

CTCG

NEWSLETTER

capital territory caving group

p.o. box 638, woden, a.c.t.



MAY 1978

NEXT MEETING

BUSH RESCUE MANUKA

16/5/78.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

COTTER BARBEQUE: What a success! Those people who did not turn up missed out on a most pleasant day. The day started out at approximately 11.30 a.m. with a number of C.S.S., N.U.C.C. and C.T.C.G. people arriving, wandering about, finding each other and finding a very good picnic place with a double barbeque gas fire. The rest of us (me included) turned up during the next hour or so. After eating, the frisbees came out and what with four frisbees, forty people and a dog or two, some very spectacular aussie rules styles of catching coupled with some rugby tackles made the next hour quite exhilarating. Jumpers came off, brows became damp and laughter was louder. In the middle of all this an elderly couple sat on a blanket and enjoyed every moment, with the odd frisbee upsetting the eats. Every one enjoyed themselves. After a short refreshment break most of us trooped off to the cotter cave. It was O.K. for a hole in the ground. A couple of keen bods crawled through a hole into a second chamber. They fiddled around for so long that the rest of us left. Oh well, better check to see if they aren't still there. The day concluded with the temperature falling by about ten centigrade degrees and a few spots of rain, at that point I went home. It was a very good day with the whole group mixing and enjoying themselves. Thankyou N.U.C.C.? C.S.S. and C.T.C.G. members for making it so.

MEETING PLACE: A meeting place has been the topic of conversation again. At the last committee meeting two new venues were discussed. We have two options, both are at the Canberra College of Advanced Education. (i) to use the Union Meeting Room on an ad hoc basis and it will cost the club zilch. (ii) the other is to have a permanent tutorial room for \$8.10 a meeting. We will discuss these and other venues at the next meeting.

WICKERSLAK. Approximately twenty five members, wives, children and parents met outside the Police Station ??? (more like the Motor Registry) where we waited for the trip leader Lindsay Atkinson. (where are you Lindsay). I noticed that Mark Hallam was not to be seen either. Fifteen minutes later they turned up with the reply " We just went to see if the cliff was still there." (they have been there for several million years but I guess that they haven't had to contend with the Queanbeyan Council till recently). Shortly afterwards we all in convoy followed Lindsay out of Queanbeyan for about 500 metres, down a dusty track into a quarry. (oops) The cliff was about 400 metres further along. Chris Nichols turned up in blinding dust. "I know a way to the top of the cliff". After following dusty Chris for a kilometre or two we ended up 400 yards south of where we started. Well done Chris.. The cliff is limestone approximately 40 feet to the bottem with a good abseil surface and a good climbing surface. Lindsay taught a couple of knots and then the action started. An abseil rope was quickly dispatched to the bottem. (one end you fool) Followed by a rope ladder and a belay rope. A belayer (me) belayed people up and down ladders, abseling ropes and the cliff face it self. SSomeone yelled 'lunch' and a mass exodus of people from the cliff would have bewildered onlookers. Natural fires through to gas fires generally cooked whatever happened to be over them. At this stage, having eaten my excellent sausages, cooked by Jim Wilson, I then went home.....

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING: The next committee meeting will be held at my place at 8.00 p.m. The meeting will be brought foward one week to the last thursday in May. (25/5/78). The next monthly general meeting is on the (18/5/78).

PROJECT YAG'BY: Jim Wilson and myself are going to Yagb'y to make some simple measurements in Jersy cave. Places for permenent instruments will be selected. Liason with the new ranger, Roger Hosking and with Andy Spate of C.S.S. with regard to the placings so as to be of the most benifit, will take place. The construction of the electronic measuring system is going 'great guns'. See You..... Phill.

BENDITHERA CAVES

Bendithera (or Bendethera) caves are situated in rugged country approximately 50 kilometers to the west of Moruya and adjacent to the Deua River. Access to the area is by four wheel drive vehicle, or for keener people, by foot. There are a number of tracks, mostly fire trails, leading into the caves area, some originating from Moruya and the others from the Braidwood to Numerella road. In the early days, access was by bridle trail from Krawarree. Even as late as 1965, this bridle trail gave the only access from the west.

Bendithera caves were discovered before 1889 and the then Superintendent of caves, W.S. Leigh, first inspected them in April, 1890. The caves were developed as a tourist resort, the walkways and stairs, most of which are still there, in part, being constructed. 1894 was the boom year for visitation to the area with a recorded 107 visitors. This number fell to 23 in 1899 and the services of the full time caretaker were finally dispensed with in 1903.

