

THE SUSS BULL

IT'S true: I'm just not on the same wavelength as men who go crawling down underground caves for fun in the dark and need to be rescued.

Perhaps that's why I'm unimpressed by the whole *Boy's Own* approach of the injured man, Kieran McKay, as he was whisked triumphantly off to hospital this week.

More than unimpressed, actually. More like downright irritated. And the reason why I'm so unimpressed is this: I'm paying absurd ACC rates so Mr McKay and other young men like him can enjoy the thrill of risk-taking on a massive scale — while the biggest risk I run in my office is getting up a ladder to change a light bulb.

It adds to my annoyance to think that room must be found in over-stretched hospitals so these young daredevils can recover from their self-inflicted ordeals, while yet more people die on waiting lists.

"Give it up! — no way. How could I give it up? I love it," he was reported as saying, rather like an alcoholic between glugs. What drives young men into life-risking sporting activities? Is it lack of imagination? Lack of girlfriends? Boring weekday jobs? Whatever it is, most seem to feel differently about it when they have kids of their own and discover something about their own emotional vulnerability and the fragility of life — an adventure Mr McKay doesn't seem to have embarked on.

SPECIAL "NO COMMON THEME" EDITION

VOL 38 (3)

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Sigma Cave (What?- Again?)
High Adventure, Opinion
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Geoffrey "Yes! Yes!" McDonnell,
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nothing from Ken Anderson
Everything from Jill Rowling
& a Merry Potty Load from Norton

The Organ of The Sydney University Speleological Society

SUSS TRIP & MEETING LIST: January - March 1999

If you wish to suggest a trip or have questions about this list contact any of the people below.

ALL trips are suitable for beginners, unless otherwise stated.

SUSS General Meetings: 7:00 p.m. Holme Building Common Room, meetings are held first Thursday of the month. The Holme Building is the building closest to the Parramatta Road footbridge, on the northern side of the University campus. The Common Room is on the first floor (enter from Science Rd, on campus).

Email Address: Check out the SUSS web site, at http://www.ee.usyd.edu.au/suss/SUSS_Home_Page.html

To get on a trip, contact the nominated trip leader. See SUSS committee list on inside back cover of this Bull for contact details.

April

1 General Meeting Video Spectacular! Jason Moule shows us his a selection of his caving videos - including Speleosports + the NZ '99 trip. Top Stuff!!

Student Holidays from Friday 2nd April to Sunday 11th April inclusive

8 Committee Meeting - 6:30pm onwards. Venue... to be announced. Phone Matthew Hole.

2-11 Cooleman/Yarangobilly Cooleman and Yarrangobilly (Yagby) are arguably the finest limestone karst areas in NSW. There is a host of stuff to do on this Easter trip, including some possible walking in the Brindabella range. Prepare to get cold though, Yagby (near the Snowy Mountains) caves are around 5°C. Contact Ian Cooper (02) 6362 9028 / (02) 9682 6790

10-11 Jenolan Miss out in March?, or just keen to get back into the thick of it? Contact Shannon Crack.

10-11 Capertree Valley. NSW Speleo Council Macquarie karst revegetation rehabilitation project. This weekend is devoted to Documentation and Vegetation Survey of Capertree Valley, but some (limited) caving might happen. If you would like to help, call Phil Maynard. **NOT recommended for Beginners.**

14 SUSS Lunch BBQ! For all those students on campus - come and check out what caving is all about. Time: 1pm-2pm. Venue: Biochemistry Lawns, Maze Crescent. **BEGINNERS VERY WELCOME !!**

17-18 Tuglow Tuglow Caves has surged in popularity ever since SUSS released the definitive work on the speleology of Tuglow Caves. Check it out! Contact Phil Maynard.

17-18 NSW Speleo Council. Now to be held at Rhodes Sea Scout Hall. For details contact Chris Norton.

24-26 SOUTHERN OBSCURE KARST ODYSSEY! In the grand tradition of last year's Crawney Pass epic, see Mt Fairy, Cleatmore, Marble Arch and more! Tour some of the less-known caving areas of southern NSW with Chris Norton. Sure to be lots of nice café stops along the way. Phone Chris Norton.

27 Committee Meeting - 6:30pm at Thurle's Castle, 200 Cleveland St. Surry Hills. Phone Matthew Hole

May

1-2 Kandos/Cudgegong. Another one of those NSW Speleo Council Tree/shrub documentation exercises. Phil Maynard 9517 1050. **NOT recommended for Beginners.**

6 Annual General Meeting; Kill the Committee, and elect another! Get involved! There is more to life than study!

8-9 Jenolan Check out one of SUSS's regular caving haunts. Phone Phil Maynard.

15-16 Wyanbene + Big Hole. Wyanbene is one of the best streamway caves in NSW. The Big Hole is a 100m+ hole in the ground, fun for SRT practice. Details to be announced....

15-16 St. John First Aid Course The Full St. John Senior First Aid Course, covering the principals of first aid and resuscitation. A **MUST** for budding trip leaders, but a good thing for everyone to have. Union Members \$95; Non-Union members \$115. Includes exam. Contact: Sydney University Sports Union, University Sports and Aquatic Centre (ie. the swimming pool reception desk). Phone 9351 4978.

22-23 Cliefden Caving in the wild wacky west. Stay in the spacious and well appointed old shearers quarters.. with all the modern conveniences. David (Cowboy) Connard 9968 3838 (Hm).

29-30 Wombeyan What project does Jill have on her platter now? Phone Jill Rowling at home on 9481 0949.

29-30 Molong Phone Phil Maynard 9517 1050. **NOT recommended for Beginners.**

June

6 General Meeting Slide show on Lechuguilla Caves presented by Terry Bolger.

5-6 Jenolan SUSS's monthly visits to Jenolan continue. Phone Chris Norton.

10 David Jackson Memorial Concert. Great Hall, Sydney University ~7pm. More details to be announced.

12-14 Mudgee/Queens Pinch/Apple Tree Flat What, all of them? Tree surveying gone beserk (another NSW Speleo Council thing) Phone Phil Maynard 9517 1050 **NOT recommended for Beginners.**

19-20 Deep Pass/ Tigersnake Canyons. A duo of canyons with David Connard. 9968 3838 (Hm).

Editorial

Welcome to the Bull. Do you like the cover?

The text I have reproduced is from a large circulation New Zealand newspaper. The name of the paper eludes me. (Is that important, Chris?) It was written by Rosemary McLeod for her "Broadside" column, and was one of the many articles that followed Kieren McKay's rescue from Bulmer Cavern at the beginning of the year.

I apologise for the quality of the reproduction. It was faxed over to me literally twenty four hours before this Bulletin went to the printers. I would reproduce more of it in the "Caving in the News" section on Page 20, but the reader gets Ms McLeod's drift after a few paragraphs.

While Mr McKay was risking life and limb in the interests of adventure, a woman was being sexually violated in the loos as festivities raged in a Wellington nightclub

- proclaims large italicized text at the centre of the article, presumably to capture the readers' attention.

In another section of the article Ms McLeod continues:

Don't imagine that rescue dramas come cheap in a system plagued by under-funding either.

Cavers were flown from all over the country at your and my expense to help with Mr McKay's rescue. And then there were the many hours of paid police time, none of which Mr McKay can expect to shell out for.

All of this expense and effort was necessary, remember, because he chose to go adventuring under ground in uncharted territory – territory of no legitimate use to anything but bats – knowing all the risks.

Yes, it's terrific that there are people skilled enough to rescue him. Yes, it's great that he came out in one piece – and less injured than everyone had feared he was. But somehow he was a little too high on the thrill of it all, as if he hadn't risked other people's lives and chewed up their summer holidays.

Then there was Matthew Hole's rescue several weeks later from Middle Earth - another New Zealand South Island cave. Matthew was involved in an accident and rescue that is the subject of an ongoing investigation. The report to be published in the next Bull promises to make for interesting reading. A brief summary of Kieren and Matthew's mishaps appear in the General News section overleaf, and a choice newspaper clipping including a photo of the two wounded gentlemen together in Nelson hospital appears on Page 20.

This could very well have been the "Danger and Disaster" edition of the Bull, but seeing as how we now have a new load of freshers that we don't want to scare away, an attempt has been made to downplay this aspect of caving. Suffice to say that if you come caving, you take your life into your own hands. Fear will be your constant companion. Mortality will be your bedfellow. And things like that.

This Bull sees the last of Jill Rowling's Sigma Cave reports. Funny – I remember hearing something like that in the last Bull. I still haven't seen a map, so it is highly likely that this is not the end of the Sigma story. Jill is to be congratulated on the accuracy and detail of her observations. I would like to thank her for kindly pointing out to me that in Bull 38 (2) I used the map of Wineglass Cave in Phil's article on the Surveying Course, where Phil had specifically mentioned the Victoria Arch Survey. I honestly didn't think anyone would notice. I would also like to apologise for the quality of the photos in the last Bull which, in an email shortly after having received the Bull she correctly observed were "a blurred mess". It is true, as she suggests, that I "... badly stuffed up". Jill's husband Mike then weighed in with his comments in another helpful email, noting that "the photos in the last Bull suck" and that he "...felt forced to hide that issue at the SSS meeting".

There are a few accidents in this Bull. David Connard describes a Starlight Canyon trip that didn't quite go as planned, and in "Buchan Amnesia" Ian Cooper – a man believed by many to be immortal – describes how he almost came unstuck in Sundial Cave. Chris describes how Vanessa drove over a Hole, fell off her bike, and was later smeared with butter.

Anyone curious as to why Vanessa had to be smeared with butter (Why not?) might care to read Norton's excellent "Obscure New England Karst Odyssey". This was a very important article for me – the first of Chris's many submissions for the SUSS Bull that I have been able to fault. Like Jill Rowling, his articles are usually presented as proof-read, polished pieces of work. Paragraphs and the content of the paragraphs are all perfectly justified. And yet, there was the mistake – glaringly obvious to anyone with an eye for minutiae. Jill will know what I am referring to. I challenge you to find it.

Happy Easter. Cave safely, and enjoy your reading.

General News

BBQ at Uni

The sun shone, the sausages sizzled and the beer bubbled. The SUSS BBQ was underway. The great diversity of SUSS was represented; from Keir Vaughan-Taylor, our on-campus life member, to our newest members Stephen and Mark (who joined up on the day) as well as the on-campus committee members and the off-campus David Connard who managed to drop in during his lunch-break. Greg Holmes added to entertainment, demonstrating how to nearly remove one's hair while lighting a BBQ.

Thanks to Shannon for organising the event, Sushila for shopping and David Stanaway for pitching in and cooking. It was too good to do just once and looks set to become a monthly event. If you are on campus, put the next one in your diary!

-AD

Ice Age, Mammoth Cave

It is now almost two years since this lead was first noticed. Following is a summary of events to date.

While waiting for the return of Ron Allum from a dive in May 1997, a lead was explored by Mark Staraj through a rockpile to the start of an almost buried streamway. The small air space breathed faintly but definitely.

A return was made in December and two days of digging "Primeval Fear" allowed Verity Morris, David Jackson, Mark Staraj and Geoff McDonnell to enter and explore "Ice Age" - approximately 100m of passages (still unsurveyed) ending at a second dig in sand. Two more days of digging showed that this dig would require a major and sustained effort. One thing had suddenly become excitingly obvious - Ice Age was heading directly for the last big unknown at Jenolan - the underground river upstream of Mammoth Cave - better known as the Woolly Rhinoceros.

Plans took shape again for a renewed assault at the SUSS 50th in May 1998. However the rains returned and by the time the next visit occurred in July, Ice Age had been subjected to flooding. Some slimy mud was removed from Primeval Fear but the two days of digging at the second dig had been completely undone. More thought went into consolidating the spoil to limit backwashing during future floods and a team set to work over a few days under David Jackson. A depth of 2-3m was reached where the passage showed signs of leveling out.

Massive flooding occurred in August and a later trip confirmed the worst - Primeval Fear had been totally refilled. It was back to the start again.

The December 1998 trip endeavored to make lasting progress and so two days into the digging the diggers once again reached the second dig, where to their great delight little impact seemed to have been made by the floods. Two days later and a new obstacle put a halt to the effort - water now leached out of the dig site and submerged it.

Surprisingly a visit just two days later found that the water had disappeared revealing three metres of gently descending passage with air space! As it was the end of the trip, this tantalizing glimpse would have to wait. March 1999 and the three metres was dug to where the passage dipped again and once again was blocked by a pool of water. The next trip in April will probably confirm whether the water is a permanent problem needing siphoning and whether the passage is about to "bottom out" and open into "caverns measureless to man".

-MS

Australian Nearly Loses Face in New Zealand

Andrew Matthews was lucky to avoid serious injury after a recent accident in HH.

HH is a cave in the Mt Arthur region of New Zealand's South Island, and has been receiving attention recently as a possible link to the Exhaleair system further upstream in the Ellis Basin, and possibly the Pearse Resurgence further downstream. HH was discovered in the early eighties during one of the Mt Arthur Tops trips, and was pushed to a reasonable sized streamway which sumped at -625m. It was hoped at the time that this cave would offer a top entrance to Nettlebed. Recent discoveries beyond Hammer Heights and Soft Rock Café in Nettlebed showed Nettlebed was heading towards HH, but dye-tracing proved H.H. went straight to the Pearse Resurgence, and not via Nettlebed.

John Atkinson from Christchurch organised an expedition there two years ago and it was during this that Kieran McKay first dived the terminal sump. It was about 70m long, not too deep and canyon passage beyond the sump continued a short way to the top of another pitch.

Danielle Gemenis from SUSS organised another trip in March this year. Big plans were made around exploration on the other side of the sump. Heaps of dive gear and enough rope for plenty of exploration was ferried to the sump. The cave still had close to 200m to drop before reaching the level of the Pearse but a more exciting prospect was the possibility of intersecting the elusive main drain - water from the Ellis Basin.

In the end there were only two trips beyond the sump because of the mammoth effort involved and also because rain and the threat of rain put things back a few days. Al Warild and Greg Tunnock had a 24hr trip rigging some wet pitches, then a US caver (Robbie ?) explored and surveyed more with a Sydney based

Irish caver. (Simon ?) They were underground and on the go for 35hrs. HH is now just over 700m deep and 130m longer.

Andrew Matthews had been responsible for rigging the system for access by the divers. Andrew was assisting fellow Aussies Al and Greg when they all stopped to change carbide.

Al Warild opened his carbide "pig", and it was sitting on a rock beside a large pool of water when Andrew accidentally knocked it in.

Al and Greg, older and wiser than Andrew, immediately fled the room. Andrew realised what had happened, and as explosive acetylene gas filled the small chamber he selflessly threw himself into the evil bubbling cauldron to shield his friends from the inevitable explosion. (ED – I have Andrew's word that this is what happened, although other reports have him running off in the other direction)

Andrew recalls there was an explosion of flames that seemed to continue for several seconds. Then he was putting out spot fires around the chamber – cave packs, suits and ropes having all caught alight!

Andrew's face was hideously mutilated by the flames, so that until his scars healed he was known as "The English Patient". His eyebrows were completely incinerated, and a layer of burnt flesh sloughed away from his face weeks later. This mask of skin has been tanned and mounted in the Waitomo Museum of Caves as a monument to the valor of SUSS cavers.

-DM

Australian Loses Face and Breaks Arm in New Zealand

SUSS President Matthew Hole was seriously injured and highly embarrassed after an accident in New Zealand this January.

The accident occurred in Middle Earth, one of the many vertical caves in the Takaka region of New Zealand's South Island. Matthew was in New Zealand with cavers from MUCG and ??? as part of a combined NZ expedition. Matthew was later heard to describe the whole Middle Earth incident as "Undoubtedly the worst experience in my life."

In an attempt to free a rope tangled halfway up a pitch, and rather than wait until the next day for rescue Matthew elected to climb. Fifteen metres up, he slipped, and although belayed in two places by tape slings looped over rocks, it is believed the top sling came loose so that he fell to the floor at the base of the pitch. He was concussed, briefly unconscious, and came to to find he had several broken bones, cuts, and that he faced a night wet and cold in the cave, albeit with a party of three others to look after him.

The party was rescued the next day, and by five o'clock in the afternoon Matthew was in an ambulance to Nelson hospital. It was found that he had sustained many serious injuries, including a fractured scapula, cracked ribs, fractured left radius and a lung infection from the cold wet night spent in the cave.

A full report on the incident will be published in the next Bull.

-DM

New Zealander Breaks Arm and Breaks and Loses Face in New Zealand

New Zealander Kieran McKay was lucky to survive an accident in Bulmer Cavern on New Zealand's South Island at the beginning of the year. The story of his rescue was front page news for three days in many New Zealand newspapers, and was mentioned in the evening news on television in Australia.

Around 8pm on Monday 28th December 1998, Kieran and three other cavers entered the Panorama Entrance of the Bulmer system to establish Camp 2 several hundred metres past the end of Soupmix 500. Other members of the expedition spent Tuesday rigging the Labyrinth section of the cave, and spent Wednesday relaxing and recovering their energy for what was to be a three day underground exploration/survey session starting on Thursday.

There were eight people above ground on Thursday morning around 8.30am when Julian, one of the cavers with Kieran's party, came into camp to report that Kieran was in trouble with a broken arm, a broken leg and some serious facial injuries. Kieran was bleeding badly from a deep cut under his chin, had been concussed and was in a lot of pain. He had fallen 15 metres after two anchors pulled out of a wall, although it was unsure whether he was clipped onto the rope ready for descent at the time.

