

CALCITE



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Photo courtesy of Alan Pryke, SUSS

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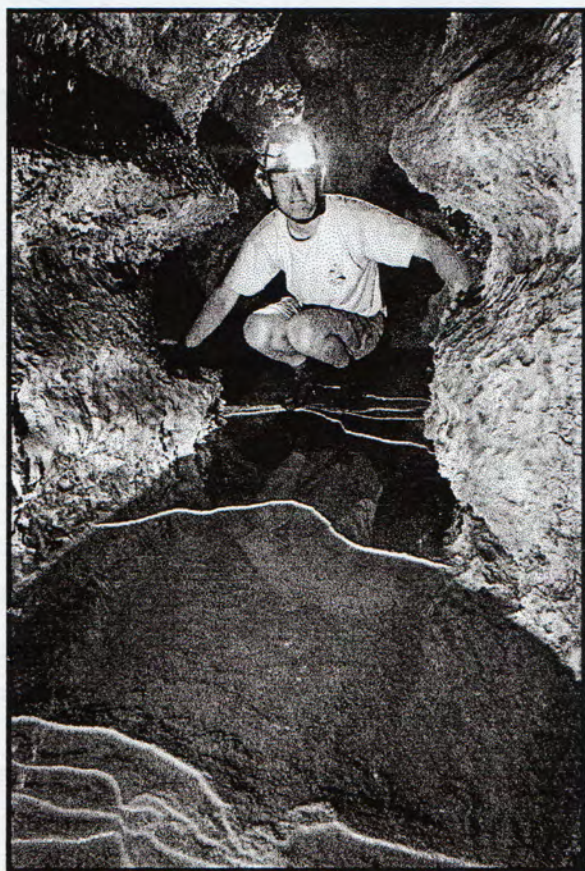
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The 2001 Yarrangobilly Trip (January 6 - January 14)

Kev Collier

A chronicle of the now famous Yagby experience, organised and led by Geoff McDonnell with representatives of SSS, SUSS, and HCG

Bathhouse: Peter and I travelled the Hume through the summer heat and mile after mile of paddock purpled by Patterson's curse. Hot and tired we arrived at Cotterill's cottage about 2.30pm.



Geoff McDonnell - Old Inn (courtesy Alan Pryke)

As we unpacked the car Geoff and Alan arrived fresh from a cave (*Old Inn*) and ready for more. Geoffrey McDonnell's main character traits are energy, effervescence and enthusiasm, regardless of how we felt about it we were headed for *Bathhouse*. So, stashing our stuff we then perused a map which showed a network of passage which looking rather narrower than would have been preferred.

A short way into the cave and my adventure ended when I couldn't fit through the first squeeze. So for me it was back to the now flooded exit and into a torrential downpour outside. But soon the sun reappeared and I managed to dry off as I waited for the others.

Some time later they returned and I was cheered by news of their failure to conquer the *Wiggle Woggle Squeeze* at *Fat Man's End*. Not even Peter Bauer could get through!

Back at Cotterill's Kate had arrived and soon Ashley and Lisa. This made us a party of seven. As a pale sun set below grey clouds we were treated to a hailstorm which, with fingers crossed, we hoped was not an omen.

Eagles Nest: Sunday morning we tackled *Eagles Nest*. We did the entire cave beginning at the upper entrance (*The Eerie*) and slowly progressed downwards. The cave was full of interesting climbs and some challenging squeezes but nothing too difficult. The ventilation was good although it must be said, a tad cold. There was a particular climb which Geoff had been a little apprehensive about but we didn't find it until three of us had free climbed it with minimal fuss.

Down a few more climbs and there was a canyon section. This led to a narrow crawl of about ten metres or so which was very appropriately named *Fuck It's Cold*. It was here that I somehow became a photographic subject (front cover) and was seduced into crawling back and forth through the frozen water until Alan had *The* shot. Just beyond was the gate to the bottom section.

This was what we had come for. A narrow pathway guided us through the pretty section of the cave taking us through some extremely beautiful passage.

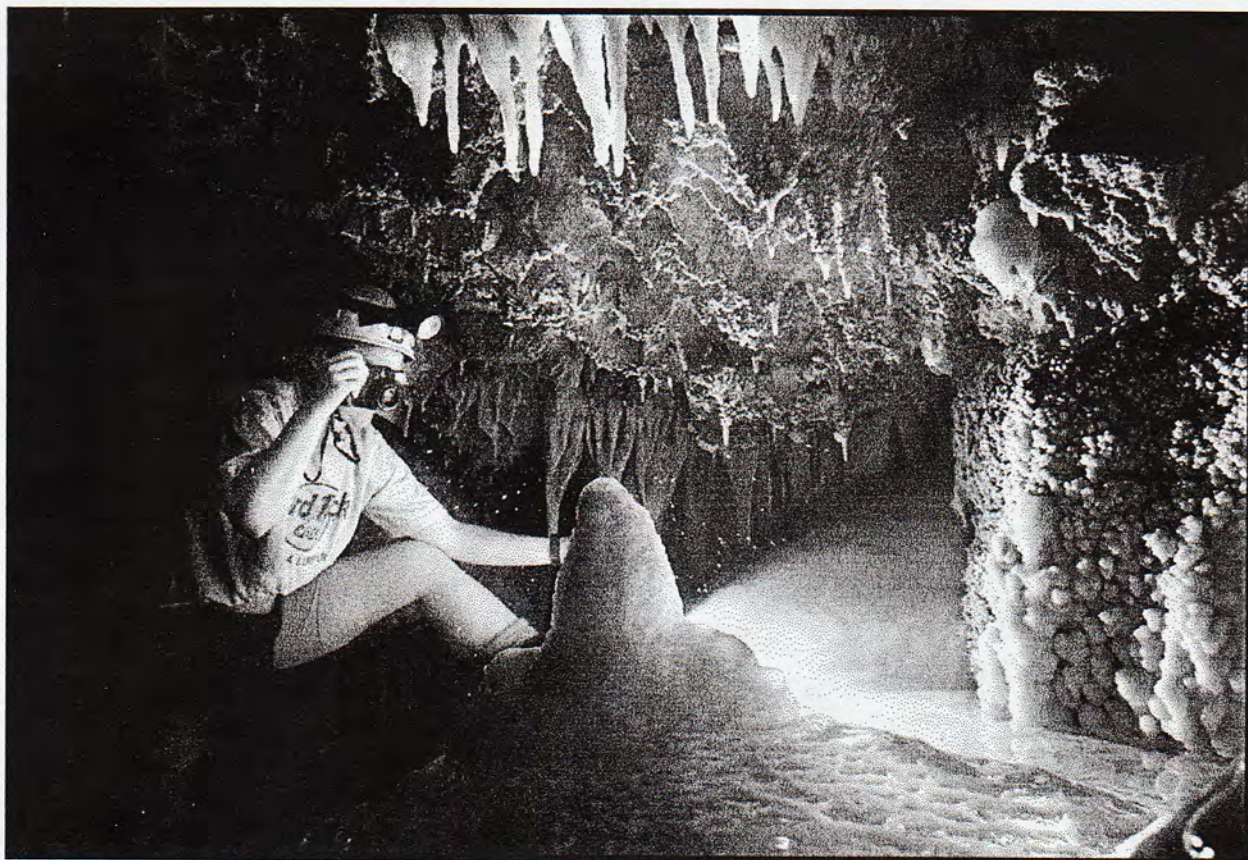
The photographers got busy here and because of the work involved we managed to overcome the cold which seemed to have descended upon us.

Outside the cave it was raining heavily. Thunder rolled and lightning flashed overhead. In a short while hailstones began to pelt down upon us. Fortunately the hailstones were small and the storm didn't last too long.

The day closed with the promise of tomorrow in the form of a spectacular sunset which we enjoyed from the verandah at Cotterill's.

East Deep Creek: Was our mission for Monday. This cave features a particularly beautiful de-trog section. There was much crammed into a small area. Crystal pools, snow-white flowstone, translucent shawls. Very pretty and very cold without overalls

Then we moved on and through a window with a slightly tricky climb came to a muddy rift. Peter, Alan and Geoff went on while Ashley, Kate and I sat in the cold dark waiting



Photography in East Deep Creek, Yarrangobilly

for them. When Peter emerged alone some 15 minutes later, we decided to leave the cave to Alan and Geoff and seek the warmth of the world of light. It really was very cold in there!

Outside the four of us sprawled on the limestone and soaked sunshine, like plasma, into our bodies. As we sat there eating and casually swatting the giant March flies a small skink kept us amused climbing across overalls and treating us with indifference. He declined offers of food and Peter suggested he was after meat. This hypothesis was realised when he decided to bite down hard on Kate's naked toe. After a startled scream (from Kate) the lizard departed seemingly satisfied.

The weather, which had been looking troublesome seemed to have cleared.

Janus: Tuesday was the day we saw *Janus Cave*. *Janus* is said to be 'as good as it gets.' There are severe restrictions on the number of permits to visit this cave and the number of persons in the group. Anybody who sees *Janus* is indeed lucky.

This is a fairly short cave with a variety of conditions, a couple of ladder climbs and a couple of tape climbs and plenty to look at throughout. There is a short climb over some interesting flowstone formations and down a

muddy rift which requires a ladder.

A little beyond this rift is a section where we had to remove our shoes and we proceed carefully along a white crystal canyon section, through a crystal pool and into a chamber the size of a football field. There are crystal pools of amazing whiteness and formations which, when lit by the last brightness of Kate's strobe, had us all blurting expletives of awe and wonder.

In search of J 201: By Wednesday there was nothing indecisive about the weather. It was just hot. With Kate, Lisa and Ashley going back to their various places of employment there were just us four blokes.

We left the relative civilisation of *Cotterill's Cottage* and headed bushward. For the next two days we were to scour the steep hills above *Natural Arch*. There were caves to be discovered and caves to be re-visited.

It was not far into the morning before Geoff discovered a cave of quite some depth which we decided would require SRT gear to attempt. We would have to return to this one the following day.

Alan had a small cave he was keen to have Geoff explore and when Geoff had crawled a short way in explained that this was *Mozzie Cave* - we waited. Soon Geoff began swearing



Kate in Eaglesnest



Eaglesnest, Yarrangobilly



Peter Bauer in Janus

and yelling alerting us to the fact that he had indeed found the mozzies. Peter had a look but managed far more decorum.

For most of the morning we searched the high sections and cliffs. In the middle of the day we crawled into *Mutt Mutt View Cave* to dine and enjoy the penthouse panorama.

Throughout the afternoon we scoured the cliff sides and the limestone outcrops for anything resembling a cave. There were one or two small caves. But one of the main purposes of our expedition was to find J201. It was said to have been somewhere near *Funnel Pot*. By late afternoon we had spotted *Funnel Pot* and the ridge over which J201 should have been situated.

The vegetation was against us. There are nettles, blackberries, lantana, rosehip. The briars tore at our hands and arms and faces, ripped clothing, lacerated legs, shins and ankles. Throughout the day the merciless sun scorched us. Tired and wounded we retired to the camp at about 6pm.

Insects also, really were something to be contended with. There were masses of smaller flies to paw all over us. Then there were the plagues of March flies. These big, beefy carnivores drove us mad for whenever we paused to consult one another and sweat poured from our bodies, these bastard flies would mercilessly tear flesh from us.

There was something quite magnificent in how these *creatures of God* could sustain blows from an angry human hand and after a quick shake of the head and grooming of the wings rise and resume their duty. Throughout the day they would take every opportunity to inflict torment upon us.