According to a 1965 Department of Mines report, the geology of the area in the vicinity of Bendithera is composed of both Ordovician and Devonian age rocks. The limestone in which the caves occur is of Lower Silurian age, and is overlain by Lower Devonian porphyries and rhyolites and intruded by porphyry dykes. The limestone is typified by close jointing and typical karstic solution phenomena. Solution cavities are extremely numerous but these are commonly filled with red clay and debris.

The BMR is at present carrying out further geological survey work in the area and the information gained should add greatly to the knowledge of the area.

Of the many caves in the area, the Main cave is the only known large one. Following, is an old description of the cave:

"This new discovery is of far greater importance than that of the flooded cave at Wyanbene discovered eighteen months ago, three distinct caves having been found to date. It is possible that other and better caves will be found when further exploration is carried out.

The principal cave is situated on the northern slope of the mountain, about 250 feet above Con Creek, which runs at the base, and the waters of which, in the main, are subterranean, bursting from the ground in at least three distinct places.

Passing through the entrance, which is an opening of about 10 feet by 6 feet, you stand on the threshold of a large chamber, which is 50 feet in height, and some 50 feet wide, containing some massive stalactites of a curtain-like form hanging 20 feet below the roof. Beyond this chamber the cave takes two levels, or rather is divided into an upper storey, being on a level with the entrance. Descending by an opening to the left by a natural staircase leading to lower levels, two immense columns are met with, one of which, at least 20 feet in diameter, rises at least 60 feet. It is called the Pulpit. On descending a further 25 feet, the lowest level is reached, the floor at this point forming a basin containing water about 3 feet deep and 25 feet wide, the floor at this point forming the drainage for the whole cave. At this point the cave is at least 60 feet wide and the roof must be 90 feet high at least. A wall of rock inclined at 60 degrees to the horizontal can now be ascended for 45 feet, then being level with the entrance, which is visible 450 feet behind. Beyond this a gradual descent for 300 feet leads to the end of the cave. Here the floor is thickly covered with guano, bats being prevalent in this part of the cave."

The main cave has suffered from desecration and vandalism. Many of the smaller formations have been broken, while the larger ones have been walked across and dirtied. Many names have been recorded on the walls and formations by carbide lamp or candle.

Our group has, so far, had two visits to the area, both in conjunction with the local Landrover Owners Club.

The first trip, in early 1977, was most enthusiastically supported by a group of 33 people, travelling in 11 four wheel drive vehicles. The Bendithera area is certainly big enough for such a large group and in the limited time available, the group managed to locate six of the tagged caves and a number of small, but interesting untagged ones.

The trip into Bendithera is particularly slow, taking about five hours from Canberra, but is beautifully scenic. We headed in from Pikes Saddle, crossing Breakfast Creek, and stopped to enjoy the view and fill in the visitor's book at Dampier Trig. From there we moved on to the Deua River crossing, had some lunch and continued through Bendithera Property and on to the slowest part of the journey. This section of narrow track, about five kilometers long, has 11 creek crossings and at one part it is necessary to drive along the rocky creek bed, in the water, for a hundred metres or so.

The armchair comfort of a Range Rover was really appreciated on this part of the trip!

Some of the creek crossings have quite steep approaches, as one of our members who was driving a SWB Toyota found. The back wheels of his vehicle lifted off the ground on the way into the creek and the front wheels lifted up on the way out! He probably won't carry spare petrol on the roof rack again either!

It should be noted that before embarking on a Bendithera trip, it is necessary to obtain the permission of the owner of Bendithera property before crossing his land. The owner has been known to turn would-be visitors back at his gate.

Upon arriving at the camp site, we set up camp and then headed off to the Main Cave and an introduction to caving for our chauffers. After finding out why the services of the full time caretaker were dispensed with in 1903, members set about trying to locate other caves. BD13 was found - it is about 6 feet deep and clogged with dirt. Nearby is an unmarked, verticle cave taking the form of a narrow squeeze about 40 feet deep. Windlass Cave, BD3 was, unfortunately, not found.