Although the accident was only 300 - 400m from Camp 2, many obstacles had to be faced to get Kieran back. Normally it would take an hour to pass the 25m pitch, three roped 5m climbs, a dodgy short pitch/traverse, several unroped climbs then three 15m pitches. It had taken Marcus and Robbie seven hours to get Kieran back to camp and get him stabilised – around midnight on the Wednesday. Marcus had two hours sleep before making the six hour solo trip back out of the cave to alert the others above ground.

Above ground it was decided that Lindsay Main would coordinate the rescue. He set about contacting the Nelson Police and as many other cavers as possible by mountain radio and mobile phone. Julian ?, John Atkinson and Andrew Matthews made the first trip back into the cave to take food and first aid supplies to Kieran. Andrew later reported arriving at Camp 2 to find a very chirpy, talkative, hungry and thirsty Kieran McKay. John performed a thorough medical examination of the victim, and removed several impressive flakes of rock from the gash in his neck. No one took Kieran seriously when he suggested he might be able to walk most of the way out of the cave.

After a few hours at Camp 2 Andrew and Robbie set off out of the cave, laying bright pieces of marker tape along the path every 5 – 10 metres. On the way out, around midnight Andrew and Robbie passed Neil Silverwood and four other cavers on their way in with sleeping mats, sleeping bags, food and a stretcher. Two other groups were passed – reeling out wire for Michie Phones.

Andrew and Robbie reached the surface at 3.00am to see a Land Search and Rescue tent erected at the exit; whose staff were supplying the tired cavers with food and drink as well as keeping track of who was going in and coming out.

There was another surprise as the sun was coming up back at Lake Camp where the cavers found approximately thirty more tents had been set up. Caterers and about forty more cavers had been flown in that afternoon. From six o'clock in the morning, and until the end of the rescue helicopters continued flying up and down the mountain ferrying gear, cavers and reporters.

Word came through later that day that Kieran was moving fast and would probably make it to Camp 1: The Octopus Room that evening. Andrew, Van Watson (Operations Manager, Black Water Rafting) and two Christchurch cavers set off back into Bulmer the next morning to porter some hauling ropes. Kieran was moving faster than expected and by the time the four pitches in Castration Corridor had been converted for hauling he was there. The 120 metres of pitches in The Lion's Den had been rigged with high tension traverse lines spanning the shaft like a flying fox, and in no time at all Kieran had been hauled up and through. A TV3 cameraman filmed this haul with proper lights – no doubt this will be good archival footage one day.

At the entrance Kieran walked out to a cheering crowd and a waiting helicopter, and was flown to camp for a brief chat with his father before being flown off to Nelson hospital.

-AM

Fencing at Cliefden

The NSW Speleological Council recently held a fencing day at Cliefden. This did not mean everyone was dressed in white and ran around with sabres and epees; rather, the aim of the exercise was to erect a barbed wire fence around Cave Island. What has this got to do with caving? Well, NSWSC has received a grant of \$5010 from the NSW Environmental Trusts to revegetate Cave Island, to restore the native vegetation above the caves so that conditions in the caves are closer to what they were before the land was cleared for farming. To grow the new plants, the stock have to be kept away, and that's where the fence comes in.

Several SUSS members helped with the fencing, and were rewarded with bright red complexions and lots of scratches from the barbed wire. Their efforts can be inspected on the forthcoming trip on 22-23 May.

-CN

Don loves Estelle

It is official. French caver Estelle Lifran captured Don's attention at a party in Chippendale 1995. He was distracted by her ravishing beauty and passingly interested to note that she possessed a finely tuned inquisitive intellect typical of engineers everywhere. However, when he asked the Gallic Goddess whether she was interested in caving and she replied in the affirmative, cupid fired his arrow straight through the centre of Don's heart. Here was a woman!

Don immediately set about to win the affection of this rare lady, and put a visit to Jenolan at the top of his list of "Things to do to make Estelle fall in love with me, but make her think I am really just showing her some nice parts of Australia". At Jenolan, by one of a series of miracles that confirmed theirs was a match made in heaven, the Cavers' Cottage was full and so Don and Estelle were forced to sleep at one of the Guide's Huts with Don's brother Andrew who was working at Jenolan at the time. In the morning Estelle had her first contact with a kangaroo when one of the guides at the hut called "Girls!" out the kitchen window into the bush, and several apparently wild kangaroos came hopping up to the back verandah to be hand fed. Estelle was charmed, and Don's plan was working.

Estelle returned to France later that year to graduate, but returned to Australia early 1996 to start work in Australia. She found a job with CSIRO and has been with the Food Sciences Division since. Estelle and Don have been "co-habiting" since then, and this arrangement has suited them perfectly well. So much so, in fact, that the couple recently announced their engagement and intention to wed in France early next year.

At the time this Bull is going to the printers, Estelle is still in France wrapping up five weeks work. During this time Don has kept himself busy with odd jobs like editing and writing articles and news items for the SUSS Bull. However with each passing day of their separation, his stomach fills with butterflies, his legs turn to jelly, his thoughts become more vague and he understands more clearly that Estelle means more to him than all of the history of Jenolan, all of the satisfaction of a hot meal on a cold Friday night in Katoomba, all of the surprising beauty of the cleanest canyons in the Blue Mountains, all of the wild mystery of the deep dark pitches in the Ellis Basin, and the pleasures of a cool beer at the Forest Lodge on a warm night after a General Meeting.

-DM

Letter to the Editor

The SUSS Mt Anne Expedition - 1987: A Scandal Exposed!

The Editor, Sydney University Speleological Society
Box 35, Holme Building
The Union, University of Sydney
Sydney 2006

Friday 27th March 1999

Dear Sir,

It is with a great sense of shame that I must report to my fellow members that I have recently uncovered a scandal perpetrated by our Society upon the unsuspecting caving community *specifically*, and upon the people of Australia *generally*.

I was leafing through journals in our library recently and stumbled upon the article "1987 S.U.S.S. Expedition to Mt Anne" in that most widely read and respected Australian caving publication - *Helictite*, Vol 25 No2.

Current members may not be aware of this endeavour but in 1987, with much fanfare and a budget of \$20,000, including \$8000 of sponsorship, SUSS headed for Mt Anne in the hope of discovering a cave that would claim the title of the deepest cave in Australia.

In this article, which has a worldwide distribution, SUSS stated its expedition aims:

"The expedition aims to explore the area, looking for caves with good depth potential. The caves discovered will be surveyed and mapped. The expedition intends producing a publication on the area in the near future. The following information is being compiled:

- cave descriptions and maps
- suggested rigging details
- entomology - Graeme Smith from Bayer
- water chemistry - Julia James
- geology - Martin Scott from Sydney University
- botany - Joy Everett from The Royal Botanic Gardens"

To date I have seen four cave descriptions and maps. One of these maps was of a doline. Where are these reports? An article was published in the *Australian Geographic* Issue 10. It said a vertical kilometre of caves was explored and mapped. Where is the evidence? After twelve years just when is "the near future"? In the AG article there was much made of the discovery of a cave around 180m deep named "Deep Thought". A computer generated map accompanied the article. However no drafts of this cave nor any survey data has ever appeared.

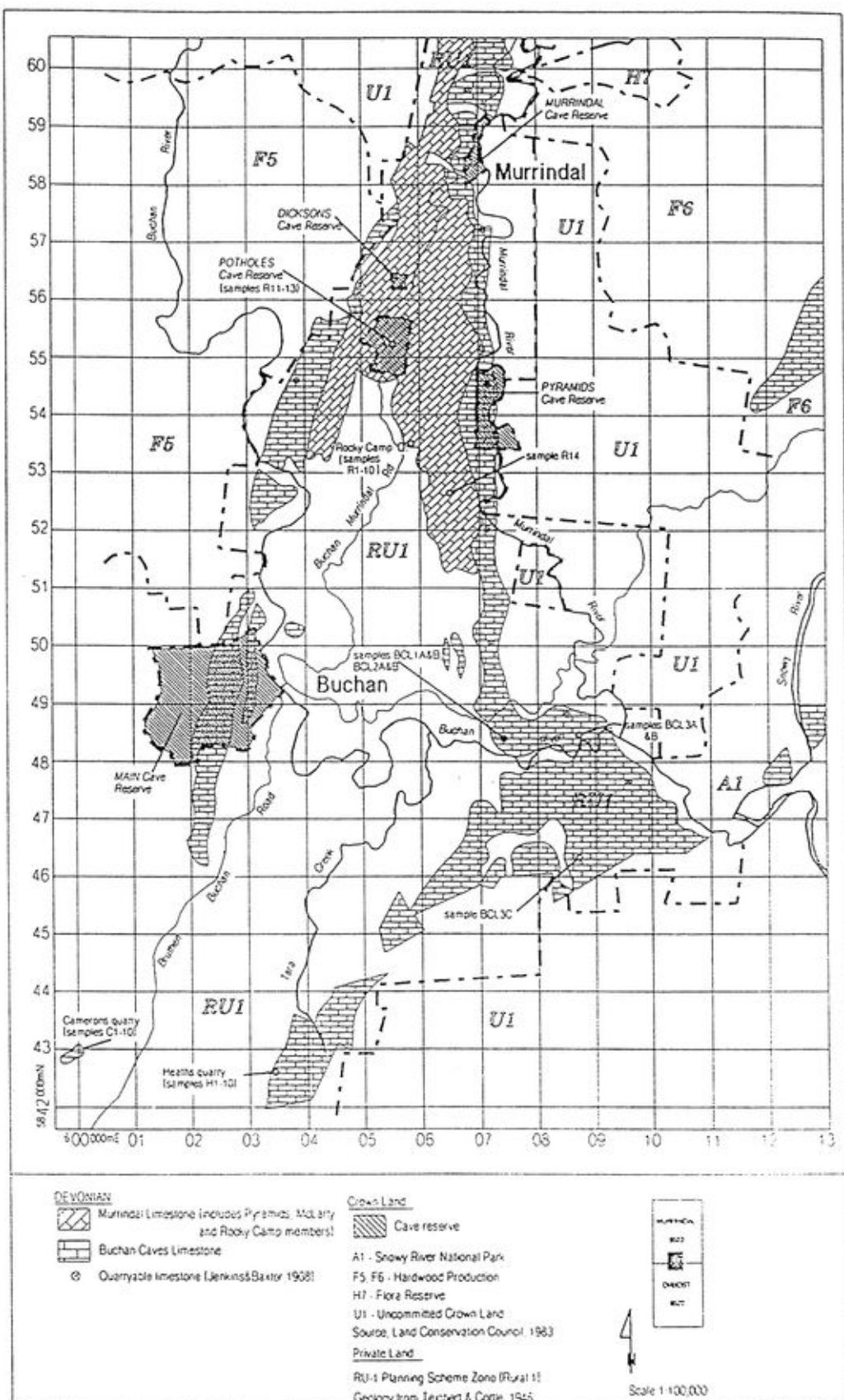
I am lead to a painful conclusion. Deep Thought is a computer fantasy (as the name was meant to suggest?) and the expedition produced nothing like the promises made by its organisers.

I believe it is time we all heard the true story about Mt Anne. What did they do? Just what did the this quote mean from *Helictite*: "There was some interpersonal conflict in Hobart before the expedition left for Mt. Anne." What was Danielle doing in the bath of custard in THAT photo?

Let us have a full and detailed report on the REAL Mt Anne Expedition!

Yours in discovery,

Mark Staraj.



Limestone around Buchanan.
Grid is Australian map grid with a 1km spacing.
(From "Limestone Resources of Victoria", p38.)

Buchan Amnesia

Buchan Caves, Victoria, 25 December 1998 – 3 January 1999

by Ian Cooper

Participants: Steve Contos, Ian Cooper, David Cusack, Annalisa Dixon, Chris Norton, Sushila Thomas (VSA) Miles Pierce, Lou Williams

Friday 25/12/1998

Want to escape the Christmas terrors of family and baked dinners? Chris and Sushila did just that by driving off to the south and camping between Bombala and Delegate.

Saturday 26/12/1998

Chris and Sushila continue south to Buchan via the Snowy River and Little River gorges. Once at Buchan they spent the afternoon looking around the tourist caves. Annalisa and Ian take 9 hours to drive down via Bombala, Cann River and Orbost through sun then driving rain, hail and wind. Buchan is a town of several hundred people with a general store, post office, petrol station, pub, and several tourist shops and motels. Base for the week was the original Buchan pub, now called "Homeleigh" and run by the Rimstone Cooperative (a group of Victorian cavers). "Homeleigh" is located on the north edge of town, within walking distance of the tourist caves. The Rimstone Cooperative bought the largely derelict building in the early 1970s and has converted this to accommodation for 40 people. Costs are \$5 per night for a tent site, \$14 per night for a bed and \$9 per night for students. The house is equipped with showers, kitchen, washing machine, plenty of hot water, a gear washing area, fruit trees and trees to practice SRT in.

Sunday 27/12/1998

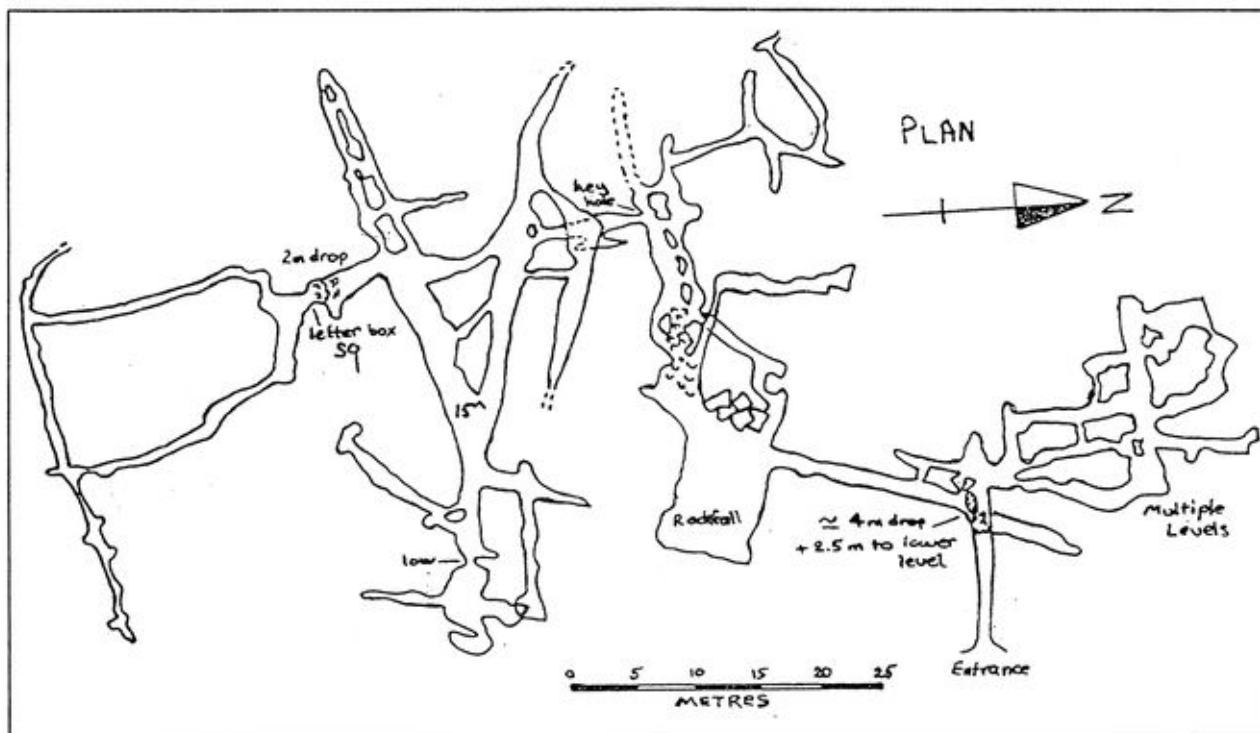
A windy, grey and rainy day. We started caving at the "Potholes" area about 8km north of town (see map). This is a public reserve that is open to all for caving with almost a dozen dolines and caves. Chris set the tone for the week by forgetting his light. Stirling Cave (M130) was today's choice. The Karst Index says that this cave has 9m and 25m pitches but we managed with a couple of tapes and a 15m rope, (the climbs would be nicer rigged as pitches, ask Sushila!). Below the pitch the cave becomes a rifty streamway with some side passages. The base of the cave is a squeeze with foul air. The first thing you notice about Buchan is how warm the caves are (16°C to 18°C) due to the caves being close to sea level. Thermals were an optional extra for most caves.

Monday 28/12/1998

More vertical caves in the "Potholes" today. Miles Pierce from VSA showed us around the area and pointed out a few entrances for us. Today Chris forgot the ropes. While the menfolk hunted cave entrances the womenfolk gathered raspberries and blackberries. Eventually we did Baby Pierre (M12) and Baby Berger (M14). Baby Pierre has a 30m entrance pitch with a big ledge at 10m then a blind 18m pitch before the rifty passage chokes down to nothing. There are some good formation around the base of the entrance pitch. Baby Berger has a climbable 7m entrance pitch, then some reasonably decorated upper levels leading to a spacious and well decorated 33m pitch. At the time our longest rope was 25m. For this reason Sushila and Annalisa had learned about knot crossings in the safety and comfort of a tree at "Homeleigh" that morning. We used 25m and 15m ropes tied together yet I found myself dangling at the end of the rope about 4m off the ground. I sat on a ledge while Chris tightened the rebelay. This along with undoing the end knot on the rope gave just enough to be able to climb down to the base of the pitch. Immediately the cave goes into a terminal choke so you turn around and prussik out again. We arrived back at "Homeleigh" to find Steve and Dave with enough time for Dave to discover how the rope washer works. All the caves in the "Potholes" area are quite muddy and we needed to wash the gear most days.

