

Walk:

Wollemi National Park: From Seastorm Caves to Caramel Swirl Chambers

Leader:

Yuri Bolotin

Maps, etc:

Mountain Lagoon. GPS setting WGS84.

Description:

The walk starts at around GR 737 983 on D'Arcy Range Trail. Descend to the north west and visit Seastorm Caves. Move north from there, exploring a series of gullies above The Line of Caves to the west, and finishing at around GR 734 998. If time allows, check out the cliff line to the east starting at GR 737 999 before walking back to the start of the walk. About 6 km. Mostly exploratory. Scrambling and exposure.

Rating:

5M. S223E

Gear Issues:

2 litres of water, GPS, PLB, appropriate head and footwear, electrolytes, maps, compass, first aid kit, tape (leader only). Change of gear for afterwards.

Date walked:

31 October 2025.

Important note:

This walk starts and finishes on D'Arcy Range Trail in the Wollemi National Park. Access to D'Arcy Range Trail is through private property, and permission must be sought for each visit. Access to the start of the walk is by walking the trail. These track notes only describe the off-trail part of the walk, so additional time must be allowed to complete the walk.

The Party:

Yuri Bolotin (leader), Katrina Hemingway, Belinda Bannister, Samantha Bannister, Stephen Craft, 5.

The Weather:

A cool morning, followed by a warm and humid day with light breezes. There was almost no cloud cover in the morning, but by early afternoon the sky was fully covered and a few rain drops fell as we were finishing the walk. Temperature range 15 to 23 degrees C.

Existing Names in the Area

Seastorm Caves. These two adjoining caves on the western side of the D'Arcy Range were named by Yuri Bolotin on a bushwalk of 28 August 2021. Yuri called these caves Seastorm Caves as the first cave resembles a giant wave and the second cave has a section that looks like churned sea water frozen in stone. Mountain Lagoon topographic map, 1:25,000. GR 7352 9843.

The Line of Caves. This feature was named by Yuri Bolotin on 25 October 2021. Yuri wrote, *Located on the western side of the D'Arcy Range and above the eastern side of Blacksmiths Creek, The Line of Caves extends for over two kilometres on a generally continuous ledge. It is one of the most outstanding series of overhangs I have seen in the Wollemi National Park.* Mountain Lagoon topographic map, 1:25,000. GR 734 984, southern end; GR 733 003, northern end.

Track Notes

Note: time references in the text relate to Grid References in the table at the end of these Track Notes.

The walk began at 0949 as we left D'Arcy Range Trail and headed north west and downhill towards a small tributary gully of Blacksmiths Creek that contained Seastorm Caves. This was the only known part of the route today, so I had decided to begin the adventure with a highlight. Although always ready for a surprise or two, I had no particular expectations for the rest of the trip. I did not know it then, but this walk would also finish with a great highlight. But let us come to it in due course.

Only twenty minutes after leaving the trail, the party made it to Seastorm Caves. Coming here again was a true treat for me and, perhaps even more so, for the people in the group who had not seen these caves before. This is how I described these remarkable overhangs after one of my previous visits on 27/10/21:

Ten minutes later, we stood on the edge of another, smaller drop, looking across to a bigger valley our gully was about to join with. On the other side of that ravine, we could see some dark caves. This is the direction Bill and I had come to Seastorm Caves when we first found them on 28/08/21. As you descend into the bigger watercourse and then begin to climb towards the first cave, some 50 m further uphill, you realise it has been carved out from a side of an enormous rock, which stands separately from the main cliff line. The rock has a shape of a giant wave. The dark brown outside surface is solid, impermeable, whereas the light brown/beige soft underbelly inside is intricately carved. This cave (No.1) is about 15 m long inside by 3–5 m high and 2–4 m deep.

Cave No.2 is within a cliff line 30 m to the east. With its size, at least 50 metres long, 6–8 m wide and 2–5 m high, it is bigger than No. 1, and arguably even more spectacular. The predominant colours here are white, beige, and dark brown, and the decorations – the swirls, the honeycombs, the deeply weathered shapes – are simply breathtaking. Standing there and looking up at the lip of cave No. 2 ceiling, you notice thousands of intricate tafoni cells that had reminded me of sea spray that could be seen when a huge storm wave (that cave No.1 resembles) suddenly crashes down. This is the reason that on our first visit here I had called these caves Seastorm Caves. It is like churned sea water frozen in stone.



Seastorm Cave No.1 detail. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



Yuri, Belinda and Samantha in Seastorm Cave No.2. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



Seastorm Cave No.2 tafoni detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Belinda, Katrina, Stephen, Yuri and Samantha in Seastorm Cave No.2. Photo: Samantha Bannister (selfie).