The following day we decided to locate Fig Tree Cave. Two parties set off, one from the camp site walking up what was vaguely recognisable as being the old trail from Krawarree. The other party 'bush bashed' from the main cave area and some hours later came to within signalling distance of the first party. An hour or so later, we all met at Fig Tree Cave and were again suitably disappointed. This cave has one rather dusty chamber about 50 feet in diameter. There are a few formations, the most interesting being a plastic bag and the remains of a caving helmet! In fact, the most exciting part of the cave is the 'squeeze' between the fig tree roots at the entrance.

Whilst returning to the camp site, BD31 and a number of other unmarked holes were found. On their way to Fig Tree Cave, the first party had also located the shallow mineshaft near the cave.

The remaining members of the trip located BD4 and BD5 and an untagged stream passage near BD4. The entrance to this is about 5 feet above a dry section of Con Creek. A squeeze leads into a short narrowing tunnel, off which a chute drops about 10 feet to a meandering stream passage, about 2 feet wide, 10 to 20 feet high and with 2 to 3 feet of water. This passage ends in about an 8 feet deep pool of water.

BD4, Water Cave, attracted a couple of keen swimmers, who after climbing down about 10 feet found a reasonably sized, 20 feet deep pool of beautifully cool water to wallow in. The leaches around the entrance enjoyed themselves too!

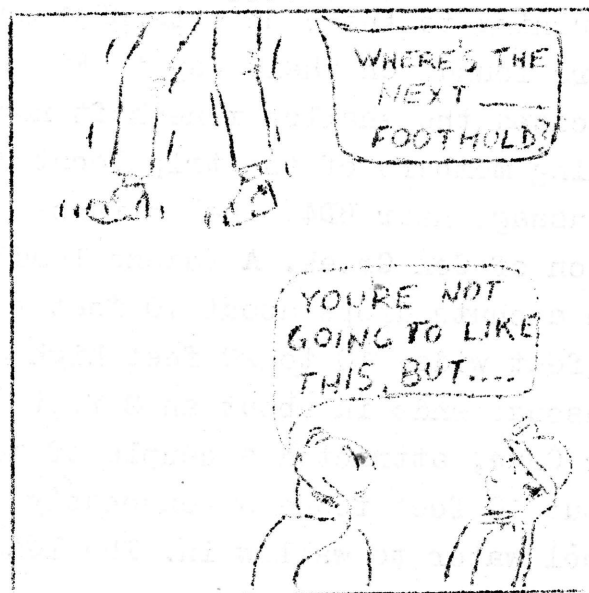
Time having run out at Bendithera, we packed up camp and began the slow trip home. This time we travelled along the Bendithera Caves Fire Trail to Bendithera Trig, stopped to view the scenery again, headed off along the Merricumbene Fire Trail for a while and then turned off onto the Mongamula Fire Trail. The crossing at Parsons Creek posed a problem for a while, as it had been washed out - the water being a ten foot sheer drop below the end of the road. However, after a short interlude of cross country driving, another crossing was found and the journey continued. A few miles further on, we arrived at the turn off to Landrover Club member Neil Donoghoe's block of land. Most of the vehicles took the time to go down to the block where we bid welcome to Neil's bush rat and kangaroos and had a cup of tea.

Neil's property is about 6 kilometers north east of Bendithera Caves area and is on the Deua River. Wyanben Caves are about 8 kilometers north west of the property and patches of limestone have been found in a few places between the two cave areas. Once suitably refreshed, we proceeded back up the very steep access track to the property and on to the 'main' road. After crossing the Deua River again and a little later circumnavigating Alpine Homestead, we arrived at the Shoalhaven River crossing, then Fairfield Property and at last the asphalt road.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the trip and our members were really appreciative of the help and cooperation given by the Land Rover Club.

Needless to say, once home again we began to plan the next Bendithera trip. A lot of time was spent on this planning and more will be said about that trip in our next magazine.

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CONSERVATION REPORT

Adrian Davey - chairman of the ASF Commission on Conservation, wrote to CTCG on 28th April, 1978, to inform us of a mining companies' application for an exploration licence at and surrounding Wyanbene Cave.

Copies of the Federation's submission to the Mines Department, objecting to the inclusion of the Wyanbene Caves and Karst in the exploration licence area will be available for perusal at the next general meeting. For your consideration, we have reprinted a summary of the ASF's submission. Please give it some thought and let me know your ideas by the next meeting.

.... Mark Hallam,
Conservation Officer.

1. Summary.

1.1 The area subject to the application includes all of the caves and limestone at Wyanbene, in the upper Shoalhaven valley.