Tuesday 29/12/1998

Today we ventured out to the north east of Buchan to The Basin. It was my turn to forget my trog suit and both Chris and I mistakenly thought the entrance drop to Slocombes Cave (BA1) was climbable. The 7m entrance pitch can be done with a tape but is much easier with a ladder. Steve and Annalisa retreated to get a ladder and spend quality time together hence I was able to borrow Annalisa's trogsuit. We wandered around Slocombes which is a fun phreatic ramble (see map) and found the entrance ladder rigged to get out on. The Letterbox Squeeze is particularly entertaining; here you go through a horizontal squeeze to emerge over a 3m drop. We spent the afternoon having a swim at the junction of the Snowy and Buchan Rivers and playing tourists at Basin Creek Falls.



BA-1 Slocombes Cave
ASF Map No: 3BA-1.VSA50

Drawn for Caveconvict Guide Book from original map by M. Pierce.

Wednesday 30/12/1998

Today we split into two groups. Miles took Ian and Sushila out to New Guinea Ridge, on the edge of the Snowy River gorge. This area is 4WD access only and probably only in dry weather. The limestone is apparent by an abrupt change in vegetation and a deep red "terra rosa" soil. Just south of the track (but not visible due to the forest) is a huge doline with New Guinea Cave (NG1). This cave has hundreds of metres of walk and crawl through stream passage with numerous bat roosts and areas of formation and has taken a major stream in the past. We stopped at the start of a 50m section of tight flattener for lunch. It was here that we discovered Sushila's real caving talent. She raced through the squeeze while Ian and Miles had to dig their way through to follow, so remember if you have a long gravel grovel Sushila is the one to get. Dave, Annalisa, Steve and Chris started the day with some SRT training in the tree then moved out to the "Potholes" to do Jampot (M48). According to Annalisa: *"Jampot is very appropriately named. David was halfway down the entrance series of vertical squeezes before deciding that this was not the ideal first SRT cave. Annalisa looked down the squeeze David had just exited from and voiced concerns to Chris about the ease of exiting the squeeze. Chris suggested rigging a handline down the squeeze we were off. The rigging down the first 10m was intricate with 3 or 4 rebelay jumps around below the entrance, one redirection and a rope change. Then a fabulous 30m abseil just misses the edges of the shaft on the new 9mm rope. We chimneyed along a narrow canyon and descended the last pitch to find mud not dissimilar to Dwyers. Then it was a short prussik, a chimney, then a long prussik topped off by a squeeze to escape"*. In the evening Lou Williams of VSA showed us some more cave entrances in the "Potholes" area.

Thursday 31/12/1998

We scattered ourselves through various caves in the "Potholes" area today. Today Chris forgot his boots. Chris went back into Jampot to derig while Ian, Dave and Sushila wandered around the top part of Honeycomb (M41). Honeycomb is one of the larger caves at the "Potholes" (see map). A 9m entrance pitch is climbable but is best laddered. This leads to a phreatic maze with several blind pitches up to 35m. Chris joined us in the main chamber for lunch and we then explored the well decorated passages in the eastern part of the cave. There is some very good formation in this part of the cave and in particular in the area beyond Helictite Wall. This area is accessible by a squeeze that Chris initially did not fit or by climbing Helictite Wall. Chris climbed the wall and I coaxed Sushila through the squeeze to spur Chris on. Dave and I did not fit through the squeeze and did not trust climbing up through the helictites. Chris returned through the squeeze (thus saving his reputation as a microbod) and assured us that there are excellent helictites beyond.

The best way for normal sized people to see this area would be for a microbod to go through the squeeze and rig a ladder down the climb. We derigged Honeycomb with Dave and Sushila going back to Buchan.

Meanwhile Annalisa and Steve had been practicing rigging in Sundial Cave (M190) and were at the top of the third pitch when Chris and I caught up. Sundial is a recent discovery with awkward pitches, squeezes and a lot of loose rock. Chris took over the rigging, rebelaying the second pitch rope to reach the base of a short third pitch. The next pitch appeared to be a prolonged vertical squeeze so we decided enough was enough. Chris started out then it was my turn. I was about 2m off the ground when the half metre bedrock bollard used for the rebelay failed. I hit the ground and rolled against the wall to be just missed by the bollard. Chris who had yet to reach the next belay suddenly found he had me for bottom weight. The bollard rock shattered on impact with a 20cm block landing on Annalisa's camera case with no apparent damage (a good advertisement for Pelican cases). The only spots not hit were where Steve, Annalisa and I were cowering. Chris got off the rope and I went up to garden the pitch and rerig the rebelay then escape. Annalisa and Steve took photos and derigged while Chris and I lazed in the late afternoon sun. Lou Williams organised a free trip through Royal Cave that Sushila joined in on. The rest of us washed gear and prepared the New Year's feast, a luscious lamb roast. The new year was seen in with cards and drinks. The best of Buchan social life was on display with raucous music, drunken parties and gunfire.

Friday 1/1/1999

Chris and Sushila departed for Sydney, Steve and Annalisa slept in while Dave and Ian headed off to explore the tourist caves. The Buchan tourist caves are in a narrow valley to the west of town and are run by Victorian national parks. There are five caves in the tourist area, namely Fairy, Royal, Federal, Dukes and Moons Caves. All but Moons Cave lie above the underground drainage of Fairy Creek. They are interconnected (system length ~3.5km) and do flood. Only Fairy and Royal Caves have regular tours. Adventure tours are sometimes run in Federal and Moons Caves. Dukes Cave is a low streamway grovel that resurges into the swimming pool. The show caves are generally quite small and the paths involve a lot of crouching. There is much less chicken wire than at Jenolan but the Buchan caves are more dimly lit. The rimstone pools and shawls are very impressive. The guides were friendly enough but over the week a few amusing remarks were noticed. One guide in front of some good formation... *"Isn't nature wonderful. You wouldn't know this was under here. You'd drive into Buchan, see that the pub was shut and just keep going."* Another guide when asked about dating of the formations.... *"It is difficult to know how old the formations are as we don't know how long they have been dripping. Then they may have stopped dripping. So we can't work it out."* In the afternoon we went out to East Buchan to wander through Wilson Cave (EB4). This cave is a quite large walk and climb through intermittent stream cave that crosses under the Buchan - Orbost road. It would be a really fun cave when the stream was flowing.

Saturday 2/1/1999

The initial plan was to do Oolite (M56) and Razor (M124) caves at the "Potholes" but this was forestalled by the appearance of 40 rovers. Miles suggested Lilly Pilly Cave (M8) but could not get access permission. Then we thought of Mabel Cave (EB1) and Miles was able to get access permission. So after lunch Miles, Ian, Steve, Annalisa and Dave ventured out to East Buchan. Mabel Cave is in an impressive looking bluff beside the Buchan River. The cliff face is riddled with holes, many of which are balconies of Mabel Cave. Mabel is a joint controlled phreatic maze with one big room, some good formation and a sump. The view out over the Buchan River is quite impressive and this cave is well worth the visit. We decided to start back to Sydney in the afternoon and visit Rosebrook Cave (R1) near Cooma on the way home. We played tourist at Little River Falls, Little River Gorge and McKillops Bridge. Little River Gorge is spectacular, 500m deep and appears to have some good canyons. The 90km of narrow winding dirt road made Annalisa a little nervous about her car but we got to Delegate just on dark for a good pub meal. After dinner we drove on and camped in the state forest near Nimmitabel.

Sunday 3/1/1999

Got to Cooma and after a little detective work found the location of Rosebrook Caves. These caves are only about 6km north east of town but when we met the owner he politely refused access due to insurance concerns. So that was it for the caving. We all arrived back in Sydney mid afternoon.

Other caves at Buchan

There are several big caves around Buchan that we did not get to due to apathy or access difficulties. These include:

Trog Dip (EB10)

A big horizontal, joint controlled stream system (see map). Low and muddy with several areas that sump. Landowner problems mean that a 2km walk down the Murrindal River is required to get there.

Kitson Cave (B8/60)

Upstream of the Buchan tourist caves. Access permission needed.

Shades of Death (M3)

Former tourist cave at Murrindal. Access permission needed.

Lilly Pilly Cave (M4)

Former tourist cave at Murrindal. Access permission needed.

Anticline Cave (M11)

Impressive large chamber. Private land, no access.

Dalleys Sinkhole (M35)

Access to the underground portion of the Murrindal River. Private land, no access.

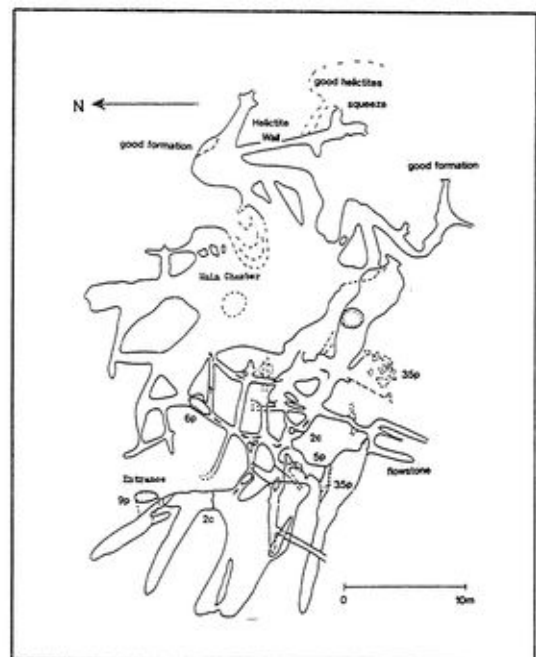
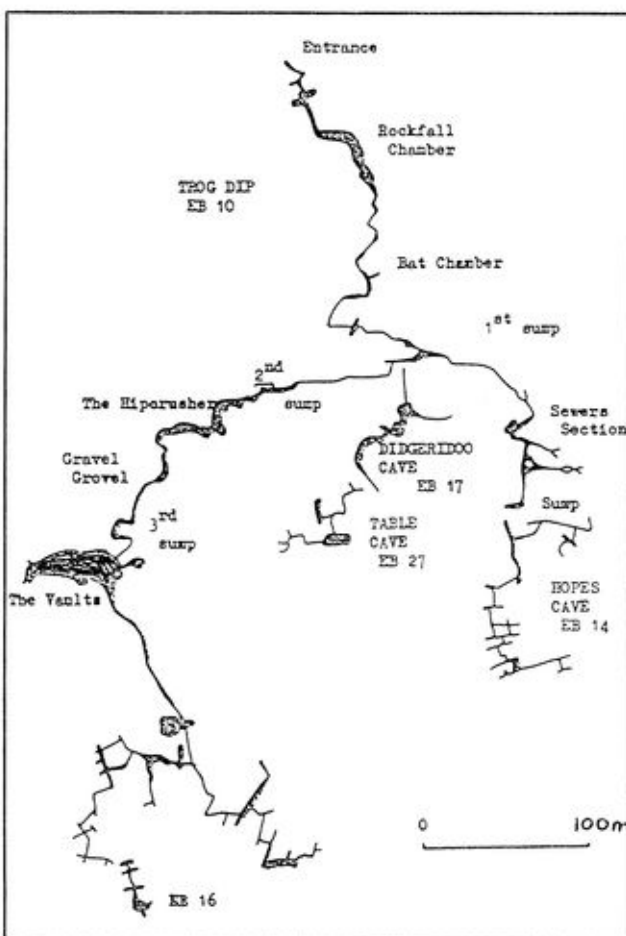
Exponential Pot (M125)

A gated cave in the "Potholes" area. ~1800m long. A very political cave, you need to know the right people to get access.

Scrubby Creek (M49)

A VSA guided stream cave. Visits can be arranged in advance.

All these and more make Buchan worth another visit for me. Finally I would like to thank Miles Pierce and Lou Williams from VSA for showing us around.



**M41 Honeycomb Cave
The "Potholes" Murrindal**

**Map of Trog Dip and Related Caves
East Buchan**

The Cauldron Boils at 35°C

ASF Council Meeting, Yeppoon, 8 January 1999

by Chris Norton

Central Queensland is not the place to be in the middle of Summer. Not for folks with a modicum of common sense, anyway. Look at the SUSS triplist for this January. Where were the trips? Victoria, Tasmania, New Zealand. Nice and cool. So who in their right mind would want to travel to Yeppoon, on the Tropic of Capricorn near Rockhampton, for a whole week of ASF conferencing in January? Yeppoon, where beer must be instantly encased in a styrofoam holder upon its removal from the fridge lest it evaporate?

Well, not me for one. That is why I attended only the council meeting on 8 January, and spent the first bit of the week scuba diving off the Whitsundays. I arrived in Rockhampton on Thursday evening to hear tales of all the great times I'd missed out on by not attending the conference. Monsoon downpours every day. Speleosports cancelled due to the ground being in an unfit state. Air conditioning that would only operate between 9pm and 6am each day. I gazed out the car window to the local pub, which promised something to please both genders:

LADIES NIGHT

First 50 women drink free all night

RAGE ROOM

Female strip show

It crossed my mind that one activity might be designed to provide willing participants for the other.

Still, joking aside, the conference participants had great fun, despite the disagreeable weather and heavy-handed camp management. Thanks to the great efforts of the Central Queensland Speleological Society, those that attended heard many interesting presentations, and went on field trips to Mt Etna including the famous Bat Cleft, and were given a viewing of ghost bats by expert John Toop.

On Friday morning it was down to business. The Executive must be applauded for streamlining the proceedings so that the council meeting was confined to a single day rather than the usual two. The issuing of business papers beforehand greatly assisted this process and the convenors who managed to get their reports in earlier than usual so that things could happen efficiently also deserve thanks. As a result, the usual simmering cauldron of speleopolitical rage and turmoil merely sat at lukewarm room temperature (well, make that sweltering room temperature), with precious little controversy. Some key points from the meeting are as follows:

Minor amendments were made to the ASF Constitution to permit it to obtain governmental recognition as an environmental organisation. This will assist it to obtain government funding and for donations to become tax deductible.

The possibility of a moderated ASF list server to act as an official communication medium for the Federation is being investigated by Chris Bradley (cbradley@spirit.com.au), who would welcome input from interested people.

Canberra Troglodytes were admitted as provisional members of the ASF. The reformed UNSWSS were accepted once more as corporate members of the ASF.

A colour code has been accepted as recommended practice for trackmarking:

route and track markers

- YELLOW indicating way deeper into a cave
- WHITE indicating the way back towards the entrance

hazard or caution areas

- RED, indicating that the area beyond is not to be entered. Reasons may be stated on an accompanying sign.

survey markers

- BLUE

The moratorium on bolt laddering introduced at last January's council meeting has been lifted. The Council was not prepared to adopt revised recommendations put forward by Arthur Clarke about amendments to the Minimum Impact Caving Code and Code of Conservation and Ethics

The Minimum Impact Caving Code and Code of Conservation and Ethics are to be reviewed.

A proposal to review the Safety Code to include new material on foul air will be considered by the Executive and the proposal is likely to be accepted during the year.

A new Cave Diving Code of Practice and Free Diving Code of Practice have been adopted.

ASF is to bid for the 2005 Union Internationale de Speleologie Conference.

Membership fees are to remain at the same level.

The next council meeting will be in Canberra, probably on 29 January 2000, and the next conference will be in Bathurst in 2001, most likely in January. The organisers are keen for any assistance from NSW cavers so let me know if you're keen to help and I'll put you in touch.

Elections were held for four new executive members, and a president. Current president Peter Berrill was returned unopposed. Chris Riley and John Dunkley will continue on the executive, as well as Phil Lardner and Keven Cocks. Former executive members Arthur Clarke and Harry Nagle cease to hold office and are to be thanked for their efforts over the past two years. Jill Rowling, Peter Dykes, Heather Jeffries and Angus Macoun are the other four executive members whose terms expire next year.

One more matter should be mentioned. At the Council meeting, ASF membership cards were distributed. This little piece of plastic, as far as we can see at present, has no use whatsoever except to demonstrate the discrepancy between the names we give to ASF as being SUSS members and the people ASF thinks are SUSS members. About half of SUSS did not receive membership cards. SUSS has also actively opposed the introduction of these cards, as we believe they present a tool with which the access rights of cavers - ASF and non-ASF - may be further diminished, without delivering a sufficiently tangible benefit in compensation. It is not appropriate to put the full arguments both for and against the cards here. However, many people like the cards, and SUSS is prepared to change its position if you, the members, so ask. As your representative, I would be happy to discuss this issue with anyone interested.

After the council meeting was over it was time for the politically incorrect Caveman's Dinner, featuring huge piles of fresh seafood - fish, prawns, mud crabs, and Moreton Bay bugs - as well as a host of other delicacies.

