

Calcite



Journal of the Highland Caving Group

Issue 47 - March 2017



A Corporate Member of the Australian Speleological Federation



Highland Caving Group



*A Corporate Member of the
Australian Speleological Federation*

P.O. Box 54, Georges Hall, NSW, 2198

CG meets 8:00p.m. every second Tuesday of the month at
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Editorial:

It has been some years since HCG produced an edition of Calcite.

This is largely due to the usual reason; no articles. As HCG approaches its 60th Anniversary this edition has been produced with highlights of trips over the last 4 years.

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Cover photo: HCG members at Ningaloo Underground.

Photo By: Anna Binnie



HCG members (past and present) at Ningaloo Underground



HCG Campsite Exmouth

Wyanbene 15–16 March 2014

Trip Leader: Ian Lutherborrow. Party: Oliver Grevin, Andrew Nosworthy, Jason Moule, David Stenson, Phil Fleming.

I finally got away from home (second time as I forgot my thermals so had to return) about 17:30. Was to meet Dave in Goulburn at 17:00 but didn't get there till 19:30. A bit of shopping in Goulburn and then off to Wyanbene, finally arriving at about 21:00. Set up camp, collected some dry fallen timber down the road and got a nice fire going. A few beers and dinner (pre-cooked at home by Dave – nice curry), then Phil and Oliver arrived. Phil was pretty tired after his drive out of Sydney, stopping at Goulburn Paragon for dinner on the way. He left Sydney just before 1700 and made camp by 2200. After unwinding a bit we settled in to a few more beers, some red and finished off with a couple of nips of port finally retiring about 01:30.



Up about 0800, breakfast, and waited for Jason and Andrew who arrived about 10:00. A few local kids on quads drove in to camp a couple of times during the morning before we got going. After a brief, gear organisation and some pre trip planning we were finally underground by 11:00.

We headed on to the old tourist area for our first stop. I noted with interest that the stream sink on the RHS (looking downstream) was significantly deeper than on previous visits (20+ years), now about 2m deep, but dry. After having a look around the old tourist area we were then back into the stream way and on to the

blowhole/gate. It was noted that the local 'kids' followed us in so we didn't advertise our presence at the gate and the 'kids' diverted to the old tourist section. Rigging a ladder with belay we then headed back up the stream and on to 'Cleopatra's Bath'. Oliver, Andrew and Jason de trogged and climbed up to have a look while the 'Oldies' waited. The bath was dry but still worth the visit.

Further along a diversion to 'Helectite' chamber was decided and all had a good look around. Some of the signage here was a little misleading – it would have been more appropriate for parties muddy and exiting rather than those clean on an entry visit to the area. The nice display of helectites was appreciated by all.

We headed back to the stream and on our way to Gunbarrel Aven. The stream was not too high so all stayed reasonably dry, except Phil, who decide to brave the wet and bypass the 'Triangular' squeeze by going low.

By 'Aitcheson's Bypass' the rest had had a taste of the water. On a bit further and up through the rock fall, after a bit of exploring, we finally emerged below the 'Gunbarrel' - some of the hanging boulders on the way were a bit disconcerting, but! The 'Gunbarrel' was rather awe inspiring considering some had tried bolting up this aven. After all my visits I had finally got here! Old balloon debris from previous observation attempts was noted high up. As there was no 'rainfall' or fog we all a good view to the top with some nice lighting from a strong 'Led Lenser' headpiece. Some country rock fragments at the base showed signs of copper mineralisation. This most probably associated with the copper mine and associated mineralisation up the valley from the cave. Most debris at the base was of coarse sedimentary origin - albeit slightly modified. Not a nice place to be if something free fell from the roof.

Exiting the 'Gunbarrel' we headed into the upstream end of the 'Rockfall' area. Again copper mineralisation was noted but this time as a vertical oxidised seam running parallel to the cave orientation. Could this be related to the original cave capture/formation? More study of this association would be worthwhile.

After a lunch break in the 'Rockfall Chamber', Jason, Oliver and Andrew had a brief look in the start of 'The Meanders' and 'Barking Dogs'. On their return, as the Oldies were getting a bit tired, it was decided that we call it quits and exit rather than pushing on to 'Caesar's Hall', 'Diarrhoea Pit' and 'Frustration Lake' – definitely next time without too many side tracks.

Heading back out we were not too tired to notice some other interesting hydrology of the stream - some minor captures and resurgences around 'Helectite Chamber' to 'The Jail House' area.

We all emerged about 18:00 to clear skies over Wyanbene. This was a nice change from previous visits which were usually overcast and raining.

Andrew had to leave us early as he wanted to get home to his new born (6 weeks old). After a brief farewell we settled in for the

Cliefden 29–30 Nov 2014

Attendees: Phil Fleming, Marie Horvath, Ian Binnie, Anna Binnie, Jim Tippett, John Taylor (KSS), Ian Lutherborrow, Bruce Howlett (OSS).

Friday 28th November Phil and Marie arrived at Cliefden shearer's hut around 10.30 pm to find Anna, Ian and Jim comfortably ensconced with wine bottle chatting to Ian Household who was staying at the hut whilst doing field work on the area for a post graduate degree in geomorphology. We didn't get to see a lot of Ian as he left very early each morning i.e. 4.30 am and spent all day in the field.

night with a nice fire, dinner and a few drinks. Not as late as the previous evening, as we were all a bit tired after our 7 hour jaunt through Wyanbene.

Up next day at dawn and we were all a bit slow, but finally managed to decamp about 10:00. We headed off to Big Hole car park. Quite a few tourists were there – some with their kids doing a little gold panning in the Shoalhaven while others were there for a walk.

We headed off from the car park and on to Big Hole. This is a quite impressive collapse into subjacent karst, with a nice cantilevered observation deck on its eastern downhill edge. I never tire of a visit when I'm in the area. After a bite for lunch we headed back to our vehicles via the south side of the hill and then along the river. A nice young well fed red belly black, very young jacky lizard and some roos were seen on the way. These were a nice highlight for our visitor from Germany. Boots off, we crossed the Shoalhaven about 0.5km south of the cars and made it back by 13:30. After some lunch we bid our farewells and headed for home. An enjoyable weekend was had by all.

Saturday 29 November John Taylor showed up after driving down from Glen Innes and spending the night at Dennis Marsh's place.

Phil, John and Jim went to get keys from property owner. No sign of Anthony but met daughter Sarah walking dogs down the road. Sarah went off to find the cave keys and we went for a drive down to Island Flat. Meanwhile Bruce Howlett OSS turned up. As it was quite some years since any of the group had visited Cliefden Bruce kindly offered to act as guide for the weekend.

Thermal Spring

While Anna volunteered to look after the hut, the rest of the group left about 1030 to go and have a look at the thermal spring and then Taplow. This is a short drive towards Kalimna and through 2 gates. Narrow strip of land between 2nd and 3rd gate with hot spring on the river side. There was a lot of water flowing from spring and someone built a log dam apparently so people can swim in it. Bruce commented that the water analysis of the spring indicated that it was not derived from the limestone areas.

Taplow Maze

Crossed river just East of spring and headed across flat to Taplow Maze. Underground party was Bruce, Marie, Phil, Ian Binnie, Jim, John. Taplow entrance is guarded by the largest detachable mesh gate ever seen. Climb down into the entrance and then short ladder pitch -about 4 metres belayed off logs. Headed down to "danger" sign and then into low crawling maze passage via the Post Office. Visited Blue Room to look at blue stalls and then Railway tunnel and Taplow Station. After some confusing crawls during which we passed the same point a number of times emerged at the danger sign. Exited the cave after 3.5 hours underground.

