

# *CALCITE*

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SYDNEY UNIVERSITY SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



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**Newsletter**

**of the**

**Highland Caving Group.**

**(Founded 1957)**

**PO Box 154, Liverpool, N.S.W., 2170.**

Production - Robert Wray.

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*The ideas, opinions and spilling mstaks expressed in this Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Executive or Members of Highland Caving Group.*

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**Grand Canyon and Tuglow  
June 3-5, 1994**

Brett Moule

**Members Present:** Brett Moule (TL),  
Jim McGregor.**Visitor:** Scott Portelli.

It was Friday night 7 pm at Neates Glen parking area, we were going to visit Grand Canyon, at night, in winter. We headed off down the track with a couple of caving lights as our only aid. Wetsuits would not be needed on this trip as the speed of these super-canyoners would be incredible, and the cold would not be felt. Taking into account the bitterly cold conditions and the icy winds, I calculated that ropes and abseil equipment would not be needed. No, we were not going to jump the short 10m waterfall pitch, but simply climb down the frozen water cascade, an impressive feat if accomplished, and a must to photograph.

As we careered down the path heading towards the waterfall the adrenalin was pumping, feet were only skimming the steps and the frozen ground steaming behind us, such was the blistering pace.

Our amazing adventure, ever so well planned, was quickly demolished on arrival at the waterfall, it wasn't frozen! Oh well, golly gosh, we couldn't continue!

On the return trip we saw footprints, someone else was down here with us. Our expert skills told us there were three strangers, one an experienced caver, another a competent beginner, and the third and possibly the most dangerous, an adventure tour operator. After several hours of studying the footprints it was agreed that they might in fact have been ours.

Our journey continued once again, and on reaching the cars the choice awaited us; where would we go? Mitchell-Palmer?, perhaps the Kimberley? No we were heading for Tuglow via the Jenolan Grand Arch.

After introducing Scott to the Grand Arch at night we continued on, our mission to avoid the multitude of obstacles, dust, fog, slippery dirt roads, and the most dreaded moving rocks (read - wombats). The mission was not accomplished. Scott hit a moving rock, but without much damage to his car.

For a change we decided to rough it at the Boyd River camping area rather than have the Boss Mt. campsite driven through by the usual multitude of inconsiderate 4WD's.

We left camp the next morning heading for Tuglow all riding in my little old Subaru ute, at about 9.30 am (early for an HCG trip). This was the first trip for it across the Kowmung River and up to the Tuglow parking area, but it managed it no trouble.

This may sound strange, but its true, this time there was no body else in the cave. NPWS didn't stuff up the permits. Anyway, we quickly descended, one rope and ladder for the top pitch, a tape for the window, another ladder just down the chimney (not the Flowstone Wall) and a rope all the way from the top of the chimney down to the bottom of the Flowstone Wall, all 26 metres of it.

We clambered down to the bottom sump before heading upstream, ascending easily to Knights. We signed the Visitors Book and continued upstream taking a slightly different route to reach the top of the waterfalls. We turned around at the big bend before down-climbing the two smaller waterfalls and having a good look at the 30 footer, musing on climbing and abseiling it .

From here we exited the cave rapidly and pretty well uneventfully after spending only about 6 or so hours in this excellent cave.

After a good nights sleep we headed back to Grand Canyon, this time prepared for the waterfall not to be frozen. Only Scott and I attempted this feat as Jim wanted to do some photography. We became semi-famous in doing this as tourists were totally amazed at our antics. The trip

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wasn't too slow, it only took 3 hours, including taking photos.

A nice easy weekend.

## Yarrangobilly, October 1,2,3 1994

Robert Wray

**Members Present:** Robert Wray (TL), Jason and Brett Moule, Murray and Catherine Dawes, Phil Fleming, Marie Horvath and Christopher.

**Visitors:** Grant Moule, Brendan Brooke, José and Manuella Abrantes, Edward Wray, Nichole Ritchie, Greg Carroll.

The usual exodus to Yarrangobilly from Sydney on Friday night was accomplished without incident with Phil, Marie and 3 week old Christopher (an HCG record) arriving around 9pm, Brett and Robert about 11.30 and Murray and Catherine shortly afterwards. Although the weather was clear, snow had fallen in the previous few days and the temperature was rather cool.

Saturday morning dawned bright and sunny as Brett, Murray and Robert proceeded down to see Nick at the Rangers Office. We showed Nick the progress of the North Deep Creek, Y7, survey and collected the necessary keys. We were informed of recent developments at Leak in the Creek and asked to have a look. We also arranged to go caving after dinner that evening.

Upon returning to the Cottage Murray, Brett and Robert set out for North Deep Creek to conduct a magnetic surface traverse between all the entrances of the Y7-Y58-Y48-Y49-Y68 system. This was completed in only a few hours with a less than 0.5% closure error for a 350m Suunto and tape traverse. The relationship of all the entrances is now established in 3D space, lunch was had and West Deep Creek visited where

various ice formation was noted in the upper entrances.

The traverse was then commenced from the Y7 tag down through the entrance rockpile. Whilst no snow was lying around the cave, the condition of the grass showed that a significant cover had only recently melted. Needless to say the cave was COLD, ice stalactites hung from the roof of the entrance chamber, and the air temperature near the entrance estimated at less than 5°C.

Numerous layers of fibre-pile clothing resisted the cold, but the slow progress did little to reduce the chilling effects of the cold air. A halt was called after only a few hours.

