

CALCITE

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CALCITE

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The newsletter of the

Highland Caving Group

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EDITORIAL

The enigma that is HCG continues. This year has been one of contrasts, with trips nearly every second weekend and only nearly meetings every second month. Despite the fact that at the last AGM most members wanted to continue with monthly meetings, the last well attended meeting was in February; this, incidentally, saw the arrival of 'Miss J. McSalmon' on the scene. All subsequent meetings, which turned out to be bimonthly anyway, were called off for lack of a quorum.

This became rather disconcerting, so early in October we held a special committee meeting to discuss the matter and decide on a course of action. The main concern was that at least we should establish a clear idea of how the club is to run, rather than just accept the status quo.

To this end, the main points raised were:

1. The members don't appear to be interested in formal meetings, whilst attendance on trips is consistently good. This could be related to the meeting time - a Sunday evening - though any alternative time is difficult to decide on.
2. Granted that the club is the members, and in particular the active members, who attend most trips, informal meetings could be held on any trip, as matters are usually discussed amongst members on trips anyway.
3. The committee runs the club effectively at the official level. This includes the production of "Calcite" which provides an effective forum for comment by and within the club, from which members, active and non-active, can be kept informed of the club's activity and policy on the official level. Thus, the committee and the regular appearance of "Calcite" should be maintained.
4. There should be at least one formal meeting per year. This would be the AGM, held in November, to elect the committee for the following year and to review any major matters.

The committee decided that these points should be the basis of the future organisation of the club.

Despite all, it appears that "Calcite" will be published about three to four times per year, which is both a realistic and a manageable number. This issue is intended to coincide with the AGM on Thursday, 22 November at Liverpool. Besides the election of the committee for 1980, members will be asked to express their views on the above organisational guidelines.

Chris Dunne

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NSW SPELEO COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council was held on Saturday, 27 October; four members of the club were present.

Peter Dykes, as Convenor of the Cave Numbering & Nomenclature Committee, made a report. To date he has received nothing from the previous convenor, Ross Ellis, and so he is working from both his own efforts and copies of some 1975 area summary forms he obtained from Peter Matthews, ASF Speleo Handbook editor. He emphasised the lack of clarity, and of definitive guidelines in the naming and numbering of some NSW areas and the fact that the NSW General Caves Areas numbering system is now in conflict with the new ASF Ethics for Numbering & Nomenclature adopted at the last Conference.

The Mini-Conference was briefly reported on, with some criticisms being made. The Mini-Con is now to be an annual event, and three clubs, MUSIG, UNSWSS and NSWITSS have each volunteered to host it over the next three years.

The draft Constitution is not out yet, but should be available for discussion by the next Council meeting. This will be the AGM at Canley Vale on Saturday, 1 December.

Chris Dunne

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NOTES

Peter Dykes has a new postal address;

PO Box 963

Dubbo 2830

His phone number at work is: (068) 82-2255

Rik Tunney and Janine McKinnon have both moved. Their address is now:

3/81 Virginia St

Rose Hill 2142

They can be contacted by phone, only at work:

Rik (w) 29-6615

Janine(w) 633-6533

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TRIP REPORTSCOOLEMAN PLAIN

8-11 April (Easter) 1977

Present: Evalt, Joan, Delia & Neil Crabb; Rik Tunney, Barry Cubitt, Wayne Crabb; Gerry & Jenny Hopkins, Brian Cleaver; Garry & Pam Rose; Mike Finger, Chris Dunne; Bruce Waddington, Steve Earl; Chris & Lynn Roberts. (17 people, 7 vehicles and 2 trailers)

All starters arrived at the Cotter River camping area (SW of Canberra) late Thursday night and early Friday morning, tentatively to meet at 8am. We proceeded via Uriarra to Brindabella; eventually we left here around midday via the Brindabella Road to the Blue Waterholes Trail, just onto Long Plain. Due to rain the previous night, which was beginning again, this route was impassable so we proceeded to Rules Point. We met some Rangers along the way, who warned us against using the Cooleman Track in the now deteriorating weather - it was sleeting! We moved on to Adaminaby for fuel, and amidst talk amongst some of us of going to Leeton for the rest of the weekend if the weather didn't change, we moved back up the highway a few kilometres and camped the night in a clearing by the roadside. We were joined by three American exchange-teachers from Wodonga (Victoria).