Pleasant lunch was had overlooking the river below the Trapdoor/Eyrie cave bluff. Saw black marsupials (swamp wallabies?).

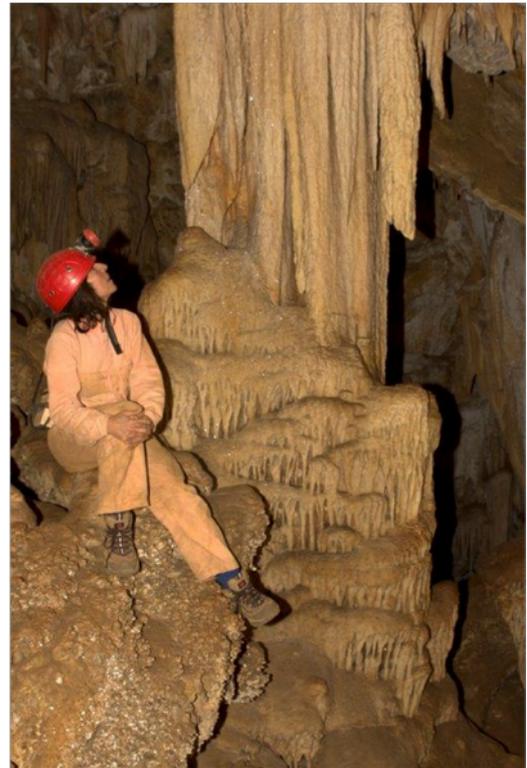
Yarrowigah.

Underground party of Bruce, Phil, Marie, Jim and John entered via bottom entrance into pleasant chamber with some nice

decoration. Ian stayed on surface. After first chamber squeeze upwards through tight section about 5 metres into another chamber followed by climb down to impressive chamber with lots of decoration and signs of mud fights. Last part of climb required long legs then climb down mud bank to very large chamber with lots of decoration and tube from upper entrance visible. Exit of cave reversal of above. Time underground about 2 hours.



By now it was beer o'clock time and back to hut. Back at the hut, we found Ian Lutherborrow had arrived after a late getaway from home. After dinner, Bruce suggested a quick Saturday evening trip out to Malonguli but since the crowd was well into hut caving mode this offer wasn't taken up.



Marie in Yarrowigga

Sunday 30th November

Main Cave

Underground party was Bruce, Phil, Marie, Jim, Ian Binnie, John, Ian Lutherborrow

Drove down to the Belubula River flat about 0930 and Bruce got Phil to demonstrate his uncanny knack for finding cave entrances. Unlocked top and bottom gates for through trip. Descended along marked track to Main Chamber and Lots Wife. Looked around rockpile at back of Lots Wife then down to "T" Intersection. Passage to left goes to Lower Room while to the right leads directly into the Boot Chamber. This comes with 2 boots; a boot like pendant hanging off the ceiling and a calcite encrusted boot with a ladder. Lot of mud. Way out of the Boot Room goes past the rock boot to Helictite wall with the passage to the Clown Room off to the left. After the Clown Room turnoff is a high chamber with a large flowstone covered speleothem called Chalmers rock. Also the beautiful and impressive "frozen waterfall". This chamber is where some people were lost for days in the early 20th

Century. Bruce produced a candle holder made from a Standard Oil kerosene tin. The way to Helictite wall is down past a passage on the right hand side leading to one of the sumps. The climb up to Helictite wall is steep and muddy and once at the top a winding passage leads to the Helictite Wall chamber and some brilliant decoration. Bruce went off to retrieve some cleaning gear from a lower passage including a dead bristle brush. Then headed to Clown Room. Jim and Ian went via a lower passage to check out an enamel billy can which was turning into limestone. The Clown Room is a long rock fall chamber with some very nice decoration at the far end (near the bottom entrance). The cave also changes from muddy to dry at this point in the vicinity of the lower entrance. Group exited via lower entrance about 1.30 pm and back to hut for lunch before going home. Phil and Marie went up to Boonderoo to return keys and met Anthony Dunhill.

Acknowledgements Special thanks to the property owner Mr Anthony Dunhill and to OSS especially Denis Marsh and Bruce

Howlett for facilitating and advising on the trip. Bruce in particular for his many stories about the history of the area and the caves.

Tuglow 4 February 2015

Trip Leader: Ian Lutherborrow.

Party: David Stenson(CWCC), Patrick Stenson(CWCC), Josh Blatchley (Visitor - UK), Helen Cooper (Visitor - UK).

Had a request from Josh via HCG's website about some caving in Australia while on their way to New Zealand. Following some further communication I decided to try to arrange a couple of trips for them to Cliefden and Tuglow during their short (one week only) stay in Australia. Cliefden didn't quite pan out, but thanks to DECW for quick permit approval (even with short notice) a Tuglow trip was on.

Josh and Helen arrived at 'Girrawiiny' (my home plot at Bald Ridge) Monday evening 3rd Feb after having a look around the Blue Mountains and the Oberon area following their arrival in Sydney on Saturday. They had been in Thailand for 2 weeks prior. Met John Spies, caving associate of John Dunkley (HCG member), and spent some time caving there. We had a 'grand tour' looking around my plot on Tuesday. Was hoping to show them some bush orchids, but not this time round. Did spot some kangaroos and other wildlife though, which they enjoyed.

After a slightly late start on Wednesday, leaving 'Flash' my dog home alone, for a very rare occasion, we travelled in two vehicles and finally met up with Dave and Patrick at the Mt Werong turnoff, just sth of Shooters Hill, at about 10:30. From here we headed south and then on to Banshea Fire Trail. Long time since I've been this way to Tuglow so a slightly slow trip and no time to show the visitors Morong Falls (bit of a detour now that access to the Kowmung is only via Banshea).

After dropping Josh and Helen's hire vehicle off at the Morong Falls lookout turnoff we finally made the old fire trail to Tuglow about 11:00. Sorting gear and a quick brief we headed off. Found some bush orchids out on the way (greenhoods) and, much to my horror, some Serrated Tussock (declared weed of significance in my area and a major problem). This reminded me of our visitor responsibilities of weed/pest transfer while visiting remote areas.

We finally got organised and underground about 12:00 and headed down through the rock-pile to 'Anvil Chamber'. Rigging up down 'Wards Chimney' to the river level with a couple of ladders with handline in between we soon all descended.

Some rubbish tucked in alcove near base of the ladder climb was found and retrieved.

I had a good look around downstream including Trickets tunnel while Josh and Helen had a good look around the downstream canyon to the waterfall/sump with lots of photo'ing.

Picked up Dave and Patrick at the bottom of the ladder pitch and headed back upstream via the high level route to 'Knights'. By the time we made the final ascent to 'Knights' most were getting quite weary.

We had a good rest and energy top up and look around Knights Chamber to the waterfall and then headed out – a cold and tired bunch by now.

While bringing up the rear at Wards climb, a small stone hit me just above right eye. Lucky - maybe not so next time. Reinforced the need to keep well clear of pitches while others are ascending/descending.

We were all out by about 1hr before sundown and drove Josh and Helens back to their vehicle. They were heading for Bungonia that evening, making the most of their short stay in Australia.

Dave and Patrick headed back to Lithgow while I headed back to my 'home alone' partner Flash.

