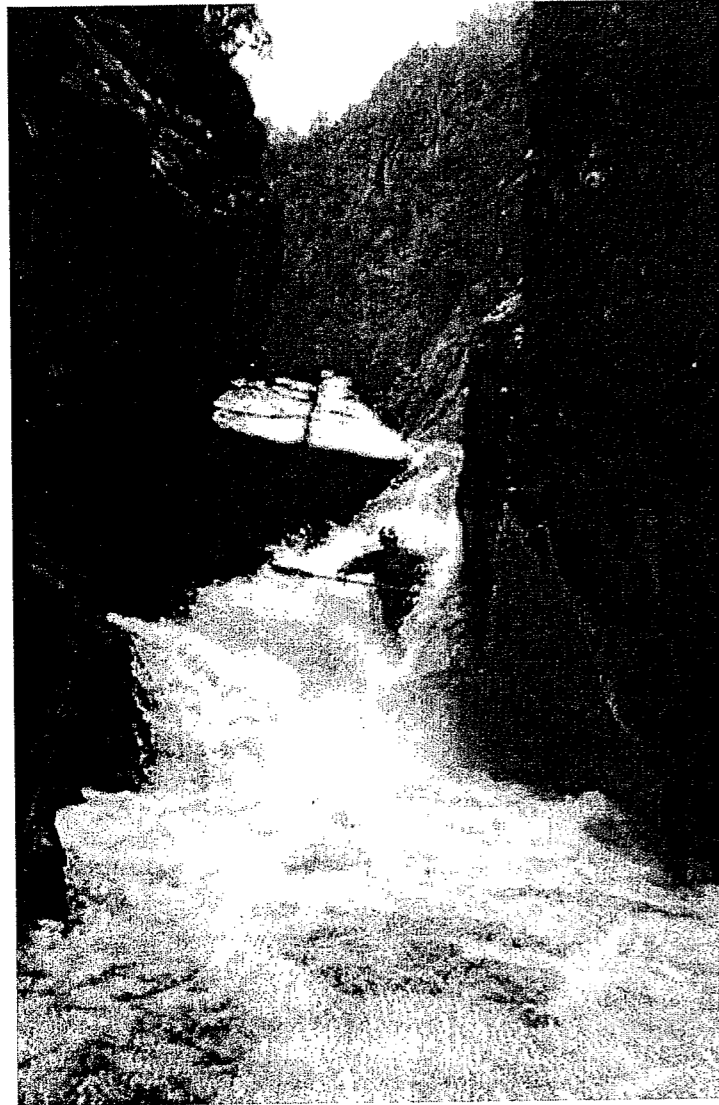


# A Peace of the DOVE, Broken

By Bryan Smith  
(Aka Booger)

I remember the first time I attempted the Dove River. It was back when I could barely see over the front deck of my then well used, state of the art Dancer. It was the middle of winter because back then we thought that you had to have water in the river to paddle it. We had just paddled the upper Dove, the section down from Pencil Pine Creek, and it was all good, full of beautiful rain forest and some nice little drops. The next day we decided to paddle the bit from the only bridge across the Dove down to Lake Cethana. It was a bit longer than the upper bit but, not looking at a Topo map, we thought we should give it a go because the top was so much fun and the river couldn't change too much in character, could it?

Anyway the rest is history that is well etched into the minds of the many parties that followed and were forced, as we were (twice) to ascend the steep gully at the top of Walk Out Canyon in order to free themselves from the oppressive clutches of the deep and steep canyon walls.



After the second failed attempt I vowed never to go down there again unless I had a pocket sized, 'just add water' helicopter or they had installed a cable car down to the walk out spot. As it turned out a pocket sized EPIRB would be all that was required. "What could be better than a free flight over the Cradle Mountain National Park after a pleasant mornings paddle down a very scenic river" was the final draw card. The party consisted of Lachie Milne, a slalom paddler from Sydney who seems to react to water in the same way that most of us react to Speed, and myself. The ever appreciative shuttle bunnies were Tom Ibbott, a mate of mine from uni whose draw card was the Lea River the day before and Mandy who wanted to see Cradle Mountain but the clouds took care of that for her.