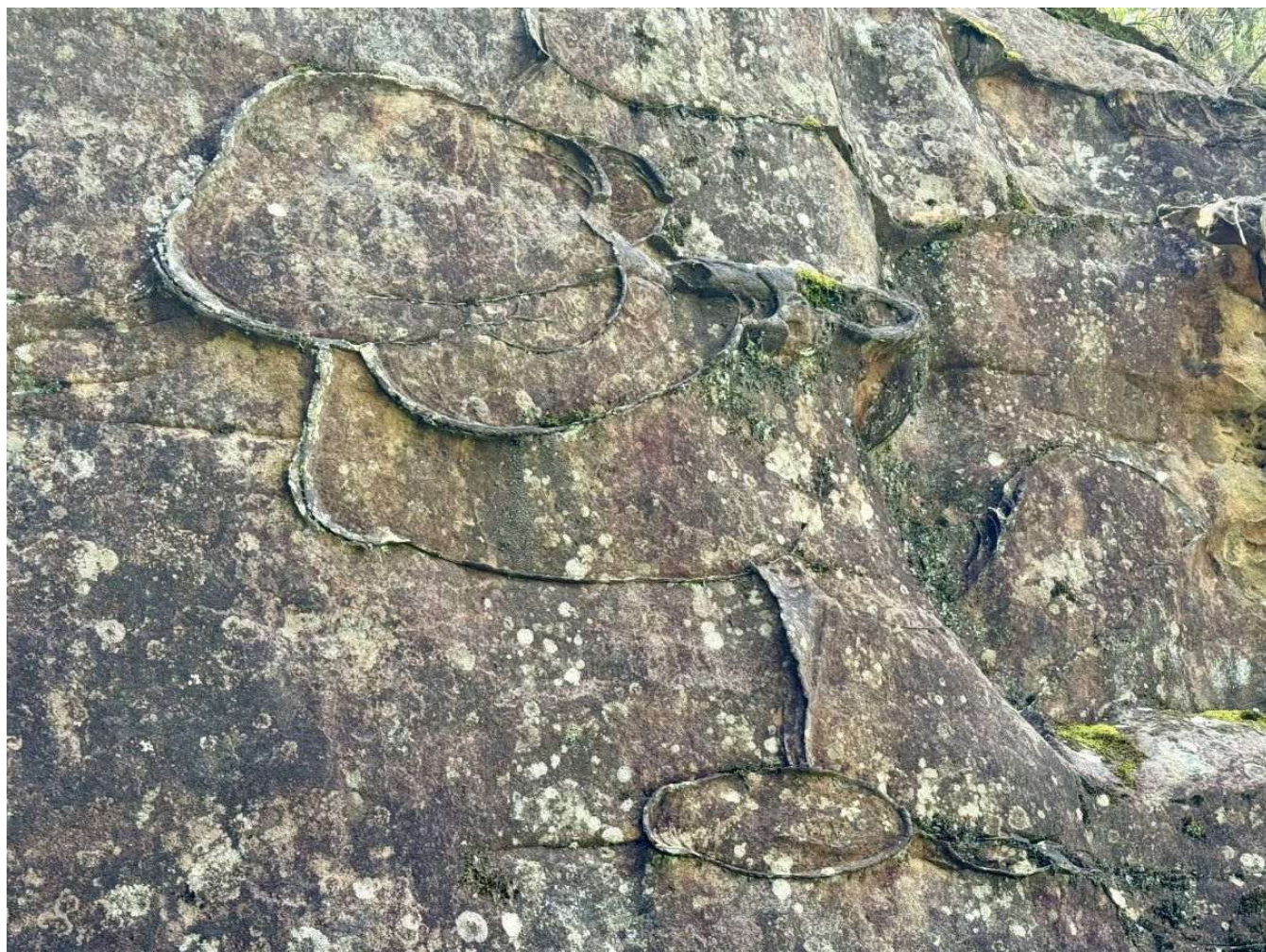
As good as these caverns were, our main goal today was to explore the cliff lines to the north, so, after a ten minute visit, it was time to move on. We crossed the adjacent gully, climbed about 20 metres and stopped for a quick morning tea, from 1023 till 1028. As often happens, I had completely forgotten about it and had to be reminded by a few party members.

Next, we began traversing below a medium-size cliff line along a good ledge. An interesting rock arrangement – two boulders propped against one another, with a gap in between – was encountered, but each of these rocks were probably too heavy to have been arranged by human hand. At 1037, a 5 metre long cave with very attractive tafoni formations was photographed. Next, we rounded a corner and entered a tributary ravine. After crossing to the opposite side, a 7-8 metre long tafoni cave captured our attention. At 1102.



These boulders are probably too heavy for a rock arrangement. Stephen looking through. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.

Moving further up the gully, we stopped at the first continuous cliff line and resumed our traverse northwards. There was only one geologically interesting 20 metre long section here that boasted several fine groups of overlapping Liesegang Rings, a few cutout shapes resembling animal heads and a line drawing-like relief on the surface of a large boulder created by ironstone veins. At 1123.