As the sun disappeared the March flies went to their places of rest. Then it was the turn of the mosquitoes. By the time we retired for the night they were in plague proportions.

In the interests of making packs lighter and taking extra food, Peter and I had decided to share a fly rather than carry a tent. As we were inundated with millions of mozzies we had time to reflect on the error of our ways. It was a very long night.

In search of J201 (Pt.II) After breakfast we made our way to *Funnel Pot* and on the way split up and searched areas not covered the previous day. *Funnel Pot* was chosen purely as an SRT exercise, the cave having no aesthetic value and for this reason plus the fact I had a slight head cold I decided to conserve energy. I would have slept in the shade had it not been for the March flies tucking into my exposed flesh.

Afterwards, we resumed our search for J201 and covered any conceivable crevice, indentation and shadow in the vicinity, but found nothing. There were several small caves worthy of tagging and these were noted. The cave Geoff had found the previous day was explored and found to be a hole of approximately 8 metres with no passages.

We concluded our days work at about mid afternoon and returned to *Cotterill's*.

Black Perry: To avoid the heat and get a start on the day, we breakfasted early and drove to the start of our days exertions. Descending to the creek I noted the steepness of the track and was not liking the idea of the return trip. From the first sight of the mountain from Talbingo I had been concerned at this severe steepness and up close I became more so. With no pack to carry the going was fairly easy and my cold was much improved. The day promised to be hot but it seemed wise to wear overalls regardless. The previous two days had been hard on the flesh and the Black Perry vegetation was legend for its toughness. The overalls did prove a good idea and by mid morning we were just below the peak of BP and throwing ourselves into the rugged bushes in search of a cave which was said to have been found there on a previous trip. Once again we did not find the cave.

Weathering cuts and scratches we kept searching for several hours before scaling the steep hill to the top, signing the visitor's book and pausing for some food beneath a small overhang on the western side of the summit. In the shade and with a gentle south wind cooling us we began to relax in earnest. It was not until about 2.30pm we started for Joanama Creek and the caves of that valley. The descent was steep, the sun hot but the south wind was cooling. With only a kilometre and a half to tread through the shady forest we imagined ourselves in for a short walk, a few caves and then a stroll back to the bottom of BP. Not So!!!

The hillside was covered with bracken ferns up to two metres high. Where there was no bracken there were plenty of hardier plants with briars, rosehip and hakia. The fallen timber was decaying and we slipped and tripped on it. Briars caught and tore at our ankles.

We found caves which were really little more than rock piles with short passages and extremely good ventilation. Peter explored further up the creek than the rest of us and found a kind of a makeshift shed with sleeping bags gas bottles and stoves. There were also pieces of

irrigation equipment found. Fortunately, the site had been abandoned long ago. The rest of us didn't go and check it out.

It was fairly late for exploring too much so we headed out at just after 5pm. It was 6pm before we reached the start of the bracken patch and we realised we would finish this walk in the dark.

Now I was carrying the pack and with the climb back up the hill we had descended the going was much tougher and I began feeling fatigue. The high I had been feeling had given me a false sense of security. Now at the end of the day after a fair degree of exertion, I was starting to notice how tired I really was. The steepness of the hill and the trip hazards and hard walking were quite a source of frustration.

We climbed up and over BP and were down at the creek crossing at about 8.15 pm. Crossing the fallen log which was the bridge over the creek had been a very easy matter in daylight and without a pack, but now I just could not balance. It was necessary to sit down and bum along the log. The unfortunate thing about doing this is that there is a branch pointing upwards about half way along it. This means you have to lift your body over it and on to the log again. To add another dimension to the difficulty, the broken branch was pointing the wrong way. At this time of night I had not the strength to lift myself and so crossing became a painful and ungainly process causing mirth among the others who had not yet attempted it, but when it was their turn to try they found that it was the best any of us could manage. That is, with the exception of Peter, who had simply stepped onto the log and walked easily across without a problem.

On the south side of the creek we navigated the steep slope by GPS and Petzel. That night we retired unwashed and pretty much unfed.

Cooleman Plain: Off the highway and across Cooleman Plain on an undulating dirt road with bright yellow, hazy sunshine. Walking on a flat road with fewer March flies was pleasant too!

At *River Cave* which is fed into by a creek, Peter, Alan and Geoff plunged while I sat in the cool cave mouth and took it easy. My cold was still with me. After a half hour or so they returned wet and refreshed and we resumed wandering.

There was a possible cave which Alan wished to show us but investigations were inconclusive. After lunch we explored *Cliff Cave*, escaping the heat for a while and later followed a creek

across the plain to a place where it simply disappeared into a hole in the mud.

Although it had been a fairly easy day by the end of it we were dragging our feet. We were to have had a swim in a convenient pond but only Geoff could muster the energy required.

On this our last night at Yarrangobilly, we sat under a clear sky, which was absolutely brilliant with stars, with our heads tilted back, drinking port and counting satellites.



The Macquarie NHT Project - an overview

Evalt Crabb

Most people have heard of the Macquarie Project, many have been on trips associated with it, but few have been aware of what it was really all about - the various agendas (motives), the management as such, the conflicts.

The project is now over and the end result satisfies the funding authority. A karst management strategy was developed and has received high acclaim. Much data on karst features has been gathered and recorded. I shall not dwell on the promised vegetation studies nor the relevance of the demonstration site. What is important - when you're handling public money - is that the auditors have been satisfied as to the dispersal of the grant. *They* are satisfied.

The project was initiated by Peter Dykes, helped by Chris Dunne and the NSW Speleological Council, and assisted by the Federation to receive a grant from the Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) to undertake a documentation, vegetation survey and rehabilitation project over karst areas in the Macquarie Region of NSW. Briefly the project had the following Aims, Actions and Outcomes:

Aims:

Raise awareness of the uniqueness of karst and karst adapted vegetation for groundwater sustainability.

Quantify and prioritise karst areas in the region in respect of remnant vegetation in agricultural landscapes.

Demonstrate strategies to rehabilitate karst related vegetation communities/habitat for long-term sustainability.

Prepare a Regional Karst Management Strategy.

Actions:

Field investigation to identify karst areas, conduct preliminary vegetation inventory and identify factors degrading the karst ecosystem in each area.

Update the ASF National Karst Index Database.

Prioritise areas by significance, needs and practicality for rehabilitation.

By use of a Demonstration Site, highlight the importance of conserving, rehabilitating and protecting karst ecosystems.

Prepare a Karst Management Strategy.

Outcomes:

Preparation of a Karst Management Strategy for the region containing a profile of the region's karst, its vegetation type, an assessment of the factors degrading the karst and action plans for future management.

Highlight the significance of karst through conserving and rehabilitating an important outcrop on private property.

The defined area was the upper region of the Macquarie River catchment which includes karst areas from Limekilns to Wellington and Ilford to Mudgee (most of the upper catchment of the Macquarie River). These areas are legitimately the concerns of the Macquarie River CMC through who the grant was approved. Subsequent to the grant being approved, "they" decided to include the Portland, Ilford and Capertee Valley areas despite their being in eastern-flowing catchments, ie., parts of the Hawkesbury-Nepean system - not the Macquarie. This decision may have been taken to tap into so much data previously collected by HCG, to provide bulk to the final outcomes. **It was not part of the original application nor subsequent approval.**

Structurally, the field work was to be co-ordinated by Peter Dykes (overall plus vegetation plus plus); Bruce Howlett/Denis Marsh (OSS) - Macquarie Region; Evalt Crabb - Lithgow-Mudgee Region. They were to be responsible to a NSWSC Management Committee which **never** met. However, the auditors have been satisfied.

The emphasis in the Macquarie Region was the tagging and listing of over 500 features, many of dubious value in respect of karst processes. Most attention in the Lithgow-Mudgee Region was paid to delineating every exposure of limestone, evaluating impacts on

groundwater, a basic recording of karst features and vegetation.

Fifteen trips were held to the Lithgow-Mudgee Region, close to half being by just Evalt and Joan Crabb. Four trips were attended by Peter Dykes, visiting eight locations of about sixty to make vegetation observations rather than surveys.

While the project extended to some regeneration of remnant bushland over karst areas, evaluation of degradation factors and community workshopping, the main thrust as far as most cavers participating were concerned, was the full documentation of all karst and its features within the region.

About forty karst features in the Lithgow-Mudgee Region have been listed for the Australian Karst Index. So far no new items have been tagged. A map has been drawn of the four postulated aquifers surrounding Mudgee township and their sources of pollution. This was not used in the final report or the Karst Management Strategy.

The project served well as a catalyst to taking *THE BOOK (Caves and Karst of the Mudgee Region)* as a HCG publication more seriously. But now there is so much more still to be done.

There is potential conflict.

With the disbandment of the ASF Documentation Commission and the prospect there may never be a National Karst Index, emphasis is thrown onto State Documentation Committees. In NSW, the convenor, Peter Dykes, has pursued his structural region concept (expounded in 1983) but this has yet to be formally accepted. He is still changing boundaries. He has indicated (pers. comm.) that rather than use a database type hard copy he intends to use a more narrative style. He wants to use the Lithgow-Mudgee Region as a model using our data, which had been gathered for a (initially my, Evalt's) HCG publication. Our book was to be a definitive guide of value to students, researchers, cavers, local authorities and such.

Following is an overview of what is known and some ideas for future directions for the Lithgow-Mudgee Region, assuming we will continue our interest AND publish.

General:

1. The NHT project served to develop an interest in on-karst vegetation, which usually has quite unique plant communities. Another aspect, ignored in the NHT trips, is the possibility of there being rare or endangered plant species.

Then also, plant communities MAY attract specific bird species.

2. Prolific cave biota has been reported in a few locations but there has been little study of invertebrates and other fauna.

3. Limestone Deposits of NSW (*Lishmund, et al*) had been used as an authoritative guide. It was generally OK - some errors, some omissions, indicating that ALL sources should be followed up.

4. Apart from the briefest mention in the *Karst Management Strategy* (and only then in the context of being the eastern portion of the Lachlan Fold Belt) there is almost nothing of the geology or geomorphology of the region.

5. There are a few indirect references, but very little has been done in respect of history of human involvement with karst in the region. Quarrying at least has occurred for some considerable time in so many places. There are old signatures in caves, old people with good memories...

Capertee Valley Area:

Previous knowledge indicated two minor caves on Coco Creek and another at Blue Rocks on Crown Creek. During the course of the NHT project very little was added there.

A new area, Port Macquarie property on the Capertee River was accessed and cave entrances, a doline, potential caves and a spring were noted.

There has been subsequent surface exploration including Excelsior, McDonald's Hole (not found), Carlos Gap (not breached), Alum Cave (too hard to reach). We are gradually learning access possibilities and are aware of fairly extensive limestone/dolomite.

The area bounded by Capertee, Glen Davis, Brogans Creek and Ilford, plus the narrow bands of Coco and Crown Creeks, is seen as a worthwhile project area. Apart from the extensive unexplored karst areas, there are the advantages of good landowner relationships, bush camping with campfires in absolutely magnificent scenery, a degree of semi-passive challenge.

Cudgegong Area:

Previously known was a largish cave - CU1 (The Swallow Cave); also reported too frequently to be untrue is a small cave to the east totally inaccessible due to blackberries. Also, a small (10m) cave had been reported at a small marble quarry to the north - this is on land now restricted by Water Resources Commission due to the adjacent Windemere Dam. Early descriptive

reports are not encouraging. A lot of limestone and minor quarries, previously reported adjacent to the site of the now destroyed Cudgegong village and pub, are now inaccessible except to the most dedicated diver but there would be no point in going there. NHT trips revealed nothing new.

