

Date: 25th November 2013

River: Tooms River (Fed from Tooms Lake and runs into the Macquarie)

Paddlers: Richo & Hippy

Time on the river: 7.5 Hours!

Distance: 11km?

Water level: 8 Cumec

It all began with a text message last Sunday, “What are you up to tomorrow? Are you interested in an adventure?”

I was intrigued of course and said “Yes” immediately. Further comments included – “I’ve looked at this one on the map before,” “It’s been on my list for ages”, “looking down from the road it looks good to go – it’s got water!” and “I’m not sure if anyone has been there before, could be a first D!”

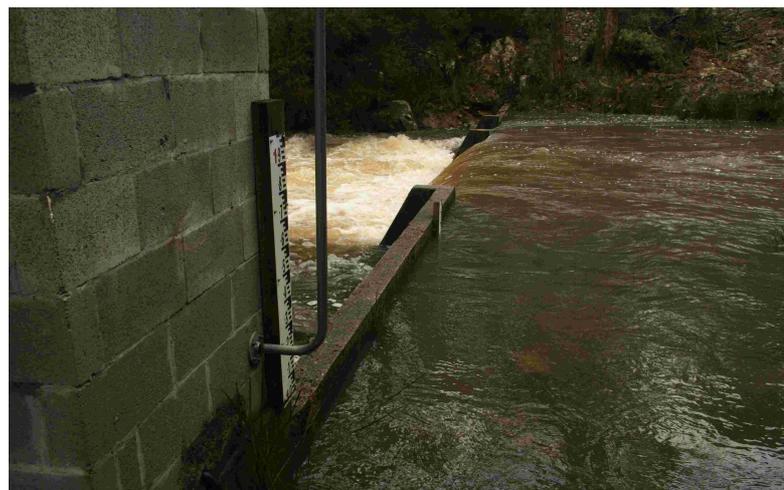
So a plan was hatched and off we headed early to make sure we had enough time for our bakery tour of the Midlands before our paddling adventure. After hitting the Ross Bakery for coffee, a roll and a mistaken identity, we headed out the back of Ross toward Tooms Lake.

We dropped a car in the middle of a farmers paddock close-by (1 km walk) to the Macquarie River (about 1.5kms down from where the Tooms joins it) instead of paddling another 4-5kms of flat water to where the river is next to the road.

Looking at the map as we drive to the top we reckoned the average gradient was around 20-30m/km with the crux(steepest) section of around 3 or 4km in a steep sided (but not cliff-hanger) gorge very soon after the start, there were no water falls marked on the map either. The flow was quite reasonable (A touch over 8 Cumec on the DPIWE gauge) and at the get in (DPIWE gauging station -50 meters downstream from Tooms Lake Spillway)



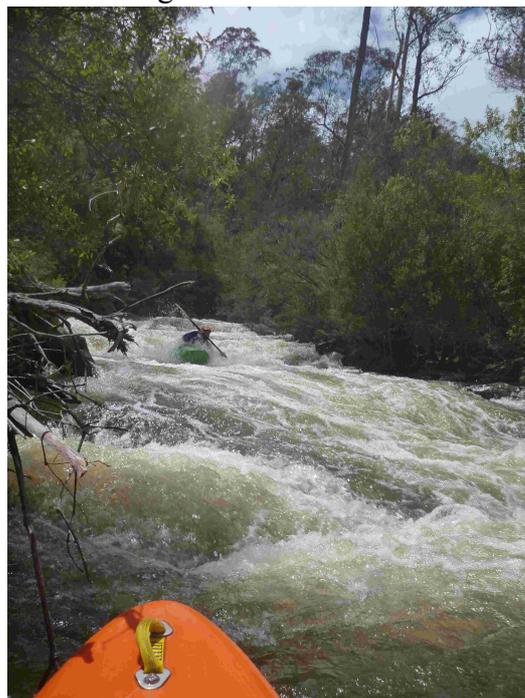
Spillway



DPIWE Gauging Station

We put in above the gauging Station and ran the weir, looking for eddies as we went. The river is very closed in with poor visibility because of low trees and blind corners. We were boat scouting for almost the entire river as there aren't many straight sections where visibility is good. The river consistently disappeared around corners and the gradient steepened, so we often had to bank scout for sometime 100-200m to find the next eddy and to make sure there was no wood in the river. A large group on this river would be a handful, as the eddies are few, spaced out and quite small. There was a surprisingly low amount of portages because of trees in the river but where we had to portage it was tough, bashing through the tea-tree scrub for a quite a way.