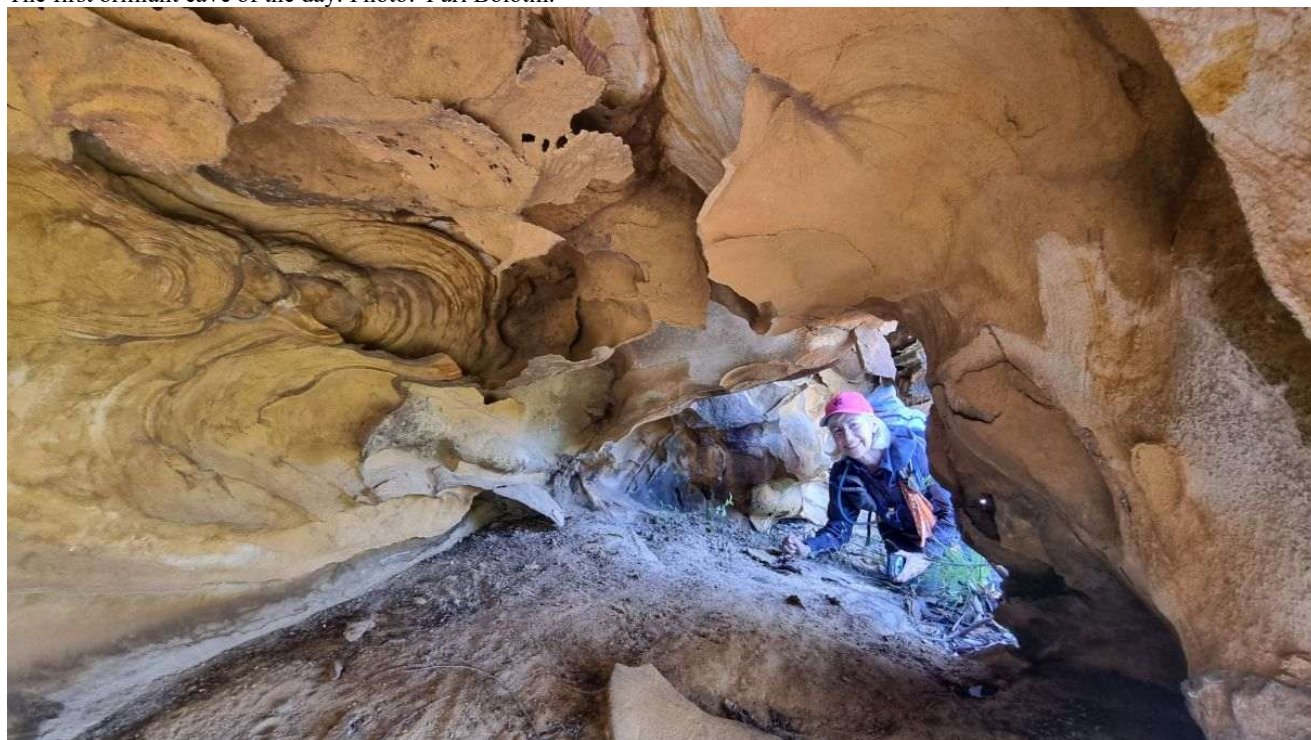


A drawing-like relief (ironstone bands) on the boulder surface. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.

Whilst I was glad to see all these features, they were not very remarkable, so the party climbed out of this gully, crossed the dividing spur and descended into the next ravine. Almost immediately, we had a great find, a small, 4-5 metre long, narrow tunnel-like cave, crammed with fine multi-coloured erosions and Liesegang Rings. At 1140. Very close by, was another fine overhang, a bit longer and much higher, with a beautifully decorated tafoni ceiling.



The first brilliant cave of the day. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Katrina in the first tunnel-shaped cave. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Cave detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Cave detail. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.

The rest of the cliff line encircling this ravine had flat brown broken-down rocks, so it was nothing outstanding, but our progress was easy and enjoyable due to a good ledge with continuous views into

Blacksmiths Creek and a surprising number of still flowering Waratahs. Next, we entered the next gully along our traverse and, at the head of it, stopped for lunch in a shady partly collapsed cave. At 1220.



A Waratah along the traverse. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

When we resumed our journey at 1242, I thought, *We are having a good, easy day, but to make it a great day, something else needs to happen.* You never know in the Wollemi what is waiting for you around the corner, and in this case, we were indeed up for a special treat.