Jason and Grant walked to Leak in the Creek and reported very little inflow. The cave has undergone much recent enlargement with several metres of passage visible to a gravel floor. Unfortunately the cave was not pushed at this time. Much slumping of the hill side above the Leak is also in progress.

The restoring effects of dinner were eagerly welcomed back at Cotterill's. By this time Jason and Grant, Brendan, José and Manuella had arrived. Needless to say Jason was eager to go caving, and so when Nick and a few of the other Guides arrived we headed off to Bath House Cave, Y8.

Nick pointed out the Discovery Squeeze giving access to the upper levels, so through we went. Whilst not a tight or difficult squeeze it did pose a few interesting problems for the larger, less experienced, members of the group. This series of passage formed in a similar manner to many of the upper level sequences since abandoned by capture into lower conduits in the area (Old Inn, Innstable, East Deep Creek). Jason pushed the Wiggle Woggle Squeeze into the furthest reaches of this level, and is probably only the third person ever to have visited the end of the cave (Nick *pers. com*). The rest played in the excellent active stream stopping at the 5m pitch, except Murray who downclimbed this.

Sunday morning was raining. The river had risen and Leak in the Creek was a raging torrent. So much water was entering the cave that all thoughts of pushing were abandoned. There is a definite clear throughflow in excess of 30 l/sec within this Cave, and as substantial opening has occurred in recent times a close watch should be kept.

Robert, Brett and Jason returned to Y7 whilst the others went to Kiandra to play in the snow.

The air temperature close to the entrance in Y7 had risen significantly due to the rain, and the survey was linked in to that completed at Easter. Further abandoned stream passage was explored under the entrance rockpile, and the re-appearance of the current stream at the end of the tight abandoned stream canyon upstream of Station 4/40 near the Roo Holes surveyed. This streamway is impassable.

Y48, the current sink was too wet to explore, but Y49 was investigated by Robert downstream to close to Y7. These caves will be linked to the main survey, but are quite unstable in places. The temperature of the water and the rain put paid to all thoughts of surveying through the Duck Unders and into the January Series on this trip. Another project for January.

Sunday afternoon Edward, Nick and Greg arrived. On Monday morning Brett and Grant left for home whilst everybody else went into the East Deep Creek middle levels to admire the formations.

By Tuesday morning the water level in Leak in the Creek had dropped a metre or so, but still not sufficiently to provide access.

Jason and Robert drove home via Wee Jasper.

## Watta Canyon - The Final Assault

Brett Moule

**Party:** Brett Moule (TL), Jason Moule, Michael Playford (MUCG).

**Visitor:** F.A. Duck (or "Duckie", as he prefers).

08 00, 12th day of November, 1994, 3 commando's and 1 green recruit (er, yellow actually) commenced the final attack on a little known canyon south of Robertson.

Why? Several days before I had received one of the usual 'phone calls, you know the ones; "Your mission, should you choose to accept it, will be to rendezvous at the vehicle parking area at Grid Reference 849 661 (Robertson, 1:25 000, 9028-4-N), more commonly known as the Nellies Glen car park at Carrington Falls. From here you will proceed to the start of the canyon (found by Brett, Ed.) along a little used fire trail upon a bearing of 273° 12' 15" to 829 667. Upon reaching this point you will change into wet-suits, if necessary, and enter the water via a two metre jump. From this you will wade, stagger, and swim downstream for an estimated 30-45 minutes until you encounter a 50m long pool that appears to disappear over an edge..... This message will self destruct in five seconds....."

It was a wrong number, but it sounded fun.... So why not?

It sounded easy, right? WRONG. Well, its not really hard, it was just a long day. Let me set the scene a little more. I had been doing some exploring on the 18th of March this year and found a nice little canyon, but was stopped by a waterfall. Jason and I returned four weeks later and were again stopped by another waterfall, a really big one. So there it stayed all of winter.

WAIT, don't start reading the next article yet, there is still a lot more to tell and

heaps to learn from this one yet, so keep reading!

We set out from the parking area around 8.00 am with 230m of rope, bolting kit, wetsuits, and other paraphernalia. After returning for the Bloody video camera and the map we were really on our way by 9am. Proceeding along the fire-trail westward for 2km only occasionally getting geographically embarrassed (well, the map isn't right) we eventually arrived at Dharowal Creek.

After ooh'ing and ahh'ing at the small waterfall and swimming hole upstream of the canyon we headed downstream for about 100m to where the required stop for wetsuits was reached. In summer a wetsuit shouldn't be needed.

This was an opportune moment for Duckie to get released for a relaxing swim and some fresh air. Whilst changing, we noticed the level of the water was about a metre lower than the last time we had been here.

The two metre jump at the start of the canyon is into deep water, followed by a short swim. From here it is pretty straight forward canyoning with a few short swims for 1/2 to 3/4 of an hour. In this section Duckie was let loose and revelled in the conditions, floating downstream over little cascades, riding the rapids, and generally just bobbing around!

A long deep pool was finally reached, easily recognisable by the way the water drops off the edge on the other side. Seeing as I had the first rope, I swam across and put it around the large log on the left-hand side, rappelling down this excellent 12m waterfall. Once at the bottom I pulled the rope to see if it would come down, but no, it wouldn't budge. It moved much more freely after Mick put a sling around the log. Since this was to be the first descent of the big waterfall, we took enough rope to leave this pitch rigged until we knew we could get down the big one.

Another 100m of scrambling brought us out at the top of a sun-drenched platform, surrounded by cliffs, and with a couple

of waterfalls rolling off the edge. The perfect spot for lunch.