Wee Jasper Trip 13–15 March 2015

Trip members: Phil Fleming (TL), Ian Lutherborrow, Jim Tippett, Cathy Brown, Chris Fleming, Cristine Fleming, Thomas Fleming, Josh Davies, Casey Portors, Ronal Morton, Regina Ryan

Friday 13th: Jim was first to arrive at Swinging Bridge Reserve followed by Ian and Flash the wondrous dog. Phil and Chris had a leisurely dinner in Goulburn and arrived about 1030. Cristine and her entourage fronted up an hour later.

Saturday 14th: Dawned bright and sunny after a cool night. Beginner training and exploration of the Dip Cave was the order of the day when we departed camp at 1030. Phil, Jim and Chris located the 65 foot pitch entrance into Dip Series 4 and rigged the entrance for SRT entry. The tag for the 65 foot entrance, WJ-4 couldn't be located. Whilst Jim and Phil abseiled into series 4 Ian took the rest of the group in via the Rubbish Pit entrance to look at Series 1 and 2. At this point Cathy arrived and joined the group in series 2. After some minor navigational adventures Jim located the rathole through to Series 2 and traversed around the balcony to the fixed belay bar overlooking Daylight Chamber. This coincided with the rest of the group all standing around looking up from the chamber. After rigging a ladder and belay rope Ian and Jim started funnelling the party up the ladder. Meanwhile Phil had rigged a safety rope around the traverse from the balcony to the rathole.

The party then split into 2 groups with Phil, Chris, Casey, Tom, Ronal and Regina moving through to look at Series 5, whilst Ian, Jim, Cathy, Cristine and Josh completed the ladder climb and traverse through to series 3. Series 5 is really one of

the most interesting part's of the cave with its beautiful wall features, stalactites and broken columns.

By the time Ian's group had returned to the rathole most of the first group had been belayed down the ladder, which had been moved around to the Stalagmite Chamber pitch. Everyone was out of the cave and the pitches derigged by 1915. Back at camp with beers and dinner underway, Chris and Tom went for a swim in the river but found it a bit cool.

Sunday 15th: Later start this morning and we headed up to the trackhead reserve to look at Punchbowl entrance, Signature and Dogleg Caves. Again splitting into 2 groups, Phil, Cathy, Chris, Christine and Josh headed up the hill, whilst Ian, Jim, Ronal, Regina, Casey and Tom made their way into Dogleg Cave.

Lot of blackberries around the signature cave entrance and the daylight hole is well on the way to becoming overgrown with blackberries. Some good examples of phytokarst in the daylight section of the Punchbowl entrance.

Signature Cave entrance blackberries had been sprayed and so entry was not as painful as Punchbowl. Signature is a short, easy but worthwhile trip with the giant rimpoles and lower phreatic area making an interesting visit.

While Phil's group were dawdling around Signature, Ian's group had a muddy time negotiating Dogleg through to the sandtrap gate and then exited via the upper entrance. Phil's group went into Dogleg as far as the first muddy pool but decided that

as it was now lunchtime and getting a bit late (1330) they would leave a full exploration for another day.

After lunch and farewells we all started to head off for home and work after 1445.

Yarrangobilly 3–5 October 2015

Trip Members: Joan Crabb, Ian Binnie, Anna Binnie, Jim Tippett, Jason Moule, John Dunkley, Marie Horvath, Phil Fleming (TL), Bruce Waddington.

All of the group with the exception of John D arrived Friday night. Marie and Phil were the last to arrive around 1.15 am. It was cool with a frost and layer of fog over the river. Headless babies floated in the mist. HCG bunked down in the Cotterills building. A group of SSS cavers were sharing the hut for the weekend but they slept outside in tents or in the post office.

Saturday 3rd October: After a cold night it was a cold morning but fine and sunny. We introduced ourselves to the SSS group who comprised Robb, Justin, Geoff and Vince. They had arrived Thursday night and had picked up the cottage and cave keys. Their program for the weekend was to do one cave - East Deep Creek and spend the balance of the time photo-tagging in the West Deep Creek area. We had planned to commence work in East Deep Creek that morning - but as they already had the key in their hot hands agreed that we would wait until the afternoon.

Shortly afterwards John Dunkley turned up after driving direct from Canberra via Adaminaby.

Jim, Bruce and Phil decided to fill in an hour by going for a walk through the old Yarrangobilly village area across the the highway. Leak in the Creek Y112 was located but the sink stream was not flowing due to the river level being low. The entrance appeared to be pretty well silted up. During a previous HCG trip in the 1990's the stream was sinking and we diverted it using an old piece of corrugated iron. I recall then that it was not possible to enter very far before it choked so nothing much has changed, just more silt and stuff.

In the bluff directly above leak in the creek is Y110, a short cave about 6 m long and 0.75m high. On the top of the bluff above Y110 is a ruin - remains of an early hut on the Yarrangobilly village site. We finished by visiting Y113 Village cave. Three entrances and 20 m of passage are immediately obvious but according to the 1986 Karst Index there should be 5 entrances and 100 m of passage.

Returning to Cotterills we were thrilled to meet Professor Brian O'Brien and his wife Avril. Who had called by after spending the previous night at Yarrangobilly Caves House. Brian is famous for his invention of the moon dust detector which was one of the experiments carried on the Apollo 11 flight. Brian and moon dust have been back in the news recently since it is now thought that the moon's atmosphere is composed of dust. In the 1950s Brian became famous for getting lost in East Deep Creek Cave whilst discovering the upper level of the cave.

We had arranged to meet SSS at the East Deep Creek entrance at 1230 to get the key but left Cotterills about 1210 - which was a bit on the late side. After driving up and down the highway several times we discovered the East Deep Creek track and were soon on our way down to the doline, finally arriving at the entrance about 1330 to meet Justin and Geoff.

Aim of the trip was to locate and photograph the spot in the cave where Brian O'Brien was found in 1953. With John, Joan and Bruce staying as surface party, Phil, Jim, Marie and Ian entered the cave via the Y5 entrance at 1400 and went straight past the obvious mud bank with the plastic visitors book holder and down to towards the lower section. Whilst Jim searched for an easily climbable way down,

Phil decided to head back up and found a howling gale signaling the upper level. Shortly afterwards we found the gated squeeze and after the usual struggle to get the gate open (struggle seems to apply to any cave gate) Phil was on his way through the gate and down to locate the area where Brian had been lost. Meanwhile Ian had stopped just past the initial mud bank climb and was feeling unwell. We decided to call it a day at that stage and return on Sunday. We exited the cave at 1530 and got back to the cottage at 1630 for an early beer o'clock. Regina, one of the Yarrangobilly cave guides dropped by the cottage. John Dunkley departed to spend the night in a nice cheap motel at Adaminaby.

Sunday morning, with an hour less sleep thanks to daylight saving we still managed to get away just after 1000 and were back underground in Y5 by about 1145. Sunday group comprising Jim, Jason, Marie and Phil moved quickly through the upper level gate squeeze and down to the area where Brian had been stuck after his light went out. Jason and Jim conducted a thorough search on the left hand (southern) side of the cavern, which climbs up steeply with areas of bedrock wall interspersed with breakdown and mud slopes. Meanwhile Phil searched the other side of the cave and Marie started to take some photos of the crystal pool before the climb up to the detrog section.

We finally decided that the most likely candidate for the rock that Brian had been sitting on was in fact the large slab directly above the crystal pools. This was directly under some roof pendants which had broken off and lay on the top of the slab. It was almost horizontal and about 3 metres long and 1-2 metres wide and gave a view down to the pools about 8 to 10 metres distant. Again a search on and around the slab failed to turn up any carbide lamps.

Following this we made for the detrog section and spent some time admiring and photographing the formations in this outstanding area of the cave.