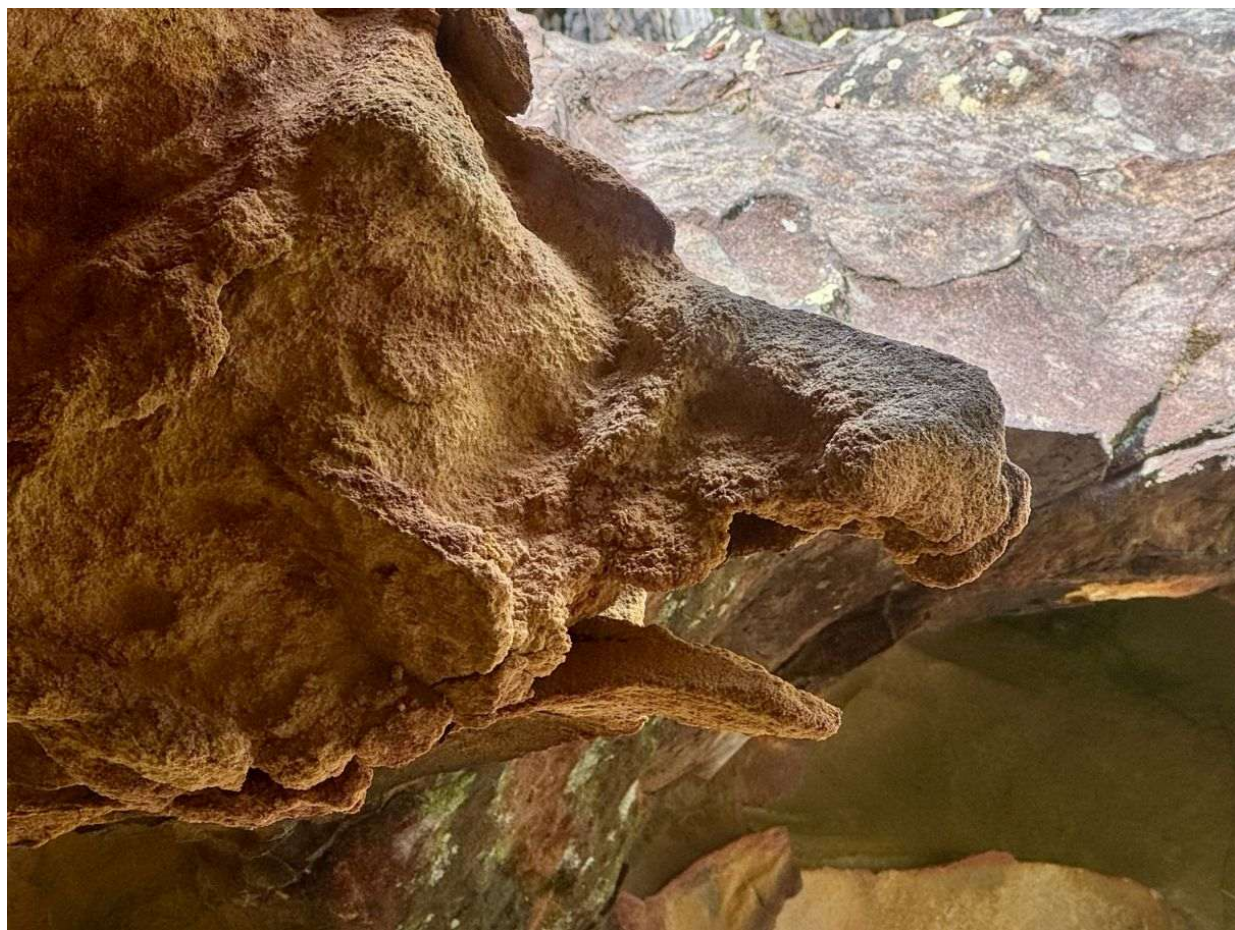
Eight minutes since the end of lunch, I saw a low overhang about five metres above the ledge level but easily accessible from the bottom. As you climb up to it, you enter a tunnel-shaped chamber, 10 metres long, 3-4 metres deep and 1.5-2 metres high with a jaw-dropping array of Liesegang Rings and multi-layer overlapping cutout plates in caramel brown, white, grey, pink and yellow. Incredible! The visual effect of it is more pronounced because the viewer is situated inside a relatively small space and is completely surrounded by the formations. It is a fully immersive, awe-inspiring experience. We spent 16 minutes here, from 1250 till 1306, and that felt barely enough.