Aside from a peculiar auction which saw someone pay \$27 for a mango, the post-dinner activities included the biennial presentation of ASF awards. Five awards were given, and two of them were received by Honorary Life Members of SUSS. The prestigious Edie Smith Award is presented for outstanding service to Australian speleology over a long period of time. One of these awards was received by Henry Shannon, a SUSS member now living in Tasmania but who occasionally joins us on our trips to the deep South, and the subject of an article in *SUSS Bull* 38(2). Norm Poulter of SRGWA also received an Edie Smith award. A Certificate of Merit was awarded to well-known SUSS identity Keir Vaughan-Taylor, as well as to David Martin and bat expert John Toop who gave an emotional acceptance speech revealing how his spirited work as a National Parks officer in defence of the Ghost Bats of Mt Etna, contrary to government policy, had resulted in his personnel file being marked "Never to be promoted." John's courageous efforts earned him a standing ovation.

The shadow of Mt Etna, site of one of Australia's longest conservation battles, lies heavily over any speleological event near Rockhampton. In the late 1980s, the extraordinary efforts of many cavers, and in particular the members of CQSS, were not enough to stop the destruction of many caves by Central Queensland Cement. However, while the battle was lost, the war is slowly being won. Part of Mt Etna has been designated as a national park. Rehabilitation of part of the quarry site has already commenced. And, on this final day of the Cave Queensland conference, it was revealed that the mining company has decided to cease operations at Mt Etna within 2 years, advising its employees to take redundancies and seek other work.

On this optimistic note, as I took my last breath of humid 35°C air and boarded the plane home to return to work, many other conference attendees were venturing forth for more speleological follies in the caves of Mt Etna, Broken River, Chillagoe and more. Lucky sods. But then again, the diving was pretty good too...

Obscure New England Karst Odyssey

Gloucester, Comboyne, Timor, Crawney Pass, 3 - 5 October 1998

by Chris Norton

Participants: Steve Contos, Annalisa Dixon, Debbie Eriksen, Vanessa Haverd, Matthew Hole, Greg and Matthew Holmes, Mark Lowson, Chris Norton

What is it about car camping areas that attracts heavy metal fans?

Unfortunately, Barrington Bridge, where we had camped just west of Gloucester on Friday night, had attracted four. Even more unfortunately, it had attracted them to the campsite next to us. More unfortunately still, it was midnight, they had a trailerfull of beer (protected by a beach umbrella for when the sun rose the next morning), and the volume knob on the ghetto blaster seemed to have stuck on 11. Most unfortunately of all, there wasn't much likelihood of them stopping. "I need more beer," groaned one, "I'm not even close to passing out yet..."

We passed out before they did, only to be awakened by Jimi Hendrix at 6:30am. Ho, hum. Debbie, Chris, Mark, Annalisa and Steve struggled to their feet and packed up hastily as the beer started flowing once more. A sign at the gate proclaims that the maximum permissible stay at Barrington Bridge is one month. After that, one presumes, it starts having a serious effect upon your health.

The Gloucester karst was summarised by Andrew Pavey as "containing two beaut stream caves but little more than a day's caving." Steve Contos's summary of the main cave (GL-1/10 - The Cascades) was "Whoever called that a cave has a very good imagination. It's a stream flowing under some boulders." As, indeed, it is for the first few dozen metres. But then there are less boulders, and there's a decent rectangular passage to wander along. Heck, the passage even bifurcates at one point! And there's a waterslide (well, there is if you're about three years old), and lots of glowworms, and even some little fish and a tortoise at the end of the cave (although these are not as permanent as some of the other cave features).

GL-2/8 (The Glowworm Sieve) was next on the agenda. This cave comes in two exciting episodes. The Western Bit, after a climb down, begins a bit like GL-1 (rectangular passage, although more rocky and with a few signs of joint control) before a stream is encountered and, after passing through some passage where you can actually stand up, the cave gets fairly narrow and jointy, with the last few dozen metres really a tracing of the widest path through a network of fissures. Steve was so highly unimpressed with the first episode that he elected to miss out on the gripping conclusion, the Northern Bit, which Chris spectacularly failed to find and which was eventually located by Mark while Chris was fruitlessly inserting himself in ever-smaller holes in the rockpile. This bit has several bats, a vertical squeeze which caused some consternation for Debbie (but Chris decided, mercifully, to reveal the easier route on the way back) and some gloopy mud terminating in a very uninviting sump.

The party left the cave for lunch in the sun. Annalisa, after a rough night sleeping closest to the heavy-metallers, had not joined us in the caves and announced that she was too ill to make it for the rest of the trip. No doubt this was in part inspired by Chris' statement that these would probably be the most impressive caves seen all trip, coupled with Steve's hearty cynicism about the speleological delights that Gloucester had to offer. So, as the others sped off in search of the fabled GL-12 (Gecko Cave), Annalisa and Steve beat a retreat towards their rellos in Taree and were to feature no further.

Debbie, Mark and Chris spent the afternoon basking in the hospitality of Jock, Margaret and Dougal Gillon of Sawpit Lane. Dougal was extremely happy to have someone to play with and immediately leapt into Chris' car and jumped onto Debbie's lap. Some stern words from Jock, however, saw Dougal with a suitably hangdog expression content merely to run round and round his new playmates' ankles like a killer wombat as they changed into caving gear. Armed with a can of WD-40 to lubricate the cave gate lock, Jock donned overalls and hat and led our heros fearlessly through thick forest and into a thicket of lantana and crofton weed, which had to be negotiated in order to reach the cave. Jock declined to go further, and having abandoned the fearless SUSSlings in the middle of the brush, disappeared to go and do something mysterious in town.

The map of Gecko Cave which Jock supplied showed it to be an intricate cave, with 4 storeys of speleological delight. The scale on the map, however, showed it could be safely left back at the car. Of course, one result of this was that Chris unerringly led the party once more through the most narrow and awkward route down the cave. If GL-1 is a stream flowing under some boulders, GL-12 is a pit full of boulders but no stream. Its saving grace is the large amount of fossils strewn about the walls (although we did not locate the one which, according to Jock, looked like a radiator grille poking out of the wall).

Finding the house deserted upon our return, we fired up the Toyota and tore off towards the Comboyne Plateau, where we were to rendezvous with the remaining members of our party. Now, anyone who has actually visited the Comboyne Plateau will know that it is unlike any other plateaux, having as it does a top that undulates dramatically with drops into vast valleys all over the place. The sort of place you want to ride a bike? Well, if your name is Hole or Haverd, yes. They had parked their car at Wingham, at sea level, and decided to cycle the 600 vertical metres to Ellenborough Falls to meet us. Silly fools.

When we arrived at Ellenborough, we were accosted by the Holmes Brothers, Greg and Matthew, who had been spending the last couple of hours peering with trepidation at the falls. Tomorrow's task was to abseil this 150m drop next to the pounding water. In fact, the abseiling of Ellenborough Falls was the *raison d'être* for the entire trip (because, let's face it, who would waste a whole weekend just to go to Gloucester anyway?). There was one hiccup, though - Debbie had not abseiled before, and as we escorted her, Mike Whitney-style, onto the viewing platform and asked "So, Deb mate, are you game?", we began to sense that she may be suffering from a complex psychological condition known to specialists as sheer terror. Evidently, a training session was clearly called for. It was soon discovered that at the edge of a 175m deep valley, there are not that many good beginner abseiling spots. Eventually, Chris had what he assured everyone was a bright idea, and started setting up ropes to facilitate an abseil off the toilet block.

"But how are you going to get onto the roof to abseil down?" one smart alec asked.

"Oh, don't be so difficult," said Chris huffily (while thinking "Oh dear, I hadn't thought of that.").

Fortunately, he was spared having to think of a solution by the arrival of a huge but battered vehicle that disgorged a bruised and bleeding Hole* and Vanessa. They in turn disgorged a terrible tale of a bicycle mishap involving a downhill stretch of dirt road, a blind corner, a stopped Hole and a hurtling Vanessa. As often happens when your bike hits a Hole in the middle of the road, Vanessa ended up flying over the handlebars, the bike's front wheel decided to fold itself up, and there were tears all round. While Mark tended to Vanessa's injuries, Chris and Matthew departed to rescue the bikes, and Debbie was left standing around in her abseiling harness looking forlornly at the great heights of the Ellenborough toilets that she was destined never to scale, let alone descend en rappel.

Ellenborough Falls Reserve is described in all literature as a "picnic area". There is no mention of camping being permitted there. However, while Council notices warn in strict terms about the dangers inherent in young children jumping off the cliffs, they make no mention of camping not being permitted there. So camp we did. And a good time was had by all that night, drinking port, squishing tomatoes, and heating sausages on enamelled plates sitting on boiling billys.

The next day dawned cloudy, but before too long the sun battled its way between the wisps and tapped our adventurers firmly on the shoulder, pointing to its watch. Showtime, folks! Gear was stowed, bicycles chained, harnesses donned, ropes rigged and edges approached very cautiously. Debbie and Matthew decided to keep their feet firmly on the ground, since, Mike Whitney not being around, no-one was going to be handing out holidays for two to Vanuatu for taking the silly way down rather than walking down the stairs. The others also kept their feet on the ground; it was just that this ground was inclined at an angle of around 90° to the horizontal. They inched their way down the rope (or centimetred their way, for the youngsters) until they reached the bottom of the gorge. Chris thought it would be a nice idea to go swimming in the pool at the bottom of the falls. However, upon approaching he was assailed by whitecapped waves, whirlwinds of spray and other things not very conducive to a pleasant splash, so he retired to another, less exciting pool further down the river, where the others soon joined him. Vanessa decided that all this removal of clothing, jumping into the cool waters and standing under waterfalls was obviously a testosterone thing and elected to lie in the sun while the blokes romped off to bond in the dark, limpid pools of the valley.

With impeccable timing, the waterfall abseilers struggled up the harsh, wooden-stepped track just in time to replenish themselves with the first home-made sausage rolls to emerge from the kiosk oven. Sausage rolls eaten, it was lunchtime, and where better for lunch than the Udder Cow Café at nearby Comboyne? Well, many other places might have been better, but they weren't nearly as close, and so the Greek toasted sandwiches, chicken nachos, coffee frappées and Rawson Island Lemonades were greeted with delight as we sat on the verandah amidst a myriad of cow paraphernalia.

* Note: To avoid confusion between our esteemed President and Matthew Holmes, the former will henceforth be referred to as the Hole. They are otherwise very similar, as Mr Holmes is like the Hole but with MS.

However, we were not the only lunching beasts. A nefarious tick had decided that Vanessa's right eyebrow was as good a site as any for lunch, and had tucked in good and proper. Upon enquiring how to remove it, the Hole was told "Cover it with butter." This resulted in much entertainment, from the request of a butter pat "...to smear on this girl's face to help us get a tick out", to the sight of the Hole liberally anointing Vanessa's forehead with butter, which soon melted in the warm air and drizzled down lazily behind her sunglasses to pool around her eyes. The tick, however, was intransigent. After some more butter smearing, and even the application of a little methylated spirits, victory was awarded to the insect and Vanessa retired, hot buttered, to the car for the drive down the hill to Wingham. It was there that we bid adieu to Vanessa and the Hole before returning to Gloucester, stocking up on fuel and heading out over the treacherous road to Moonan Flat. (And no, we hadn't forgotten about the caves at Comboyne - we just decided they really weren't worth the effort.)

The drive was marked by a plague of gnats, a fierce hailstorm, a lot of dust, a few bits of the road that weren't there any more and a spectacular descent down towards Moonan Flat. Regrouping, we continued through Ellerston across a road that seemed to spend an unusually large portion of its time underwater to Isaacs Creek, just below the Timor Caves, where we camped for the night. And - surprise, surprise - the campers next door were heavy metal fans. We slowly banged our heads to sleep.

Nest morning, we rose bright and early and set about crossing Isaacs Creek for a quick look at Timor Caves. The last time SUSS had tried doing this, the creek had been 5m wide and raging along, and ropes and things were needed to prevent drowning. This time, the creek could be stepped across. Much less exciting. However, it made for an efficient trip through Main, Belfry and Helictite Caves, and we were back in the cars and heading north having already notched up three caves for the day by the incredible hour of 10am.

Half an hour later, we were at Crawney Pass. Now, for those of you that scoff at Crawney Pass, consider this: when they assign alphabetic codes to karst areas, where more than one area starts with the same initial, they generally give the single initial to the most significant area, right? So, Jenolan gets J, while Jaunter gets JA and Jounama Creek gets JC. Wombeyan gets W, while Wellington gets WE and Wee Jasper gets WJ. So, which area got C? Cliefden? Nup, CL. Colong? CG. Surely not Cooleman Plain? No, that's CP. The proud bearer of the C code is Crawney Pass. So, of course, we had to see what all the fuss was about. We can now say that Crawney Pass has the following things in its favour:

It is very scenic to get to.

The caves are about 100m from the cars.

All but 2 of the caves are within an area about 100m by 50m.

They are in a pleasant forest.

They contain some unusual fungus.

Even though no permit is required, you are unlikely to be disturbed by other cavers.

You could easily see all 9 of them in a day. (The two largest - Suicide Pot (C-2) and Bone Cave (C-3) - are only 40m long.)

There is a nice stream nearby to sit beside for lunch and splash around in.

So there.

Some notes: The entrance to Suicide Pot is a bit pitchesque. Fortunately for us, there was a convenient log with little knobbly bits on it to climb down propped in the entrance. However, Greg managed to clear half of the nobbly bits off on the way down, and the other half on the way back. Mark was able to pioneer a climbing route out of the higher entrance in order to make his escape. The next mob along may need a ladder (or at least, a new log). Caution should be taken entering C-4, as just past the entrance you must drop through an awkward vertical squeeze that is very interesting getting out again. Oh, and we saw a frog in Bone Cave.

Having done six caves that morning, lunch was well-deserved. But all this activity was still not enough, so we continued on to Burning Mountain near Scone. Burning Mountain had often been recommended to Chris as a spectacular sight worth the hour round trip walk. So despite the heat of the day, our crew set off hiking up the hill, following signs asking you to look at the scenery and try and unravel the Mystery of Burning Mountain. The mystery was actually spoiled rather early in the piece by an old sign which said "Follow this track to a burning underground coal seam"; however, we played along. We were very disappointed when we reached a viewing platform suspended over a large crack in the rock at a saddle near the top of the mountain with a sign which led us to believe that this was where the burning was supposed to be taking place. No smoke, no heat. We were cheesed off. We hopped the fence and walked up and down the crack. No,

definitely no burning. What a cheat. We were not amused. However, seeing as we'd come all this way, we may as well go up that track to the top of the hill and - aha! Smoke (lots of it), ash (lots of that) and funny smells abounded. Two silly people were running around in the burning ash. Tut, tut, we said, we would never hop over safety fences like that. We stayed on the right side of the fence and made a nuisance of ourselves standing in front of the video camera of the nearby tourists.

Well, we may have done nine caves, but total time underground was something in the order of 4 hours. Is this a new record? Goodness knows. But we did cover almost 1,200km and saw lots of pretty countryside. And had a beaut lunch on Sunday too. So if you missed out, tough. For one thing's for sure - there's not likely to be another Crawney Pass trip in the near future.

Resources: Gloucester

A good article on Gloucester is that by Ian Cooper in *SUSS Bull* 31(1) p16. Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society have also prepared a book on the main caves, a photocopy of which is in the SUSS Library. At the request of NHVSS, precise details of the cave locations will not be published here, but are available from the author on request.

The main caves are owned by Peter Green, but the property is managed by George Fisher and Lyn Warwick, who have no objection to cavers turning up and wandering through the caves. There is a gate shortly before the Western sump on the Glowworm Sieve, the key to which is held by Garry Smith of NHVSS. Gecko Cave is owned by Jock and Margaret Gillon and is gated at the entrance - both Garry and Jock have keys. NHVSS have requested that any trips to Gloucester be arranged through them. Garry Smith can be contacted by e-mail:

smith.garry.gk@bhp.com.au

Garry lives just off the freeway near Newcastle and it is very easy to deviate to his house to collect the keys.

Resources: Crawney Pass

To get to Crawney Pass, drive along the New England Highway through Scone. North of Scone, you come to the small town of Blandford. Turn right off the highway at a blue sign indicating a picnic area. After about 20km, you will reach a T-junction at the small hamlet of Timor. Turn right. After about 9km, you pass the turnoff to the right that leads to Issacs Creek and Timor Caves (about 6km along, over 3 creek crossings). However, if you continue north from the turnoff (towards Nundle) you drive along beside the Isis River, past the Isis River Caves just north of the property Allston, and then after fording the river you begin winding up to Crawney Pass, at a height of 950m. On the other side of the pass, the road winds down to Wombramurra Creek, and is flatter and straighter. About 1km after reaching the creek, you cross a small bridge over Limestone Oaky Creek. Two caves (C-6 and C-7) are up this creek, but most of the caves are up the next gully along, at about 152057 (Crawney Pass sheet). All told, it is roughly 57km to this point from Blandford. Hills Speleological Society have put together what some might call a "book" about Crawney Pass; however, the map attached to this article is really all you need. There is apparently a flat area used for camping a short distance further north along the road; we didn't go and see it so we can't say if it's any good. However, it's bound to be quieter than Isaacs Creek.