1.2 The public land within the area is within the proposed Deua-Tuross National Park.

1.3 Wyanbene Cave - the major cave in the area - is one of the longest caves in New South Wales, and has been known for well over a century.

1.4 Wyanbene Cave was used as a tourist cave for a number of years at the turn of the century. It is regularly visited at present by substantial numbers of cavers from the Sydney region, Illawarra, and Canberra.

1.5 Wyanbene Cave (and several of the other smaller caves) has a relatively high capability for recreational caving.

1.6 Several features of Wyanbene cave are of considerable scientific interest:

- a) The lofty Gunbarrel is the largest and most impressive blind shaft in Australia.
- b) The Gunbarrel contains cave wall fluting of a size and quality uncommon in other Australian caves.
- c) The Gunbarrel is especially interesting in that it has

stoped upward to an unconformity with a different geological formation which overlies the limestone.

- d) The Gunbarrel is a key to the understanding of the nearby Big Hole - a karst collapse feature of international interest.
- e) The cave contains numerous fine examples of aragonite crystals - a mineral uncommon in NSW caves.
- f) The orientation of the cave may be controlled by sheeting joints due to erosional unloading - an unusual and interesting situation.
- g) The stream which drains from the cave is apparently derived solely from seepage water - unusual in Australia.
- h) The cave has been the subject of meteorological study of a more detailed nature than almost any other in southeastern Australia.

1.7 Various other features of the caves at Wyanbene are of scientific significance:

- a) There is an interesting cave fauna, including several undescribed species of harvestmen, spiders, and beetles.
- b) The caves are frequented by two species of bats.
- c) Clarks Cave is developed on an unconformity between the limestone and the overlying rocks.

1.8 The significance of the caves at Wyanbene has been recognised by Caves Reserves from as long ago as 1889, consolidated in 1931.

1.9 There have been numerous mining and exploration tenements in the area over the last century, including as recently as 1974. No mineral deposit of any consequence has ever been found.

1.10 Exploration - particularly costeaning, bulk sampling, and the construction of tracks and drill pads - can cause considerable physical damage at the surface. In a karst area, surface damage might quickly affect the subterranean drainage and the caves themselves.

1.11 The exploration Licence should not be granted.

1.12 If for some reason it is found necessary to grant the Exploration Licence, there should be strict conditions attached to the licence such that there is no possibility of damage to the caves, the drainage system, or the karst landscape.

SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE.

Last Edition of this Newsletter contained a Safety Question sheet. The C.T.C.G. Safety Officer, Lindsay Atkinson, is anxious to obtain some feed-back from Club Members on their responses to that Questionnaire. Could all Club Members receiving a copy of the Newsletter please complete a copy of the sheet and either post it or bring it along to the next Club Night. Please take this seriously, and respond as we know you will! Lindsay wants to plan Safety activities which will be beneficial to all, it's no fun going over things we know....

Please add your name to the completed sheet so that we can put the screws on those people who don't respond.

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May GENERAL MEETING of the C.T.C.G. -- New Venue

The May General Meeting of the C.T.C.G. will be held at the headquarters of the A.C.T. Bush Rescue Service, situated in Collins Park, Manuka. If you want a comfortable seat (i.e. Not on the floor) you will have to bring your own fold-up chair. Also, since the premises are unheated, dress warmly. The committee has arranged to supply coffee and some primitive form of heating, but you should bring your own taste in liquid (or otherwise) refreshments.