We exited the cave after 1500 hours and made for the Yarrangobilly thermal pool where we met Joan, Bruce, Justin and Geoff (SSS). After a refreshing swim it was back to the cottage and dinner and relax around the camp fire provided by Justin and Geoff. We learnt that Ian had not been feeling well that day and had returned to Sydney with Anna.

Monday morning, Bruce and Joan decided to head home whilst the remaining members had decided on a prompt start at 0900 for a quick trip into Coppermine Y12. Marie guarded the cottage whilst working on her uni assignment. Caving group was Jim, Jason, Phil, Justin and Geoff (SSS). We parked the vehicles at the locked gate on the Yan's Crossing Fire Trail and had a pleasant if cool walk down to the Coppermine bluff. The water level in the river seemed pretty much same as usual and the walk up the streamway pleasant and not too cold. We found the first climb up to the upper level alright but the next (nasty) 2m climb required a tape to loop around a convenient stal boss at the top of the climb (tapes had been left in cave packs outside the entrance). Jason, Justin and Jim (the "J" group) all managed to negotiate the climb using various methods, whilst Geoff and I decided it was all too hard and decided to sit it out whilst the "J"s moved off to check out the rest of the cave as far as the gate squeeze. We then exited and made it back to Cotterills by midday in time for lunch.

After farewells Phil and Marie headed home at 1315 via the tourist caves to arrive home about 2000.

East Deep Creek Upper Level: Above Crystal Pools looking west note broken roof pendants above Jim's head – appears to be fairly recent collapse

East Deep Creek Upper: level view of Crystal Pools

Looking down to Crystal Pools

Bungonia 20–22 November 2015

Trip Members: Phil Fleming (TL), Bruce Waddington, Lindsay Matheson, Thomas Haskell, Dave Stenson (CWCG), Jason Moule, Joan Crabb, Cathy Brown, Ian Lutherborrow

Also present at Saturday lunch for Robert Wray:

Robert and Jayne Wray, Kristen Moule, Mark, Jane, Jack and Emma Bonwick

Bruce and Lindsay were the first to arrive on Friday evening and set up camp in the "Greater Keyhole" camping area. Phil arrived about 10.30 pm and likewise set up camp. Friday had been a sweltering hot day and the temperatures in Sydney were in the 30's but Bungonia was a pleasant 18°C.

Saturday morning we were joined by Thomas Haskell, prospective member and Jason Moule. Shortly afterwards Ian and Dave (Stenno) arrived after spending Friday night at Dave's farm at Windellama.

We got away about 0930 on Saturday morning for a familiarisation tour of B5 Hogan's cave. Party comprised Phil, Ian, Dave, Jason and Thomas. Bruce and Lindsay came in for the initial section. After the cement bag crawl we headed down the hairy traverse, "rock worn smooth by countless trembling bums" but now with a chain to impart confidence to nervous types. After examining the 12 year old squeeze we decided we'd leave it to 12 year olds and instead climbed up out of the rift and followed the passage through to the letterbox. After posting ourselves through it with aid of a 2 inch tape tie off for the vertically challenged we reached Kings Cross and the bridge over the paleo-sediments. As I recall the bridge was a Joe Sydney and Dirk Stoffels production and is really a very impressive piece of engineering. Given the dry conditions in that part of the cave and the solid construction of the bridge it should easily be good for a few thousand years. Moving

through to the B4 entrance we negotiated the climbs up to the fixed ladder and exited into bright sunlight just in time for lunch.

Meanwhile back at the "Greater Keyhole" a crowd had gathered in honour of ex HCG president, Dr Robert Wray. Robert is suffering from motor neurone disease and has a bit of trouble moving at the moment. Robert is well looked after by his wonderful wife, Jayne and everyone enjoyed their company along with the Bonwick family. Jason went off to rescue Kristen who was running short of fuel somewhere around Bungonia village. When he returned with her they proceeded to cook a huge lunch of what looked like wombat steaks. Prompting some others to comment about the fringe benefits of being a WIRES carer. It was great to see such a good turnout for Robert. The arrival of the Bonwicks (SSS) was a real surprise and thrill for Robert.

After lunch Ian, Phil, Jason, Thomas, Cathy, Joan, Dave, Bruce and Lindsay set off to walk the green track to Grill Cave. On the way we looked at B91, FX dig near the cowpool, an early 1990s HCG project. We eventually reached Grill Cave after some bush bashing and headed in. Joan, acted as surface party whilst the remainder headed in. Ian, Jason, Dave, Phil, Thomas and Cathy headed down to the mudslide and Crystal Palace. After climbing up into the old tourist section at the top of the mudslide and admiring some unvandalised stals and straws we decided to call it a day caving-wise.

Jason, Dave and Kristen departed that afternoon while the remaining group of Ian, Phil, Bruce, Lindsay, Thomas, Joan and Cathy settled down for dinner at the Greater Keyhole.

Sunday morning was also a mild day weather wise. With Cathy having left for home on Saturday night and Joan looking after the camp, and Phil, Thomas, Ian, Lindsay and Bruce headed off to do some

abseiling and ladder training in the B5 doline. This was followed by a driving tour to the Lookdowns and then lunch. Phil packed up after lunch and left to drive back

to Sydney. Ian, Joan, Bruce and Lindsay also packed up but paid Dave Stenson a visit at his place at Windellama before going home.

Yarrangobilly 22–26 Jan 2016

Present: Phil Fleming, Ian Lutherborrow, Thomas Haskell, Ian Binnie, Anna Binnie, Joan Crabb, Cathy Brown, Hossein Shargh,

SUSS: Deborah Johnston, Dean Coleman, Jon Urejola, Neka Murua.

Another slow trip out of Sydney on Friday night saw Phil arrive around 1 am as usual after passing through some pretty big rainstorms around Goulburn. Ian and Anna had a much earlier start and struck some big rainstorms before arriving at the Caves Information Centre just after 5 pm to pick up the cottage and cave keys. Deborah and Dean had already arrived down from Maitland - quite a drive for them. As well Saturday morning, saw a fairly small group initially but numbers gathered quickly. Jon and Neka turned up after spending the night in the car near Tumut. The natives were getting restless to go caving but I convinced them to wait for Thomas who arrived about 0930. We formed a group, Phil, Deborah, Dean, Thomas, Jon, Neka and Ian and got going down to East Deep Creek. After missing the track turnoff yet again found it on the way around, The walk down to the EDC doline was more overgrown than October and a lot more weeds around. We moved quickly into the upper level of EDC and through the gate down to the crystal pools area. The plan was to search for the O'Brien light in the rockpile, but strategy was to look for places that Brian could have gotten lost whilst trying to find the route back out through the cave. Needless to say the group was totally underwhelmed by this pointless and open ended idea and after about 15 minutes of fruitless searching during which we saw a

Joint trip with SUSS

lot of breakdown, mud and scary, unstable rockpile it was decided to go and have a look at the detrog pretties area.