Rover Speleological Society had started (1999) a more accurate survey and recording of historic signatures but need one more trip to complete this. The biological diversity has not been studied or recorded, nor has there been a geological/geomorphological description. The location is not mentioned in Limestone Deposits of NSW (*Lishmund, et al*).

Because the landowner is, rightly, protective, any trips should focus on maximum yield of data with feedback to landowner.

Ilford Area:

There is one known cave, with the entrance alongside the road a few kilometres north of Ilford. It has been fully explored and mapped, but there is no data on biology, geology or geomorphology.

The only other recorded limestone in the area is in the form of minor xenoliths - of no relevance in interests in karst processes.

Kandos Area:

There are extensive limestone deposits from Carwell Creek, through Kandos to Brogans Creek to the south. Almost all limestone is subject to quarrying and access is not permitted.

A report of a water-filled cave circa 1980 was pursued; an interview with an old resident revealed there had been more than one but all were now submerged in the Windemere Dam upper reaches.

There may be potential at Brogans Creek. One trip revealed extensive limestone with reasonable relief, surface karst features and the "feel" of a cave area. It is very close to the location of "Port Macquarie", Carlos Gap and Alum Cave previously mentioned, but the first task is determining access routes. It could be that the boundary between Capertee Valley Area and Kandos area is an illogical one.

Lue Area:

There is a vague report of limestone in *Limestone Deposits in NSW*, but the reported location is now occupied by a large Motor Cross circuit and access is denied. The gentle rolling pasture landscape does not suggest much potential. Nothing has been found or reported.

Nevertheless, there had been frequent reports, emanating from pub talk in Mudgee, of a large cave near Lue. In the mid 1960's UNSWSS reported on trips to a large cave in the area but no location provided.

In the mid 1980s some Mudgee locals stated they knew of the cave, but strongly advised me against trying to enter the area because a valuable vegetable crop had armed protection. The precise location is not known - "*better I don't know!*".

Mudgee Area:

During the NHT trips no new features were found. Instead, it was noted that those previously listed no longer exist due to quarrying and roadworks.

There is potential for new discoveries. Access is indeterminate, but there is much limestone on the south-eastern side of Mt. Buckaroo. Also, from a distance, there appear to be a number of stream captures high on Mt. Frome. (Siltation - excavation?)

For those interested in groundwater there is a very wide range of opportunities for further study of surrounding aquifers.

There have been very reliable reports of limestone with considerable relief east of the river near Mullamuddy/Apple Tree Flat. It is understood that access through one property is vehemently denied, but there may be an alternate route. Precise location is not known - a planned trip never occurred because my local guide, a Shire Councillor, died of a heart attack weeks before the trip. The area is extremely rugged. There are early reports (1870's) that there were events where a goldminer sinking a shaft, breaking through the roof of a large limestone cavern and falling to his death. A study of archived local newspapers would provide more detail, BUT - there is now very little surface indication of the locations of the gold leads. Holes have been covered/filled and the area given over to sheep grazing.

Portland Area:

The largest feature is a now-abandoned quarry at Portland, which ran out of limestone. Similarly, quarries at Ben Bullen (there was a Ben Bullen Cement Co.) closed a considerable time ago. We have been strongly denied access to the latter but it would be of historical interest. North of Sunny Corner there is some scattered limestone pavement but karst features are unlikely. The biggest non-quarry limestone is at Palmers Oakey, about .6ha, relief about 8m,

some surface solution features are present but it has surface drainage to an intermittent stream so cave development is most unlikely.

There are two non-limestone caves in the Portland area and it is not known whether they have been described.

Queens Pinch Area:

This now includes the area previously listed as Apple Tree Flat - one range contains both clusters of caves which were previously known as QP and ATF. There are now 21 listed features - caves, dolines and springs. Two listed as caves have not yet been opened and explored.

There is much potential for new discoveries and perhaps a re-discovery or two.

Until the NHT project cavers tended to go directly to either or both of the clusters on the top of the range. There is potential on the hillsides and even on the valley floor of Mullamuddy Creek. A report from 1970 indicates either one or two caves of reasonable size south of (?) but near Mt Margaret. These would be on the Limestone Creek drainage and on land restricted by the Water Resources Commission.

Along Mullamuddy Creek there is the possibility of shallow caves resulting from runoff from the mountains to the west. At present it is believed that the valley is a shattered rock aquifer several kilometres long, with "islands" of solid (jointed) limestone. Recent random observations suggest that this aquifer is entrapped by Oakey Creek at its downstream end, leaving the downstream end of Mullamuddy Creek perched.

One local area that has yet to be investigated is on the southern side of Spring Flat Road. There appears to be a large capture of streams from the nearby hills and appears to be a depression rather than an alluvial fan. Nearby there appears to be a very large doline, at least ten times the area of any other doline in the region. In the same vicinity is a high limestone face, either a cliff or quarry face. Usually these have been noticed late on Sundays, when we're disinclined to seek landowner permission. Then there are reports of non-limestone caves...

The next step:

So much has been done but the material is largely unsorted beyond satisfying the needs of the NHT project. Drawing all reports, observations, references, maps and photos into some semblance of format is continuing slowly and will be presented to the club from time to time.

As the nature of HCG is voluntary, largely recreational and laid back, there is no need to change our spontaneity or loosely planned trips to such passive places as the Lithgow-Mudgee Region. And we have no deadline (yet!).



Sailing the new Subaru!

18 November 2000

Joe Sydney

Present: Joe Sydney, Scott Lloyd

Because of persistent rain, I cancelled our planned 'Fortress Creek' canyoning trip set for November 18th. Scott was the only person who was still interested in doing something so we decided to do a bushwalk.

A few years back, Scott and I entered a team of cavers into the Bushwalkers Search and Rescue navigation and rogaïne competition. Embarrassingly, our team failed to return on time owing to foul weather and being geographically embarrassed. While out there in the wilderness we sheltered in an overhang and when I looked up, to my surprise, I found some aboriginal paintings. On leaving the cave and continuing the rogaïne, the only problem we had was that we were not sure of its exact location. So it was decided that we should back track along our exit route and find this cave with the paintings.

Leaving Sydney early we headed north along the expressway-heading, turned off to Bucketty and soon arrived at the NPWS Mogo campsite. This was the base camp where the rogaïne started and finished. A kilometre back along the road we found a track heading off in the direction we wanted to go so the new Subi headed into the bush for the 1st time!

The rain was heavy making the track interesting to drive along until we hit a rocky outcrop. Scott jumped out of the car and directed me where to place the wheels but still the Subi couldn't make it! Too slippery in the wet and it was time to walk!

After changing into our bushwalking gear we started down the track to the end of the ridge. The ridge looked interesting, as it was almost a sheer drop! "The Rover could have managed it!" chuckled Scott. I just rolled my eyes! It took 10 minutes to get to the bottom to the banks of Mogo Creek. A few minutes on we were at the saddle where we needed to turn off. Just over the saddle was another creek and we knew that the overhang was very close.

We all assumed that the overhang was much higher up but Scott walked right onto it and about 80m from the creek! Dropping our packs we did not enter the cave at first and took pictures of it as a record. It seems that it had not been disturbed since our last visit.

I took notes of all the four types of paintings found : hand stencils (adult & juvenile), large multi pointed star, and two types of line art.

After a quick bite to eat, we started back to the car, which took only 1½ hrs to get back.

Driving back to the main road we decided to take the wet & muddy road to Wiseman's Ferry via St Albans. Along the way we noticed the northern section 'Great North Rd' track on the left. The sign said, "Gate at 5km" so we decided to take the Subi off road again!

Driving along this track was easy with lots of nice shallow puddles and rocky outcrops. It was just after the main remnants of a bridge we found our path crossed by a large puddle. Scott said stick to the right and we should be OK. Never will I listen to Scott again! This puddle turned out to be just under 80cm deep - well above the waterline! The feeling of my new car floating and then sinking in the mud horrified me! What would I tell my wife? All I could do was laugh, I knew that my life was over!



I quickly tried to reverse but the wheels just kept spinning, it seemed that the car had settled on top of the wheel ruts. I asked Scott how water-proof the seals were on Subi's. It took about 2 minutes to find out. The muddy water filled the floor pan and rose inside the car, all I could do was just sit there wondering how high the sludge would rise. It seems that I was very lucky as it only came to the bottom of the seats. The other lucky thing was that no water had gotten into the engine! Scott mumbled something about being 4.2km from the main dirt road. That did not reassure me! As it was a very bleak and wet day I did not expect any assistance along that road for at least 4 hours.

Scott decided on another course of action, he took his clothes off and said he'd try something. Climbing out the window he gingerly slipped

into the brown water and walked to the front of the car. "when I start rocking the car, start the engine and try and reverse," he called. With sheer luck, the car slipped sideways and sunk even deeper but this allowed the wheels to just grip the sides of the wheel ruts and reverse out at high revs!

Opening the door let a deluge of muddy water from front and rear compartments. We threw everything into the back and hastily drove home!

Arriving home Scott immediately commenced pulling out all the seats, floor and door trimming, floor carpet and anything else that was wet. I in the meantime went and saw Ros explaining what a wonderful time we had and that we were just drying the car out from a slight mishap.

By the time she came downstairs, we had high pressure hosed the mud off the carpets and floor pan making it look considerably better! There was no hiding the fact that she was upset. It took another 6 weeks for the car to dry out, as the weather had not improved since "sailing the Subi"!

After all the cleaning, Scott turned to me and said how exciting the trip was. I just nodded and said, "Next time we go canyoning, and we'll go in comfort, we're taking your Range Rover!"

More can be found on the web at:
<http://www.geocities.com/kvrsq/cavepainting.html>



Clean Up Australia Day Sunday 4th March, 2001

Joe Sydney

As part of the clean up, members of Highland Caving Group decided to clean up Carmen Park nestling on the fringe of Berowra National Park.

This area of the park, is occasionally used by Highland for cave safety training and was nominated owing to its unsightly rubbish left by late night picnickers, locals who use the area as a convenient place to dump rubbish and weeds.

This is the second time the park and surrounds needed cleaning up. The first clean-up in 1992 saw over 5 large garbage compactors carting away tonnes of garbage.

This year wasn't as bad but still two huge piles of rubbish were collected - tyres, sleepers, garden hose, polystyrene boxes, concrete, pot plant tubs and general take away food garbage.



Cherrybrook Rural Fire Brigade in action on Clean Up day



The end result of the Clean Up in Carmen Park!

A great deal of weeding was also done.

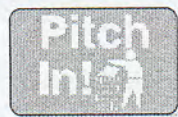
It was pleasing to see that locals took interest in the clean-up with two families, several individuals and the local fire service turning out for the big day.

A special thanks to all those who participated and to Andrew and the crew of Cherrybrook Fire Service who spent most of the day pulling the big stuff from the bush.

More about the clean up can be found on the web. Also visit the great guys at the Cherrybrook Rural Fire Service.

<http://www.geocities.com/kvrsq/cleanup2001.html?984116153600>

<http://www.vjtait.com.au/cherrybrookrfb/>



Caption Contest....What did Geoff say to Peter?

Send in your caption to the editor for the next issue. Photo courtesy of Alan Pryke.