A start was then made to rig the big waterfall. A ledge was sighted about 20m down which was big enough for 3 or 4 people, about 3m long and 2m deep. The only decent rigging point that could be used to get down to this ledge was a tree high up on the left. The start of the abseil is actually about 1/3 the way down the rope.

Jason and Mick abseiled down to the ledge, and since there wasn't anything to rig off, Jason spent a bit of time putting in a couple of bolts strategically placed for a good abseil. I stayed at the top for the moment so I could retrieve the top rope, and also because I could get a good view of the pitch to see if the ropes reached the ground before they started the second descent. You wouldn't want to use ropes shorter than 60m!

Off Jason went with his video camera running, yelling out something about getting wet. Once at the bottom he checked the ropes to see if they would pull easily. That was my cue to race back and retrieve the rope back at the first waterfall, and then abseil down to Mick who was just starting off the ledge. Well, you should have heard the racket, it was obvious that Mick was enjoying himself. Then it was my turn. The first 10m is against the face, but the next 50 is free hang, about 5-10m to the true left of the waterfall. On a windy day, like that day, you get a good soaking from the heavy spray. (Probably quite damp at normal water levels then, Ed.). Excellent, a real ripper of an abseil.

The rocks at the bottom are EXTREMELY slippery. Then follows another 10m abseil immediately after the big one, so we used some trees on the left.

Expecting that this was the last abseil, we packed up and continued rock hopping and scrambling downstream for a couple of hundred metres, until, you guessed it, another 15m abseil. There is a conveniently placed tree on the right, or on the far left. This was the last abseil, so again we packed the ropes away and

continued bouldering downstream, passing some pretty cascades until the creek joins the much larger Kangaroo Valley. Duckie was again revealed from the pack going for another quick swim.

From here we headed upstream rock hoping through house-sized boulders. Quite fun at times, and frustrating at others. There were lots of places to cool off in deep, clear, waterholes, and in places quartz crystals and petrified wood.

After an hour or more we reached an impressive waterfall about 10-15m high. 100 or so metres upstream from here, is a gum-tree on the right with a couple of reflective markers on it. This is the exit track up a very, very, small gully to a vertical crack. Climbing up through the crack, and following the track led to the tourist lookouts at Carrington Falls.

For the trip, if you have a small group (max 3-4 persons) 2 60m ropes are needed, but anymore people and its advisable to take an extra 50-60m rope to get down to the ledge. Also take cowstails for the ledge. In summer, thermals should keep you warm enough, but in other seasons you definitely need a wetsuit. The trip takes all day, so leave early, and the track out of the Carrington Falls valley is hard to find. Have Fun!

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## JAVA '94

Brett Moule

My camera was securely mounted to my newly acquired mini-tripod, its shutter was open and had been so for several minutes. There could've been no-one around me for hundreds of kilometres, but no, Mick, Jason, and Mark were surveying only a couple hundred metres upstream, probably near a formation we were to later call the "weeping virgin". I was taking a photo of the first gour dam/waterfall: although only 30-40 metres into this incredible cave, it was quite spectacular. Already I had fired off

several flashes and was stumbling around in the dark with my carbide flame extinguished so as not to leave any light trails. I fired half a dozen more flashes to illuminate the 2m waterfall to the correct exposure and returned to my camera that was silhouetted by the entrance light and released the clamp that held the shutter open.

I reached up and turned the piezo-electric starter and heard the characteristic 'Kaboom' of my carbide lamp igniting, and thought, "there's nothing like the smell of carbide in the morning!". Leaving my Nikonos camera screwed on to the tripod, I picked it up and waded upstream, thankful that I was using carbide rather than electric. Recognising another photo opportunity, I set the camera up on a rock, and lined it up. The surveying party were in sight at the end of the passage before it turned the corner. Realising this, I stopped down one F-Stop on the Nikonos so as not to over-expose them. Off I went with flashgun in hand, 5, 10, 15, 20 flashes! That should be enough, now to find my way back in the dark to my camera that's 50 metres downstream on my right, somewhere!!

I estimated I was halfway back to where I left the camera because I was no longer wading waist deep in water but was walking along the top of a maze of rimstone pools, when, whoops, I slipped, stumbled and hit the fire button on the flash, which was pointed towards me, blinded myself and then fell into a deep rimstone pool! Now I was disorientated and had no chance of finding the way back to my camera without switching a light on. I turned my mini-mag light on knowing that this would leave a light trail on the photo.

After collecting my camera, I headed upstream to capture some action shots of the survey party strutting their stuff. 3-4 shots later tragedy: I accidentally drop the cable release (actually a big alligator clamp), preventing me from taking any more time exposure shots. After packing the camera gear away I grabbed a drink of water from my pack and sat down in the water. The heat in this cave is just incredible. We tried to stay in the water as much as possible to avoid

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hyperthermia. Upon reaching a comfortable body temperature, I asked the survey team if they needed a hand.

"No, just go ahead and have some fun, explore around a bit and come back in an hour or so!", was the reply from Mick.

"Excellent", I thought to myself as I swung my pack on my back, and trudged upstream, exploring this totally awesome cave known to the locals as Gua Umbultuk. As I was walking along I thought of the chain of events that led me here.....

It all started one HCG meeting back in February when Robert Wray mentioned that Pat Larkin and Derek Hobbs were organising a trip to Waitomo, New Zealand at Easter. I had been to Waitomo 2 years earlier and was keen to return, so I rang up Derek to find out some details.

"No, there's no trip being organised there, but there is an expedition to Java in July run by Ann-Marie Meredith if you're interested?"

"What are the caves like?", I quizzed Derek.