Deborah managed to locate a small skeleton in the flowstone cascade which Brian had described to her. By this time we had decided that the O'Brien light definitely was not anywhere in the crystal pools area or rockpile and after moving back out through the gate, Deborah and Dean had a climb in the rockpile chamber above the gate passage. Exiting the cave, we warmed up, had a quick bite of lunch and decided to go and find Restoration Cave Y50. Ian who had done a great job in EDC decided to sit it out and enjoy the view. Restoration was easily located from Phil's topo map and is in the side of a prominent doline about 150m from the Y5 doline. There is a chain gate just inside the entrance but it's not locked. Apparently someone leading an adventure group managed to get themselves strung up by the neck on the chain. Immediately after the entrance a nicely decorated chamber is encountered with what appears to be calcified tree roots

(or are they donkey tails?). The way on is obvious and downwards until after some muddy climbs we emerged into the main track marked chamber. At this point we split into 2 groups of 3 - one group went right and the other left. Then we swapped over. Lots of beautiful stuff to see stal, columns and the longest straws ever - some of them must have been 3 metres long. A very beautiful and worthwhile cave. We then exited and after deciding that Ian had not gone back into Y5 but was probably on his way home, set off through the weeds and undergrowth up the doline. By the time that we got back to my car, Ian was waiting but had been unable to find the key. We got back to camp about 1830 for a nice beer and dinner. By this time our numbers swelled more with Joan and Cathy Brown arriving. Cathy had photocopied a huge pile of stuff on Yagby from the ASF library - mainly old UNSWSS "Spar" journals. It's a shame that we didn't have time to fully digest the content as it would have made a significant difference to the rest of the weekend.

Sunday Morning again arrived with fine weather as did Hossein who had turned up late Saturday night and headed down to the Caves House at the Tourist Caves only to discover that the accommodation (\$100s per night) was not what he had been promised when he signed up for the trip. So he pitched Tent in the camping ground opposite Cotterills. About 1030 am group of Phil, Thomas, Hossein in Phil's care and Deborah, Dean, Jon and Neka in the city WD set off for Eagles Nest. George the manager had thoughtfully provided a key for the Eagles Nest management trail which Dean's 4WD had no trouble negotiations but Phil in the low clearance Toyota Aurion thought it a better idea to park the vehicle about 2 km along the track and walk the rest of the way to the clearing at the end of the trail. At this point we set off in the direction of the Yarrangobilly river and totally missed the Eagles Nest doline.

Some in the group thought that the steep limestone walls of the gorge were the side of the doline and wanted to keep going but sense prevailed and we found Eagles Nest by backtracking about 0.5 km during which Neka showed her mastery of swearing in English whilst managing to get bitten by a ferocious bull ant. We climbed down into the doline without mishap but a pretty large, loose limestone slab was dislodged which could have done someone injury. We had lunch in the cool of the Y1 entrance and set up the entrance pitch with ladder and belay rope. Everyone in the group negotiated the ladder pitch into West Eagles Nest (WEN) in style and we were on our way to the first rock choke which Dean climbed and rigged a tape at the top as protection for less confident climbers. From the top of the choke the rockpile corkscrews down and down until the "non-pitch" is reached. This 4m climb looks worst than it is and offers a wall corner crack which is actually the way up and down the drop. From here more corkscrewing down leads to the "Fuck it's Cold" (FIC) passage (from graffiti on wall, apparently) which abruptly ends and a stoop down and look to the right shows the Hughies Dig gate about 10 m through a low crawl. FIC shows evidence of a lot of charcoal (from bushfires) evidently washed into the cave and is deposited on the low ledges on each side of the passage. Through Hughies Dig and now into East Eagles Nest (EEN), the most beautiful decorated areas were there to enjoy. After visiting the Red Room and Crystal Cascades we marvelled at the beautiful bathtub like crystal pools near the railway tunnel. Dean even spotted an Eagle and its nest high above the crystal cascades!

From there we headed up and found our way through flatbed cavern and followed the track marking rope to near the start of the streamway rockpile. At this stage we had a navigational dilemma. Neither Deborah nor I had much idea which way now to the Y2 entrance and exit from the cave. Deborah had been through the rockpile before and couldn't remember

whether the entrance was down or up. I had previously (like 20 years ago) entered through the streamway and so thought that the gated entrance would be down through the rockpile. The trip map and notes that we had were not much help on this point. And we were not even sure where the rockpile was - there were a few of them in that part of the cave. We must have looked around backwards and forwards for an hour. Meanwhile we decided to backtrack to Flatbed Cavern and at that point I slipped and fell whilst attempting a very simple and avoidable climb. Deborah was very close when I slipped and was on the spot telling me not to move about 2 milliseconds after I landed. After checking me out for spinal injuries, double vision etc I was able to get up and move slowly but painfully back to Flatbed Cavern whilst the rest of the group continued to search for the exit from the cave. The frustrating thing was that we knew we must be very close to the streamway entrance but it was starting to dawn that if we didn't locate it soon we might have to back track through the cave and exit via Y1. This would make a very long trip since we had already been underground about 8 hours and we were looking at 3 to 4 hours backtracking. Finally we hit upon the idea of looking at the rockpile passage which we had first looked at and discounted and there was a well trogged route with bits of track marking rope tied to the roof seemingly indicating the way on. Meanwhile I was moving slowly but painfully and was unable to support any weight on my right arm so climbing was impossible. Hossein, Thomas and Jon all joined to help me negotiate the rockpile and all seemed to be going well until we came to a muddy pit which seemed to signal a dead end. Hossein and then Dean spend quite a long time checking out the rockpile from here looking for the way on to the entrance. Finally a decision had to be made and it was that we would stay as a group and move back out through the cave the way that we had come in. It was already about 10 pm and so we got prepared for a

long night. So we started back and then Deborah called out "I can see a chain...with a gate attached to it". Immediately under the gate was a rock with a 1 metre high white painted arrow pointing upwards! We had missed it completely on the way through. And immediately below was a short drop through which clean stream polished cobbles could be seen - the streamway. Within minutes we were exiting the cave and the mood and morale of the group improved markedly. We had been underground for about 10 hours. The guidebook notes that we had describes Eagles Nest as a 5 to 10 hour trip.

However the fun wasn't quite over. Because we had come via a circuitous route to the Y1 entrance it was not entirely clear where the car was, so we set off up the hill in the general direction; the aim being to head at least far enough East to intersect the track. I actually set a compass bearing from my topo map based on where I thought the car should be. Anyway the long and the short of it was that the rest of the group headed south East and turned East whereas I along with Hossein - who was keeping a close eye on me given my damaged state kept going South East to intersect the track. The track intersection didn't happen and we ended up over the other side of the ridge and got caught up in the most massive amount of weeds and undergrowth. It took ages to get across to the main group who were patiently cooeeing for 20 minutes (they said). However when we reached them we found that they hadn't located the track or the car, which turned out to be about 50m away. So seven of us piled into Dean's 4WD and off up the trail to collect my car and back to Cotterills

When we returned to the cottage it was around midnight and the rest of the group had grown quite anxious and we're making plans to conduct a recce to at least locate our vehicles. A decision to call the police was being contemplated but probably would not have happened until the morning

After a few drinks and late night dinner everyone was feeling pretty much back to normal after an epic trip. Next time at Eagles Nest we will try the Eyrle entrance.

Monday morning another fine day but a later start due to the late night before. And people started to depart. Jon and Neka for a leisurely trip back to Sydney, Ian and Anna also back to Sydney and Joan to Nowra. It seemed a Coppermine type of day but first Ian L, Phil, Hossein and Thomas went for a stroll across to the village area to check out Leak in the Creek and Thomas and Hossein went for a quick trip into Village Cave Y113. Deborah and Dean who had a long trip home (to Maitland) and got fed up waiting for the rest of the group to get ready for Coppermine said their farewells and headed off after lunch

Phil, Ian, Thomas and Hossein left for Coppermine. Parked the car at the locked gate on the Yan's Crossing Fire Trail (which

had been busted open incidentally) and wandered down to the Coppermine entrance. Hossein checked out the first big collapse doline on the way down and said that the cave entrance had an initial 2 m climb down then went along to another drop which he didn't enter. Meanwhile storm clouds were looming but we pressed on. At Coppermine we checked out the streamway down to the duck under just before the sumps, then Hossein and Thomas explored the upper level, Above ground there was some thunderstorm activity going on but apart from some very large raindrops the weather left us alone.