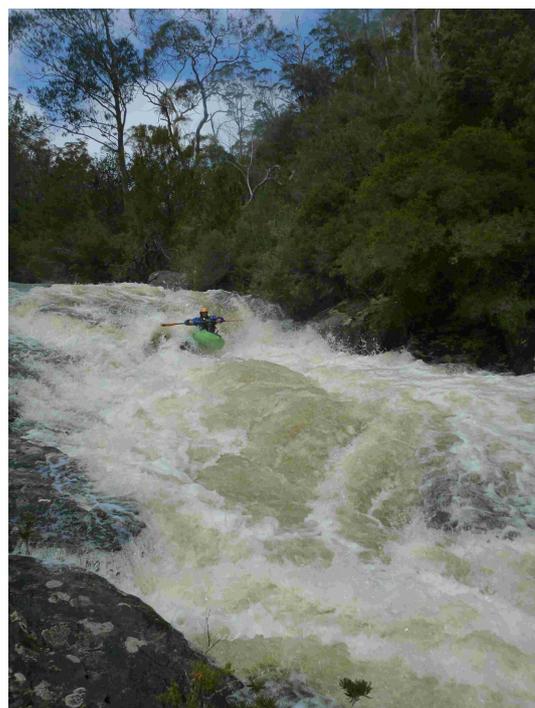
The river is very continuous with almost no flat water till the bottom 4 km or so. The Rapids were heaps of fun with some sweet twisty drops and some cool reaction boating.



We came across a couple of reasonable drops, one of which was close to being runnable but needed some more water (perhaps a cumec?) to make a clean line appear.



There was another drop over a bit of a hole that looked good to go – so we fired it up.



Hippy fired it up while I ran some safety (photos), and made it look easy, whilst I made it look hard!

The rapids continued down till the river started to flatten out and once this happened there were heaps of Logjams – fortunately paddocks had started to appear and portage was easy enough through the fields. We passed some Fishing/Hunting Shacks – where we had lunch. This would make a more appropriate Take out – however the signs on the road “No trespassing – you'll be shot etc etc” perhaps make the full trip more appropriate for those who like to keep all their organs/Appendages etc.

Many portages at the bottom due to logjams and trees and then we joined the Macquarie to float down to the get out. The Macquarie was flooding so made the trip fast but not without risk – trees everywhere, water heading wherever the hell it wants with few reasonable eddies. A loud roar was heard at one point and we weren't sure if it was a rapid or just water in the trees, with no eddies to catch Hippy went ahead and probed. He appeared to get stuck in/on something. He wasn't swearing, so I assumed he was just being surfed – not strained! After the okay signal I punched on through quite a large stopper that he had obviously dropped into sideways and had provide much entertainment. We floated down the river till we thought we were at the take out and walked back through the paddocks to the car, but not be before we avoided all three species of Tasmanian Snakes hiding in the tussocks.

After 7.5 hours on the water – we arrived back at the car utterly exhausted and ready for 1 warm beer shared between two people. We loaded the boats, collected the other car and headed for mobile reception making it mere minutes before our contact, Stacky, was supposed to send out the chopper.

We arrived back in Launceston around 7pm, both of us many hours late for the things we were had organised to be doing.

I would definitely go again, the water level was almost ideal for the trip. If it was a lot higher, it would be very fast with nowhere to stop as most of the eddies would disappear No more than 10 cumec for sure, with maybe 9 cumec being spot on – but I'm not sure without paddling at that height.

It's a big day out, there is lots of scouting and make sure you take plenty of food and all the appropriate emergency gear (breakdown paddle, first aid, Boston bun etc)