Hole in the Wall Canyon

18th February 2001

Joe Sydney, Peter Bauer, Kevin Collier

Starring: Joe Sydney, Peter Bauer, Scott Lloyd, Kevin Collier, Stephen Collier and 2 of Scott's friends



Peter, Kevin and Stephen met Joe at McDonalds in Richmond where they piled into Joe's Subi after the traditional breakfast snack. They arrived an hour ahead of Scott who had just come off night shift. This meant a bit of a late start and as none of group had ever done *Hole in the Wall* canyon before they prepared for a hard canyon and long walk out.

Joe had heard that the NPWS had put a gate close to the park boundary but no one was prepared for what they found there. At the new car park were two sections of steel cable running through thick steel girders embedded into the ground blocking about 100m of ridge top. The NPWS were certainly determined to prevent 4WD's from using this track, but in doing so had created a site of devastation. Hundreds and hundreds of trees had been felled and laid out over a 200m section of ridge line. Makes one wonder!

Fortunately there were people in the car park that were familiar with the canyon and to the relief of Joe's party, who were becoming concerned about the time, assured it would take no more than 4 hours. Soon the group set off on the additional 2.5kms to the walking track. The day was pleasant day with a slight breeze and not too hot for walking. They followed the fire trail until reaching a track on the left that was the start of the walking track to the canyon. This wide road (highway), which gently undulated led them to a rocky outcrop overlooking the valley. The GPS proved navigation to be spot on. Here they paused for lunch, enjoying the mildness of the weather, the clear air and the spectacular scenery. After a bite to eat and a heavy discussion about the delights of army ration packs the party began their descent into the valley.



A deterrent for 4Wheel Drivers



Peter & Joe overlooking the valley.

It was not long before we dropped into the canyon itself and were walking in the clear shallow waters of the creek. The creek ran through sandstone slowly descending a series of natural steps. The canyon began to close in so the canyoners trogged up in their spring suits. After negotiating a few pools the canyon opened out into a valley. Amid the blackened remnants from previous years fire, ferns grew lush and green on both sides of the creek. Above the cloud cover had completely disappeared and strong sunlight diffused and reflected off the low cliffs of the surrounding sandstone. The remarkable beauty of this canyon was unsurpassed.



Trogging up

Scrambling over boulders Peter happened to look back and saw a large black spider crawling aggressively up Stephen's leg towards his crutch. He quickly picked up a stick and flicked off what looked suspiciously like a Funnel Web. The rest of the party seemed oblivious to what could have been certain peril as they became strung out along the canyon.

The walls began to narrow and tower above the creek bed but the water remained shallow. Stephen, who was slowly boiling in his full length steamer had to roll in the water to cool off but for those that had only worn thermals (Scott's friends) the cold was a bit of a problem. Then they encountered a tunnel of glow worms and the hot and cold of the situation was forgotten. The tunnel was formed by collapsed boulders sealing the canyon in darkness, which made it necessary to use Petzels. Amazed at the number of glow worms, they all crowded into the chamber and stood with lights off gazing at a scene of starry skies.

Beyond was a 'hole in the floor'. A narrow boulder choked floor with a 16 metre pitch. Joe eyed the tie off point with suspicion. A series of rope loops around 15 rotting saplings! On further inspection Joe decided that it would be

okay so all abseiled into the darkness of the cavern below. It was an interesting descent. The chamber into which they'd lowered themselves was a huge cavern of sandstone, softly illuminated from further along the passage. It was a bit like abseiling into a 16 metre egg. Around the corner and along the gently downward sloping floor a short burst of sunlight awaited.

They soon encountered another enclosed section and were plunged into darkness and chilling, chest deep water. This section was blocked by a huge boulder around which there was an alleged way on. Peter found a tight gap and squeezed easily through it. The only female followed. Stephen found a larger opening at water level so the rest of the party, being of a more robust build, sniffed the roof behind Stephen.

Finally they reached the intersection of Bungleboori Creek. Seems they'd gone too far and overshot the more popular departure point. Looking back the canyon appeared as a wall with a hole in it - hence the name. Shivering (especially those without wetsuits) the group found a ledge bathed in warming sunlight and spent 20 minutes soaking up the luxury before facing the slog up the hill to the track that would return them to the car park. Like the rest of the canyon, Bungleboori Creek was very pretty. Soft, diffused light glowing on the sandstone seemed to accentuate the lush greenness of the ferns and plants. Within 2.5 hours the canyoners were back at their cars, changing into better smelling clothes to head back to Sydney. Of course they couldn't leave Richmond without the usual McDonald's feast at Richmond.



Highlands in the Mist Wyanbene 24-25/2/01

Julie Bauer

Present: Ian Lutherburrow, Jason Moule, Kristen, Lindsay Matheson, Julie & Peter Bauer, Stephen Collier, Cathy Brown

Saturday - 24th

The Bauers arrived at the campsite at 9am, just as Ian's billy came to the boil. While waiting for Cathy Ian and Jason inspected the map to jolt the memory and determine the extent of exploration for the days trip. As Cathy didn't materialise by 10am we decided to make our way to the cave. Peter hadn't been camping for a while and had forgotten his overalls, luckily Ian had a spare



Ian & Jason study the Wyanbene map

pair of cotton overalls. Jason and Kristen headed off towards the cave to unlock the gate while the rest of us finished trogging up. Ian held back as long as possible incase Cathy turned up while Julie, Peter and Lindsay made their way up the hill and finally entered the cave at 11.45am. The low stream passage looked cold and uninviting, hoping it wasn't the way on the trio decided to wait for Ian.

Ian soon caught up and pointed to the water, "Through there," he grinned.

The water was crystal clear and quite invigorating, for want of a better word. The party proceeded along the stream way, past the Elephant's Head, to the gate. Stephen and Lindsay slipped through quite easily, but after 4 or 5 attempts at the keyhole and much passing of wind (sorry Ian), Julie decided to return to the cars. On her way out she stopped to take a quick look at the old tourist section. Outside the blazing sun spread its warmth and Julie soon dried out.

The rest of the party continued down the ladder to meet the stream way once more, making their way to the Jailhouse and up to Cleopatra's Bath through to the Helictite Room. The group decided to bypass the wet stream way but soon realised their error - the stream way was a big, walk though passage and the bypass a muddy crawl. Ian and Jason were first to reach the Gun Barrel but Peter couldn't find the way on and waited with Lindsay, Stephen and Kristen. After theorising about the best way to ascend the Gun barrel Ian and Jason could be heard returning. Lindsay had begun to feel wet cold and tired and decided to head back to the surface. Ian accompanied Lindsay while Jason escorted the rest of the party to the Gun Barrel.

Another detour took the party to Barking Dogs. The lack of water in this section had silenced the dogs though. When water flow is high the waterfall at the end echoing through the serpentinious passage sounds like barking dogs. The way on led to Caesar's but, wet, cold and weary the group decided to turn back at this point.



Stephen & Peter

Outside Julie had returned from a visit to the river and was busy photographing a spectacular yellow fungi. The clouds had moved over the sun, the mist was beginning to roll in and it was becoming quite cool. Ian didn't waste any time in whipping out the gas stove and putting the billy on to boil while Lindsay stripped off wet gear and tried to warm up. Ian doesn't seem to feel the cold and seemed quite comfortable in shorts and bare feet. Brrr.



Jason, Kristen & Ian

Several cups of tea later the rest of the party emerged to the dim light of a sleepy sun.

Cathy was waiting for everyone when they returned to camp. After dinner everyone huddled around the fire partaking in Ian's rockmelon and Julie's Tim Tams. The mist had become so thick it resembled light drizzle, just wet enough to be annoying. By 10pm it seemed far more comfortable cocooned inside a down sleeping bag than braving the all encompassing mist.



L-R: Peter, Stephen, Lindsay, Ian, Kristen, Jason & Cathy

At 8am people began emerging bleary eyed from damp tents into mist that hadn't lifted. Breakfast was an academic affair. Jason experimented on meat ants with tea of varying mixtures to conclude that it wasn't the scalding effect that killed them but the sugar in the tea. Experimentation was paused briefly to discuss the days activities but only for a heartbeat (the ant's) before discussion turned to ways in which the new bio-ant killing elixir could be patented and marketed.

Ultimately the group decided to visit Cleitmore and look for caves and return to camp via Marble Arch. The group took off at a Lutherburrow pace but at the river Julie, still recovering from a tendon injury decided to ease off a little and straggled behind with Peter for company. The group spent a little time on the platform over looking the Big Hole, some reminiscing, others deciding looking was for better than doing. The mist, still a thick shroud, added a soft ambience to the forest but did little for visibility and navigation. After leaving the fire trail we headed across the wet grassy paddocks and the group began to spread out as each settled into a more comfortable walking pace. Soon the grass gave way to forest again and the mist became even thicker. Ian, Jason and

Kristen reached the caves and began exploring. The rest of the party battled through the bracken and met up with Lindsay. Peter attempted to search the hill for caves and look for Ian and Jason but the mist made exploration impossible. It was very quickly realised that leaches were in plague proportions and to stand still for more than a few minutes meant there were 20 leaches to pluck from boots and socks. It was certainly unpleasant and didn't take long before the idea of Marble Arch was abandoned and people began high tailing it back to less leach infested ground.

Again the party spread out on the 5km walk back to camp and by the time the stragglers arrived Ian had the billy boiled and was halfway through his first cup of tea. Everyone ripped off boots and socks to check for leaches, Jason counted the most bites with 9 puncture marks. As Ian and Jason found a few caves worth surveying another trip or two goes without saying but perhaps it's best to wait until the mist lifts.



Notes - BRAG Meeting 23 march 2001

Julie Bauer, Jill Rowling

Present: Andy Spate, Jane Gough, Jackie Taylor, Julie Bauer, Jill Rowling, Chris Bradley, Kevin Collier, Ken (birdwatchers), + 1 other

Apologies: Brian Richardson, Ron Poulton

The Bungonia Recreational Activities Group (BRAG) meet 3-4 times each year to discuss management issues. Julie and Peter Bauer have been on the committee since its inception in 1994.



BRAG committee members present at Bungonia as guides for the ACMKA Conference delegates.

L-R: Chris Bradley, Jill Rowling, Brian Richardson, Andy Spate, Julie Bauer, Jane Gough, Ron Poulton and Peter Bauer (front).

Chairman's Report (Andy)

The NPWS Queenbeyan office has been busy with the current wilderness proposal for the Morton area. Jane and Andy have been writing a paper on the works at Bungonia for the upcoming ACKMA Conference. Andy is still involved in the groundwater position and continues to chip away at colleagues regarding the value of karst. He seems to be making progress albeit small. Jane has been off work due to illness.

Senior Ranger's Roundup

The Senior Ranger's Report was given by Jackie in Brian's absence.

Currently many field officers are employed as temps and must continually reapply for their position. The Parks are currently advertising the senior field officer position. The list of applicants will be short listed and a number selected for temporary and casual positions.

The comprehensive "Wilderness" proposal has been completed and is now on exhibition. Submissions to be in by mid May.

Jackie detailed how staffing has become a critical problem at Bungonia. The Bungonia Office has just acquired more land to manage without an increase in the number of field officers, which has exacerbated the need for a person to be employed in a clerical capacity, allowing Jackie and Brian to get away from the office and carry out their ranger duties. Jackie also explained about changes to the ways in which funding is now distributed. Monies donated directly to the Park and money from camp fees and sales from products such as *Under Bungonia* now go to consolidated revenue rather than staying within the Park. This not only meant that BSRA had to manage with \$41,000 less but also means there is no funding for clerical staffing or for other desperately needed works: new weir, new sewerage system. Brian and Jackie are forced to consider alternatives including closure of the camp ground. It was suggested by committee members that individuals/clubs should write to the Minister regarding unacceptable distribution of funding and that we could devise a way of lobbying for a clerical position - also to ask Ron to see what he can do.