"I don't know, no one has been to where we're going yet".

"What the hell, sounds like fun".

Derek's response was his trademark laugh, followed by about an hour conversation about his recent China expedition, including topics like, deaths in caves, eating delicacies like turtles, dogs, ducks tongues, about huge amounts of fireworks they bought, and of course the dreaded rice wine.

The next thing I knew, I was sitting in first class on a plane doing laps of Bali, before landing at Denpasar airport. The first thing I noticed was the heat, like wow, this is hot. After 10 minutes of trying to explain to a customs officer what a carbide container actually is, we all made it to the hotel. At last the gathering.... All expedition members gathered in the same place at the same time.

Ann-Marie Meredith - BFL (Bloody Fearless Leader).

Mark Sefton - Gentleman Caver.

Lucinda Coates - Expedition Masseur.

Brett Moule - International Caver, Caver of Fortune.

Jason Moule - Mad-dog Caver.

Michael Playford - Mover of Mountains.

Derek Hobbs - Queen of the Cavers (certainly not the Fairies -Ed.).

We spent a day in Kuta, Bali, before embarking on an overnight express bus trip to Blitar, our destination in Java. After unpacking our gear into the hotel, we split into two groups to buy the essentials; 60kg of carbide rock, 180 litres of water, 110v-240v transformer for the laptop computer and for recharging batteries for the video camera and 100watt video light, and a lot of strange food. Just the usual stuff.

Exploring Gua Umbultuk, (*gua* meaning cave in Indonesian), I took the whole atmosphere in, the adventure in knowing that I am probably the first white person exploring this passage that contains huge formations that reach from the ground to the roof. The cave was covered in formation. As I continued my journey upstream, more totally pristine formations, flowstone, gour dams, rimstone pools, mud. Mud! there wasn't supposed to be mud in here, but there was and it was up to my knees. There was a junction in the streamway too. I had two choices, I could take the left branch, which is where the mud was coming from, or I could take the pristine right passage.

After 300 - 400 metres of exploring the right hand passage, I decided to head back and find the others. When I found them, I helped survey to the junction. I told them that the right hand branch is probably the main passage, and the left a side branch. We munched on some strange Javanese snack, had a drink of water and decided to explore the left hand branch. After 30 metres of swimming we came to a flowstone choke. The roof came down to meet the water. I was in the lead and searched for a way through. I found a triangular airspace just big



enough for a nose and one eyeball to fit through. I took my helmet off to shine my carbide flame through the hole and to my disgust saw what looked to be a dead cow floating on the other side. I swung my feet through the water and kicked it out of the way, turned my electric light on, took a breath and went through. Upon reaching the other side I quickly had another look at the dead cow, but to my relief it turned out only to be a pile of rotten coconuts, logs and other debris.

I told Mark, who was waiting on the other side to wait there to see if this passage was worth surveying. Turning around, I swam across the pool pushing numerous rotting coconuts out of the way and climbed out over a pile of mud and dead logs, rounded the corner and discovered a passage the same size as the main one disappearing off into the distance. I returned to the flowstone choke and told the others to come through and bring the survey gear. At this stage we had already surveyed about 1 kilometre of passage, so for a break from surveying we decided to survey this passage on the way back out.

This passage was just as spectacular and pristine as the main passage and it didn't take long to travel a couple hundred metres to where the passage size dropped to about 3 metres wide and the mud got deeper and deeper. As we slushed through the mud the cave became less and less inviting. The mud, which by this time was up to our crutch, had the consistency of sewerage (and smelt like it), and as we walked, or slogged along, methane bubbles were released and on their quest to reach the surface of the water, and that was up around our necks, caressed our legs and various other parts of our anatomy!! As this was going on there were strange little bugs swimming around nibbling on our skin, and rotten coconuts floating around at eye level along with other materials that I can only hope were sticks. To help move along the passage we used our hands to grip the roof that was 2 foot above the water and propel ourselves along. Great fun!! Who knew what diseases were in the water and mud, seeping into our freshly acquired cuts and gashes on our shins caused by ultra sharp limestone rocks

hidden below the surface of the water. It didn't take much imagination to call this passage the "Cholera Infestine".

After 60-70 metres into the Cholera Infestine we reached a small chamber off to the side, and from here on the floor depth deepened and we could no longer walk, or touch the roof, and basically the conditions got worse. We surveyed the 400 metres back out of the left hand branch.

From the junction it took slightly over an hour to return to the entrance. We met the other expeditioners at the van who had been surface trogging trying to find more caves. We changed into some dry clothes, packed our caving gear into the van and drove to the local village where a hot meal was prepared for us. As we ate our rice beside the road, it was a strange feeling to be watched by 15 or so locals. This reminded me of the other village we visited this morning where we were the first white people ever to enter the village.

This feed was also quite different to last nights meal at the Ramayana restaurant where we dined on delicacies like sweet and sour fish, frogs legs, and my favourite, fried pigeons, heads and all!!

The second day of caving saw two groups enter Umbultuk; one to survey the right hand passage, and the other group was prepared for serious photography. Derek, Mick, and Ann-Marie managed to survey a further 600 metres of passage until the IRS. Not to be confused with the Internal Revenue Service, but the Infinite Roof Sniff. This was a roof sniff where the passage flattened out to 5m wide, with a flat roof, a gravel floor, and only 3 inches of airspace for 120 metres. But then it opens out with about a foot of airspace for a further 60 metres. The first part was quite fun as we could only get our noses and one and half eyes out of the water. As well as this the roof wasn't perfectly smooth, there were stalactites and bumpy bits. A smooth progression was needed so as not to cause any waves as these would cause water to be forced up your nose, causing you to cough, hitting your head on a small stal on the

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roof, taking in a mouthful of water, and half drowning yourself!