Saturday dawned fine and sunny, so we proceeded via Tantangra Dam - with a brief stop to play tourists - and Goodradigbee Airstrip to Cooleman. Eventually we decided to camp at a spot above the upper canyon, near Spence's Hut ruin and the old mine, in preference to Pocket's Hut some 6km back - caution was again in mind the rain and unpredictable weather. Although on top of the canyon, this spot proved to be well sheltered and pleasant, despite the cold nights. Almost all the party managed to get down and see nearby Right Cooleman Cave (CP2) at the suggestion of Ev, who wanted to surmise it's further deterioration from the virgin state in which he'd found it some ten years ago. Most spent $\frac{3}{4}$ hr on the trip thru to Cooleman Cave (CP1).

The weather held and on Sunday almost everyone went on some sort of hike and some caving to familiarize themselves with some part of the Cooleman area - only four of us had been here before. Rik led a party of five upriver to Murray Cave (CP3). We spent an hour following it in as far as the first sump; some of the side passages were checked out, including one by Brian half-way in (west near cross-section 'p') which isn't on the CSS/Helectite maps of 1965-68. Another party of four also looked into Murray's, later. We continued up the North Branch of Cave Creek, missing the sink and cave noted in the 'Helectite' maps/articles by walking across the spur to find sinks further upstream at GR 686996 Currango 1:50000 sheet. Here, the bulk of the stream sank into a rockpile on the right bank and the rest in gravels a little further on. We cut back cross-country to River Cave (CP6) and Glop Pot (CP7), both on a fossil tributary to, and just off, the South Branch of Cave Creek. River Cave was only negotiated to about half-way to the junction, that is, to where one's shorts began to get wet wading in the pool. The South Branch Creek and adjacent collapsed caves and sinks were finally looked at. Meanwhile the Crabbs and Hopkins had gone downstream from Blue Waterholes as far as the first waterfall, taking a look at Black Range Cave (CP12) which now has a locked bar some 5m

in, and Barber Cave via the dry route (CP15-16). Besides some photography, they managed on their return to find a small cave on the right bank upstream of Clarke Gorge and about a metre or two up from creek-level. It was dry and about 5m long; further progress would require a dig. Rik and Barry also had a quick look up the dry valley which contains New Year, Frustration and Clown Caves (CP9-11).

By Monday we'd grown lethargic; the Roses had left Sunday afternoon and Rik and co. that night, to beat the holiday traffic. Besides preparing to leave for home, we were content to merely potter around the top of the mine shaft (CP33). We left by midday with only Gerry and I braving the track out to Long Plain via the old Coolamine homestead in order to return to Sydney via the Brindabella Road.

Chris Dunne

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MUDGEES - CAPEERTEE

28-29 October 1978

Present: Peter Dykes, Graeme Smith, Evalt Crabb, Rik Tunney.

Graeme and I left Sydney late Friday night and managed to get to the Sydney side of Capertee where we stopped for what was left of the night. After waiting over an hour with a flat tyre for the owner of the Mobil service station in Capertee to pull his finger out and fix it, we proceeded down to the 'Crown' property in the Capertee Valley. Here we got the permission of the owner, John Wilson, to look at the Blue Rocks limestone outcrop.

Arriving there we spent some time chatting with John, after which we looked over the eastern section of the outcrop. This is not very wide and is about 1-1½km long. A reasonable looking bluff is evident but no cave development was observed. The western outcrop was toggled next and yielded the same result. It was a little wider and extended up the hill and into the next valley as far as we could estimate; we didn't completely trog this outcrop.

The most interesting thing about the Blue Rocks outcrop is not its karst development but its peculiar vegetation which was made up predominantly of spinifex, with some 'blackboys' observed. This grew only on the limestone and in fact there was a clear delineation between this type of vegetation and the mountain vegetation of eucalypt and scrub. Also of note, was a spring, located on the western side of the road near the creek.

We only stayed at Blue Rocks for a couple of hours, then left and drove back up the Capertee Road to Coco Creek where we set up camp for the night. We attempted to walk up the creek in search of the limestone outcrop Evalt Crabb has reported; however we didn't find any limestone.