Incidents Report

A Brown Snake was rescued from Grill Cave. In Feb/March there were a spate of incidents - 5 occurred within the space of 1 week.

- 1) Broken ankle at the bottom of Long Point (PRS & Careflight)
- 2) 15/3/01-broken ankle at the bottom of the White Track
- 3) 2 lost students on the Red Track
- 4) 17/3/01 - caver stuck in Karabiner Cave. The rescue was effected by Binalong, Berrima VRA, Goulburn PRS and Careflight. High CO₂ hampered rescue efforts.
- 5) 18/3/01 - a high teenage female student with a knee injury at the bottom of the Mud Slide in Grill Cave. The casualty walked out unassisted once she was out of the high CO₂.
- 6) Army stuck in the Dragon's Teeth, B51 (self extraction)
- 7) Scout group self extracted someone who freaked out in either Argyle or Accoustic Pot.

The base jumpers have returned to the Park.

Exchange rescue personnel from the USA visited the Grill Cave. David Herring is going on exchange to see how rescues are conducted overseas.

Loose rocks in the entrance chamber of B4 have been removed

The chain at the bottom of the vertical ladder in Grill has been replaced.

Park closures due to feral animal control will be between 14-18 May and 27 Aug. to 7 Sept.

Andy has been taking photos around cave entrances. A fence tape has been put around the B15 doline for reference. The B5 entrance is eroding (leave for now and see how it develops) and the B4 entrance requires more work to combat erosion. The B31 track is good now due to the cave entrance hardening work.

Bat trapping (Eastern Australia coastal study) was done in January. The Naracoorte bat and invertebrate numbers had crashed but are now building up again. Warrnambool bat population has been stable for 35 years. Nowa Nowa OK. The bat populations at Bungonia and Church Cave, Wee Jasper is up a bit. A total of 10,000 bats were banded.

The Lookdown Road has finally been sealed and 3 speed humps installed - too much signage.

B72, Dinosaur Cave - the property owner, Gary Welsh, is unhappy again and has complained that people are still driving onto his property which is strictly forbidden.

B17 breakout! A person had written on the comments section of an activity statement that in urgency to exit the B4-5 Extension he free climbed the pitch in Largest Chamber to B17 and had to break the chain on the gate to get out. (later verified - see B4-5 Ext. report).

Discussion regarding Julie's HCG trip into the B4-5 Extension via B17

A number of projects for HCG were also discussed including: Tree of heaven in Beck's Gully, Kings Cross sediment bank, new loose boulder sign for Grill

Spring Creek Canyon - discussion regarding statements made on Ozcavers. Bruce Stewart's FOI request is being handled by NPWS Head Office. Andy to see Jennifer Pierce re the legalities of reopening Spring Creek.

Commercial operators using the park are mainly Southbound with frequent trips, Edge Adventures and Australian Based learning. Since southbound are by far the most active with 90-100 students it was recommended that they have a representative on BRAG to replace Karen Fry.

CO₂ issue was discussed. High levels of CO₂ have been reported from Grill, the week prior to the meeting it was reported at high levels just below the Daylight Hole. The Goulburn PRS (Police Rescue Squad) measured 4% on their Draeger and 7% at the incident at the Mud Slide. If rescue squads want to flood a cave with O₂ that is fine by NPWS.

Drum Cave closures (response to ozcavers) - Drum Cave is not open between the 1st of November and 1st of April due to bat breeding as described in *Under Bungonia*. Outside of bat breeding season it is open. It was also closed for 3 days last year during the histoplasmosis scare.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the downside of "Wilderness". Andy reported cave vandalism at Indi, Yarrangobilly and Blue Waterholes as a protest against the wilderness proposal. Some of the perpetrators have been caught. Handling the proposal has required enormous effort from many NPWS people over a number of years- costs that would be best spent elsewhere. BRAG recommends the Spelo-Council to make a submission (Chris Bradley to bring up at the NSWSC meeting). Jill commented that it seems silly to include Tolwong Mines as a wilderness and personally, I can see no sense in designating an areas as wilderness that is beneath a major limestone quarry. The proposal takes the wilderness boundary to the near Red Track.

The next meeting will be held at 1330 on Friday 24th August 2001.

If you have any comments or issues you would like addressed by BRAG email your request/submission to a committee member prior to the next meeting.

Julie's email address is jbauer@ihug.com.au

Not just a 'Mir' trip for HCG!

24-25 March 2001

Joe Sydney

Present: Evalt Crabb, Joan Crabb, Bryan Race, David Race, Jim McGregor, David Rothery, Michael Rothery, Joe Sydney

Friday 23rd - Back to Earth!

HCG members waited patiently for the exciting news - 'Mir' crashed safely back to earth in a series of fireballs that lit up half the South Pacific sky - so now it was safe to emerge from our bunkers and go CAVING! Blue Rocks here we come!

Young Michael and I picked up David at 6pm and we shot off like a rocket heading west over the Blue Mountains. A quick stop was called for at Lithgow to refuel the Subi and ourselves - we tried Red Rooster this time and after a quick meal of chunky chicken, it was time to hit the road again.

With all this space stuff happening, we decided to pull over just outside of Capertee to view the International Space Station fly over as I pulled the co-ords from the net hours earlier. Sadly, we missed this orbit but there would be an opportunity to see it again tomorrow evening.

Driving on the crew of this ship decided to camp at the abandoned shale-mining town of Glen Davis. It was about 9pm when we arrived and we pitched the tents in a quiet section of the camp-ground. David was feeling tired so we all decided to have an early sleep.

Sat. 24th - Bacon fat and Cackleberries

I woke earlier than Michael and David so I started making the coffee and setting up breakfast. Mmm, feeling hungry lads - the smell of bacon and fried eggs soon enticed them out of bed!

I pulled out the video and started filming the campsite surrounded by high cliff walls. It had been nearly 20 years since my last trip here and it hadn't changed. Soon after breakfast we packed up and headed back the way we had driven in and were soon at Crown Station Road junction where the others were waiting.

Lead on McDuff!

Evalt led the way with Jim following in his new dusty Subi Outback and my Subi Forester taking up the rear. We soon arrived at the Crown Station turn off where Evalt popped in to say hello. It wasn't long before we were back on the road again heading towards Blue Rocks.

It soon became evident that we were very close to Pantone's Crown, a sandstone plateau that is a mecca for keen bushwalkers as it towered to our right. Driving along the dirt, we soon spotted limestone jutting out here and there and we were closing in on the campsite as young David, Bryan's son, was peddling his way up the valley to greet us.

A mighty wall of limestone!

All three cars pulled into the campsite and we looked in awe at the massive 80-90m wall of limestone before us! Bryan Race greeted us and we all started chatting about what we would like to do for the day – there was talk of abseiling down the bluff to look for entrances, climbing cliffs and so on. Meanwhile, David Rothery had snuck off with his son and while we were enjoying a cup of tea, it wasn't long before we heard a hello coming from the cliff tops and we saw both David and Michael in a section where we had wanted to abseil too! Well, that's one section searched!

Hi tech gadgets!

Continuing with our tea break discussion, we touched on GPS units. Bryan then pulled out his trusty Garmen and asked if I knew how to calibrate it. After a few minutes of fiddling, I had it all set up and ready to go. Then Jim asked – if anyone knew about Magellan units. Lucky for them that CHOICE Magazine tested GPS units a while ago and I had an understanding of how to set-up various brands!

Lunchtime came upon us suddenly so we decided to eat before undertaking anything strenuous. Bryan had earlier dug a pit and lined it with rock, which made an impressive campfire. As quickly as it came lunch was over and young Michael told us of a hole he had seen while climbing with David.

The expedition starts!

Jim, Michael, Bryan, young David, Joan and I started for the left side of the bluff and soon found a break to climb up on. Climbing up onto the lower edge, I noticed that the band of limestone seemed quite thin – only about two meters thick at the low point. Slowly we climbed to the top of the bluff to enjoy the magnificent view of the surrounding valley. We could see Pantone's Crown in front of us, the valley cliffs of Blue Rocks pass to our left and the entrance to the valley back towards Crown station.

More limestone.

From this vantage point, we could also see further outcrops of limestone directly in front of us (west) and more towards the south. I took out the video camera and filmed the surrounding area for others to see. The geology was interesting at the top in that the band of limestone on the bluff edge was about 2-3m thick. Looking away from the bluff behind us (east), the bluff dropped away into a small gully that was covered with what appeared to be shale. Another interesting feature found at the top of the bluff is a section of the limestone edge seemed to have a large curved fold in it. A very unusual sight so I filmed it!

A hole? The geology?

Michael soon yelled out that he had found that hole again so we all headed off towards him. It was quite small and it looked as though an animal had dug it. The surprising thing was that the outside soil was that shaley soil and when we poked our head in the hole, the floor was limestone! It seems that the shaley soil is only surface material.

Pushing on

We crossed over the high point of the bluff again and we split into two groups. Brian and Joan took the easier way down by dropping into the southern side of the bluff creek. The younger lads and I continued following the limestone bluff edge looking for anything unusual. This way was a much steeper. Dropping lower every minute we soon found the terrain starting to be less steep and interestingly the limestone changed. Not long after dropping lower I saw Joan and Jim following the road back to camp so I headed off after them.

Back at camp we told Evalt and the others of what we had seen but sadly – no caves. We had a quick bite and another cup of tea when we realised that Evalt looked as though he had itchy feet – it was now his turn to explore!

Virtual caving!

Back at the Subi I found David still in relaxed mode and doing his 'virtual' caving stuff. I picked up some gear and we all headed off to explore the southern valley. Bryan led the way with the younger lads as he knew where the entrances were while Jim and I escorted Evalt. The valley is quite small with a flat flood plain about 50 meters wide. Wandering up the valley we came across the usual wombat holes but little

evidence of any other wildlife expect a small finch nest (unknown type) in an open bush. We also came across some geo-survey tape near some old stone ruins and log work. These were both just inside the National Park boundary marker.

Where are the caves?

Bryan "raced" ahead (pardon the pun) and we found him up on an eastern hillside a little further up the valley. Bryan believed that the entrance was on this side of the hill so he started searching for it. Young Michael and I decided to wander up an interesting looking gully looking for limestone and entrance. We met up with Bryan half way up the hill. We climbed and climbed until we were almost to the summit but still no limestone or entrances. Bryan, he decided to go higher while we headed back to Evalt, young David and Jim in the valley below who by now were making there way slowly back. By the time we reached Evalt, Bryan "raced" back down and declared that this may not have been the hill with the limestone so we started to head back to camp.

Getting dark and heading off home!

Darkness was falling and the rumblings of stomachs could be heard! Evalt called us over to sample some home brewed olives stewed in port! Very tasty, but not quite the stuff to munch on before tackling a long drive! Packing up the car didn't take long and by then it was quite dark. David, Michael and I sadly had to say our farewell and head back to Sydney but on the way we took notes of gates and distances so that we could draw a mud map for others next time.

So what happened about finding the lost cave entrances? I'll leave that for others to tell who searched on the Sunday!

Blue Rocks - Part II

Evalt Crabb

Saturday night settled down to relaxation after Joe, David and Michael departed. Lot's of David's fresh bread, snacks, Port then sleep.