The other group, consisting of professional photographers Lucinda, Mark and I, along with movie-maker Jason, endured an epic 9 hour photo trip. In our packs, we took 4-5 cameras, a spare lens or two, 2 flash bulb reflectors, 140 flashbulbs, 3 flashguns, a couple of flash slave units, 4 tripods, a video camera, a big 100w video light, and a partridge in a pear tree. We photo documented the cave as far the junction where we packed the cameras away and introduced the video to the cave and filmed on the way out.

The video work wasn't as easy then as it is now for Jason: he couldn't get hold of a waterproof housing for his camera, so he made one up the night before we flew out.

The next day, Derek, Jason, Lucinda and I explored and surveyed above the IRS in hope of finding another entrance. After the roof sniff the cave develops a into maze of upper level mud passages, so we decided to explore first and survey later. The size of the passage decreased to a muddy crawl and while we were in the smallest section, Lucinda, whilst in the lead, found a friend - a 2 foot long black snake, wriggling away from us! It's not everyday you meet a snake almost 2 kilometres from the entrance, so we figured out that we must have been fairly close to a top entrance. The passage soon found the streamway again, leaving the four of us covered in mud and sweating like pigs. This was a hot cave out of the water. But, there waiting for us was a crystal clear pool just big enough for 4 people.

After cooling down we left the so called "Bathing Pool", now dirty, and climbed the dry 2 metre waterfall that would flow into it to find that 300 metres upstream was an upper entrance, Yippee! We emerged at the side of a paddy field, and not knowing where we were, dumped our caving gear and tried to find a landmark. We wandered across the field and were welcomed into a little village. Luckily we met a university student from Malang who could speak a little English

and so he offered us some traditional Javanese coffee - strong, black and chunky. We left the little village of Krajan and went back down our hole.

On our journey back we surveyed and joked that there was more wildlife in the caves then what there was outside. The theory behind this was that the locals had already eaten everything living above ground. Some of the wildlife we saw underground were; bats, cockroaches, shrimps, yabbies, eels, spiders, snakes, little biting things, frogs, crickets, crabs, fish, and of course Javanese locals.

The next day we split into two groups again. Jason, Mick, and Lucinda went to survey though the IRS and finish off the mud passages, while Mark and I were shown another entrance which we presumed joined onto the left hand branch. This was a rather large entrance with a lot of mud and debris that was not too dissimilar to the mud in the Cholera Infestine. 100 metres down the cave was a large log and mud choke that narrowed the passage down to about one foot by one foot before opening back out again. It was about this point that we realised that the three locals that had followed us in intended to continue through, although only one of them had a torch that was shining about 1 glowworm power, and they were wearing only shorts and thongs.

Several hundred metres downstream the passage was of equivalent conditions to those at the end of the Cholera Infestine. Since we were upstream of it, we named this part the "Upper Infestine". The passage was even more unpleasant than what we had already been in, but we persisted on and made the connection. Upon reaching the junction, we sent the locals downstream, while Mark and I travelled upstream to meet the others. They were just about finished surveying and Jason told us about a side stream halfway through the IRS that we could survey. We obliged and started surveying up a horrible 2 metre wide, half metre high gravel passage. The gravel changed to mud, and the mud got deeper, and the roof lower. Great!



At last we surveyed through to a chamber 3 metres round and 1 metre high known to us affectionately as the "Orgy Room". By this time Jason, Mick, and Lucinda had already overtaken us and were waiting in the Orgy Room. Jason had already started crawling up the next passage - "Sh\_t A Brick Passage". This was named as we thought that the passage was more painful than the one we had just come through, which we had named "Fu\_k A Duck Passage". You see, it would be more painful to sh\_t a brick than it would be to .....

When Jason came back he told us that after 100 metres the passage opened back out to a big stream passage again, one that we had previously discovered the day before. After a quick chat we all set out for the entrance at our own pace - a very pleasant experience. Gua Umbultuk now had a surveyed length of approximately 4 kilometres.

After a day of sight seeing we decided to check out a cave that was approximately 3 hours drive to the east. It was known as Gua Tetes. When we looked north on arrival a triangular shaped mountain towered above - Mt Semaru, Java's highest mountain at 3767 metres. We left the car and walked down the path, dodging coconuts and branches being dropped from above. After a short walk a huge gorge was revealed before us, 100 metres wide, 1 kilometre long, 100metres deep. At the north end there was a huge waterfall pouring out of a crack 30 metres down from the top. All the way around on the eastern wall, water was seeping out, some places in dribs and drabs, others in full blown waterfalls. At the bottom, a river made its way to the southern end, picking up momentum from the side waterfalls before disappearing into a hole in the far corner. This was reminiscent of the video of Atea Kananda in Papua New Guinea. I had visions of finding raging torrents as were in Mangawhitikou at Waitomo!!

We continued down the skinny path, across a bamboo bridge that was somehow impossibly stuck onto the cliff to a set of waterfalls halfway down the gorge. At a quick glance a set of huge flowstone and gour dams seemed to

cascade down towards the bottom. An area of water 150 metres wide and 60 metres deep appeared from caves in the cliff. We split into three groups; Jason and I to check out the waterfall on the north end, Mick and Derek the lower sink, and Mark, Lucinda and Ann-Marie to check out the caves we were at now.