Sunday morning we packed up and drove in to Mudgee where we met

Evalt and Rik. After a session at the wineries, Ev, Graeme and I paid a visit to the Buckaroo Limestone outcrop. The following features were tagged:

- M1. Located on the western side of the old quarry in the main outcrop, a small enclosure with a rock pool. This feature has previously been known as 'M1' but had not been tagged.
- M2. Located on the eastern side of the quarry, drops into a passage 6m long, running south and ends in a very small chamber. Previously known as 'M2' but untagged.
- M3. Another entrance to M2, located 2m south.
- M4. Located in the western outcrop, a doline containing a shift about 3m deep.

It was observed that a great deal of damage has been done to the surface area here, mainly thru the use of explosives. All the other features previously reported by Blayne Pearcey (unpublished report, 1964) appear to have been blown up!! There has also been a fair amount of excavation in the area for no apparent reason. We all agreed that in its present state the Buckaroo outcrop appears to offer little prospect of any further cave discoveries.

Peter Dykes

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BUNGONIA

23-24 March 1979

Present: Steve Bunton, Geoff Innes (SUSS), Dave Gillieson (UQSS).

After discovery of the exquisite sediments in B60, attempts were made to find a geomorphologist who could apply some meaning to them. During the 'Atea 78' expedition, I met Dave Gillieson of Queensland Uni Geography Dept who is working on a PhD studying cave sediments in relation to landform evolution in New Guinea. I suggested that he may be able to help us with the Phoenix Cave sediments and shed new light on Bungonia's geomorphic development.

This weekend was only conceived of on the Wednesday night, when I found out Dave was in Sydney. The two problems to be overcome in the short space of time available were, organising a car, and getting a key. Thanks go to Julia James for lending Geoff and I her car. However, getting a key proved more difficult. Graeme Smith was in Queensland working, but it was his considered opinion that the lock wouldn't open anyway. Oh well! On the way down on Saturday morning we stopped at Ev Crabb's to pick up his key, only to find that he had already left for a weekend at Bungonia himself.. Well, we decided, if he didn't have his key with him, we'd see Don Stoneman, the Ranger, and get his key. Sure enough, Ev didn't have his key, so we went to see Don. Don was at Crookwell, and so for half an hour I tried to convince his off-sider, whom I didn't know, that despite the fact that I wanted to destroy the gate on the cave, I was a respectable person who could be trusted: Buckley's!!

We spent what remained of the afternoon bludging Rik's food, since it only took 5mins for Geoff to saw off the gate.

That evening we entered Phoenix Cave; there was no trace of CO₂ despite reports of most other caves being full to the brim. We proceeded slowly so as not to disturb the fauna, however, I could find no trace of any silverfish. There were Symphyla, Carabids and one Opilione, which could be classified as cave-dwellers. There were numerous 'accidentals' beneath the entrance rift, including a frog. I feel that the lack of Nicoletiroes could be attributed to a loss of habitat. They previously inhabited the space beneath rocks on the floor of the cave, but this has recently been filled by silt. The silt content of the caves has increased since the fire a couple of years ago, and Phoenix Cave has had no traffic since then.

At the squeeze, it took us half an hour to remove enough silt to make this obstacle negotiable, however Dave still couldn't fit thru because of the loss of mobility in his once-fractured hip. He was able to study some laminated and varved sediments beside the entrance to the squeeze. Geoff and I continued into the cave to Grand Canyon Chamber where there were pockets of foul air. Here we photographed many sedimentary structures, all with scale-figures so that Dave could make meaning of them later. We returned to the surface after about 4hrs to a cold beer and a warm bed, away from the campfires and midnight noises.

Next morning we let the HCG party know we were okay before packing up and doing a quiet, and pleasant walk thru the Gorge. This was the first time I'd walked to and from the Gorge. The other time I visited the bottom, I abseiled in and prussicked out. After a picnic lunch at the Lookdown we returned to Sydney.

Steve Bunton

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MUDGE - CAPERTEE

14-15 July 1979

Present: Peter Dykes, Rik Tunney, Evalt Crabb.

I drove down from Dubbo to Capertee Valley on Friday night and arrived at Coco Creek to find Rik and Ev already there. In the morning we decided to fully explore Coco Creek.