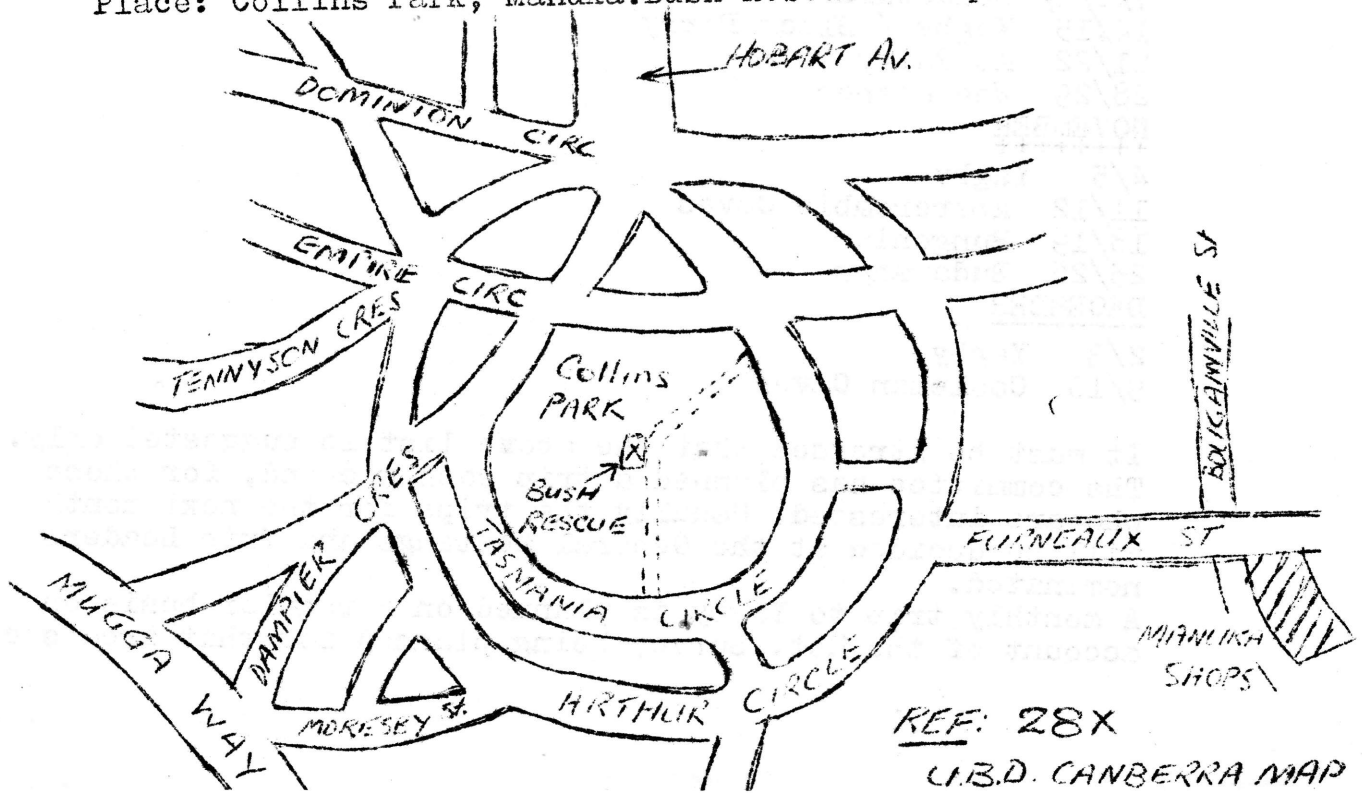
We are hoping for a big roll-up, so do make the effort. Your committee is trying this location as a possible permanent meeting place, we'd like to give it a fair trial.

See the map for navigation instructions..

DATE: Thursday 18th May

Time; 7:30 pm Sharp

Place: Collins Park, Manuka. Bush Rescue Headquarters.



TENTATIVE CALENDER OF TRIPS -1978.

This is a list of trips suggested by the committee as a possible guide. This should assist in Long range planning and timely requests for permits. This is not final as yet.

MAY

13/14 Bungonia - Trip Leader Chris Nicholls (w)478949
20/21 Mt. Fairy - Trip Leader Ian Brown (h)583839
27/28 Wee Jasper -

JUNE

3/4 Yarrangobilly - (Possibly East Deep Creek)
10/11/12 Buchan (Victoria- Permit required)
17 Bendethra
24 Cleifden (Leader- Reg Bayment)

JULY

1/2 Yagby
8/9 London Bridge
15/16 Marble Arch / Big Hole
22/23 Bungonia
29/30 Wyanbene

AUGUST

5/6 Yagby
12/13 Wee Jasper
19/20 Mt. Fairy
26/27 Tuglow

SEPTEMBER

2/3 Black Perry (& Yagby)
9/10 Wombeyan
16/17 Bungonia
23/24 Ginninderra Falls
30/31 Michaelago

OCTOBER

7/8/9/ Bendethra
14/15 Yagby / Black Perry
21/22 Mt Fairy
28/29 Wee Jasper

NOVEMBER

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4/5 Yagby
11/12 Abercrombie Caves
18/19 Bungonia
25/26 Budawangs

DECEMBER

2/3 Yagby
9/10 Cooleman Caves

It must be stressed that the above list is suggested only. The committee has planned a trip each weekend, for those who are interested. Usually the trips for the next month will be decided at the General Meetings and Trip Leaders nominated.