(The Accidental Caver's Guide to) Minimising Post Caving Soreness

Jenolan, March 6 - 7 1999

by Christine Sommerville

It is the morning after the weekend before. I sit at my desk, rediscovering all the muscles I had forgotten about as each of them reminds me that I went on a caving trip to Jenolan on the weekend. The trip to work this morning was an extension of the weekend's activities - the slow descent inch by inch down the stairs to the station, the painfully tight squeeze past the gentleman who didn't move over so that I could sit down, and the limping walk along Park Street to the office. I will be walking in the style of C3PO for days because I ignored sensible advice and basic common sense.

The easiest way to remain ache free after a weekend is to not go caving. For those of us who persist in taking the difficult way, try the following simple suggestions:

Suggestion number one: *stretch before you leave for the cave.* It may be a reasonable walk to get to the cave entrance, and if you don't stretch before you leave you run the risk of being stuffed before you start. Stretching is always beneficial, especially if you are not a regular caver. Stretch EVERYTHING. If you forget to do this, your legs, arms, back, shoulders, stomach and anything else you can think of will remind you of the fact on Monday morning. Don't be fooled by the feeling of anticipation as you don the well loved, muddy overalls, the battery pack and the helmet. Your mind is feeling this way, your muscles are not. On the way to the cave, it is also wise to take care when walking on treacherous ground near an electric fence. As members of our party discovered, to their discomfort, on the way to Frenchman's Cave, the fence IS turned on, and it HURTS!

Suggestion number two: *when waiting in a cave for the way forward to clear, sit, stand, kneel, or wedge in a fashion that is not stressing muscles already getting a good work-out.* This may not always be possible due to the confined nature of caving, but get comfortable as you may end up waiting for a while. To practice this try sitting underneath a kitchen chair wearing overalls, gumboots and a stackhat, with a large tin of baked beans strapped around your waist and attached to the stackhat by a metre-long cord.

Suggestion number three: *stretch when you get back.* Once you stop moving, the lactic acid in your muscles gets to work, and pain and stiffness will follow. Stretching out the muscles when you have finished using them allows them to relax and ease up slowly, and they will be much happier about it. These three hints will not only help you enjoy the experience of normal movement on Monday morning. They will also help you on Saturday night to enjoy the delightful *après-cave* experiences on offer.

Après-cave is one of the best experiences of the caving trip. Perfectly honed bodies in jeans or jodhpurs and tight t-shirts mill about sipping tall glass mugs of hot, spiced wine while chatting animatedly about the jollygood run they had at the ladder climb out of Frenchmans, etc... Alternatively there is reality, which involves a group of muddy, sweaty, exhausted people sitting around waiting for their turn in the shower. In this respect the Jenolan hut is well equipped, with one shower and a limitless supply of hot water. Those who are waiting smell the dinner cooking slowly in the kitchen, search through the blue book and the yellow book to see maps of the caves they encountered during the day, and try to move as little as possible if they ignored the advice printed above. This trip the menu was composed of European Chicken and Veggie Casserole à la Annalisa, accompanied by rice and a rather tasty 1994 shiraz, followed by fruit cake and blueberry danish with brandy and cinnamon cream, custard and coffee... all of which was gobbled down with relish by the starving hordes.

If you wake on Sunday feeling tender, and don't want to chance dragging your body through small spaces with muscles that have seen better days, there are alternatives to caving. Even in the drizzle, the walk down to McKeown's Valley and around to the Devil's Coach House is inspiring. We were particularly lucky in our above-ground adventures this trip. Suzanne and I managed to score three free tickets for a tourist trip of Chiffley Cave and two free cappuccinos. Ian McCullough gave us a fascinating and informative geological tour of Chiffley and also a lift back up the hill!

The last thing to do on a caving weekend is pack up and go home. This leads to...

Suggestion number four: *get a lift.* Being a passenger gives you the luxury of enjoying the scenery on the way home, and sunsets over the mountains can be spectacular. The specimen to which we were treated this trip set the sky on fire behind us as we headed towards Katoomba. Breaking the journey in Katoomba for a meal is an option guaranteed to find several participants. If you aren't looking for speedy service, we found the Avalon restaurant, near the station, worth visiting for wonderful food and unique atmosphere.

Suggestion number five: *a hot Radox bath* if you can possible manage it before you fall wearily asleep will round off the weekend nicely!

Tuglow Caves – Book Review

by Mark Staraj

A4 format, soft cover printed in colour, 72 pages printed b/w, published by Sydney University Speleological Society 1998, Photos 33 b/w, 2 colour plus photo index, Index and descriptions of all tagged features, most with maps. Sections include History, Biology, Geology and Hydrology and references. No general index. Fold-out maps of 2 caves - B1 and A3 sheets provided loose in back pocket.

"Tuglow Cave is one of the best wild caves in New South Wales". So says the opening line of the Introduction to *Tuglow Caves* a very recent publication of the Sydney University Speleological Society. In fact I can recall describing the cave in similar glowing terms when seeking funding from the Sports Union for the publication of this book back in 1993 - "Wet, long, sculptured and vertical, it remains one of the classic NSW caving trips." And so it is.

Anyone who has had the good fortune to visit Tuglow Caves will agree with the statements above. For this reason alone every N.S.W. caver should possess a copy of this book. It is the first and only publication on this significant cave system. It also contains the first ever published map and by far the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken - and also the only completed one.

This book will provide an excellent and invaluable reference for anyone planning a visit, however its finest qualities would probably be most appreciated by those who will never have the opportunity to visit the cave. I am referring to the content and presentation of the material within it. There are many aspects of this publication that merit elaboration.

It is probably best to begin with the maps contained in the map pocket at the back of the book as without doubt these are what all cavers will study first.

Most admirable are the size and clarity of the maps. The cave has been drafted at 1:500 scale and fits comfortably on the B1 sheet. The layout is intelligent and clear and the composition of Elevation, Plan and offset views works extremely well. The scale has permitted the whole cave to be represented on a sheet that is not so large as to make interpretation difficult but still sufficient to resolve detail in some of the more complex areas. In particular the cave has been represented with floor and wall detail that is not only informative but provides a very pleasing appearance. All in all it is an excellent map.

Some improvements could be made with the labeling. Some of the features referenced in the text such as "Main Room", "Olm's 'Orrible 'Ole", "Crystal Palace" and most significantly "Shale Bands Canyon" are not shown on the map. Also I would have preferred use of mixed point sizes to distinguish between the features of greater and lesser importance - for instance "Singing Shawls". This might also have resulted in making space for more labels.

Pushhi Cave has also been included on separate A3 sheets for clarity but the other maps have been printed with the text. All maintain the high standards of the Tuglow Cave map and care has been taken to maintain clarity and uniformity by using the same grid orientation of AMG North.

One of the standout map inclusions is in the Geology and Hydrology section where two maps illustrate very clearly both the geology of the area and Tuglow Cave's relationship to it. This is an extremely powerful tool to any cave explorer looking for clues to understanding and locating more of the system. My only disappointment with it is that it stops just short of fulfilling its role - it should also indicate locations for the other caves and probably a silhouette for Pushhi. This may in part have been a necessary concession to private landowners.

I would also like to have seen a checklist for all known Tuglow maps to aid further research by the reader.

The authors strongly emphasise the value and philosophy of sharing information and reference occasions in the past where previous prodigious efforts in surveying have benefited very few. It is one of the key reasons given for this book's existence and I am in fundamental agreement with it. So I must draw attention to the most important deficiency of this book. It does not contain instructions for how someone can obtain their own copy of the survey data. Until this is advertised survey-based work done by parties other than SUSS cannot be compiled with the data making up this publication and hence will be of little value. Nonetheless the Surveying and Maps section gives a very good introduction and practical guide to the techniques used in surveying the Tuglow Caves and emphasises the importance of the integrity of this data. A reference for interested readers on survey reduction would have been useful in this context.

The next section to receive close attention would probably be the descriptions. Except for Tuglow Cave these are included in a section on their own with the relevant maps. These are prefaced with a tag list for the Tuglow karst area and the cave descriptions follow sequentially. These are well laid out, informative and clear.

However the sequence of descriptions for Tuglow Cave is not systematic in any obvious sense: for instance the "Upstream Sumps" appears prior to the passages used to reach it e.g. "The Shale Bands Canyon". The best approach for the descriptions in my mind is to recognise that readers will be consulting the book to plan trips. The sequence and structure within these sections should clearly aid a reader in visualising, planning and executing the likely trips of interest. This would also highlight the need to include in "blow-up" detail the sections of the map that would be most confusing to interpret for route finding. For instance the route between the entrance and the river. This section would also benefit from a comprehensive index - no index at all has been included. For instance if you had heard of the major route to the back of the cave via "Olm's 'Orrible 'Ole" and wanted to suss it out you would have to skim the book to find it. Nevertheless, the descriptions are comprehensive in themselves and provide a blend of useful information for navigation, a feel for the experience of each place, and are illustrated with items of interest.

The History section is well presented and features historical photos and reproductions of old surveys and text. It provides good coverage of exploration history from earliest European acquaintance with the area through to cave discovery and current state of knowledge. In many ways this is the hardest section of all to put together in any state of completeness and the authors must be given substantial credit for the result. Historical records by their nature are scattered, contentious in respect of accuracy and frequently incomplete. Nonetheless this section flows well and gives the reader a clear sense of the way in which people's, and in particular cavers' and governments' attitudes to caves have altered with time. Hopefully this commendable effort will entice those with further knowledge to contact the authors to help fill in some of the obvious gaps in the record. Again, an index would be an invaluable help to the researcher but there is at least a comprehensive list of references.

As for the photographs there are a good many of these and most were taken inside the caves. An index is provided for these photographs. Except for the cover photos these are all reproduced in black and white. This is a great pity as they all were originally in colour and the black and white versions are somewhat flat and lack good definition. If one compares the rear cover colour photo with its equivalent on page 36 it is apparent how much better the colour reproductions look. There is more texture, more variation, more interest and more atmosphere. The cover photo is another good example of this and catches the eye effectively with a scene both moody and mysterious. Hopefully one day we will see more of these photos produced in colour.

Finally the other sections such as Caving Procedure, Introduction (which has directions on how to get to Tuglow) and Biology are all useful inclusions respectively for visitors and interested experts.

All in all this is an excellent production and sets new standards in Australian caving literature especially for its maps. At \$16 each it represents excellent value for intending visitors and armchair readers alike.

ILLEGAL USE OF THE JENOLAN COTTAGE

Recently, two people claiming to be affiliated with SUSS were caught using the Jenolan Cottage illegally, having broken in. These people claimed that they had been told this was acceptable.

SUSS wishes to make it clear to all its members that:

- The Jenolan Cottage is for the use of cavers who hold a permit for speleological activities at Jenolan.
- If any person wishes to arrange use of the Jenolan Cottage for any purpose, they should contact John Bonwick on (02) 4735 3816 (home); (02) 4735 4070 (work).

No Society member should use the cottage without permission. Members abusing the Cottage may be liable to disciplinary action.

The Nelson Mail

Friday, January 22, 1999

Cave fall cuts holiday short

The most annoying thing for Matthew Hole about his fall while caving on Takahe hill is that it has put an end to his two-week holiday from Australia.

Mr Hole, 25, from Sydney is recovering in Nelson Hospital from an operation on his broken left arm, and other injuries he suffered in a 12m fall on Tuesday night in Middle Earth Cave.

Middle Earth Cave is about 5km along Cannon Rd toward Harwood's Hole.

Now, instead of enjoying his break from studying a PhD in plasma physics at Sydney University and caving around Nelson, Mr Hole faces a weekend in hospital and an early return home.

Swapping caving stories with Mr Hole in Nelson Hospital yesterday was Kieran McKay, who was the subject of a huge cave rescue operation beneath Mt Owen at New Year.

Mr Hole, an experienced caver, fell while he was trying to retrieve a rope for his caving party that was stuck on a ledge around 15 metres from the ground. The group needed the rope to get out of the cave.

Without it they would have had to spend the night in the cave until someone came the following morning to drop the rope back down.

Ropes which were left for people to get out of caves were often tangled up or stuck out of reach of cavers and this situation was no different, Mr Hole said.

He said he was knocked unconscious and remembered little of the fall but the three people who were with him in the cave had filled him in on all the details.

"I remember waking up and thinking, this is a bad dream, but slowly I realised it was reality."

He and his companions spent a long and uncomfortable night huddled together to stay warm and sheltered from spraying water nearby.

Making the night even longer was the fact he had smashed his watch in the fall so the group had no idea what time it was and when to expect someone coming down to look for them.

Rescuers came to the cave on



MAIL PHOTO / MARTIN DE BUITER. KIERAN McKay, left, who was at the centre of a cave rescue early this month visits Australian caver Matthew Hole, who is recovering in Nelson Hospital following a fall this week.

Wednesday morning to see where the group was and found them at the bottom of the pitch waiting for a rope to be dropped down.

There was no drama in his rescue, Mr Hole said. He never doubted he would get out of the cave because the accident happened so near to the cave's exit.

A combination of being carried in a stretcher and some "pauld" walking got Mr Hole to the top and daylight again where an ambulance

was waiting to take him to hospital.

The fall had not dampened his enthusiasm for caving. He was just waiting to heal so he could continue his underground adventures when he returned home.

This trip was his second time caving in New Zealand and he looked forward to returning here for the wealth of caves the countryside offered.

— by David Courtney

Sky train planned for fragile caves

BARRY OLIVER

VISITORS to the Jenolan Caves in the NSW Blue Mountains will arrive by electrically powered aerial cable car under an ambitious scheme that will see motor vehicles banned from the immediate area.

The idea has been selected by the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust as the preferred option from a shortlist of six produced by a team of consultants employed to look at ways of eliminating cars and coaches from the site.

The trust's general manager, Ted Reedy, says the project, expected to cost between \$12m and \$15m, would be undertaken by the private sector and no government money would be involved. A private operator would foot the bill in return taking a slice of the revenue for a set time before handing it over to the trust.

At present, cars and coaches approach the caves down a steep, narrow, winding route established in 1867, then pass through the so-called Grand Arch — itself a cave — on the way to car parks.

Mr Reedy says concerns include damage from vehicle emissions to the arch and the caves that lead off it, as well as pollution from the car parks, one of which is directly over a limestone cave. Spills such as oil and petrol are flushed into the cave system by rain, he says, threatening the fragile environment.

"The health of the caves is dependent on a number of things, but probably most important is maintaining the purity of the water that flows into them. Any impurities or pollution has the ability to impact on the tiny creatures that live in the caves," he says.

"It's a fragile environment and the balance is easily upset. The caves are a vast underground library of our past. It's absolutely essential they are preserved."

One possibility is a gondola system, similar to Skyrail Rainforest Cableway built — in the face of considerable opposition — from environmental groups — near



The Grand Arch: Jenolan Caves west of Sydney may ban motor vehicle access

Cairns nearly four years ago. "The beauty of the new technology is you don't clear a huge swathe of trees," says Mr Reedy. "The footings for the towers are quite small and the cables themselves can be strung without touching the canopy of trees."

He says aerial transport would add to the visitors' experience. "Spectacular incised valleys, the Jenolan River, the escarpment of the Blue Mountains... it will be a magnificent backdrop that will help visitors better understand the caves."

The next phase in the process involves public consultation and a viability study. The trust hopes to get government go-ahead by the end of the year and Mr Reedy says the system could be built within a year of receiving approval.

He didn't expect strong opposition to the plan since 21 interested groups, including conservationists, had been kept fully informed during the consultants' study.

"In fact, we are getting pressure from some interest groups to get on and implement the preferred solution because there is concern

about the current method entry."

Trust spokesman Richard McKay says the scheme will maximise the visitor experience and "the Jenolan Caves 1860 line with its tourism industry's increasing commitment to environmentally sensitive, ecology friendly destinations."

The caves, 180km west of Sydney, boast some of the finest limestone formations in the world, attract more than 250,000 visitors a year. Nine of the 350 known caves on a 2400ha site are open to the pub-

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Looking into the Wolf's Lair

Hastings Caves, Tasmania, 5 February 1999

by Geoffrey Mc Donnell

Wednesday 3rd February was a 'rest' day for us SUSSlins caving in Tasmania. After a long day in Mini Martin we figured we all deserved a break. Some went shopping, others kayaking the Lune River. Some were content reading/lazing around the Ida Bay Youth Hostel. I decided today to give myself the full *Hastings Caves Experience*!

As I left to walk for an hour to the caving area I said to Verity "I'm off to Hastings Caves and you can bet I'll have lots to tell you upon my return!" This was based on my belief that there couldn't only be one cave in the area at Hastings and just maybe as a group we could do some 'wild' caving there before we left Ida Bay. I knew almost nothing about Hastings Karst, but by the time I left I knew more!

Firstly I visited about 250m (tourist section) of the 1.6km long H X7 Newdegate Cave. This cave is good - not quite as good as Jenolan - but interesting and unusual insofar as the Hastings Caves have formed in Dolomite.

After a visit to the Thermal pool I got talking with a friendly Guide/Pool watcher and he mentioned three other caves in the area of interest; H X6 **King Henry V Cave** (400m of pretty gated cave), H 204 **Beattie Cave** (a 12m x 12m single room) and H X8 **Wolf Hole**. The last one he said we wouldn't need a permit for and that we could easily visit as a group as it's just ten minutes' walk up a hill nearby the caves. I thought this sounded ideal, so upon my return to the Ida Bay Youth Hostel I told David Connard all I knew about Wolf Hole and we decided to visit this cave on Friday.