Sunday morning saw Bryan and David searching for the elusive CV12. They found it easily. The previous day we had gone on to the next, wrong gully to the left. Meanwhile, Jim, Michael and Joan searched for the limestone exposure reported the previous day by David Rothery, from the top of the Blue Rocks cliff. Jim reported what looked like a cave alongside

the base of a scree slope. Then he went home. The remaining members followed Jim's directions, found the place which exactly fitted his description, but alas! It was the right colour, it had the right shaped blocks, but wasn't limestone or dolomite. What seemed like a cave turned out to be a reasonably wide gap between separate huge boulders, filled with a very dark soil. The profusion of spiders' webs seemed typical of some entrances, hence the confusion.

The vegetation nearby was profuse, diverse and quite peculiar. Many photos were taken for identification some day. By mid-afternoon the weather turned dark and morose; the only activity was Evalt photographing even more on-karst vegetation and a few scenic type trees.

An uneventful night - how relaxing! - then pack up and head elsewhere in the morning.

A courtesy call to the Caporelli's (how essential that is!) Then - Bryan and David off to Hill End then Bathurst via the Bridle Track, Evalt and Joan to Sunny Corner and beyond to gather roadside quinces and apples - they're free - for jellies and wines.

An Almost Spontaneous Trip - Ilford - 7th April 2001

Evalt Crabb

Present: Evalt & Joan Crabb, Jim McGregor

The weekend was originally set aside for a trip to Mt Margaret but only three people were available and more are needed to cope with our Mt Margaret program.

So, we set off in Jim's new Subaru to try and find an access route into Excelsior, (then) believed to be an abandoned quarry near the railway line on the edge of the Capertee Valley, west of "Port Macquarie" property and near Carlos Gap.

We stopped at the fireplace north of Capertee to get our bearings (see separate snippet re this fireplace). We had gone a few kilometres too far. Finding a sealed road clearly signposted "Excelsior Road", we crossed the railway line after an 8km scenic drive, turned north for less than a km, past some gates and illegible (or ignored) signs and found ourselves on the floor of a huge limestone quarry. We were surrounded by huge bulldozers, even huger trucks and a choking cloud of white dust. The quarry wasn't abandoned at all! Many photos were taken from a safe perimeter road which was usually at least

2m from the pit edge. After a brief, 1km diversion to the north where the wheel tracks merged with the forest, we retreated to the fireplace for a lunch of smoked salmon, chicken and trout, fruit cheese and watermelon.

From here we used the road behind the fireplace to reach the railway line some 10km to the east (This road is mentioned in a to-be-published trip report from January 2000). We didn't see a small quarry near the railway line - didn't look because we didn't know that we were at McDonald's Hole. The bush here is verrrry dense. Turning north along the railway line - occasionally steep, rutted, very narrow - we stopped at the entrance to the railway tunnel under Carlos Gap. The road continued but Joan found it too steep to walk. But we were getting closer and closer to Alum Cave. We decided not to go through the tunnel as once considered, the rails were too shiny and we didn't have a freight train schedule.

Turning back we drove clear through to Excelsior alongside the railway line, noting opportunities for quiet bush camping, and a proliferation of "black boys" at both Carlos Gap and Excelsior.

We had just enough time so we raced north to Mount Ilford Winery before closing time. The second time Evalt & Joan and the first for Jim to partake in the unique table wines up to 8 years old and moorish fortifieds. If you want modernity and gloss, this isn't the place. Here we learned that by going straight ahead instead of turning right to Running Stream, (past a solution sandstone cave visited a year earlier) the road descends to the same railway line. It is assumed that this would be between Carlos Gap and Brogans Creek, between Mt Vincent and McDonalds Mountain. Not far from Alum Cave. Road condition and steepness is not known but the height, top to bottom, is about 340m and the valley floor is only a few kms away.

Obviously we're getting closer but to what?

Snippet - "Our" Fireplace

Evalt Crabb

In the nearly forty years that I've been driving to Mudgee there has been a serious shortcoming. Opportunity for a comfort stop between Lithgow and Mudgee (that has changed very recently).

There was one only opportunity - a roadside fireplace and garbage bin with a dense clump of trees behind, some 12 km north of Capertee.

What blessed relief it offered, so often... It was always safe to go 50m down the road, it was never used.

On our trip to "Port Macquarie" in January 2000 we travelled in via Glen Alice. The property owner told us of a more direct route and were surprised when he asked if we'd seen the fireplace on the main road. It just happens that behind the clump of trees is a road that leads over a railway line and comes out behind Spring Gully. What a coincidence!

We haven't used that route yet and don't know how negotiable it is, but we have been as far as the railway crossing. On the recent trip to Ilford though we discovered a couple of excellent bush camping areas. But watch the dense bush, it has the dampness so beloved by red-bellied black snakes.

ACKMA

14th Australasian Conference on cave & Karst Management

29/4/01 - 5/5/01

Julie Bauer

Present: A "karst" of thousands!

Sunday 29th April

Wombeyan is so picturesque this time of year with carpets of fallen leaves and the brilliant reds and golds in the trees. We arrived late afternoon and as we had opted for camping over dorm or cabin arrangements we pitched our tent. We later realised that camping was the way to go as those in the dorm complained of rats, drunks and snoring disturbing their sleep. With time to spare before registration we wandered over the creek and visited John & Glenda Wiley's campsite. Simon Bland had just discovered changes to the program had moved the SSS talk from Monday to Tuesday and as he only had one day off work he drove straight back to Sydney. We waved hello and goodbye within the space of a few minutes. The Wiley's filled us in on what had been happening at Wombeyan, mostly exploration and documentation for an update of the SSS publication, Wombeyan Caves.

Towards 6pm we wandered over to the dining room to register and meet other delegates. Beer and nibbles by the log fire set the mood and soon Kent had to yell "Delegates" to be heard over the din. Dinner was ready. After the plates had been cleared away John Wiley and I set up a book

stall. How strange to see the old and new Bungonia books being sold side by side! Nick White was flaunting the last copy of the new Speleogenesis book ... lucky Peter brought his cheque book. The evening concluded with a slide show by Ernie Holland on NSW cave areas followed by more beer and banter.

Monday 30th April

Peter rose early for a full breakfast of bacon, eggs, sausages, hash browns. I decided to miss breakfast and think of my diet. Armstrong Osborne kicked off the papers with his new interpretation of cave formation - from the bottom up. The idea isn't new but Armstrong is first to formalise the concept. We digested Armstrong's theory over morning tea along with a wide selection of cakes. The HCG Mug was a real hit (now called the bludger mug). Papers were then given by Elery on cave management in the new millenium; Penny Davidson, who is researching the social dimensions of karst tourism at Jenolan and John Dunkley on guiding assumptions of cave management. This session concluded with lunch - boy I'm glad I skipped breakfast!

There were 2 options for the afternoon - Show Caves or Wild Caves. I chose the show caves, which included a visit to Broome's bone deposit and a tour of Wollondilly and Mulwaree Caves (including David's Cave and Coronation - these sections are not lit and used for extended tours only). Armstrong pointed out sections in Mulwaree that he would like cross sections drawn for a possible HCG project for Wombeyan.



The icon of Wombeyan - Lot's Wife and the Cockatoo, Wollondilly Cave.

Stephen Babka was leading a trip into Sigma Cave and assigned Peter as an assistant guide. The Sigma team became something of a conference legend. Arthur Clarke had a slight mishap -losing his footing on a handline climb slammed him against the wall, he would have been ok had it not been for his digital camera in his pocket. Later he reported to have sustained one broken rib, one cracked rib and a cracked bone in his big toe. The digital camera survived unscathed.

After yet another meal papers were given by John Dunkley on interpreting cave history, Derek Mason (NZ) on the politics of the NZ Resource Management Act and Arthur Clarke on cone karst, cave fauna and management in the Guangxi and Zhejiang Provinces of southern China. Fortunately Jane Gough arrived with a new multi-media projector in time for Arthur's talk. She also brought the poster on the cave entrance work at Bungonia, a compliment to Andy Spate's talk on Wednesday.

Tuesday 1st May

Delegates sat down to listen to the mornings papers with a full stomach after another huge continental breakfast. The food was too good, even Peter was dreading the post conference postmortem on the bathroom scales! Andy Spate presented the first paper of the day, management of "wild caves", coauthored by Brian Richardson and Steve Reilly. Neville Michie explored the direction for the future in reducing cave impacts - perhaps we need to built a cave system in Sydney or utilise advances in technology for virtual caving. Steve Reilly addressed the failures of cave access control systems and shared his vision for protecting wild cave values. This enlightening information was followed by morning tea - groan - more delicious food!

With my bludger mug filled with steaming soup I joined other delegates for the next round of papers. OK I admit the cake was too good and my will power didn't hold up. Anne Wood delivered an interesting talk on recent developments in management in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. Tom Rea and Kriste Lindberg all the way from Indianna, USA introduced us to the Indianna Karst Conservancy and Sullivan Cave. The IKC recently purchased Sullivan Cave and during the conference IKC purchased a second cave. John Wiley then detailed the contribution by SSS to speleology for the use and management of wild caves.

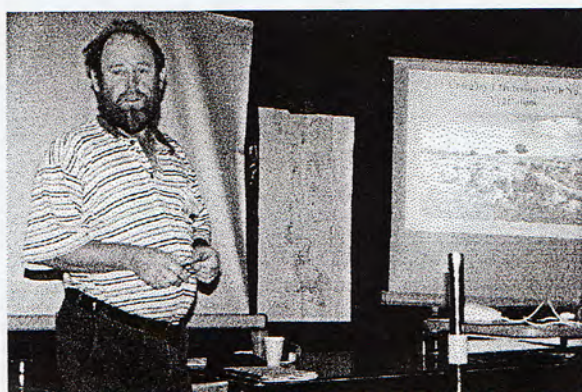
Outside rain had settled in, delegates huddled under the tarps and feasted on yet another delicious meal. Delegates again had the option of visiting show caves or wild caves to fill in the afternoon. Peter was again designated as assistant guide of one of the two groups venturing into Bullio. I took pity on the two ladies who were doing such a great job of feeding the masses and stayed back to wash up lunch dishes after 80 odd delegates.

Meanwhile, Stephen Babka and Peter had slogged up the hill and led the group 2/3s of the way to Bullio when Babka realised they had forgotten the pack containing all the ropes. Peter was sent to fetch it and by the time he returned most of the group had been belayed down the first ladder. The group continued up the earth embankment to the 60' iron ladder and continued to abseil to an alternate route rather than the usual path. There were no mishaps but in Laurie's group, Tim Stokes (Canada) fell in when he misread his bridging capabilities.

Back at the campground I had become heavily involved in discussion with Peter Dykes about the new karst index and GIS in general. Neville Michie joined us and the discussion turned to broader cave related issues. I was lucky enough to obtain a copy of the NHT report and Neville's PhD for my ever expanding library. After dinner delegates had the chance to mingle and drink more beer!

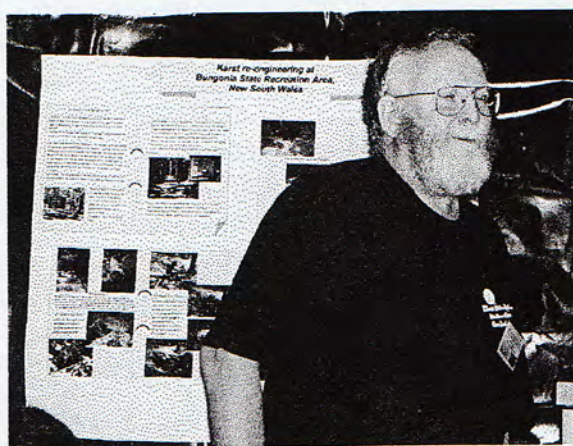
Wednesday 2nd May

Ernst Holland delivered the first paper of the morning about an unusual karst feature at Borenore. Tim Stokes, all the way from British Columbia, explored the Canadian approach to managing forested karst lands. Cameron James from Mt Etna NP detailed the parks latest 1080 campaign against the fox population and finally Peter Dykes gave a status report on the NHT project - no mention of HCG though!