To this end we drove back up the Capertee Road to where a fire trail from Ben Bullen joins it. We continued on foot down this trail to its junction with Coco Creek (GR 257264 Ben Bullen 1:25000 sheet). Continuing down the creek we observed no limestone till GR 290275, where a fairly large outcrop was explored. A fair amount of rillenkarrren was observed, but no caves found.

The vegetation on the limestone was the same as at Blue Rocks, ie. 'blackboys' and spinifex, with the same sort of distinctive vegetation difference between limestone and non-limestone areas. We

walked down as far as the Capertee Road, observing two smaller outcrops, with no caves and again the same difference in vegetation types.

Having taken the best part of a day to do the walk, we then drove on to Mudgee and stayed the night at Jenny Meeke's place, 'Mudgee Wines'. Rising reasonably early we had breakfast, then decided to finish off our work on the Buckaroo outcrop.

Arriving here, we got permission to enter the property and proceeded to finish our look at the area, tagging:

M5. Doline, covered in fencing wire; previously referred to as M4, but untagged. This doline was previously dug out by Newcastle Technical & University College Speleological Society in 1963. It was then described as a vertical shaft 6-8m deep, a tight squeeze, with running water at the bottom. Since then it appears to have suffered from the effects of explosives and is now filled in with scrap wire; the prospect of reopening the shaft is poor.

We continued, looking again at what had been found on our previous trip (October 1978). The water level in M1 had dropped considerably, giving access to a 6m passage ending in a pool. This was surveyed, as was M2.

Evalt took a few photos of the area and after having another good look over it again we drove back to 'Mudgee Wines', packed up, tasted some wine, bought some wine and left for home.

Peter Dykes

Reference: Pearcey, Blayne Report on the Exploration & Excavation of Limestone in the Parish of Bumberra (Por. 110, 102, 113) - County of Phillip, April 1964. Unpublished report held in the records of the Highland Caving Group.

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BUNGONIA

4-5 August 1979

Present: Rik Tunney, Janine McKinnon, Andrew Torning, Debbie Osborne, Evalt Crabb; assorted Lurnea High School pupils & teachers.

Rik, Andrew and I left Sydney early Friday night and arrived at Marulan Station in time for the arrival of the pupils coming by train. We were so heavily loaded, we could only squeeze two pupils (with gear) into the car for the trip out to Bungonia. We were the first of the 'station cavalcade' to arrive and found a large number who'd come privately, already set up.

Ev arrived about 20mins later with pupils falling out all over the place! After much noisy camp-setting-up and a 'night cap' most of

the 'older set' retired. A lot of the pupils were too excited, and 'ragged' for most of the night (Oh, to have the energy and exuberance of youth!).

Saturday morning, after a lengthy breakfast, we all headed out for a walk thru the Gorge. It was a slow, but enjoyable trip down, and a lot of the pupils seemed to gain a bit more confidence as we went. We had lunch by the creek at the bottom and then started the long walk back. A few of the pupils were very scared going up and had to be taken very slowly, but we eventually made it to the top just before dark. The whole trip took about six hours. Saturday night was a big barbeque, with much singing by the pupils; and HCG sampling the inevitable brew around their own campfire.

Sunday morning, everyone arose late to another glorious day, and by the time breakfast was over it was decided that there wasn't enough time to do a cave like Grille. So I got to take those interested down Argyle Hole (B31), a cave I'd never done before - and now I know why they picked me! We started with half a dozen interested pupils and ended up with 21! Having got them all in, we were informed that another party was coming out, so I stowed them in a side chamber and there we all sat for 20mins. When we finally got to move on, the cave rapidly narrowed, so being as there were so many pupils, and they hadn't been in a cave before (and some were quite scared), I turned around and came out. (Just you wait, Ev Crabb, I'll got you back for that one!)

We got back in time for a barbeque lunch before those that were interested - about half - started walking cross-country with Rik back to the turn-off. The rest of us broke camp and hung around for a while before driving out to drop the pupils at the station, then come back to pick up Rik's brigade.

Janine McKinnon

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COOLEMAN PLAIN

29 September - 1 October 1979

Present: Rik Tunney, Janine McKinnon; Graeme Smith, Robyn Pogany; Fred Davis, Mark Davis, John Kersaitis, Nigel Hawkins; Chris Dunne, Ian Lutherborrow, Suzette Coates (SUSS), 'Chelsea' (woof!).