Visiting Wolf Hole

Today all five of us (Geoff Mc Donnell, David Connard, Annalisa Dixon, Jenny Mee and Simon Goddard) visited Wolf Cave. Verity Morris, after hearing that this cave only offered vertical work of 30m opted out for a day kayaking on the Lune River. Once we met the helpful guides at Hastings Caves and mentioned we were from SUSS they soon described how to find the Cave. After leaving the van by the side of the road we walked up the hill for about fifteen minutes following pink, blue and yellow marking tape on the trees. High up on the hill I found a large cave entrance about 20m x 15m and approximately 30m deep. Although untagged we were pretty sure this was Wolf Cave. David nicely anchored a 40m rope nicely to a solid tree and after re-belay he soon announced that he was at the bottom of the steeply sloping pitch. Annalisa followed and about 14m down placed a caving pack as a rope protector on a rock edge. Soon we were all down (by this time David had already found the way on) and admiring the fern, moss and green plant filled cave entrance that led to the cave proper: a larger room maybe 50 x 30m. In this room whilst David and Annalisa were photographing a straw scene I explored a tight rift. The rift went for about 30m to a small rock filled chamber going no-where in another small side passage. After the photo-shoot we all followed David onward in a rift like passage which narrowed considerably for about 150m until we ended up at the beautiful Lake Pluto.

On the way we had noticed side leads that went and at least 2 major straw filled rooms that were of great beauty. Here Annalisa marvelled over a straw cluster where like a pin cushion the straws came out at different angles. As if having beaten gravity the straws were not growing straight down - yet were straight! There were hundreds of straws, some around three metres in length. Below the straws in the narrow and high passage was for the most part very wet and gooey mud which was disgusting.

At the large lake we entered from the narrow rift passing by a large rock pile to our right. To the left of the lake were what looked like huge banks of roadbase! (coarse gravel) The lake was large - say 50m x 15m and very photogenic with plenty of straws above it and reflections. We spent the next hour taking many different shots, but although the passage clearly continued around the corner past the immediate end of the lake we stopped at the lake and returned where we found that Simon and Jenny had 'got lost' in an extensive side passage very close to the entrance. Also very noticeable as we returned to the entrance chamber was a couple of small daylight holes that connected to the outside entrance pitch. Back outside we all quickly ascended the one pitch to a beautiful late afternoon at Hastings.

We just managed to get to the café by 5.40pm in time for an extremely late of bottomless cups of coffee and plenty of meat pies. The Cave Guides at Hastings were very friendly and helpful and showed us their photo albums: shots from wild caving in Northern Tassie and of the track in Newdegate Cave. Next on the agenda was a leisurly stroll across the road to the Thermal Pool area. Here we found Verity who had walked in with Alex from the Hostel. Of course we all conveyed our enthusiasm about our day's caving.

The Hastings Thermal Pool is clean and refreshing but shallow (1.2m). However compared to Yarrangobilly the 28°C water is warmer and allows you to laze around without getting cold. We even found nice hot showers after the pool and good barbecue facilities near the pool. There are also a couple of short walks that follow the thermal river, and a platypus was seen. At most we probably only saw about a fifth of the Wolf Caves' 2km of passage. It is a cave definitely worth seeing! Annalisa described it as a cave designer's dream. I loved the straws above the lake, David liked it photographically and even Simon and Jenny were impressed. Later that night I drew a grade 1 sketch map of the cave, and with additions from David & Simon we should have enough information to aid the next group from SUSS to visit. It's an impressive cave which sort of reminds you of lakes in Jenolan's Wiburds Lake Cave- but with the straws above the lake adding to the spectacle. With around twenty caves of varying size at Hastings it offers an area different from the Exit Cave Reserve. The formation seem to be of better quality and the fifteen minute walk to a cave sure beats the two hour bush bash we had to Exit cave on Thursday! Due to very heavy weather the next day this turned out to be our last caving experience around Ida Bay for this particular two week caving trip to Tassie; a pretty good way to finish caving in beautiful Tasmania.

Surveying in CO₂

W43: Big Crystal Squeeze / CO₂ Cave

Wombeyan, August – December 1998

by Geoffroy McDonnell

Jill Rowling thought that this would be a good cave for me to survey because of my tolerance for CO₂. It would also make a good cave to draw up after the Surveying Course held at Wombeyan in November.

Surveying took place over three SUSS trips: August, September and November 1998. We had permission from SSS on a mid-December trip to complete some small details preventing completion of my map. CO₂ is high in this cave between December and May each year, so the survey had to be completed by 1998 or else we would have to wait until mid-99. In late January 1999 an SSS party of four had to leave the cave because of high CO₂ levels. I have measured CO₂ levels up around 4% at this time of the year.

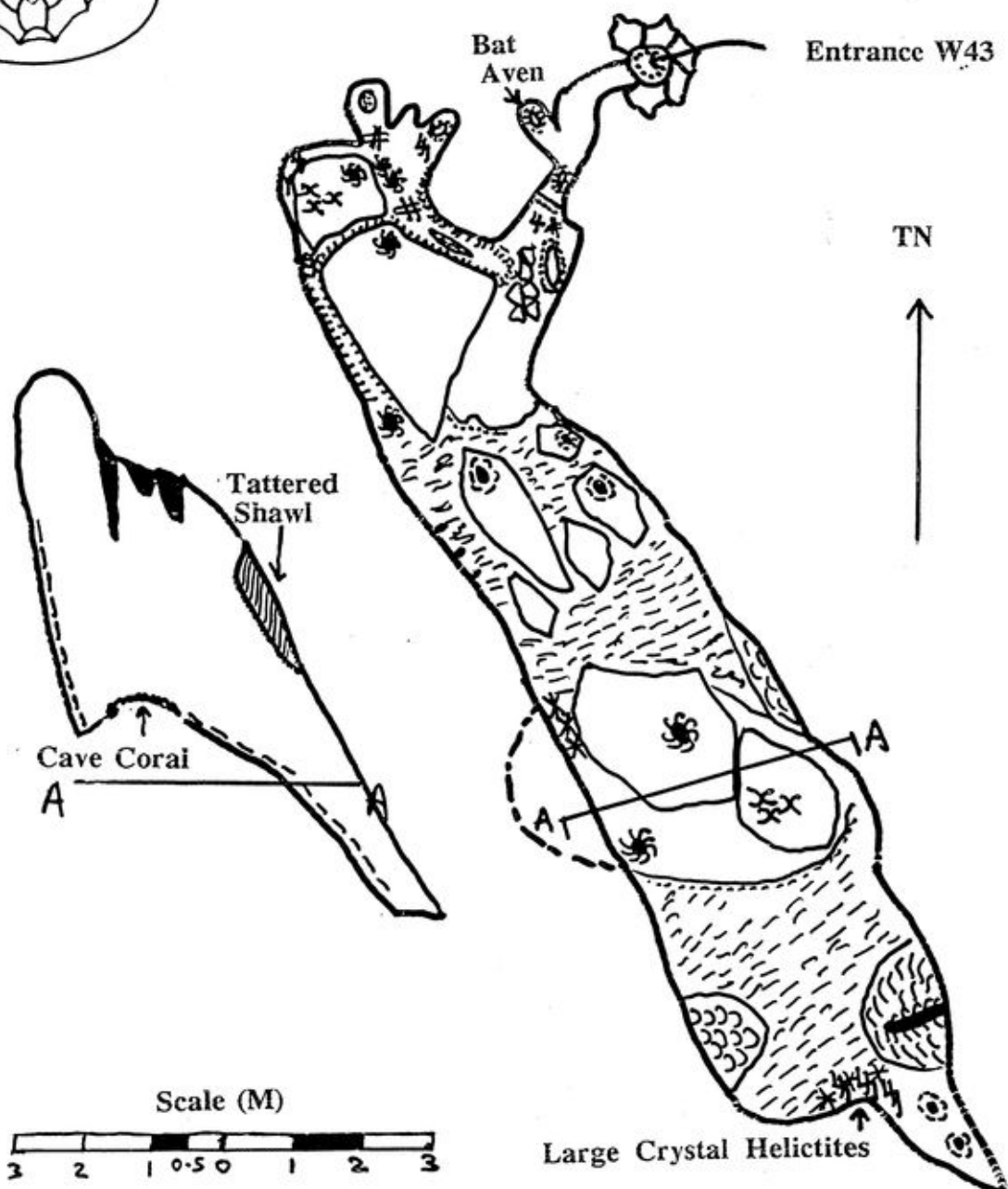
Only seven hours were spent surveying in the cave, because even when the CO₂ levels are low, the awful squeeze at the base of the entrance climb is psychologically offputting. See Jill Rowling's description of her W43 experience in SUSS Bull Vol 38 (2). The squeeze is *not* suited to long legged cavers, who will have some difficulty pulling themselves through. Party size should be limited to four people, and the cave should be avoided during the warmer six months of the year. Only eleven survey legs were required (see below) due to the small size of the cave. Most of the time was spent drawing *in situ*.

Unusual Features

In the Wombeyan Caves book published in 1982 this cave is only described up to the squeeze. I believe the squeeze was dug out during the active SSS trips of the 1980's to yield a surprising cave. There is a mark partway up the wall indicating the chamber was once partially filled with water. No way on to a deeper level was found during our visits. Also noticed every visit were huge piles of dead flies on rocks throughout the chamber. Bats appear to intermittently occupy a small side chamber off the entrance. At the base of the entrance pitch on the chamber floor is a considerable amount of organic debris and tree roots. This partially explains the CO₂ levels. In the pre-formation filling stage a lot of rock collapsed into the chamber from above making the chamber quite high and covered in a variety of speleothems. Six metres of tape is required to negotiate the pitch.

Large, unusual crystals up to 40mm across can be seen in several parts of the cave. The helictites at the southern end are also worth examination. Perhaps the best feature in the cave is the large "Tattered Shawl" 2m long, part partly shattered/eroded (?) The shawl is composed in parts of translucent calcite. The cave also contains a lot of cave coral.

Easting	Northing	Altitude	Station	Station Description
0.23	0.39	0.72	1	Cave entrance ground level
0	0	0	2	W43 tag
0.2	-0.27	-1.32	3	Rock on side of entrance
0.2	-0.27	-3.32	4	Floor at base of entrance hole
0.01	0.46	-3.56	4a	Rock below bat aven
0.38	0.95	-4.43	5	Rock on floor before squeeze
1.29	1.13	-1.83	6	Bat aven
0.38	0.95	-6.40	7	Rock edge in squeeze
-0.39	0.40	-6.82	8	Straw in squeeze
0.27	-0.20	-7.18	9	Edge of pitch
-1.34	-3.94	-13.21	10	Pitch rock base
1.64	-8.56	-14.19	11	Central column
4.41	-13.81	-17.08	12	Cave end helictite

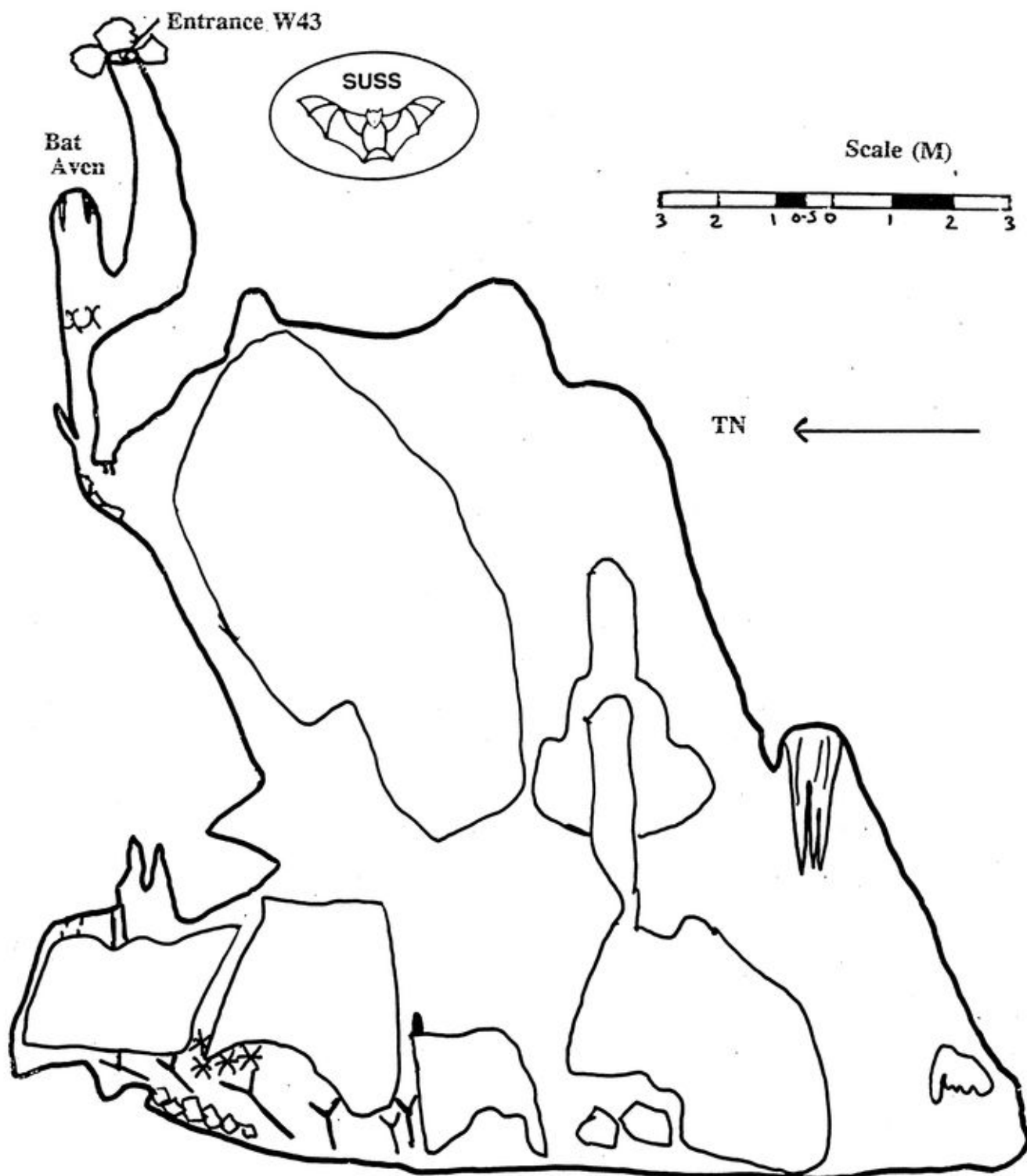


**CO₂ Cave / Big Crystal Squeeze Cave (W43)
Wombeyan Caves, N.S.W.
2W43SUS1 Sheet 1 of 2 PLAN**

Instruments: Suunto twin compass & clinometer, 30m fibreglass tape.
Map Grade: ASF 54

Surveyed by: G. McDonnell, M. Lake, C. Layton & A. Pryke during August – December 1998
Scale of original – 1:100. Original sheet size: A4

Sydney University Speleological Society



CO₂ Cave / Big Crystal Squeeze Cave (W43)

Wombeyan Caves, N.S.W.

2W43SUS1 Sheet 2 of 2 ELEVATION

Instruments: Suunto twin compass & clinometer, 30m fibreglass tape.

Map Grade: ASF 54

Surveyed by: G. McDonnell, M. Lake, C. Layton & A. Pryke during August – December 1998

Scale of original – 1:100. Original sheet size: A4

Sydney University Speleological Society

Wiburds Wandering

Jenolan Caves 16 - 17 January 1999

by Jill Rowling

Saturday: Wiburds Lake Cave: the Maze and Neddys Knock

Participants: Jill Rowling (TL), Matt Ridley, Megan and Alan Pryke

A trip to Wiburds Lake Cave was planned by Jill, to look at helictites in The Maze and aragonite in Neddys Knock.

Alan was "having the horrors" over the chest high nettles outside Serpentine. He and Jill were wearing shorts but Jill managed to sidestep most of the stinging canes. "Oh, Alan, they say salicylic acid is good for rheumatism," she said. We stopped to look at the doline near Blowing Hole and picked burrs from our socks.

Outside Wiburds, several bushwalkers were walking over the bluff looking for cave entrances. We had lunch down the bottom and pulled more burrs out of our socks. Then, despite the heat, we pulled on caving gear and bashed up the hill to the J92 entrance. At Five Ways we spent a bit of time cooling off and getting dark adjusted.

Into the Maze

Jill led round the maze to a spot where there were interesting helictites. She had been reading an NSS article (Davis 1990) and thought that these ones were similar.

Description of the helictites

There were several forms in one small area, all located down dip of the upper maze.

- 1) A multibranched form with a thick (10mm Φ) "trunk" and dozens of thinner (3mm Φ) "tentacles" each of which had many branches and made the whole thing look like a tangled mess. Overall height about 70mm.
- 2) A radiating form with about half a dozen (5mm Φ) curved helictites. One or two were branched. This form appeared active and was the whitest. Length was about 150mm.
- 3) A small (2mm Φ) tightly curled form similar to *flos ferri*. This form was a dirty brown and appeared inactive. Height was about 30mm.
- 4) A fine (1mm Φ) multibranched form with no trunk and dozens of fine branches which re-branched and intertwined. The fine branches were mostly upward pointing and appeared inactive. Overall height was about 100mm.

Forms (1) and (4) looked like the helictites of supposed subaqueous origin.

The chamber in which they are found contains very fine sediment with a black coating; in fact most horizontal surfaces have a black coating, possibly from bushfire smoke as the entrance is not far away. Further round the room are some poor anthodites.