Peter Dykes presents the NHT project at the ACKMA Conference, Wombeyan 2001.

Following morning tea (more hot soup and delicious cakes) was a paper we'd been waiting for - Hardening of Cave Entrances at Bungonia SRA. Andy Spate delivered the paper that had contributions from Andy, Jane Gough, Julie & Peter Bauer, Mike Lake, Brian Richardson and Jackie Taylor. Andy was expecting heated discussion or opposition to the works but we only heard positive feedback. Perhaps it's time to stop regarding Bungonia as the sacrificial lamb. David Merritt followed with a fascinating account on glow worms and Annalisa (Julia James' student) enlightened us on the challenges of conserving microbial mantles - who even knew such a thing existed!



Andy Spate delivers the paper on the Hardening of Cave Entrances. Perhaps he knows something we don't!

After lunch the mini bus ferried delegates to the limestone quarry. The group walked to Mare's Forest Creek and watched a party jump into a very invigorating canyoning trip. Brrr. The group then returned to the quarry for a better look slowly making their way back to camp via Figtree Cave.

The New Zealand vs Australia cricket match was cancelled due to wet weather and the state of the pitch. Coaches ferried delegates to Taralga Pub for dinner. Money passed over the counter and the barmen could scarcely keep pace with the drinking capabilities of some delegates. During dinner Steve Bourne was awarded a prize for the best article in the ACKMA Journal by Elery Hamilton-Smith who had to leave the conference to receive his Order of Australia medal. Way to go Elery! We're all so proud of you. While it was stressed that delegates were to board the coaches at 10pm the hard core drinkers partied on until midnight and for a further 2 hours back at camp.

Thursday 3rd May

I decided to eat breakfast this morning since the diet had gone out the window anyway. We were still packing up our tent when people started moving out. Opening our car over the last three days and using the inside lights had flattened the battery, fortunately Nick White was close at hand to jump start us and send us on our way to Trappers Motel in Goulburn. After booking in we boarded the coach to travel to Bungonia for the inspection of the cave entrance work. The delegates were unloaded at Adams Lookout for morning tea, where they were met by Brian Richardson and BRAG members; Jill Rowling, Ron Poulton and Chris Bradley. The group inspected the platform and views before walking the Green Track to the Lookdown and back to David Reid car park. After lunch delegates were divided into groups and assigned a guide from the BRAG committee who led them to cave entrances and detailed the works and erosion problems. Great job by BRAG members!

Then it was off to the Goulburn brewery - needless to say we were late for dinner at the Motel!



Delegates enjoy the exquisite brewery wares.



4 of the 7 dwarfs outside Goulburn Brewery.

L-R: Papa Smurf, Neville Michie, brewery owner, Andy Spate

Arthur Clarke, who was celebrating his 55th birthday, showed slides taken at conference on his digital camera. The Bob Drop was organised as post dinner entertainment. This was new to

me but I had my camera ready. The idea is to carry a coin between your butt cheeks a set distance and drop the coin into a glass. Competition was fierce, especially between Tom Rea, the USA champion and Nick White. Perhaps Tom got too confident when he tried to deliver 10 x 5c coins into the glass at once. Nick managed to drop 5 into the glass to win - he really wanted that bottle of Naracoorte Red!

Friday 4th May



Left: Nick White depositing his winning bob. Note the fingers, such concentration... Ohm.

Above: Deb Hunter swallowing the chocolate



After Breakfast we travelled to Yass where we left our cars and boarded the coach for travel to Wee Jasper. Morning tea was held in the Wee Jasper Community Hall, followed by the ACKMA AGM where Peter Diamond took over the presidency from Brian Clark (Naracoorte). Papers followed by Prof. Soo Jin Kim on the origin of speleothems in a lava cave on Jela Island, Korea. Fascinating even the gurus couldn't explain the likes of these formations. John Ash discussed the redevelopment of Ruakuri Cave, Waitomo, New Zealand and Steve Bourne concluded the conference papers with the development of Cathedral Cave, Naracoorte, for guided tours.

If we thought the food at Wombeyan was excellent, they weren't to be out done here in the bush. Plate fulls of half chickens completed to spread of food. There mustn't be a chicken within cooee of Wee Jasper now! On very full stomachs we boarded the bus to head out to Carey's Cave. I hadn't been to Carey's before so this was new to me - very specky. Our guide got carried away and it was all but dark when we emerged from the entrance - oops, late for dinner again!

Most of the delegates were staying at the Sundowner Motel and others, including us, were booked in to cabins at the Yass Caravan Park. I had come down with the flu and would have murdered anyone for a packet of Codral. We went in search of a chemist to no avail. It was going to be a long night. We arrived at the Sundowner with time for a few beers before dinner, while taking in the haute courtes of cave wear. Andy in his bat shirt and Barry Richard in his hat and shirt elaborately embroidered with bats. Over pre dinner drinks Barry had a tales to tell about our illustrious leader not that we really wished to know about Ev scrapping maggots from his steak prior to cooking or about blowing up lakes as a form of fishing. Perhaps Evalt can shed some light on these escapades of his youth?

Tim Moore, former Minister for the Environment spoke about the ABC of parliamentary colleagues and other troglodytes. The evening concluded with a chocolate fish swallowing competition won by Deb Hunter. John Ash had brought the "Fsh" all the way from New Zealand for this momentous event.

Saturday 5th May

The conference concluded with a BBQ breakfast at Cooma Cottage, home of Hamilton Hume. NPWS from Queenbeyan travelled to Yass to cook the BBQ. Eventually it was time to hug our goodbyes and go our separate ways - some to post conference trips, others to wineries but for us it home with a short stop at Bungonia to photograph the Tree of Heaven in Becks Gully.

Peter and I had a fantastic time. This was our first ACKMA Conference but we really felt welcomed into the ACKMA family. Congratulations must go to the organisers, to the delegates that shared their knowledge and delivered papers, especially Andy and Jane who so diligently worked on the Bungonia paper and poster. To its credit ACKMA attracted delegates from the US, Canada, Korea, Philippines, New Zealand and all over Australia. We will certainly be going to the next (15th) Conference to be held at Chillagoe/Undara in North Queensland: 5-12th May, 2003. For your information - the 16th Conference has been awarded to the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand, and will be based at Westport, being held in early May 2005. If you're interested in karst science or management I can't recommend a better venue or better company.

PERSONAL CO₂ SCRUBBER

David Rothery

Background

The desire to build a personal carbon dioxide scrubber was based on the premise of others, that the body is more sensitive to an increase in carbon dioxide concentration than to a corresponding decrease in oxygen concentration.

Corresponding to the opportunity to go on a trip in the B4-5 Extension, was an opportunity to test out a personal scrubber in an environment with moderate CO₂ levels. The existing known terminus of the B4-5 Extension is named St Patricks Lake. Visitors to this spot are unanimous in their stated desire to turn tale and exit as soon as arriving. This anxiety is believed to be due to elevated carbon dioxide levels.

Construction

The scrubber canister was constructed from 100mm PVC sewer pipe components. This provides a robust light-weight, water-tight container for the chemical contents. A coarse stainless steel strainer fixed in position covers the inside of the entry and exit ports.

Inside the canister the first component is a 20mm coarse foam diffuser to spread the airflow. On this is stacked silica gel to dry the air. The next chemical in the stack is Lithium Hydroxide to bind with the carbon dioxide. To confine the powder from moving, a fine 1.6mm thick HEPA filter is placed on either side of it. The NASA designed HEPA filter will remove dust and other particles larger than 0.3 microns. This is smaller than smoke particles or bacteria. Finally in the stack, a layer of activated carbon is added. The activated carbon will absorb many organic and a number of inorganic compounds including Hydrogen Sulphide which is a poisonous product of rotting vegetation.

A mouthpiece was selected for caving rather than a face mask, which has been trialed on units in the past. This may be because a face mask is required for military gas masks on which the designs were based. The mouthpiece would stop the face from overheating during periods of activity. The mouthpiece would also be better for communication as it can readily be removed. In the cave atmosphere there is no environmental requirement for a face mask. The mouthpiece consists of a commercially available snorkel mouthpiece with exhaust flap valve. The mouthpiece is connected to the canister with a

ribbed flexible hose such as would be used for a washing machine drain hose. A second flap valve was machined down and pressed into this hose to limit air movement to a single direction, and prevent the entry of water.

From the base of the unit a ball valve manually controls the entry of water for purposes of entering a swim such as exists in the B4-5 Extension.

Results

Usage of the unit was adopted in an area where the carbon dioxide level was later found to be 3%. Oxygen levels were found to be 16.6% further down where the carbon dioxide level had risen to 4%.

The unit was easy to transport despite a temporary belt attachment, which proved troublesome. This initial design had an intake tube to permit snorkelling. It was quickly found to be a hindrance as the end of the tube was often blocked on the back of the overalls. The next version will have a strainer intake, which cannot be sealed off accidentally.

The performance from this model was disappointing. The contents appeared to pack down after a short period of usage in elevated carbon dioxide levels. The packing down is characterised by being initially unable to draw breath without great effort. Once the air breaks through then the remainder of the breath is easily obtained. The anxiety caused by not being able to draw breath without great initial effort caused the use of the unit to be terminated. The packing down had not occurred with trial usage on the surface, where it was found to operate easily.

The mouthpiece design was excellent. It could readily be removed and stored when not in use to keep it clean. Unlike divers, cavers cannot readily wash out a mouthpiece.



Joe Sydney & David Rothery with the Scrubber

Conclusion

Without the use of a carbon dioxide scrubber the effects of this environment type were clearly felt once again. The clear intentions of the trip were rapidly abandoned. Some have since proposed that this would be due to the diminished oxygen level effecting the ability of the brain to function clearly. Until an effective personal scrubber is available, and tests conducted we may not know for certain.

A successful start on production design, but it is back to the drawing board for the next trials.

Post Trial Examination

Following the trim the canister was emptied and the contents examined.

The activated carbon was found to be sooty, which had unnecessarily used up the capacity of the following HEPA filter. It was decided that next time the activated carbon should be washed and baked dry prior to usage.

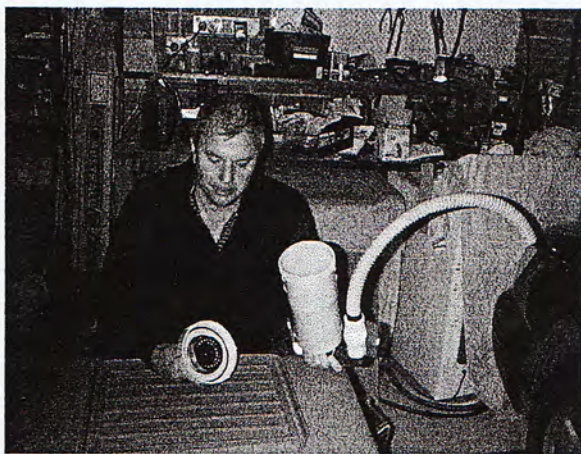
The Lithium Hydroxide was found to have totally vacated the compartment where it was intended to have been. Later it was found to be in the bottom of the canister and partly blocking the intake hose. It was found to be still in powder form contrary to expectations. The only explanation for the blocking effect may be the total blocking of a HEPA filter which had its seal compromised by heavy sucking; or the containment of the Lithium Hydroxide in the piping at the bottom of the canister.