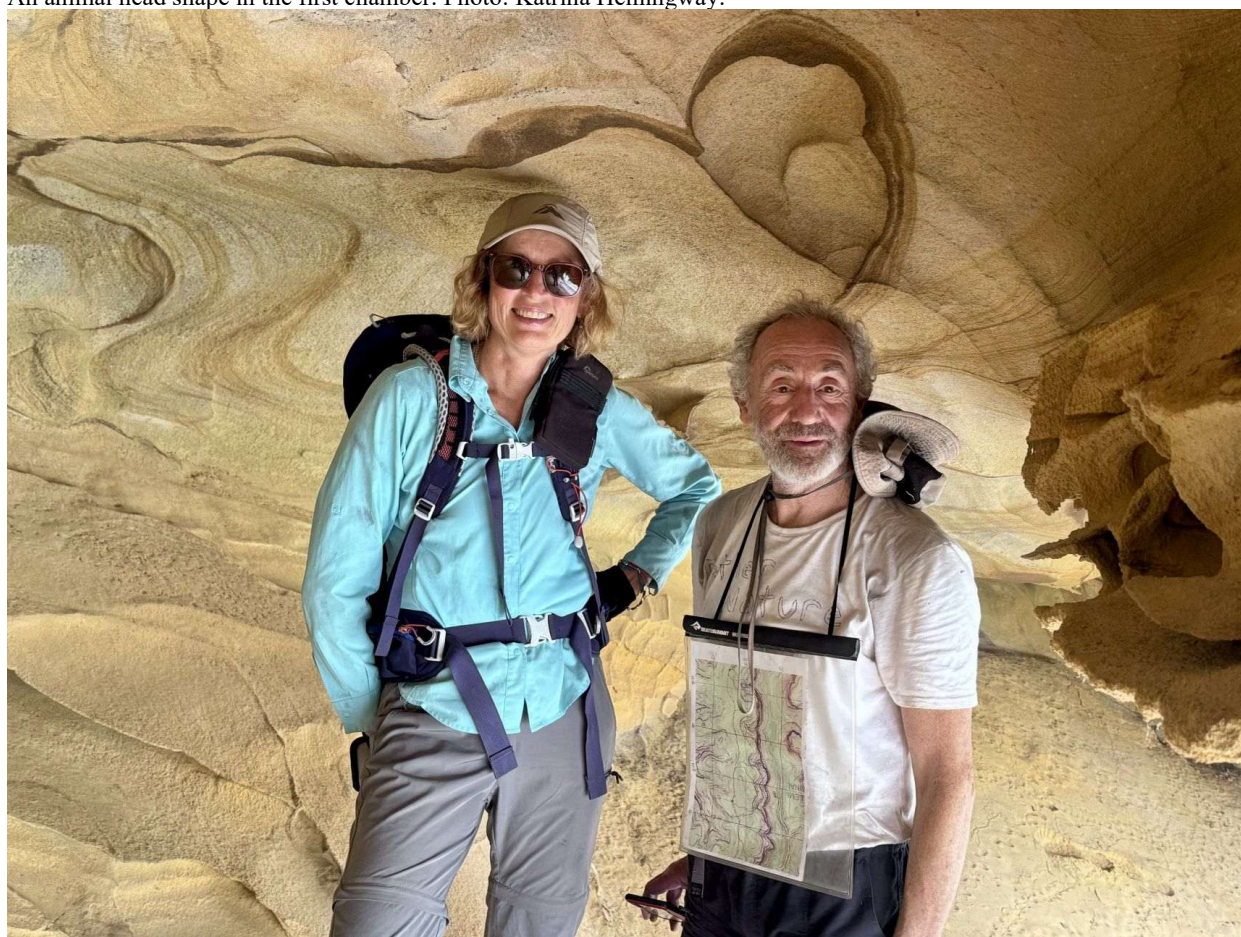
First chamber detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



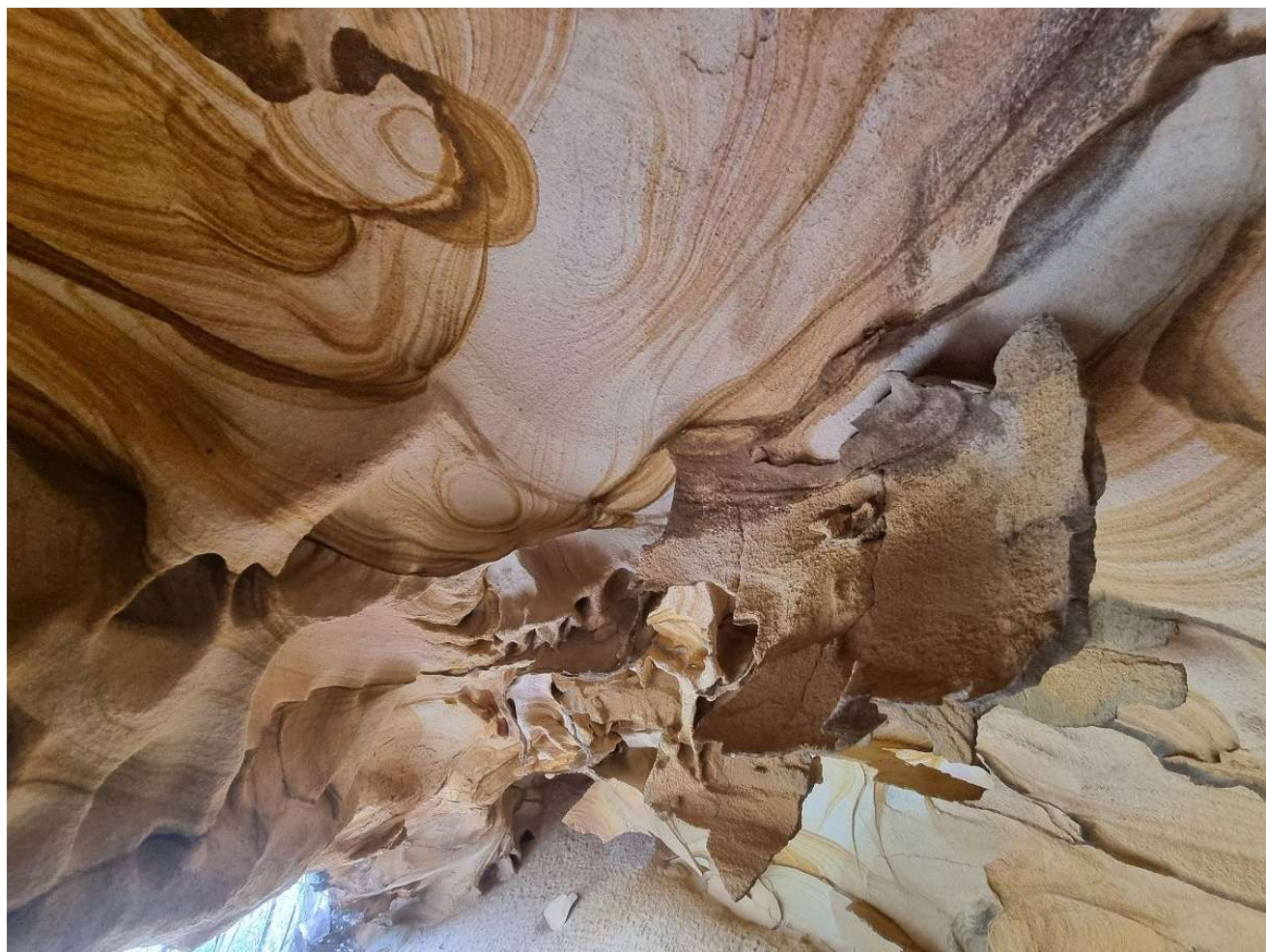
First chamber detail. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