This was followed by a trip down to the Thermal Pool for a refreshing swim and a quiet night back at Cotterills.

Tuesday morning was Straya Day and the group split to go back home/work.

Yarrangobilly 24–28 March 2016

Joint trip with SUSS

Present: HCG: Phil Fleming, John Dunkley
SUSS: Deborah Johnston, Dean Coleman, Rowena Larkins, Tristan Martin, Louise Johnston, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble, Elsie Wang, Blake Hawkins, Isaac Brunton

CASM (Cavers & Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains): Michael Larkin, Al Beck

Car loads of people starting arriving at Cotterills Cottage from about 2230 onwards on Thursday Evening. Rowena and Phil were first to arrive and opened up the cottage. An advance party from SSS (with whom we shared the cottage) arrived shortly afterwards and then the balance of the SUSS group turned up at various times during the night.

Friday morning, Michael Larkin from CASM joined us and a large group set off to the East Deep Creek doline. We were numbering 11 at this stage so split into 2

groups with Rowena leading one party into Restoration Cave Y50 and Deborah and Phil taking the other group into East Deep Creek Y5. Friday afternoon was same but groups swapped over. On the walk out of the EDC doline Blake was bitten on the leg by a spider but suffered no ill effects other than temporary pain. Michael returned home Friday afternoon.

Saturday we were joined around 0930 by John Dunkley who had driven that morning from Canberra. Meanwhile we had a large group sitting around the cottage with not much sign of anyone about to start caving. This suddenly changed and people went from stopped to full speed preparing to move out. John commented that this reminded him of the "Easter Uprising".

Main item planned for Saturday was an exploratory dive in the Coppermine sump by SUSS cave diver Deborah Johnston.

Deborah is a highly experienced diver with over 200 cave dives in NSW. The rest of the group decided to take John Dunkley for an easy walk up to Tricketts Y13.

Coppermine Sump Dive Y12

Team consisted of Deborah (diver) supported by Dean, Isaac, Louise and Blake.

Deborah reported details of the dive as follows.

“On 26/03/16 a group of five entered Coppermine and made their way to the main sump with a light weight kit for a reconnaissance dive to determine ongoing diving prospects in the cave.

On previous trips the water had been clear enough to show a possible restriction not far in, and a white fish had been seen swimming in the sump.

A single diver (Deborah Johnston (SUSS/ASFCDG)) did the dive, and found that there was no restriction with the passage easy to negotiate with two small cylinders on either side. Deborah swam along the top of the passage for approximately 9.5m where the walls then sloped vertically downwards to a lower section where the passage was seen to continue. The roof of the passage was in 4.5m and the wall appeared to slope to approximately 10m although haziness in the water made visibility poor.

The temperature was recorded at 12 degrees and there were no signs of fauna or bacterial growth. The decision was made not to continue into the deeper section as no adequate tie off had been found to allow an easy return in zero visibility. The total dive time was only six minutes as the water was surprisingly clear on the return journey. There were no signs of divers visiting the sump before.

Now that dive prospects have been determined, SUSS would like to continue exploration of this dive on a future trip with gear that would allow longer and deeper exploration with a view to submit a permit

for this in the future. No dive line was left in the sump due to a lack of suitable tie offs in the roof passage visited.”

After exiting the dive the group warmed up/partially dried out in the sun and went for a walk along the river to Tricketts.

Tricketts Cave Y13

What started out as a quick side trip to a long known and straightforward cave turned into a very interesting afternoon. Rowena took the lead with John, Phil, Tristan, Peter, Miriam and Elsie in tow.

We bashed along for an hour or so through the blackberries and other weeds on the Eastern side of the gorge before finally climbing up to the very impressive Tricketts entrance arch. Everyone who has walked down the gorge has seen the Tricketts entrance – it’s impossible to miss. But visitation to the cave appears to have been limited over the years as evidenced by the visitors book.



John Dunkley, Rowena Larkins and SUSS cavers in Tricketts Y13

Whilst hanging around the entrance having a snack, John Dunkley drew the group’s attention to some interesting calcite rubble deposits. More about this later. It wasn’t long before the group was having a great time climbing around the old dry chambers of Tricketts and exploring the rockpile at the southern end of the cave. Things got interesting when Rowena and Tristan squeezed into “new” passage in the unsurveyed southern upper level see Pavey map, Spar 30. The area has seen

minimal prior entry and leads to small, pristine, decorated area. Contains bones and appears to be close to surface. No air movement was noticed. Should be signed detrog area.

Meanwhile John Dunkley had been philosophizing on the rubble deposits and provided the following commentary.

“The only map of Y13 appears to be the one published in *Spar 30, Dec 1973 p. 7*, numbered 2Y13.ASF1 on the original. This is also the only Y13 map listed in the Australian Karst Index, where it is incorrectly listed as 2Y13.ASF10 due to a clerical error in filling out the AKI data sheets. It is only a plan view with 3 cross-sections & no long section. It was done in January & May 1973, so Y13 was not listed in either of the two earlier cave map lists published by Pavey (for ASF) or SSS.

There are two unsurveyed extensions marked on the original, each "continues for at least 30m, not surveyed".

One appears to be at a high level, the other low level on the west side, apparently beneath the rock fall.

Despite its obvious entrance & interior size, not much seems to have been written about the cave. Some animal bones collected in 1968 were identified at the Australian Museum. The CSS Visitors Book didn't have many entries considering it has been there for at least 36 years. The cave appears to be a warm trap, where in summer cave air flows in near the roof, & out along the floor because it's colder than outside, but in winter warmer cave air is trapped at higher levels, and cold air circulates only close to the entrance. The “bent” stalactites provide ample evidence of this.

The reason I asked about possible air movement in your extension is that if there is an air connection higher up, very cold air could enter in winter & provide a different scenario. That leads to my next item.

You probably noticed a fair expanse of pinkish gravel-like material on the floor about 3-5m inside. The material is light, coarse & easily crushed, is quite unusual, and I think came from the ceiling possibly as the result of air currents. Minor sorting has occurred downslope, leaving larger fragments upslope. The most likely reason may be frost shattering. Yarrangobilly was certainly subjected to past periglacial conditions, one characteristic of which produces freeze and thaw cycles, with spalling from walls & ceilings, & material gradually migrating downslope.

The deposit near the entrance is certainly unusual & may be worthy of taping off to divert foot traffic to the West side to minimise unnecessary trampling. A small laminated notice could be installed. We'd have to discuss this with George.

Y13 may be a very old outflow from Traverse Creek, probably associated with a spring (Bubbling Spring) in the bed of the river below. There are apparently no known caves in the vicinity of Traverse Creek so a thorough surface search may turn up something. The cave runs about 150m at 150deg., SSE towards the valley containing Traverse Creek. A quick measurement on Google Earth suggests that the passage entered by Rowena is about half way from the entrance to the north bank of Traverse Creek.”

After returning to the Tricketts entrance we were joined by the Coppermine sump dive team who had decided to wade down the river rather than through the blackberries.

Rowena's group then moved down to have a quick look into Coppermine and climbed up to the upper level. Phil had a crisis of confidence when faced with having to bridge the floor canyon just past the 2 m climb and decided to sit out that part of the cave along with Peter and Tristan. Rowena, Miriam and Elsie though had no second

thoughts and negotiated the obstacle with grace and style, disappearing upstream to explore through to the gate section.