One of the more enjoyable aspects of a Cooleman trip is all the hassles involved in actually getting in and out of the place, and this trip was no exception.

It was raining as we made our way down to Canberra, so instead of camping at Cotter and moving on to Cooleman on Saturday morning, it was decided that Rik's Subaru and Fred's ('very-little-ground-clearance') Holden would drive on to the hut near Peppercorn Hill. Graeme and Robyn arrived as we were refueling in Canberra and announced that they weren't going to take the Brindabella Road at night and were going to stay at Cotter, and anyway, they could sleep in the back of the van and be very comfortable, so there!

So we battled on thru the rain and fog to Peppercorn Hill. Later on in the night, Ian's Land Cruiser arrived and its occupants proceeded to see how much noise could be made with caving boots, (answer: A lot!).

Saturday morning was overcast with a bit of hail and rain too, but after Graeme arrived we set off to Cooleman. We only made it 50m off the Long Plain road before Graeme got stuck in the first boggy bit. We got him out, but when we went to put his chains on, he found they weren't there; but he managed with a little help from the Land Cruiser. After a bit of difficulty, we put chains on Fred's Holden and set off along the track to Cooleman. Fred seemed to think his car was a road-grader and proceeded to pulverise the rocks sticking up from the track - much merriment from the other cars ensued - then on the descent from Cooleman Range his roof-rack, complete with two spare wheels, fell off! - more merriment as John and Nigel went running down the track, carrying a roof-rack between them. But this was not to be the last of our problems, in the creek-crossing about 1km before the homestead, Graeme stalled his car. Of course no one wanted to get their feet wet to help him, till Chris volunteered. Actually, his car was out of tune and eventually had to be towed out by Ian's Land Cruiser.

No one was at Coolamine Homestead, so we decided to camp there, not being game enough to drive any further and liking the idea of being out of the rain. After lunch we set off to Murray Cave (CP3). The walk cross-country was most enjoyable. Getting across Cave Creek was a bit of a problem, but we managed to find a spot where we could cross dry shod. The outflow was running; we made the usual tour to the sump, near which there is now a visitors book. The area near River Cave (CP6) was visited after this, and then the party returned to camp.

On Sunday we set out for the main purpose of the trip - a survey and description of Cliff Cave (CP4). The cave was surveyed by Chris, Graeme and Ian, with Ian pushing a difficult squeeze thru rockpile, to add a mere few metres to the survey. A rainstorm in the meantime, stopped the rest of the party from an attempt to look at the morphology of the area.

After a bit of lunch Chris, Graeme and Janine set off down-strem to do some wet caving in Z-cave (CP30), while the rest walked cross-country over a few hills to Blue Waterholes, where we all rejoined. Owing to lack of time New Year Cave (CP9) wasn't visited. It had been our intention to document damage done to the cave since its discovery by HCG in 1966. From Blue Waterholes one group headed up the road and the other up a very leading to the north of the homestead.

Monday morning was spent packing up, cleaning out the homestead and tuning Graeme's car. We had been a bit worried about being able to get up the big hill to Cooleman Range, but only Graeme needed a tow as he had no chains. Things went alright till Fred lost both his exhaust pipes on the track a bit before Long Plain. After bashing Fred's car back into shape we set off home and fortunately had an uneventful trip, stopping together for tea at a Chinese restaurant in Goulburn.

And now, in praise of Subaru; while both the Holden and Land Cruiser each used over 50l of fuel to do the 200km Canberra - Cooleman re-

turn trip, the Subaru only 231! And, it didn't got bogged!!

Rik Tunney

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TRIP LIST

November

24-25 CRG Practice

December

1 NSW Speleo Council Meeting - Fairfield

1-2 Jenolan (with SUSS) Graeme Smith 524-6447

8-9 Tuglow Rik Tunney (w) 29-6615

15-16 Jenolan (with SUSS) Graeme Smith 524-6447

26-1 Jan Kiandra - Kosciusko Graeme Smith "
(walking)

January

19-20 Bungonia (canyoning) Graeme Smith "

26-28 ASF Committee Meeting - Buchan, Victoria

February

16-17 Kanangra Walls Graeme Smith "
(canyoning)

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