An animal head shape in the first chamber. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



Belinda and Yuri in the first chamber. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



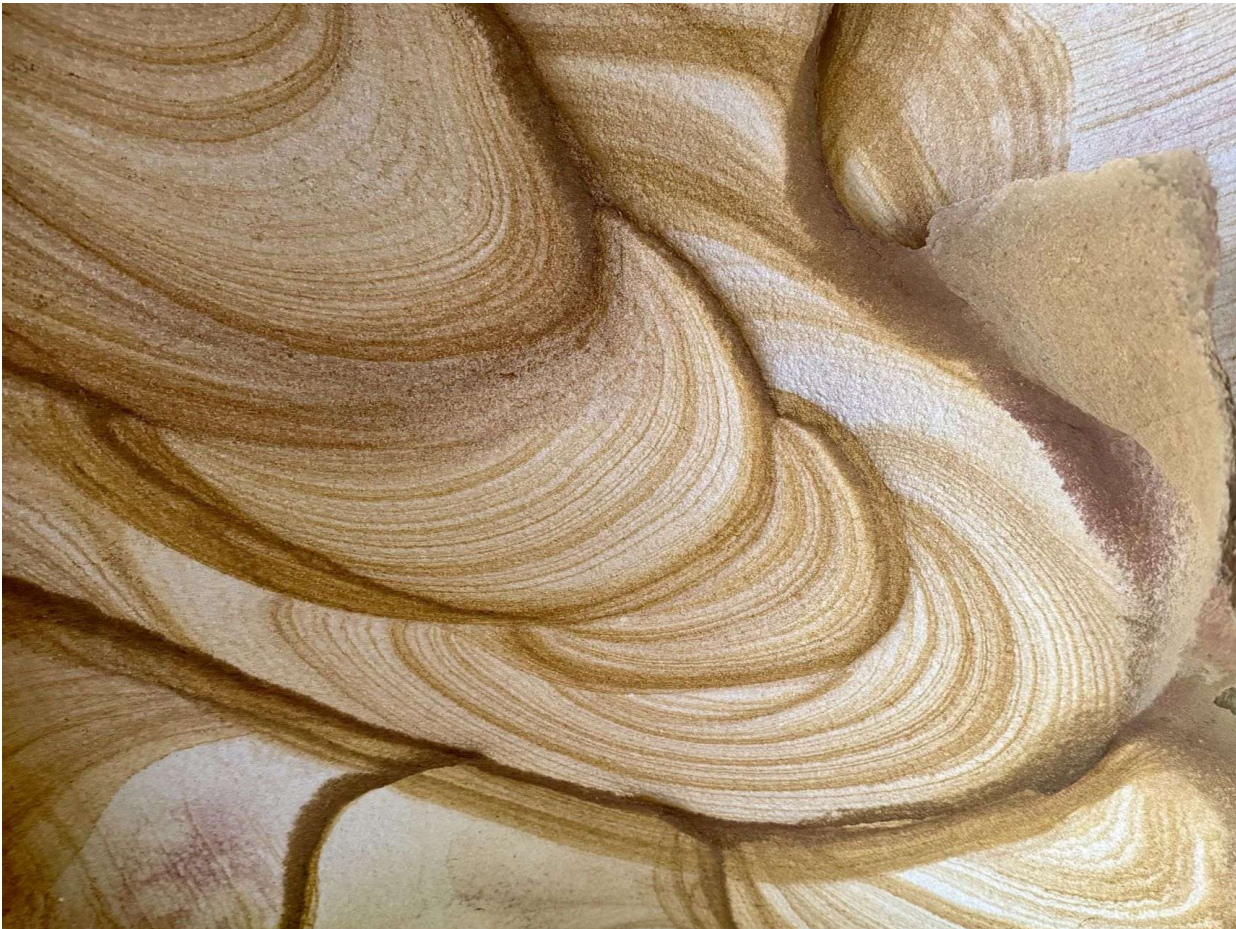
First chamber detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Belinda in the first chamber. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



First chamber. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



First chamber detail. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



Animal head shape in the first chamber. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.