A monthly trip to Yagby is planned on a regular basis on account of the Met. Survey being planned for that area's caves.

CAPITAL TERRITORY CAVING GROUP
(Highland Caving Group, Canberra)

ROSTER of MEMBERS

May 1978.

Lindsay Atkinson	15 Mackellar Cres, COOK ACT 2614.	H 511667
Reg & Judy Bament	6 Moseley Place, KAMBAH ACT 2902.	H 319348
Don Barnby	15 Palmer Street, GARRAN ACT 2605	H 810793
Phill Bowers	28 Deloraine Street, LYONS ACT 2606.	W 470677 H 815268
Ian & Marie Brown	20 Garrard Street, SPENCE ACT 2615.	W 483461 H 583839
Graeme Cashion	12 Bromell Circuit, WANNIASSA ACT 2903.	H 316301
Peter Crewdson	8 Bland Place, STIRLING ACT 2611.	W 731514 H 888241
Russell Dempsey	c/- Staff, P.O. DARWIN 5790.	
Robert Douglas	77 Parkhill Street, PEARCE ACT 2607.	H 862811
Mike Doyle	Macquarie Hostel, BARTON ACT 2600.	W 499342
Paul Duane (Prosp.)	10 Dobbie Place, WATSON ACT 2602.	W 633419
Sandi Fristad	14 Bromell Circuit, WANNIASSA ACT 2903.	W 724005 H 317990
Mark Hallam	30 Bambridge Street, WEETANGERA ACT 2614.	W 497355 H 542419
Peter Hallahan (Prosp.)	48 Pennefather Street, HIGGINS ACT 2615.	H 541949 W 483886
Col Harmon (Prosp.)	24 Dallachy Place, PAGE ACT 2614.	W 411911 H 548054
Mike Johnson	19 Barnett Close, SWINGER HILL ACT 2607.	W 483111 H 864707

Bill Maiden (Prosp.)	37 Bingley Cres, FRASER ACT 2615.	H 585939
John Marsala	40 Lumeah Street, NARRABUNDAH ACT 2604.	H 959442
Greg Martin	8218 145A Street, SURREY British Columbia.	
Dave Morrison	c/- 12 Arthur Street, NARRANDERA NSW 2700.	
Cris Nicholls	43/6 Wilkins Street, MAWSON ACT 2607.	W 478949
Jim Reid	14 Garrard Street, SPENCE ACT 2615.	W 499291
George Waterson(Prosp.)	4 Mooyi Place, GIRALANG ACT 2617.	W 632156
Mike & Rosemary Webb	7 Wallis Place, SPENCE ACT 2615.	W 652064
Mark Wilkins	6 Gundara Street, ARANDA ACT 2614.	H 513002
Vicki & Jim Wilson	12 Munro Place, CURTIN ACT 2605.	H 811189

SAFETY OFFICERS REPORT

You may be wondering what to do with the questionnaire in the last CTCG Newsletter (yes there was one on the back page !) concerning safety. Rather than using it for fire-starters it would be greatly appreciated if you could return it to me A.S.A.P. or at the next general meeting. The survey will enable me to make a statistical analysis of the the Group's disabilities and technical knowledge. This in turn will help me to provide tuition to those requiring help in the form of discussions at each General Meeting.

Now on to another relevant topic; on Sunday the 7th. of May a safety day was held at Wickerslack near Queanbeyan. My sincere thanks to all those who attended as it turned out to be a very worthwhile day. Most people learned something and it was very good to see the more experienced helping those with somewhat less knowledge. There were several activities including ladder climbing, abseiling, belaying and climbing.

The cliff which was used consisted of limestone varying from 30 to 40 feet. This was useful as it is the most commonly encountered rock type in caves.

Generally a good day and I'll be looking forward to seeing all those who missed out at the next Safety Day which will be held next month.

Some of the things that I noticed that people were doing that could be improved on are as follows:

- (1) People STOOD on ropes, need any more be said.
- (2) Incorrect positioning of the 'crab' on the belay. The carabine should be attached so as not to cause back injury.
- (3) People using the belay mumbled when replying to safety calls
- (4) Incorrect call procedure used during belays.
- (5) Checking set ups by independent people was not carried out.
- (6) Separate anchor points should be used for each rope or ladder.
- (7) People not using belay.
- (8) Gloves were not used while using low friction devices.

Thanks for coming folks, it was a good roll up. See you all club night.

Lindsay.