We kicked off from the now fallen down bridge across the Dove at about 9.30am after battling through the very over grown road in the rain. The first 2 or 3 kilometres consisted of many tight and technical boulder moves interspersed with a few drops of around 2 metres in height with a similar feel to

sections of the Lea. Sensational rainforest and moss covered walls became the highlight of this section of the trip but speed was the main focus due to the unknown entity of the rest of the river. As the walls closed in and the drops became more pronounced the start of Walk Out Canyon appeared like a nemesis from a dark past that I must have been a part of before being

reincarnated as an unrelenting fool. At this stage of the trip the river takes on a very different feel. The gradient increases to around 60m/km, the walls close in until they almost touch each other and the rainforest becomes invisible as the only things that can be seen are the multitude of horizon lines hiding 4-6m falls interspersed with 20m long flat pools.

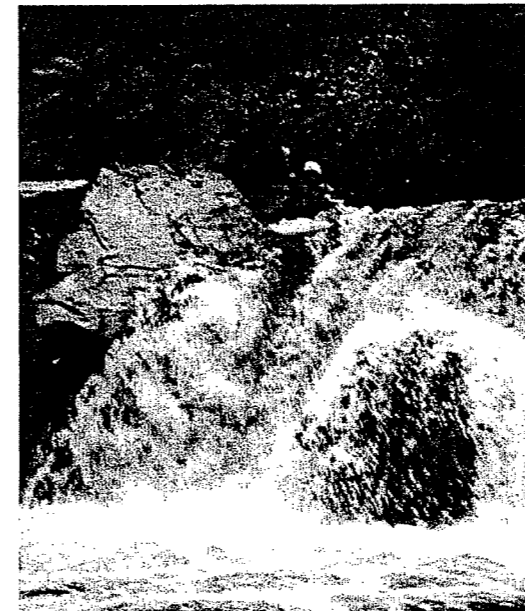
It was here that I became very thankful that, in previous trips, the rest of the crew didn't take my advise of "lets run it and see" as with the 2 foot higher flow experienced then the whole canyon would fill up and become one seething mass of bubbling brown stuff in a similar fashion to ones underpants upon entering this gorge.

The tempo holds up for about a kilometre or so and then the moss covered rocks and man ferns reappear for brief moments of relief before several more similar gorges are encountered. All these gorges are extremely hard to scout before entering and it would be impossible for anyone except Spiderman to climb out of. However, with low flows it is possible to walk up to the lip of the drops, peer over and decide whether to paddle or jump from there. We paddled pretty much all of them as they were all pretty clean and it seemed safer to at least start the rapid in our boats. One log choked fall did require a bit of a shimmy down a slippery log in the middle of the fall and some boat balancing acts that would make the Moscow Circus proud but the ropes stayed firmly in the boats for the whole trip.

Once dispensed with the canyoning side of the trip an enjoyable, very scenic rock slide for about 2 hours is necessary. A flying fox appears about 30 minutes before the Campbell River joins the Dove and from there it is only 10 minutes down to Lake Cethana. The Campbell had loads of flow (20 cumecs) and if I wasn't totally buggered I may have had the same level of enthusiasm as Lachie about another potential winner of a trip in an already popular boating area.

The sun beamed down on our battered bodies as we entered Lake Cethana approximately 3 hours ahead of our scheduled pick up time. You see, not having full confidence in a successful trip being pulled off and knowing exactly where we would end up if we too were forced to take the high road out, we had organised to meet Tom and Mandy at the walk out spot at 6pm or at Lorinna at 7pm. Being only 3.30pm we decided to paddle down the Lake and cut them off at the bridge over the Forth below the dam. Having lost the map well before the start of Walk Out Canyon we racked our brains and decided it could be no further than 2 or 3 Kilometres to the dam, a casual hour in short boats. 2.5 hours later we found ourselves sprinting towards the dam praying that we would not miss the 'cutting off at the bridge' bit and have to paddle the 2.5 hours back to Lorinna. Not a problem, with 5 minutes to spare it was all good and what would a first descent be without a small amount of unplanned anxiety?

## Some facts



Put in: From Moina drive towards Cradle Mountain. On the flat plain just before the Daisy Dell Playing Fields (glorified paddock) turn left onto a dirt road and follow this turning right at the Quayle Falls intersection and being careful to go straight ahead instead of left up a rough hill. Continue down as far as you want on the rapidly revegetating road towards the old bridge site. Take out: Lorinna, beside Lake Cethana.

Time: 6 hours +

Class: V (VI with high water)

Level: Needs to look very low at the put in. If you can paddle the rapid above the bridge without hitting a rock bring a snorkel or leave a car at the Quayle Falls turn off. Too low and the canyon will be runnable, with some drops being too boney, but the rest will take a very long time. Probably best done in summer after a little rain.