Right next to the first cave was another overhang, shaped like a 10 metres long wall, with Liesegang Rings and tafoni panels. The predominant colour here was once again caramel brown. Less than a hundred metres along the same line of cliffs, there was a wall of striking overlapping Liesegang Rings and a few steps further, another tunnel-shaped chamber, 7-8 metres long, 2 metres deep and up to 2 metres high, full of magnificent weatherings. This was followed by a double chamber cave that had honeycomb panels on the outside and layers of strikingly beautiful multi-coloured weatherings covering the inside space, including the roof above our heads – another intimate encounter with the amazing geology of this part of the Wollemi. The last eroded overhang in this stretch was encountered at 1332.

Based on the suggestion of Samantha Bannister, who was one of the party members on this walk, I called this remarkable 250 metre long sequence Caramel Swirl Chambers. These chambers contain sandstone weatherings of many different colours, but the predominant one is caramel brown. I think this area is a worthy rival to Kaleidoscope Caves located four kilometres to the south on the other side of Tootie Creek. The chambers are smaller in size but their opulence more than makes up for it. Because of the limited internal room, the weatherings here are very close by, and I am asking future visitors to treat this astonishing feature with utmost care by not touching the rock, which is often paper-thin.



Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



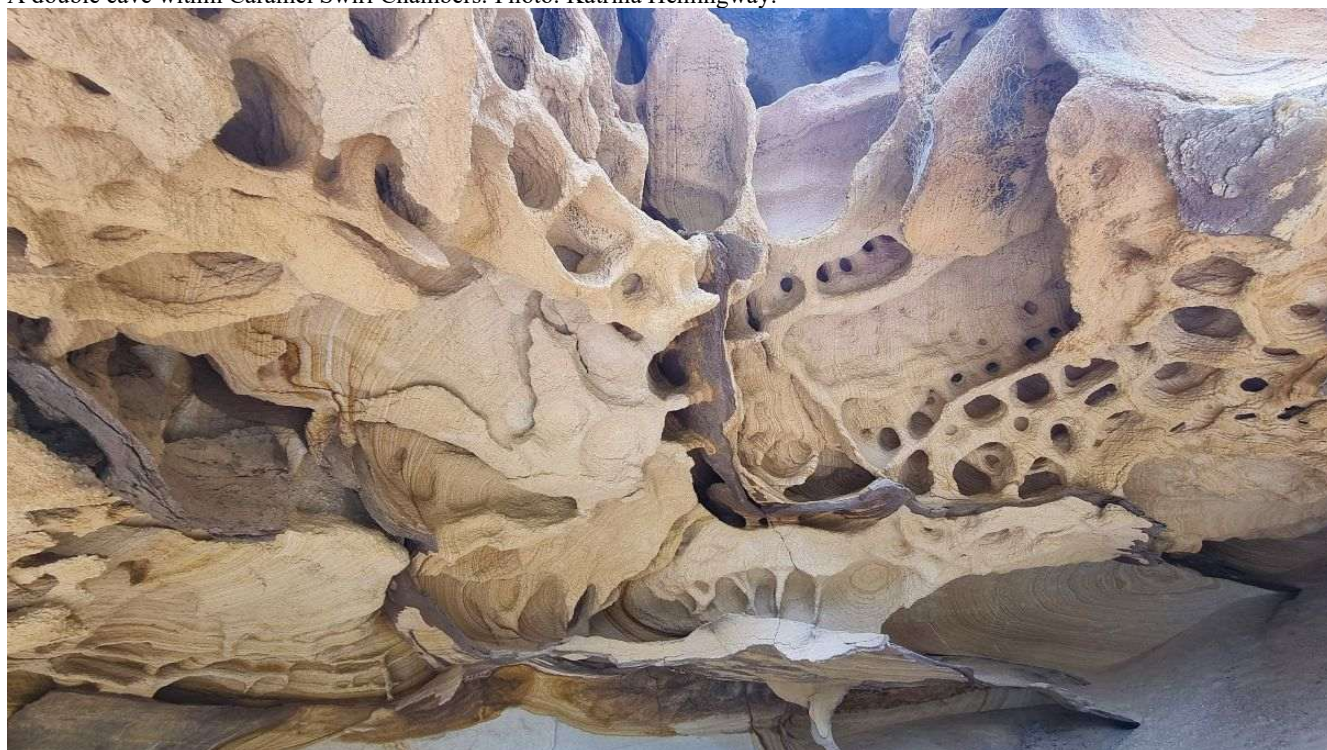
Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



A double cave within Caramel Swirl Chambers. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.



Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Caramel Swirl Chambers detail. Photo: Katrina Hemingway.