Mick, Derek, Jason and I headed down the cascades. We continued down until a 20 metre overhanging cliff stopped us. Having no ropes we decided to retreat and head off to our respective targets along the top. Coming back up we noticed that the flowstone was actually tufa and not calcite.

Unfortunately, not a single cave was found by any of us. Upon regrouping at the car 3 hours later it was agreed that this was not a limestone area, and the water was seeping out through layers of volcanic rock from a previous explosion of one of the volcanoes only 100 kilometres or so north of us. The water wasn't sinking at the bottom either, it just did a very sharp bend, giving the illusion of a cave.

We then found a new caving area west of Blitar, at a place called Watulimo. There was no actual village there so camp was made at Prigi, a small fishing village on the south coast, a little more than half hours drive from the caves.

At the Watulimo limestone one tourist cave was known and several other smaller caves had been named. A surface reconnaissance was done with 3 groups on the first day, and pretty soon an impressive number of caves were found. The next two weeks were spent surface trogging the limestone, documenting entrances and exploring/surveying the caves that lay below. A number of caves were found; both vertical (yes, we did get to use all our ropes), horizontal stream passage, and higher level dry passages. The limestone was very sharp in the vertical pits and usually very loose.

We surveyed the tourist cave first, Gua Lowo, (bat cave translated to English). This had an impressive entrance, 20 metres wide, 15 metres high with a flat floor. Some large scale old formation

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covered the walls and a small stream worked its way through the cave. It was hard work surveying the cave, we had to navigate the concrete path, cross the dangerous bamboo bridge, climb steps cut into flowstone, and be careful to stay on the right side of the fence.

About 500 metres into the cave we were surprised to see a daylight hole in the roof some 80 metres above us. The passage here was still very big, but it soon closed down to only about 5 metres wide and splitting into 2 main branches before splitting into lots of small streams. Exploration was stopped by a series of sumps again, so we all exited the cave, after surveying approximately 1 kilometre of passage.

Codot cave was the first inflow cave surveyed in the area, being fed from the currently dry river bed. One can imagine the amount of water flowing down here in the wet season. Codot cave, having the added bonus of being one of the local toilets, sumped out after 230 metres of passage and was surveyed by Derek, Mick and Lucinda.

Over the ridge, heading in the same direction as Codot cave, a small valley of caves were found, the first one being an outflow cave 400 metres long with a chamber 100 metres long, 35 metres wide and 15 metres high. Downstream from here is where a water-hole we named 'The Oasis' is to be found. A beautiful pool of water 15 metres round with that perfect limestone blue/green water colour, just downstream from an very scenic arch. This pool must have had a magnetic force because we always seemed to end up there after a long day of caving, wherever we were.

Another great cave that we found was Surapan cave. This was found a couple kilometres walk from the car-park. Inside was a couple streamways, very nice ones as well, a fair bit of formation in places and in other places heaps of mud. The streams were great - they were Mick size streamways, ie. big enough for Mick to run through with out hitting his head!! Progress was again stopped by sumps, a common cause over there, so in despair, Mick tried diving one. After 4 attempts he

decided that getting a hand through into an airspace and feeling sticks and logs was good enough for him. 2 kilometres of surveyed passage was a pretty good effort I thought.

Some of the local Kids told us about a cave just near the tourist cave that was rumoured to be "Just as big as Gua Lowo, but not quite as long". Great we thought, so Jason and I climbed on down to the delight of the half a dozen locals standing around. Once we got down we weren't confronted by a nice clean streamway, but a muddy, grotty little hole. Being disappointed at this we named it FUMP cave. This was the sound the mud made when you threw it at the walls. Oh, that's right, it also stood for fu\_king ugly mud pit.

Several vertical pits were found too - 70 metres deep, 40 metres deep, 45 metres deep, 60 metres deep, all un-named but bottomed by me. The two Major vertical caves were Birthday Pot, 100 metres deep, and Stew Pot, 80 metres deep. Birthday pot was found on Micks birthday (hence the name), and had a nice 55 metre entrance pitch, all free hanging with one re-belay. This was followed by a short rocky slope and then the dreaded Pooky Squeeze. This was a tapered small, tight, vertical squeeze, with the rope hanging down the skinniest part. It was fine to abseil down, you just sort of push out and slide through, but prusiking out was a different story. You see, the squeeze popped out in the roof, so there were no walls around, secondly the rope hung down the skinniest part so you had to push out against the rope to fit through the squeeze. Thirdly, the limestone was really, really, really sharp, and since we were only wearing shorts and tee-shirts, any movements had to be made very carefully. Fourthly, there wasn't any room to move your ascenders so you had to jam yourself in as you climbed. Fifthly, it was painful, Micks back was shredded after he had been through, enough to make anyone cringe at the sight of it.

After the Pooky squeeze, there were another couple of pitches and the cave just sort of stopped. Jason and I played

around in there for a while but couldn't find any leads.

Stew Pot was an extremely hot and humid cave that basically did the same as the rest of the pits, go straight down and then stop!

One Sunday it was decided that we take a boat ride around the harbour and around the headland in the search of sea caves and basically a good time. So we hired a small traditional Javanese fishing boat out for the day for a bargain price. Lots of small sea caves were found and a heap of blow holes that we tried to coax Jason into checking out, but he wouldn't be in it. We saw heaps of little native monkeys and birds on the trip and on this boat trip is I had my first piece of Jackfruit, the nicest fruit in the world. It's sort of got a tangy taste to it and it's real nice!! After a couple hours touring around we stopped into a secluded beach. There were coconut and banana trees, fresh water streams, natural spa baths and a waterfall where Derek had a really good wash. It was just paradise. On the return journey we saw a giant turtle and a miniature fishing boat returning from sea, and I thought the one we were on was pretty small.