Back then to Cotterills for a beer followed by a spot of horse poo collecting. John went home to Canberra.

Easter Sunday came about and this time we were off to Eagles Nest. Due to the size of the trip we split into 2 groups and staggered the entry times so that only one group was in the cave at a time. Group led by Rowena entered through the Eyrrie entrance, Y3 whilst the other group led by Deborah went in via the streamway Y2 entrance. Apart from some minor navigational stuff inside the cave the trip went smoothly for both groups and we were all back at Cotterills before dark.

In the meantime the SSS numbers had been gradually building up and by Sunday evening there was quite a group around their campfire, including us.

Monday, again split into 2 groups with Al Beck from CASM joining us. Rowena took one group to Old Inn Y10 whilst Phil was intent on leading a trip into Bath House Y8. However due to a navigational stuff up Phil took his group to Instable Y9, which has a bad reputation for stability of the entrance and was given the thumbs down by popular vote. Since time was running short and Y10 was closer than Y8 it was decided to wander over and have a look at Y10. Rowena's group was exiting just as we arrived and a quick trip was made to Strawhaven and then out and back to the cottage for a quick pack up and getaway back to Sydney.

John Dunkley and Rowena Larkins with SUSS members at Y13 Entrance

Rubble deposits and bones near Y13 entrance

More Y13 entrance deposits

Yarrangobilly 30 Sept–3 Oct 2016

Joint trip with SUSS

Present: HCG: Phil Fleming, Joan Crabb, Thomas Haskell, David, Provest, Hossein Shargh, Ian Binnie, Anna Binnie, Lindsay Matheson, Bruce Waddington

SUSS: Rowena Larkins, Simon Lee, Victor Tan

The week before the trip had been wet and cold in Southern NSW and we were under no delusions that we would be in for an icy, soggy time.

Ian and Anna drove through huge rainstorms to arrive Friday evening and open up the cottage. There was snow on the ground driving over the Cumberland Range and Cotterills was decidedly cool inside.

On arrival, it was found that a glass pane on the kitchen door had been broken. The broken glass was cleaned up and

temporary repair made to the hole by Lindsay using linen backed tape. The damage was reported to the Parks office.

Once again SSS had a trip and we shared the cottage facilities with them.

For daily activities, the group travelled to caves as a single party but once underground would split into 2 parties and rotate visitation to areas in order to ensure safe numbers and supervision and to minimise impact on the cave environment.

Poor weather and high water flows over the weekend plus fact that group included 3 beginners limited the amount of caving conducted. Snow had fallen on Friday followed by heavy rain reducing to showers by Saturday afternoon. After a fine Sunday, heavy rain resumed Monday AM and light powder snow fell in Deep Creek area early Monday afternoon.

Saturday was an icy, soggy trip down to East Deep Creek with snow on the ground at the start of the EDC track. No animals observed but extensive trampling and rooting damage seen on steep slopes on way into EDC doline - suspect feral pigs but animals not seen.

Down in the doline there was lots of water pouring into East Deep Creek Y5 entrance.

Visit past gate was planned but this had to be curtailed as unfortunately when Phil was attempting to operate the lock on the Y5 gate, the key was fumbled and dropped down into the rockpile immediately below the gate. We were unable to locate and retrieve the key at the time but judged low risk of anyone else finding it and using to access the cave. In future Phil will use a wrist loop or lanyard to ensure that this type of incident does not reoccur (key was recovered in January 2017 trip).

Whilst in the EDC doline on Saturday familiarisation trip was conducted to Restoration Cave Y50. Later Saturday afternoon trip to Old Inn Cave Y10 – with high flow stream sinking spectacularly into entrance. Very high water levels encountered at entrance required extra care in entering the cave and handline was rigged for aid. Inside the cave water flow was high and as some members of party wore cotton overalls minimisation of exposure to cold/wet was a major consideration.

Sunday weather was beautiful and trip made to Tricketts Cave Y13. On the previous trip (April 2016), “new” extension was located by SUSS cavers in unsurveyed upper level at southern extremity of cave. During this trip the lead was pushed upwards by Hossein but he was unable to make a connection to the surface. The area is little visited but not new, previous visitation of this area of the cave was evidenced by an inscription in mud at the top of the rockpile “IX 12-1-73”. The area has some beautiful pristine decoration with

a peculiar “cherry red” or “port wine” coloration. Rowena carried out a survey and DISTO traverse to tie in to the Y13 tag.

Also on previous trip, April 16, ASF Fellow John Dunkley noted extensive, unusual calcite rubble deposits at the entrance of Y13 and report on that trip contained a recommendation that these be taped off to preserve them from traffic.



On this trip we installed track marking tape around the deposits and 2 small laminated interpretive signs. The tape and the signs are affixed by rocks and are just inside the entrance and direct traffic around the northern side of the deposits and into the main area of the cave. Tricketts was followed by visit to Y12 Coppermine entrance - high water made it impractical to venture much past the visitors’ book area without getting immersed and so trip was aborted.

Heavy rain returned on Monday morning and fell for about 7 hours. Despite it starting to fine up lots of wet gear from the previous days made a caving trip impractical and most of group left but Phil, Rowena, Simon and Victor had a trip to the tourist cave area and visited Glory Hole followed by walk along river track to thermal pool – but aborted due to high water levels covering the track.

Evidence of hunting was noticed in the Cotterills reserve area – an arrow was found near the cottage enclosure. The arrow was left with Parks staff.

High water flow at entrance to Old Inn Cave – note caver lower down

Inscription found in Tricketts extension

Unusual “cherry red” speleothem coloration in Tricketts extension

Bungonia - or going six rounds with a cave 19–20 Nov 2016

Members: Phil Fleming (TL), Ian Lutherborrow, Hossein Shargh, Thomas Haskell, Ian Binnie, Bruce Waddington, Lindsay Matheson, Joan Crabb,

Visitors: Dave Stenson (CWCG), Theresa, Sharnie

Phil arrived 10 pm Friday night at the Greater Keyhole to find a party in full swing - Ian L had arrived early about 6 pm and was sharing beers with park visitor Scott who had rocked in for a quiet overnight camp but found himself getting pissed with Ian.

About 4am the quiet of the Keyhole was broken by the screech of a car, a tent dragging itself around to find a camp spot and swearing in a foreign language. Hossein had arrived.

Saturday dawned when the sun came up and Lindsay, Ian Binnie and Thomas soon arrived, followed by Bruce and eventually Joan.

About 0930 we all headed off for the B5 doline for SRT practice with Joan staying back to mind the camp. On arrival at the B5 cliffs we encountered a large group of ACT scouts who had set up ropes on every available spot. Anyway they kindly moved one of their ropes to allow us to use the second last (only overhanging) pitch. We quickly had our rope set up and practice was underway. Thomas soon mastered prusiking and declared it much easier than laddering. Most people agreed with this statement except for devoted ladder tragic Ian L.



After an hour or so Dave Stenson “Stenno” arrived with his work friends Theresa and Sharnie. Stenno proceeded to show off by doing a 15 m forward abseil using an oval carabiner and what looked like a comb as a brake device.

By about 1430 everyone was practiced out. Ian L and Stenno headed off with Theresa and Sharnie for a trip through B4-5. Thomas headed off home. Phil, Hossein and Ian Binnie made their way to the B16-51 doline for the planned Blowfly through trip via B51 arriving about 1600. Within milliseconds of arriving at the Richard Styles carpark another car pulled up with a party of 3 who announced that they were bound for a trip into B16 which they would

rig with ladders and a safety rope. We agreed that we would use their ladders for exit since to do otherwise would involve 2 groups rigging the same pitches with 2 lots of gear. That only left B51 to be rigged by our group.