The Silica Gel was in place and had clearly changed colour.

The filters need to be rearranged to prevent migration of the fine Lithium Hydroxide in either direction. The Lithium Hydroxide could be stacked in place easily using the course diffuser pads and placement of a HEPA filter below the Lithium Hydroxide.



Dave removing the mouth piece from the Scrubber unit



Dave removes the lid of the cannister to which the mouth piece and hose is attached.



Dave removes the remaining filters covering the Lithium Hydroxide.



Dave has removed the spacer filter and HEPA filter to empty the activated carbon.



Dave removes the Lithium Hydroxide from the cannister, which had migrated into the base of the intake hose..



Showing the filter beneath the activated carbon layer.

St. Patricks Lake, B4-5 Extension Bungonia - 19-20/5/01

Julie Bauer

Present: Peter Bauer, Julie Bauer, Bryan Race, David Race, Lindsay Matheson, Bruce Waddington, Evalt Crabb, Joe Sydney, David Rothery, Kevin Coller, Geoff McDonnell, Matt Fisher, Jill Rowling

The main aim of the expedition was to explore the aven in the terminal chamber. The developed long section has similarities to Drum Cave and it is reasonable to assume that there is an overhead passage that will either bypass the sump or lead into another section of it. To reach the aven steep mud covered flowstone must be negotiated. Whilst exploring the cave we decided to test the Michie Phones in the cave for which they were designed some 25 years ago. To date the equipment hadn't been tested to such depths - 500m of cable! Joe was also keen to log the expedition on video as there are many cavers who wouldn't ever see the bottom. Joe also was to test the air and CO₂ levels throughout the cave and Dave was testing his CO₂ Scrubber for the first time.

Julie and Peter met Kevin at the main gate and led the way back to the campsite where Bryan and Lindsay had the billy on the boil. The group grew until all had arrived except Robert Wray and Jane. Joe had filmed the drive into the park, around the campground and then trained the rolling camera on those gathered at the campsite. It took some time to sort out the gear - there was lots of it! Eventually the group proceeded to the B16-51 carpark and trogged up while Julie went to collect the key to the B17 gate.

Bryan and Bruce must have thought it was going to be a long wait and toted their camp chairs to the cave entrance. Joe set up the base station for the Michie Phones and began laying wire into the cave while Peter dashed on ahead to begin rigging the pitch. Evalt manned the base station, comfortably sitting just inside the entrance on Bryan's camp chair. Jill made her way into the cave after main rabble had descended. Jill was there to photograph the aragonite and other bits and pieces in B17. Julie was the last to enter, with a heavy pack full of camera gear.

Most of the party, except Julie, Jill and Bruce went down the pitch into largest Chamber. Some ascended without going past Largest Chamber. Peter had rigged up a rope for self belaying up the ladder. Peter noticed a length of pink tape half way up the pitch and thought it may have been left there

by the person mentioned at the BRAG meeting who had broken out of the cave. It became evident very early on that the group had far too much gear and some knew that it would be a problem on the way out. Kevin and David turned back at the Lavatory Pan Squeeze. Joe, Peter, Matt and Geoff made it to the Baby Snake, the CO₂ was 4% at that point. Peter, Matt and Geoff kept moving leaving Joe to tackle the Baby Snake. Joe was most upset to later find out that he had negotiated the tightest part of the cave only to turn back when the sump was just a stroll around the corner. Joe slowly reversed out of the Baby Snake consciously controlling the anxiety brought on by elevated CO₂ levels.

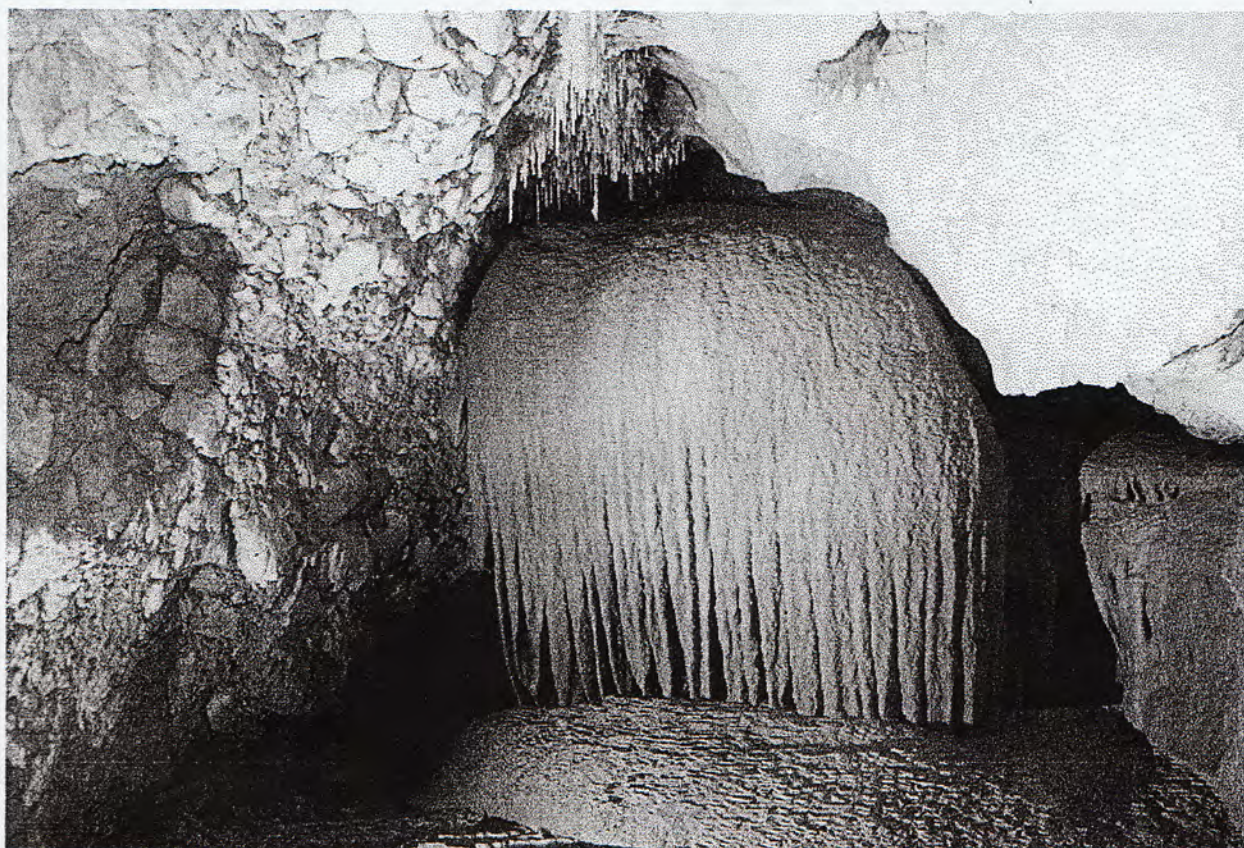
The Michie Phones worked extremely well all the way to the Baby Snake where Joe ran out of cable. Kevin and David emerged from the cave at 4.30pm. Evalt, Bruce and Bryan returned to the campground to shower and dinner while Kevin and Julie manned the base station keeping warm with a cask of red. As Joe was alone he kept in constant contact with base while videoing formation in the Ribbon Room. Peter, Geoff and Matt made it to the sump but were so fatigued from the CO₂ and carrying those leaden cave packs that they couldn't face exploration and immediately made their way out. They soon caught up to Joe. Here the CO₂ was supposedly 3% but the sump team suddenly stopped breathing heavy and suspected that the CO₂ at the sump may have been as high as 5%.

The last of the team exited the cave at 8pm and the real challenge began - finding their way back to the cars. It seems that the weary party made a wrong turn and came full circle to a deep doline. Julie decided to go down the hill a bit to see if she could find a tag while the others scouted around in different directions. It was extremely fortunate that Andy placed the white tape around B15 for that Julie would have certainly fallen in, as it was she ended up clinging to a tree until Kevin could offer a helping hand up the dewy grass. After that Peter led the party in the right direction to the car park.

Back at camp David had gone straight to bed with a headache and some were preparing to depart. Evalt had gone home earlier, Geoff was committed to walking the Spit bridge the following day and Matt had a field trip with the Uni. Geoff had forgotten a change of clothes and had to drive home wet and shivering. The heater helped dry him out some what but also made him very sleepy, that combined with fatigue and the effects of CO₂ were a lethal combination and Geoff had to stop several times for a roadside nap. Eventually the fire died down and the cold chased everyone to bed.



Bruce Waddington at the top of the climb into Magnathea Chamber, B17

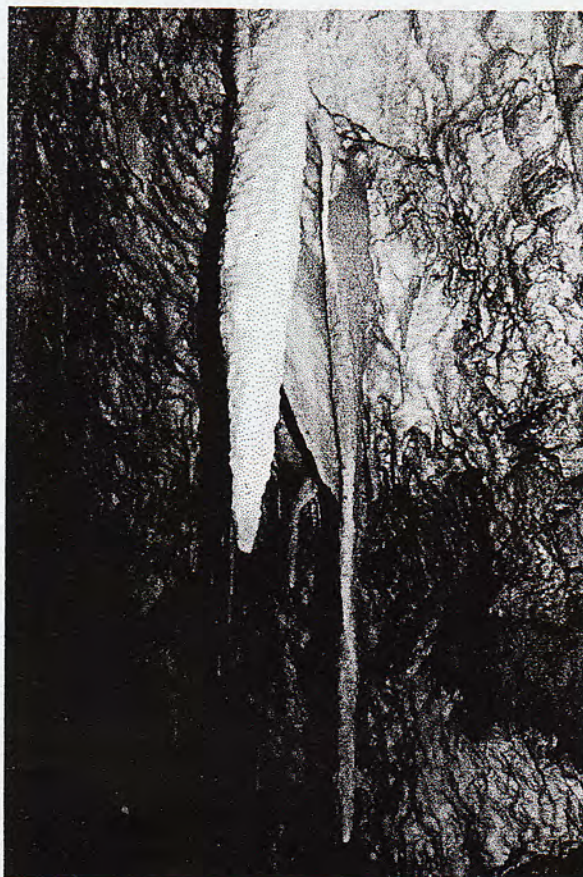


Formation in Magnathea Chamber, B17

Sunday

Everyone was lethargic, such are the effects of CO₂, so everyone milled around the camp fire. Julie looked at the video footage that Joe had taken in the cave, sharing the interesting bits with everyone. Then Joe decided to film Dave and the CO₂ Scrubber and accidentally wiped the beginning of yesterday's video. Bryan and David Race went for a quick look at Grill while Joe made cappachinos for Lindsay and David Rothery. When Bryan and David returned Joe took David Race and Peter back to B17 to refilm the section he'd wiped from the tape. Meanwhile everyone else packed up too fatigued to even think about replacing the sign in Grill or looking at Kings Cross.

After everyone had packed up Peter, Julie, Joe, David and Lindsay filmed the Lookdown platforms and then made their way to the office. Julie paid the camp fees while the guys walked out to Becks Gully to film the extent of the Tree of Heaven - or the Weed of Evil as David calls it. That concluded a tiring weekend. Perhaps on the next trip the team will focus on exploration only and largely reduce the gear to be lugged into the Extension.



Above & Below: Formation in Magnathea Chamber B17.

Left: Lindsay at the top of the pitch into Largest Chamber

Below Left: Kevin about to descend the pitch into Largest Chamber