There were a couple days where we just sort of walked around in circles following guides, or not following guides, trying, unsuccessfully, to find caves and/or new caving areas. One instance we drove for about 2 hours before going for a little walk where Lucinda was led by some locals to some new caves. She was surprised to see that at the entrance of one of the deep pits was a caving bag, Jasons! He was down doing Stew Pot. Derek and I were led around and shown a couple more caves called Surapan that would have almost been surveying if we had more time. Some of these days we affectionately called wafwot days (ask me what it means).

Lucinda and I walked around a bit and found numerous little stream caves but none of them really went any great distance. Lots of caves were found by everyone, not all of them were surveyed but all were documented. I think in this

area we got a total of about 4 kilometres surveyed, not including caves just documented.

On the last day of caving, Ann-Marie and Mark went to check out some caves they found earlier while Mick and Jason went back to Umbultuk to finish off a little bit of surveying. Derek, Lucinda and I were left the fun job of washing the ropes. All three hundred metres worth. This was achieved by leaving the ropes soak in the mandi before slowly washing them in a bucket of water. One person would hold a brush on top of the rope pinning it to the floor of the bucket. The other person would run the rope back and forth vigorously until the rope was clean, then turn it over and do the same. Best results were achieved doing about a foot at a time! After the ropes were washed they had to be hung up to dry. This was done in the local picnic shelter. It was quite a sight to see three hundred metres of rope hanging up in a shelter 3 metres wide by 5 metres long.

With all leads tied up, we packed up the caving gear and headed back to Bali. This was done in several stages, one day to Blitar, then another day to Mt Bromo. This is an active volcano that we all agreed would be great to visit. The popular tourist thing to do here is to watch the sunrise, so we got up at 2.00am after only 3 hours of sleep to catch the express short wheelbase Landcruiser up to the look-out. Mt Bromo is 2400 metres high and we were a couple hundred metres higher than that. After spending most of the time in shorts and tee-shirts, being up here at 3.00am felt pretty bloody cold. The actual sunrise wasn't that spectacular but when the sun started to give light over the volcano, it was breathtaking. A scene you could easily associate with pre-historic times. The scene was spectacular. A smoking volcano rising up from a river of mist that really looked magic.

Next on the agenda was a ride across the 'sea of black sand' on a donkey to get to the base of Mt Bromo. After climbing the 250-300 odd steps to the top of the volcano one was awe struck at the sight. A rumbling sound was constantly heard bellowing out of the centre, along with

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billowing plumes of white smoke and small yellow plumes of sulphur. It was quite eerie. We walked around the entire lip of the volcano admiring the sights of the surrounding country side and other volcanoes, including Mt Semaru. After the donkey ride back to the cafe where they start from, Lucinda, Jason and I decided to walk down a back road to the hotel rather than the main road. We reached a small village and heard music bellowing out of one of the halls. Our curiosity got the better of us and so we headed on in. We were welcomed in and were quickly given beer and lots of other strange food and snacks, some tasting rather nice, some horrible. We were surrounded by several men and when we tried find out what was going on they tried to explain by sign language and a little bit of English. We finally got the message that we were at a circumcision ceremony. After the ceremony the poor little kid had to ride the three kilometres to Mt Bromo and back on a donkey after the big snip! After spending a couple hours there watching dancers, we walked back to the hotel.

We had tea and were booked on a bus to go back to Bali that night at 10pm. When the bus turned up it was a bit smaller than what we had expected, but we packed it anyway. It turned out that we wouldn't fit so we unpacked and waited for the next bus. Everything only just fitted onto that bus and we headed off. We made it to the ferry and were waiting there to get loaded on. I fell asleep on the sidewalk and when I woke up the van was nowhere to be seen. I searched the multitude of buses and found the one we came on, but it was empty. I didn't know what to do, the bus was empty, and no other white person was in sight. I walked down between the buses looking inside and to my surprise saw a heap of white faces inside a strange bus. I jumped on and asked what was going on. Just a change of buses. A few hours later, we made it across the ferry and after 10 minutes of driving we stopped. We found out that we had to change buses again! We eventually made it into Kuta at about 10.30am, a real bus trip from hell, and a total of 4 bus changes in one night.

By this stage we had had only 3 hours sleep since 2 days before and we were pretty tired. Everyone went to sleep except Mick and I who went for a surf at the beach.

After spending a day in Kuta we flew home feeling accomplished and content on spending a month in the tropics caving, surveying about 8 kilometres of cave. Tropical caving is really fun as you don't get cold and you can swim in the water as much you like. You only have to wear shorts and tee-shirts and your packs are usually a lot lighter. This was a great trip, thanks need to go to Ann-Marie for doing such a good job of organising it.

So, if you're thinking about going on a caving expedition, think about the following facts: do you want to come out of the cave and have fresh coconuts and bananas etc?; do you like caving in tee-shirts and shorts?; do you like a cheap holiday?; do you like big stream passage?; do you like laying around in the sun? Than consider an expedition to the tropics.

SERAM is an island west of Papua New Guinea and has mountains 3 kilometres high. The island is made of limestone and has great potential. I am thinking about a trip there in 1997, anyone interested? Think about it.

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**Yarrangobilly,  
26-29th January, 1995**

Robert Wray

Once again the long night time drive from Sydney to Yarrangobilly, but this time with a twist; the Cottage was full of very irate contract road workers. I had talked to Nick Mayo, the Ranger, on the previous Monday morning and he had made no mention of this.