Phil started the rigging of B51 using a belay log next to the big steel bar which seemed to be holding a boulder from blocking the entrance. The rope was backed up to a steel bollard outside the entrance pit. Hossein then took over rigging and discovered a rebelay bolt at the top of the 6 m pitch and a further rebelay point at the top of the next pitch requiring 2 carabiners and a double figure 8 knot. We gave away putting in a rebelay at the top of the next pitch as we hadn't thought to bring enough carabiners - this one had eye bolts beautifully positioned on the wall either side of the pitch to allow a sling to be rigged to give a perfect free hang for the rope. Had

signs of Mr A. Warild's work. Soon we were all 3 at the bottom of the pitch and noticed that we had about 2 metres of rope to spare!

Hossein disappeared into the low crawl off from the bottom of the pitch whilst Phil and Ian moved up and checked out the dry and dusty middle aven. By the time Hossein emerged we were ready to commence the climb up through the Dragons Teeth encountered the other party coming up the tube which leads to the top of the Dragons Teeth. After passing them and entering the tube things got interesting for Phil. Equipped with 2 gear packs coming down the tube he let both drop down onto a ledge. One pack made it onto the ledge - the other pack - Hossein's - fell down the slot below the kidney squeeze window. So Phil went off to retrieve the pack - which he did - and then decided maybe to push down through the vertical squeeze, but soon gave up on that idea as the slot narrowed considerably. But on trying to extract himself from the slot his left gumboot became jammed and came off. Obviously Phil is new to gumboot wearing in caves or he would have taken more care. Meanwhile Hossein who was past the kidney squeeze found the gumboot - but Phil was still stuck in the slot. A helping arm from Ian got Phil out of the slot but then getting through the Kidney Squeeze was another performance and after about 6 attempts Phil got through. Ian followed through and did it one go.

We were now on a roll and headed up the the ladders which the other group had rigged to exit about 2000. Hossein who was first out went off to de-rig B51 in record time. We got back to camp about 2030.

Saturday night was a damp affair weather-wise with a fine misty rain covering everything but the après cave socialising continued in the fashion which has been made into an art form by HCG over the years.

Sunday morning arrived grey and damp but by about 0900 the sun had come out and things were warming up. Phil, Hossein and Ian L were starters for an Acoustic Pot B22 trip. By 1000 Ian L was still fixing a teapot so Hossein and Phil headed off to rig the 30m pitch in Acoustic. Both were arrived just down the bottom when we heard Ian's voice at the top of the pitch. After Ian joined the group at the bottom we headed off to explore the rest of the cave. Hossein and Ian went off to check out the (faint) breeze in the left hand branch. Then Hossein went through the right hand passage "over" squeeze (the "under" looked wet and muddy). Phil sat at the junction and was joined by a blowfly for company. We exited via the pitch, de-rigged and were all back on the surface by 1330, just in time to see some huge storm clouds rolling in. On the way back to camp we stopped to admire and photograph a beautiful echidna opposite the park workshop.

Back at the greater keyhole the heavens were getting ready to open up and so breaking camp and packing up was a wet affair.

Rigging notes:

B51: Minimum 50 m rope. Tie off at bollard outside pit, rebelay off belay log at entrance. Rebelay at top of 1st (6m pitch). Rebelay at top of 2nd pitch - two bolt hangers requires 2 krabs and double figure 8 knot in rope. Rebelay at top of 3rd pitch two eye bolts on either wall out over the pitch - at least 3 krabs and 2 slings to get freehang drop over pitch.

B22: 50 m rope. Find a natural anchor for primary belay, then lots of bolts in the roof - options - don't have to anchor from all of them! Rebelay on wall above main pitch and further rebelay from bolt just past beginners ledge about 10 down (avoids a rub point).

Yarrangobilly 25–29 Jan 2017

Joint trip with SUSS

Present: HCG:Phil Fleming,

SUSS:Deborah Johnston, Rowena Larkins, Dean Coleman, Jordan Fenech, James Selles

Key activities:

26/1/17:

Y5 East Deep Creek

Cave:trip to pretties/detrog section. Recovery of gate key lost during October trip – this has been returned to park office. O'Brien lamp search continued in upper level of East Deep Creek. Recreational trip to Y50 Restoration Cave.

27/1/17:

Y12 Coppermine sump dive:

This visit continued the exploration of the Coppermine sump commenced in April 2016. During the April 2016 trip SUSS cave diver Deborah Johnston found that the

sump led into shallow (4.5m deep x 1.5 m wide) horizontal passage. After around 5 m the walls of the passage were seen to descend vertically to depth about 10 m and the passage continue. The lack of a suitable tie off point before this descent prevented further exploration due to concerns of low visibility further in the sump.

On this trip Deborah came prepared to place a high tensile stainless steel nail to create a tie off point before descending to explore the ongoing passage. Deborah was assisted to the sump by the other 5 members of the group. After kitting up and entering the sump Deborah chose not to proceed past the point reached in the previous dive. This was due to 2 factors – 1.the rock was unsuitable for nail placement due to its fractured state, and 2. the visibility in the sump was extremely poor and failed to clear over time. The diver returned after a total dive time of less than

10minutes. The group plans to use a float as an artificial tie off point but it was decided this would be done on a future trip when visibility has (hopefully) returned. SUSS are keen to continue exploration of this sump but a fix needs to be found if there is a continued problem finding tie offs further in. This may be use of a small hand driven drill to enable artificial anchors to be driven in. After the dive, Deborah exited the cave assisted by 2 of the party for gear haul whilst the other 3 visited the upper level streamway. Further permit application will be made for future dive.

Y13 Trickett's Cave:

During this trip we continued survey and exploration in the "new" extension located by SUSS cavers in a previously known but unsurveyed upper level at southern extremity of cave. During the joint HCG/SUSS April 2016 trip, ASF Fellow John Dunkley AM speculated on the possible existence of a high level entrance in Tricketts which could permit entry of frigid air into the cave in winter. This could provide an explanation for the frost shattered calcite deposits located in the entrance chamber as well as contribute to the formation of the curious bent stalactites further inside the cave. During this visit to the "new extension" SUSS caver Jordan Fenech attempted to push the rockpile at the top of this area. The rockpile is awkward and so the attempt was not fully pursued but potentially leads to a collapsed entrance as evidenced by extensive animal bones and organic material and the temperature being noticeably warmer

suggesting that it is close to the surface in what is an otherwise cool cave. Plan for the next trip will be to conduct surface traverse to locate the area on the ground and to identify any associated surface expression.

During this trip, track marking tape was placed in the new extension to protect key areas from muddying.

Additional survey work was carried out by Rowena to further define the area. Preliminary survey has now been issued by SUSS.

Just inside the "new extension" is a low, pristine room un-enterable except by very tight squeeze by very thin caver. But the decoration can be readily viewed from outside the chamber. We suggested to management that this be designated a "for your eyes only" section and tape marked and laminated signs be installed to discourage entry.

28/1/17:

Y58 Janus Cave:

Enjoyable trip into this most beautifully decorated cave. Recommendation to management for cleaning of shoe tray "stepping stones" and ribbed pads on Crystal streamway. We undertook to do this in our next trip.

Other:

Feral horses: horses (4) were seen grazing in the late afternoon about 2 km south of Yarrangobilly Village Camping Area. A single horse was seen grazing in the camping area amongst tents/trailers on the river flat early morning.