...to Neddys Knock

We had spent some time photographing the helictites and Matt had become bored. Returning to the Five Ways by a different route, we heard voices. Some of the bushwalkers had come in but mustn't have located the way on from the entrance chamber, as we never saw them again (either that or they're hopelessly lost!). We continued to the (dry) Lake Chamber, Dyke Chamber and up to Western Passage and Neddys Knock.

Here we spent some time photographing the aragonite and Jill's light decided to develop an intermittent fault. This caused her some interesting moments crossing deep holes in the unstable rockpile.

...and on to 22 Passage

We returned to Western Passage for a final photo fling and then went down to 22 Passage as Matt, Alan and Megan hadn't seen it. Jill's main "sewer light" failed completely along this passage so she stopped before the end to change batteries. Instant success with Duracells. (Don't buy the \$1 Indonesian No-Frills D Cells because they fall apart internally!). The group had fun trying to get down the drop by various means, then returned to a somewhat illuminated Jill. Together we exited the cave to the heat and prickles.

We caught up with Anthony Barrett's group who'd been in Mammoth on the Naked Lady Chamber - Hell Hole round trip, and we were all glad of a lift in Alan's & Megan's 4WD back up to the cottage.

An Evening with Mickey Mouse

Things got interesting, then, attendance-wise. In fact the excuses ran thick and fast. One fresher and her friend left before dinner as she had had sufficient excitement for the weekend. (read: stuffed) *Will she return?* Anthony, Lucia and Glen left for a laser show in Sydney. However they missed out on an after dinner treat. Matt brought out his latest acquisition: a 16mm film projector, hand cranked, and a number of very funny Mickey Mouse B&W's from the 1930's. Jill split her sides laughing; Mike laughed at Jill and Alan tried to hide while Mickey tried to catch canaries and put out fires.

Sunday: A Very Good Look

On Sunday however, Anthony and Lucia returned (with nice new SUSS T-shirts, too). We all went to Kia Ora Bluff to have a very good look at a blowing hole there. This took some hours and lots of enthusiasm.

After lunch we went to Mammoth Cave. Alan was struck with amazement by a beam of sunlight in the entrance chamber, so he started a photo session with Mike Lake, Jill and Megan. He even sacrificed a white T shirt (not a SUSS one!) for use as a fill-in reflector.

The others had gone on to Mammoth Squeeze and Conglomerate Cavern. We met up again at the Jughandle but by then people were getting tired so Mike, Alan, Megan and Jill just looked at Horseshoe Cavern then exited.

Reference:

Donald G. Davis (1990). Helictite Bushes - A Subaqueous Speleothem? In: The NSS Bulletin (Journal of Cave and Karst Studies), Special Issue: Black Hills Symposium, Vol 51 December 1989 Number 2. P 120-124. Published by the National Speleological Society. ISSN 0146-9517.

Summertime at Cooleman Plains

Cooleman Plains, 18 - 22 January 1999

by Carol Layton and Ian Cooper

Participants: Carol Layton, Ian Cooper, David Cusack and Matthew Luttrell

A very pleasant five days was spent at Cooleman exploring the area and having a look at some of the caves. The most brilliant thing about this caving area is the beautiful river and the stunning limestone gorges. Where else can you get dirty and sweaty and have a refreshing cleansing swim straight after exiting a cave? Rivers are not meant to run on the surface of karst, the water usually sinks. However, at Cooleman the God of Geology has been kind, as the river has eroded through the limestone to the nonporous layer of shale. In fact, the scenery is so fantastic that the rather small caves on offer in the area are not worth spending all day in. Nevertheless, many caves were visited such as Cooleman (CP1), River (CP6), Frustration (CP10), Barbers (CP14), White Fish (CP18), Easter (CP21) and Cormorant (CP40).

Murray Cave (CP3) is very interesting with its sumps and decorated passages. It is a small cave of less than a kilometre but there is an intriguing SUSS lead from a previous trip. We groveled along the passage so that Ian could show us the small sump at the end. The last time Ian visited this sump nothing unusual was noticed but this time we could hear water slowly trickling out of the sump and draining out of sight. Maybe the sump could be drained and the passage upstream explored? Another lead was found near this area when Carol found a spot in a small rock pile that was drafting. The breeze was very strong and was screaming at her to be followed. Two good leads to be pursued at a later date - and the side passages need surveying.

On the last day Dave, Matthew and Ian went off to try and find Black Range Cave (CP12). The map led them to an intermittent swallet but they could not find the tag. They explored an entrance rockpile but did not see a way on. So another half-hour was spent looking for other entrances before Ian decided to have another look at the swallet. This time he found the CP12 tag and after more looking in the rockpile found the way through. The cave contains about 200m of walk through streamway with good formation and one excellent area of rimstone pools. The streamway runs along a series of granite dykes getting smaller as you move downstream. The walk through cave goes into 70m of crawl through streamway and then 30m of flat out grovel before they turned around. The down stream continuation of this stream is a promising dig with a draft blowing downstream.

Then drama as the three were called to search Barbers Cave for a group that was overdue. Just as they started the search the group returned to the upstream entrance. The children in the party were unable to do the climb out and were unwilling to go out through the wet exit.

R & R at Colong

Colong, 9-10 January 1999

by Carol Layton

Participants: Phil Maynard, Megan Pryke, Alan Pryke, Brendan Hyde, David Stanaway, Carol Layton and two visiting poms, Martin and Helen.

SUSS veteran Brendan Hyde opened his eyes, a bit blurred as he gazed at the inside of his car. It had been a long drive the night before, if 1am can be considered the night before. Even though it is only 90 something kilometres as the budgie flies from Bexley, it does take about 4 hours to get to Colong. You have to drive almost in a circle to get through the Blue Mountains and then finally along a winding dirt road in lush bush to get to the camping area where the walking track starts for Colong Caves.

Brendan was tired, it had been a hard slog all week and he was looking forward to some rest and recreation on the weekend. Phil Maynard, trip supervisor, had assured him earlier in the week that it would be a quiet and relaxed caving trip.

All was definitely not well.

People got up very early on that Saturday morning and were easily convinced by the madly keen pair of Prykes to pack their tents up and camp down the bottom of Acetylene Spur nearer the caves. The walk down only takes about an hour. Of course, it takes a bit longer on the way back as the spur is quite steep. Brendan had been expecting a decent sleep in. Now he was being forcibly encouraged to pack his gear up.

Everyone zoomed down the spur and found a nice clearing in the rainforest to set up their tents. Soon enough, all were ready to go underground. All that is - except Brendan. Brendan hadn't quite managed to put his tent up or have his lunch. A team of people got to work on Brendan, persuading him of the merit of going underground as soon as possible. Brendan was heard to say on more than one occasion "I was assured by Phil...".

So a happy bunch of cavers went exploring in Colong (though I think Brendan may have been considering a claim for compensation for harassment). In case you haven't been into Colong, it is a cave with several entrances and a maze of passages. Unfortunately a lot of the passages, especially near the entrance are covered in graffiti. We did benefit from this later.

We followed Alan and Megan, who knew the way. Eventually we got to a nice sandy chamber called Beach Cavern. Since the water levels were low we checked out a not so nice stream passage that was gravelly and required groveling. No one in the group had been through this passage. We wondered where it might go. The mystery of it all! It went down then up to a bigger passage. This larger passage contained a lot of footprints but where could we be? Alan and Megan weren't sure if they had seen the passage before or not. The mystery was solved when we happened to turn around and see the graffiti on the wall. With this discovery Megan and Alan remembered the way out of the cave. Who needs maps?

Sunday was another pleasurable and active day. Brendan, David, Martin and Helen had a cruisey photographic tour in the cave and the rest of us searched and found a chamber with a very blue pool of water taking advantage of the short cut passage between Beach Cavern and Pulsating River. While we were underground, a huge goanna visited the campsite and ate Phil's lump of butter and Brendan's rotting steak. That's another story.

Piece, man...

In the 1999 edition of Earthlink - Australia's Environmental Product and Services Directory, SUSS appears proudly on page 10, listed alongside State Environment Organisations as: "Sydney Peace Squadron", "The Sydney Speliological Society" (at least they spelt speleo right in our title), "The Men of the Trees" and "Oxygen Farm Association"!

SUSS 50th: Chevalier Trip

Chevalier Extension, Glass Cave, 2 May 1998

by Jill Rowling

Participants: Jill Rowling (TL), Lucinda Coates (MUCG), Michael & Gary Smith (NHVSS), Geoffrey McDonnell, Stephanie Goodrick (SUSS)

I grunted in the top of the entrance tube, trying to extrude myself out over the 15m pitch, and fiddled with the stiff rope behind my head. Eventually I got a loop round my arms and lowered myself down the ancient fixed wire ladder which looked as though it was 100 years old (or more, probably 1890). The belay hitch jammed. "Damn!" Weighed down with a pack of gear dangling from a waist belt, I climbed back up and untangled the thing. *Mental note whilst undoing krabs: Don't fall.* I climbed back down the ladder and poised delicately on the rock ridge about half way down and secured the pack, then talked Stephanie through a similar manoeuvre and belayed her down.

Geoff, Gary, Mike and Lucinda had gone on ahead to look at the rest of lower Glass Cave. Their names had been selected out of a hat of hopefuls by the committee on Friday night, while I fretted about the gear and the rigging. Earlier, the overstressed SUSS 50th committee had ensured that the rigging had been set up beforehand so that this trip would run on time.

We contemplated the single rope and ladder coming out of the ceiling of the scaling pole pitch... where I had been expecting a double rope. Gary kindly opted to ascend first using a tape sling prusik knot as a safety. He then belayed the others up.

I continued, located the Chevalier extension and the Loubens extension. We did not have time to look at the Loubens, so we looked down its pitch instead. The ladder was brought up for later on and any dirt brushed off.

I slipped through the squeeze to Chevalier extension. The last time I was here was eight years ago, in June 1990, and I seemed to remember a squeeze. It's been widened by someone by removing roof pendants long ago. I changed into a clean set of overalls and thick socks. Boots are not to be worn in the Chevalier extension, and it helps if you've been walking barefoot round the house for a week beforehand.

The chamber has a wonderful set of shell fossils in the wall. I led the group over a set of dry gours, each of which contained a different type of pool crystal.

A side passage had a bit of moonmilk on the floor. I pointed out an almost totally white moonmilk deposit in a wall cavity with 200mm long aragonite-like helictite branches coming out of it.

On my first & only trip here eight years ago I'd noticed a hand print in the moonmilk. This same damage had been previously reported ten years ago (the SUSS 40th), however now it was almost gone, filled with moonmilk. Is this stuff alive? Possibly...

Returning to the main route, we climbed past a set of small "stegamites" (vertical cave shields in the floor) to a room with a rough microgour floor and pieces of a small broken stalagmite or column. "The Broken Column Room". People's eyes were starting to bulge with amazement and their camera trigger-fingers were fidgeting. At this stage, I suggested that people hold their photos until the end of the cave and photograph from the inside out to save both time and film as "Y'aint seen nothin' yet - the cave gets better". We climbed across a 2m pit then rigged the ladder again for the "Tinkling Helictite Pitch". The anchor point was a large "jug" which was identified as a stegamite about 50cm high, touching the low ceiling and covered with sparkling microgours. Needless to say we used a tape, however it was apparent that previous groups have used a trace. We descended the ladder, toes gripping the

rungs awkwardly. At least the two drops were short so the toes didn't have to suffer for long.

We stood, awe-struck at the next scene before us: the dry "Wishing Well" and the "Red River". The floor is rippled reddish microgours, cascading into a circular well about 5m wide and about 2m deep. All around are exquisite draperies. We saved the scene for later, and headed upstream to the right. Presently the floor became less than pristine and there were vinyl rubber & plastic stepping stones to help prevent mud from being tracked around one section. Around the corner and further to the right is a section floored with white flowstone and pool crystal. In one corner is a small dry crystal pool with calcite rafts suspended over long (finger length) pool spar. The flowstone nearby has triangular pits. This is very reminiscent of the Sidney Smith section of the Jubilee tourist cave, only a lot cleaner. "Is this the end of the cave?" they asked. "Can we take photos now?" I looked up the flowstone wall. "Not yet - the last bit's up here, if I can remember how to get up it", I replied. With care, gloved fingers and toes only (no scraping or sliding allowed) I climbed up the sharp gour edges. Each gour was about 200mm across and almost flat topped, so this was not too difficult.

At the top was another room: "Dreamdust". This has an interesting rock pendant roof and about 7 shallow gours on the floor, each of which has a different style of tower coral or moonmilk in the bottom. "Avoid stepping in the first gour" I warned. I'd suspiciously touched the white pasty looking stuff in the middle of it and it felt like cottage cheese. The other gours were dry. One contained orange coloured super fine dry sand; the one next to it had white sand with rounded cave coral and the next one up had no sand but spiky cave coral. Peculiar.

The walls were covered with potato-like hemispheres of moonmilk. To the left near the end of the room was a small chamber that you don't enter, you just look down into it. This is the "Mothball Cavern", a spherical void about 3m diameter, covered with white and black moonmilk hemispheres about 20mm diameter set onto a background of red and black earth.

We had our snack lunch in "Dreamdust", taking great care to eat over bags, etc to catch any crumbs. After this, the photographic gear was given a workout! Near the wall was what appeared to be a gypsum stalagmite: about 300mm high with a 10mm diameter "drill hole" going all the way down its centre. Near the top it was blackened, possibly from soot? It was covered in prickly crystals and vaguely resembled "los tres amigos" in the Lechuguilla book. At its base were clusters of frostwork and coralloids. Anthodites hung from nooks in the ceiling.

We climbed back down carefully. Geoff decided that everyone climbing down was an "action shot". The suspended calcite rafts were the next objects for the flash guns. Nearby and up the wall was a sediment bank with curious dark bands resembling wood. The deposit was covered in small drusy crystals.

Michael was getting tired of holding Gary's flash and they returned along the "stepping stones". Here there were more interesting red and black sediment walls, highlighted with brilliant white patches of moonmilk and aragonite anthodites. Continuing along to the "Red River" of dry orange-red microgours, the photographers noticed it contrasted well with the reds, browns and white moonmilk of the walls and more anthodites.

The magnificent "Wishing Well" at the end of the chamber is fringed with reddish canopies under which lurk unusual coralloids. Its floor is very smooth flowstone. On the right (west) wall is a collection of stalagmites overhung by stalactites and a large shield festooned with helictites, in all shades of white, yellow, grey and pink. Above the middle of the "Wishing Well" hangs a large creamy coloured drapery with white horizontal "tiger stripes" (reflections from the large crystal facets). Each stripe was

about 200mm wide and about 10mm high. This drapery is actually part of another shield, way up in the ceiling.

On the other side of the "Wishing Well" is an alcove containing nice things. On the south side over the unusually flat overlapping gours (like big scales) there are a couple of "nests" of clear calcite spar crystals, like diamonds, each about 30mm high. These are unusual in that they appear fibrous, as though composed of bundles of vertical needles. An elegant shawl and a few interestingly coated stalactites complete the scene.

We returned up the ladder. Just opposite the stegamite tie-off is a low room containing unusual pinky-red coralloid pool deposits.

Geoff busied himself photographing the "Tinkling helictites" (actually they are quite safe from the ladder). The 2m deep pit that you climb over is actually formed by the walls of a large shield.

We returned back the way we'd come to nearer the change room. Jill and Geoff fell victims to Gary's camera. A last-minute flurry of photography had us looking at clusters of helictites / anthodites festooning the underside of one wall. One 5mm wide helictite snaked its way some half a metre across the roof. They looked as though they were made of aragonite.

Fortunately Gary ran out of film so we changed, packed up and made our way back to the pitch. Here the ladder was re-rigged and Gary opted to be the last down after the ladder was lowered so he could descend the rope canyon-style. I went down first and sorted the ladder into position, then climbed around the various obstacles in the main chamber to the ridge under the main ladder. A flowstone nearby has interesting smooth calcite hemispheres on it, similar to what can be seen in Loubens extension.

Climbing up the ancient ladder was an interesting procedure. A person is belayed up, and they climb part way into the tube. A pack comes up next and is parked by its krab onto a convenient steel ring. A second pack is hauled up and is taken by the person in the tube. The next person up repeats the performance. Presently we had four people in the awkward entrance passages (including Stephanie who had first darted out then came back in because it was cold and raining outside) so we could pass packs conveniently.

Outside, we locked the gate and wandered down the hill. The Alladin track was all churned up and horrible so we tried to avoid it. It looked as though kids had been sliding on it. Returning to the tourist complex via the DCH we had virtually no time to change before the next activity (the gorgeous slide show in the Lucas Cave) so we just went in our smelly thermals!

Gear List for Glass Cave, Chevalier and Loubens Extensions, Jenolan Caves.

Glass Cave Entrance Pitch: 30m rope, tape & large krab for double rope + italian hitch belay (use a supple rope!) on 100 year old steel wire ladder. Be nice to the ladder. Alternatively, take your SRT gear and try to get through the tube with it... A tape handline is useful to get across the main chamber.

Chevalier and Loubens Extension: Scaling poles to about 8m (usually this can be done with 6 poles), 30 foot ladder, tape, 30m rope and large krab for italian hitch belay. First person up should fix top of pole to steady it. Pull equipment up for either Loubens or Chevalier extensions.