Phil, Marie and the baby fortunately managed to get a room, but most of us

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were forced to camp on the verandah, having no other place to go. This was difficult and very uncomfortable as it was cool and raining for much of the time.

Work-wise, we ran several trips into Y.7, North Deep Creek, managing to survey through the sumps to the start of the January Series. Wall detail was also checked down through the Entrance Rockpile, and down the main streamway to the Duckunders.

All that remains of the known cave is to check the detail of the left-hand tributary, and the upper January Series. More rockpile is continuing to be found above contemporary stream level, and this will also have to be surveyed.

A trip was also made in to West and East Eagles Nest, but the connection from West to East could not be located in the rockpile near the Y.1 entrance.

### **Tumbarumba 27-30th April 1995**

Evalt Crabb

One of the purposes of this trip was to follow up on the information that at on a particular site on a creek, the flow rate was 5 cusecs - and the source of the water was underground.

An inspection was made of Mannus Lake (about 6 km south of Tumbarumba township). It is a man-made pondage some eleven kilometres long by up to one kilometre wide. There was considerable volume of water in the lake despite the severe drought.

The catchment area of Mannus Lake is about 400 square kilometres, most of it an igneous base (granodiorite?) with sedimentaries forming the steeply eroded mountain sides to the north and north-west. There are smaller uplands to the west. Total relief is about 300 metres.

The Hume and Hovell track, with side branches, provided interesting walking to the north. Here it was noted that there was considerable diffuse resurgence of groundwater, causing prolific moss and fern growth despite the drought. The lake was also explored by canoe, but stream action other than at the foot of the gutter erosion was not detected anywhere. Nor was there a hint of tufa.

The conclusion reached was that the 5 cusecs flow quoted was the throughput when the mini hydro-electric turbine was activated, but this could not be sustained indefinitely. It has been since learned that following recent rainfall the turbine has been operating twenty-four hours a day and the water is spilling over the top of the dam wall.

As the catchment area is divided almost equally between plateau, slope and valley, it is suggested that there is an aquifer effect in the slate, shale and mudstones which are most likely of Tertiary origin. An estimate of the length of diffuse resurgence is 100km  $\pm$  30%.

### **Murray's Cross Country Extravaganza**

Robert Wray

Present: Murray and Catherine Dawes, Robert Wray, Jason and Brett Moule, Rebecca Small, Michael Playford (MUCG)

The start of the winter ski season looked fair, the middle was outstanding, and then..... Two weeks of hot north-westerlies and most of the snow went west (or south).

Driving to Yarrangobilly via Cooma on Friday night wasn't encouraging, as not much skiable snow was seen from the road at Kiandra; but in the light of day things were a little more promising. Quite an adequate cover of very nice skiable mostly dry snow lay only a short walk from the highway.

Half an hour or so bumbling around on some of the lower slopes at Kiandra was sufficient for our intrepid first-timers (read most of the party) to begin to get the hang of moving on skis, and generally having a lot of experience falling over. Then it was off along the range toward Four Mile Hut for lunch.

The day was glorious, the snow was great, and the views were equally excellent, if you were not face-down in the snow.

Sunday also dawned fine and clear, and many being a little tired with sore muscles we found a nice wide slope at the New Chum Diggings and proceeded to improve on our telemark turns, or just any turns really.

Fantastic weather and a great time. Roll on winter.

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### Midnight Snack in Claustral

Brett Moule

**When:** Saturday 7th October, 1995.

**Who:** Brett, Jason, Rebecca and Ian.

**Why:** I don't know.

We all met at the car park, some just a tad bit late, and started at 8.30pm (that's right, night time). We had a nice stroll down the hill in the light of the full moon and struggled with wetsuits for about 1/2 an hour at the start of the canyon that some of us were sure had shrunk since last time they were used.

After jumping into the cold water, we raced down to the first abseil. Fortunately Rebecca had the good sense to say she was too cold, and the decision was made to retrace our steps after Ian and Brett descended the first abseil and they therefore climbed back up.

Decisions like this are important as canyons are dangerous places, and it

doesn't take much to get into a very dangerous situation. Canyons are always going to be there, they aren't going anywhere (except maybe down a bit, but only very, very, slowly).

A quick 2 hour snack of boiling hot tea and noodles at the start of the canyon was organised by Ian as we extracted ourselves from wetsuits.

We dodged back up the hill in a misty moonlight, and hit the sack at about 4.30am.

We revived later that morning with a cup of coffee at 8.30ish and headed for home aware of the condition that we will encounter next time, at the next ..... full moon..... (Ah Brett, have you thought about a full moon, midwinter, midnight, naked trip??? - Ed.)

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### Bungonia 4-5th November, 1995

**Members Present:** Brett, Jason, Brian Race and Boys, Ian, Oliver and Friend, Cathy and Lindsay.

Ian, Brian and the Boys explored Grill Cave on Saturday whilst Jason and Brett sumped Serpentine, Jason trying out his new Stop descender before Mexico. The sump was full as usual.

Later Jason and Brett cruised slowly through B4-5 (11mins 36 sec). Everybody then inspected B81 and looked into Bunny Room Cave (fools -Ed.) with Jason going as far as the drop into the Bunny Room itself.

On Sunday, Brian, Ian etc. walked over for a look at Dinosaur Cave whilst Jason and Brett tried to negotiate Bungonia Falls from the top without a rope! (They lived, therefore they didn't make it -Ed.)

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