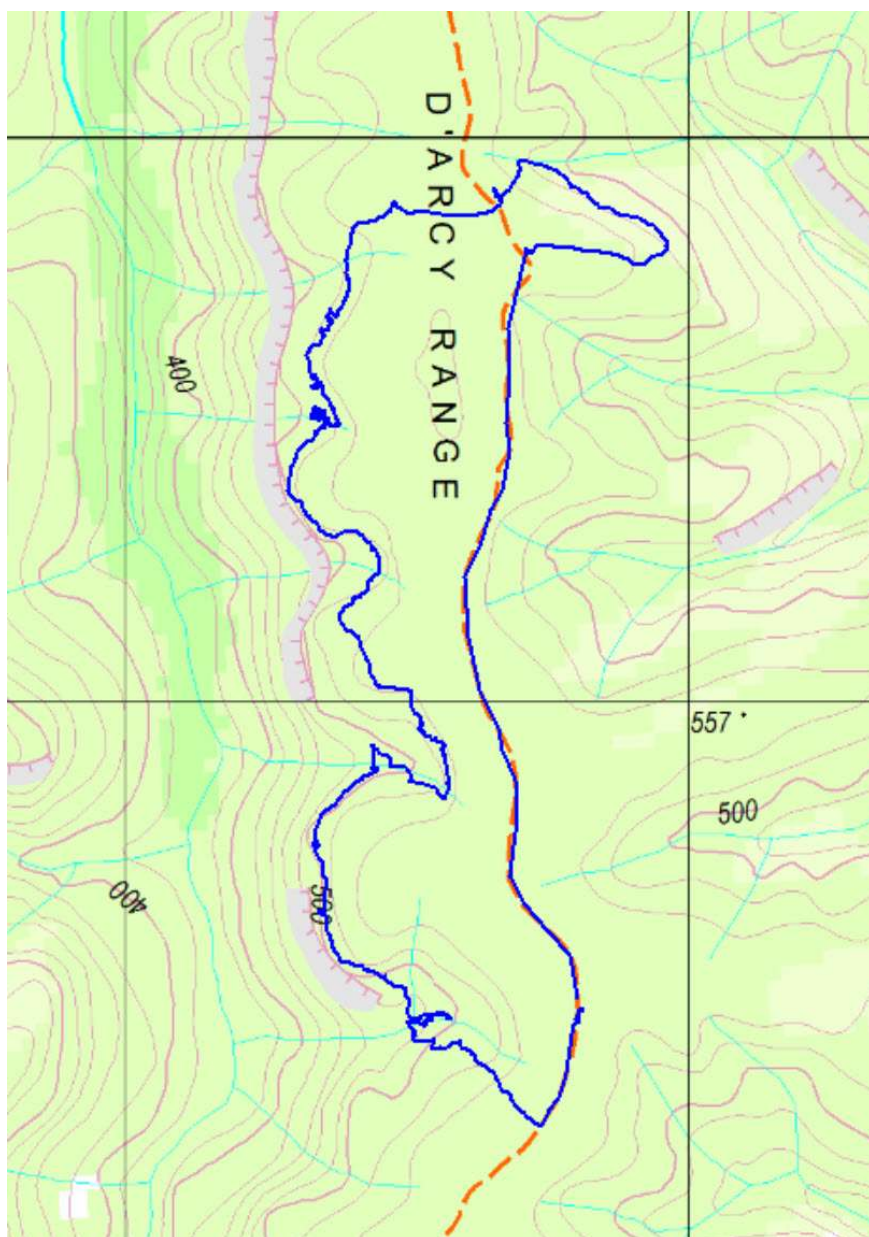
Having completed the planned traverse, we now climbed back to D'Arcy Range Trail, reaching it at 1345. As there was still some spare time, we descended on the opposite side and explored the first cliff line to the east, but it did not yield any discoveries. The group made it back to D'Arcy Range Trail at 1421, just at the spot where Bus Trail comes in from the east (we had followed it for the last 150 metres). There was a timbergetters camp here many years ago, and the remains of an old bus that served as a kitchen could still be seen half-hidden in the dense scrub.



The remains of the old bus that served as a timbergetters kitchen. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The group made it to the walk start by 1445. This had been a wonderful day in the Wollemi, bookmarked by two outstanding cave systems.

Trip statistics: total distance 6.4 km; total ascent 362 m.



Walk topographic map. Recorded and prepared by Yuri Bolotin.

Table of Times, Locations and Grid References

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
0949	Walk start on D'Arcy Range Trail	GR 7375 9826	550 m
1009-1019	Seastorm Caves	GR 7352 9843	480 m
1023-1028	Morning tea	GR 7346 9851	500 m
1037	Cave	GR 7335 9863	500 m
1102	Cave	GR 7345 9892	490 m
1123	Boulder with ironstone band reliefs	GR 7354 9894	525 m
1140	The first outstanding overhang of the day	GR 7341 9918	520 m
1220-1242	Lunch	GR 7336 9950	530 m
1250-1306	The southern extent of Caramel Swirl Chambers	GR 7335 9956	523 m
1332	The northern extent of Caramel Swirl Chambers	GR 7340 9976	522 m
1345	D'Arcy Range Trail	GR 7366 9988	555 m
1421	D'Arcy Range Trail and Bus Trail intersection	GR 7372 9981	558 m
1445	At walk start	GR 7375 9826	550 m