Additional gear for Loubens Extension: Bring the rope and ladder from the scaling pole pitch. An extra 15 foot ladder and a tie-off may be required for the 4m (?) pitch, plus extra hand lines.

A belay should be used on the first drop into Loubens. Loubens is photogenic, but quite different to Chevalier.

Additional gear for Chevalier Extension: Change of clothes, clean gloves, clean socks or soft soled wetsuit booties, no boots. Make sure your light & helmet and the ladder is clean. Allow two or three rolls of 36 shot film (or four rolls if your name is Geoff). For Tinkling Helictite Pitch, tie a 7m handline to the bottom of the 30 foot ladder. Tie the ladder off to the "jughandle" using tape. Don't use traces.

Allow about seven hours total for Chevalier including about two hours rigging. Allow another two hours for Loubens. Trips to Chevalier extension must be led by someone who has been there before. All party members are to be proficient at caving. Chevalier extension is usually allowed two trips per year, six people maximum. For the main part of Glass cave (ie not the scaling pole bit) the permit system currently allows for four trips per year, maximum six people per trip, to protect the historic site (ie the 100 year old ladder).

Memorial Dinner for David Jackson

To celebrate the life of David Jackson and raise money for the Sydney University Mathematics scholarship that has been set up in his name, it is planned that SUSS and SUMS (The Sydney University Musical Society) hold a special dinner in the Great Hall, Sydney University.

More details are to follow. At this stage the proposed date for the function is **Thursday 10th June, 1999.**

ACKMA AGM, Cliefden, UV & Trees

Jenolan Caves, Saturday 6 June 1998

by Jill Rowling

Mike Lake and Jill Rowling attended the ACKMA AGM, held at Jenolan Caves. This went till lunch time. It was not as well attended as it could have been, so we were told, however it was a good opportunity to meet cave managers from around Australia and New Zealand.

It was held in the upstairs function room of Caves House, the same room that SUSS used for the 50th Year celebrations.

Two of the agenda items raised of interest to cavers were the recent ASF moratorium on bolt laddering and the proposed magnesite mine in north-western Tasmania. Both of these issues are striking examples of the use of internet email as an excellent communication medium: those without such access knew little about the issues.

Afterwards, Mike and Jill had lunch with Rob Whyte as he was casual guiding that weekend, then they headed off to Cliefden.

At Cliefden Hut

At the Cliefden Hut Mike and Jill met the SUSS people who had just come back from a tour of Cliefden Main Cave. Dinner was a wondrous multicourse communal affair, ably organised by Annalisa Dixon.

UV Light Experiments: Sunday 7th June

It poured overnight. Simon Goddard was accused of snoring. Most people braved the weather (after a very leisurely start) and walked to the Belubula River, forded it and visited Taplow Maze.

Mike and Jill instead drove to the silos and walked to Main Cave in the driving rain and sleet. Mike's glasses fogged up from the warm, moist cave air as soon as he put his head over the entrance to unlock the gate; this was about 12:20 pm. Once inside, we waited for about ten minutes to get dark adjusted and for Mike's glasses to defog. We proceeded to the main chamber and Jill took out her latest toy: a long wavelength, low power UV lamp. With no caplights on, it was easy to see by the fluorescing speleothems. If your hands were free you could walk around the rockpile.

The large stalagmite, Lot's Wife, glowed evenly under UV, even though it has two distinct colourations under normal light (brown and white). Some draperies glowed poorly. Shields invariably glowed a bright greenish colour, especially near the medial crack.

Wandering to the south part of the chamber we had a look at the walls. Under normal light, one wall was grey limestone with white patches and spots. Under UV, the spots fluoresced various colours: mostly blue and violet but one or two nondescript patches fluoresced bright green and orange.

Moving into the chamber to the west, one ribbed stalactite fluoresced green but its neighbours were white / blue. Helictites in general did not fluoresce much, nor did fine pool crystal or gour.

Moving to the western wall, we observed large (3cm long) dogtooth spar crystal (vughs) fluoresce a dull blue / violet.

A certain level of fluorescence is necessary before colour can be observed; this is probably the limit at which the eye's cone cells (colour detectors) can respond. Below that level, the eye's rod cells (monochrome light detectors only) are active and we see greyscale. Dark adjustment is of course required.

We had some lunch, then went back to the north end of the chamber. Near Lot's Wife was a couple of boulders with what looked like gypsum extrusions. These fluoresced a dull blue / violet, however some nearby white blobs (probably fungus) in a spider's web fluoresced bright green.

We decided to go down to the Boot Room (Mike exited for a quick nature call and returned). In the rockpile, the majority of white crusts fluoresced blue / violet. Mike boiled in the Boot Room and had to remove some excess clothing. Near the Boot, the stalactites fluoresced beautifully.

About half an hour was wasted by Jill who'd forgotten the turnoff to the Clown Room, so we gave it a miss. Another room however (one way to the Helictite Wall) had a good fluorescent response except for the helictites which again appeared dark.

Back to the Boot Room, the mud was disgustingly cloying. There was no water in the pond and its bottom was covered with sunken calcite rafts.

We returned to the base of the lower rockpile and Jill went into the Laurel Room to look at fluorescence. Again, white gypsum-looking crusts fluoresced blue / violet, stalactites and canopies: bright green, helictites: not much response. Some stalagmites fluoresced weakly, others didn't at all.

The cave was still blowing out when we exited at about 5:30 pm. Jill locked the cave and trudged back to the car in the twilight and driving rain. Mike ran.

Vegetation Day, Monday 8th June

The next morning, Chris Norton was determined to get everyone out of bed, and decided to perform a little industrial style number using a saucepan and corrugated iron.

While one group went caving at Deep Hole / Tiddalick, another went to Molongulli and Jill walked over to The Island (which contains Island Cave). Peter Dykes (from Central West Caving Group) had requested a list of tree species on The Island for the forthcoming combined clubs' revegetation project. When Jill got there it was immediately apparent that there were hardly any trees. Only two species: Kurrajong and wattle, and even then, only on the south west corner. The rest was grass, mostly *Poa annua* and weeds such as thistles and poisonous mountain celery. Although there is a fence around it, it is down at the south west corner, allowing sheep onto The Island.

Leaving The Island, Jill returned to the hut via the creek and compiled a vegetation list as follows:

The Island: Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*), Acacia (*Acacia deanei* subsp *paucijuga*) (thanks, Geoff MacDonnell).

Upstream, towards the hut: Hop Bush (*Dodonea* sp.), Kurrajong, Acacia, White Cypress (*Callitris columellaris* (inland form)), White Box (*Eucalyptus albens*), two leaf types of River Red Gum (*E. camaldulensis*) and (I think) Slaty Box (*E. dawsonii*).

Contact! and a Hole in the Roof

Jenolan Caves 5th & 6th December 1998

by Jill Rowling

Participants: Jill Rowling (TL) and Mike Lake.

Saturday: Contact!

Having wandered about the steep East Gorge area on a previous occasion made it a bit easier this time, although the rain had brought the nettles out in force. The way up was finery, airy and in places decidedly dodgy as Mike and I climbed the second short 4m cliff. We were going up the way Manager Steve Reilly had suggested after discussing the trip with him. We stopped for some lunch at a good flat spot then went cave searching.

Mike found J105 in a surprising area, right on the apparent contact between the limestone and the shale scree.

I rigged the 3m ladder and tape from a nearby *Acacia falcata* and descended the short pitch to a good sized chamber. As it was a hot day I spent some time on the ladder checking that no snakes, etc had fallen in.

Waiting to get dark adjusted in the room below the ladder, I had a look around. Patches of gleaming silver droplets adorned some walls, indicating colonies of microorganisms. The floor sloped away from the vegetable debris.

Presently Mike descended that ladder and we made our way downslope past a charcoal deposit that appeared to have been washed in. The right hand wall appeared to be made of loose blocks of limestone (like its geological symbol). We passed by tree roots, then stalactites. Some of these stalactites may be calcite-coated tree roots.

Looking down into the chamber I saw anthodites: prickly looking stalactitic outgrowths from the ceiling. This was what I'd come to see, as part of a study on aragonite at Jenolan. The anthodites appeared to be dusty and dirty however closer inspection revealed they may be aragonite coated with a chalky substance. This "chalk", on some specimens, appeared to be hydromagnesite. Although most were dry, one outgrowth looked wet and pasty. One anthodite had what appeared to be a broken section, revealing a shiny, glassy interior composed of bundles of long crystals.

The cave doesn't "go" and we made our way back slowly. Parts of the roof had peeled off as though by crystal wedging, exposing a black limestone. The sandy floor was interesting and appeared to be made of the same particles which were buried in the roof. Perhaps the floor sand has fallen down from the roof.

Another part of the floor has what appear to be "potatoes" - regular lumps or hemispheres of moonmilk or similar material. Some areas of the roof appeared pink.

On the floor nearby was a broken portion of stalactite with a white chalky material on its end. This white stuff was relatively hard but crumbly like chalk.

Some areas of the floor had dark patches which could have been bat guano or even manganese dioxides. Mike pointed out, underneath some tree roots, a very dark red-brown deposit, most likely organic compounds from the plant roots. In the entrance area, Mike pointed out a rather large black beetle which had eyes so was presumably not troglomorphic but had accidentally fallen in. He took it out of the cave.

The exit was free climbable (for Mike) but I preferred the ladder. We returned to the valley via Jill's route to the north, past J104 (an UNSWSS dig), down a steep gully then waded through head high stinging nettles (thank goodness for protective clothing) before regaining the path.

Saturday night was the Xmas BBQ. Only one injury this time: Phil broke his nose after it was thumped by a forceful fresher frisbee-thrower.

Sunday: Hennings, Mammoth and a Hole in the Roof

On Sunday I wandered up to Hennings Cave (J76) and went into where the "Voss Wiburd" signature is in order to check the "aragonite" therein. As expected, it does not look like aragonite. Rather, it is a collection of small helictite clusters, similar to what can be seen near the Z-Squeeze (Spider Cave) and the 5-Ways (Wiburds Lake Cave). Helictite types seen are as follows: Spicular (needle-like); some slightly beaded; vermiform (small "shrubs"); and antler. Close by are some very grubby ones. One was active with a tiny droplet on the end.

Coming back out, in Main Chamber on the left just under a canopy are blobs like microorganism colonies similar to the "pigeon poo" forms described from Sigma Cave, Wombeyan.

Reflective droplets were also seen in this chamber but the majority of droplet sites are in the entrance chamber.

I exited, had some lunch, watched Cunninghams Skinks perform rockclimbing feats, swatted some mozzies and wandered down to Mammoth where most of the action was taking place.

The "new" old entrance is nice, even has the old <13> tag. A shaft of sunlight lit the main chamber so I didn't need my light until the bottom of the rockpile. A swallow circled the uppermost part of the ceiling.

Below the Jughandle, the walls had areas of silver reflective droplets, which extended to Cold Hole.

I met the SUSS people in Horseshoe Cavern. Mike Lake, Shannon Crack and Lucia Barrett were loading scaling poles onto a rope which was pulled up by Chris Norton and Anthony Barrett. Matthew Hole was far above them all, spectacularly trying to put in a bolt.

Lucia had a spot light so we were able to see how high the aven went (very high!) and it appears to have a chamber leading off at the top.

I walked a bit further on to the end of Horseshoe Cavern. Silvery reflective droplets were here, too, in the roof. I wandered back and we had some snacks. After about an hour, people were starting to get a bit cold (what a difference compared with Wombeyan!) so with all the scaling poles up above the canopy, a rope was rigged to a stalagmite and the three abseiled down.

We exited to a bright sunshine so I put on my silly sunnies. Matthew returned to help Mark Staraj near Slug Lake; Mike and I returned to the hut to write trip reports and head home. Some of us have to work! A very productive weekend.

Sigma Survey: Pushing Downstream

Wombeyan Caves, 19 - 20 September 1998

by Jill Rowling

Participants: Jill Rowling (TL), Geoffrey MacDonnell, Carol Layton, Kevin Moore, Megan and Alan Pryke

Friday: Jill, Kevin and Geoff arrived via Goulburn as part of the mountain pass road from Mittagong was washed away in a storm. The usual campsite was occupied by others so we set up near the runaway hole instead. Jill related Simon Bland's (SSS) joke that he wished to pitch his tent over it so he could have a good "look"...

Saturday: Downstream Sigma and the Choir of Maniacs: Jill got the key and the padlock (!) from the guides' office. After we had a leisurely breakfast, Alan, Megan and Carol arrived and we walked off to Sigma Cave. Mares Forest Creek was low but flowing cleanly. We were underground by about noon. The first problem appeared to be the transport of Alan's photographic equipment, so some time was spent reorganising gear as best as we could. The drop to the Funnel Room was rigged with a ladder which was lowered by the last person who freeclimbed down. Just below the Funnel Room was a patch of cloying mud, necessitating a stop for boot cleaning. The recent rains must have swelled the clay.

Proceeding to Iota Grotto, the helictites were much admired. Past the squeeze, there was more swelled clay so we stopped for another boot clean before the Pointed Finger chamber. Many Oohs and Aahs later, the group split. Carol, Alan & Megan stayed at the Pointed Finger chamber to take photos. Geoff & Jill started surveying a side passage at Fallaway Drop (the Shoe Change Room) whilst Kevin started re-checking and correcting lots in Knockers Cavern Two.

The photography wasn't going to Alan's liking so they went with Carol to have a look at Omega Chamber. The exciting place to be, however, was downstream. Using two sets of Suuntos and tapes, Jill and Geoff surveyed the two passages that headed downstream. Geoff drew the shorter straw on account of Jill not being able to fit through the Zeta Zig Zag. That meant he had to lie in the creek and try to keep the notes dry. Jill had her own problems squeezing through to the connecting chamber, then together they surveyed the rift leading to the next big room which neither had visited before.

The babbling of the creek in the rift sounded like human voices: a peculiar sort of singing choir of maniacs. I don't think anyone would really enjoy being there alone under those conditions. Geoff thought it was weird.

They continued the survey through a beautiful section of creekway with a high roof and gravel floor, leading to a canyon with the roof lowering, white marble bedrock and eroding gours. Geoff mistook the depth of one of these and fell in a metre deep gour. Saturated, he lay in the creek for the last survey leg while Jill did a pushups / balancing act over the metre-deep gour with roof 50cm above. They managed to get the last instrument readings without losing anything in the water.

When the surveyors returned to the junction of the big room, Alan and Megan had found the way through and were admiring the canyon. Geoff set off up the high room which led to a dome. Was this close to the surface? Jill and Megan left, leaving Geoff and Alan to try some photos.

A note left at the shoe change room indicated Carol and Kevin had left already. Jill and Megan left at a leisurely pace, giving Jill time to again inspect the weird helictites at the Iota Grotto squeeze. Alan and Geoff caught up with them at the main chamber where Alan complained about needing some water (which had been left there for him) and was generally showing preliminary signs of exhaustion.

As the gear was being passed up, Jill spotted a cave cricket about 4m in from the entrance.

We emerged to a slight drizzle and proceeded to Mares Forest Creek. On the other side of this, a Greenhood orchid flowered beside the track. By the time we got to camp we were well and

truly soaked. Dinner was held in the Barmah, where Geoff made good use of the firewood he'd kept dry in his car.

Sunday: CO₂ Pit, Lantern Cave, Bone Cave, Cow Pit & Victoria Arch: The next day Geoff led most of the group to W43 (CO₂ Pit) to complete his survey and start sketching. Next, they went to Lantern Cave (W182) for a rather successful photography session.

Jill & Kevin went to Bone Cave (W42) and surveyed the top of the doline. They then went to Cow Pit (W52) to complete the survey and sketch. After lunch at the tourist cave complex they went to Victoria Arch to re-check a couple of Mike's survey legs and returned to camp to pack, write reports, etc.

In re-checking Mike's survey legs it was interesting to see where inaccuracies come from. In this case (Victoria Arch) it was the ease with which the surveyor can position him/herself at the stations. The twitching of strained muscles can lead to an error of about 1 degree.

Dinner was at Mittagong, via the long Goulburn route. Although the road this way is good, it is an hour longer and takes about the same time as, say, Goulburn - Yass. We look forward to when the mountain pass road is fixed.

Sigma Survey: The End of the Survey?

Wombeyan Caves, 21 - 22 November 1998

by Jill Rowling

Participants: Jill Rowling (TL), Mike Lake and Geoffrey MacDonnell.

All arrived on the Friday night.

Saturday: It was overcast and cool as we walked over to Sigma Cave. Mares Forest Creek was flowing gently however the side creek below Sigma was dry. A large black cicada fluttering on the hillside gave Geoff a start (a problem with people brought up in the UK is that they don't have the pleasant childhood memories of sticking large squawking cicadas on their grandmother's jumper). We entered Sigma Cave just before noon, getting underground just as the sun came out all hot.

Below the ladder, Jill moved a large burrowing bush cockroach off the track and under a canopy so it wouldn't get trodden on. We regrouped in the main chamber to get dark adjusted and set up the short ladder for the Funnel Room.

The clay below the funnel room was still swelled. This area is almost directly below the entrance so presumably rainwater gets in. We removed this mud off our shoes before proceeding to Iota Grotto. Here there was a wet floor and dripping stalactites in the passage with the square cross section.

Just after the squeeze in Iota Grotto, we had a look at some of the speleothems. Mike noticed that most of the helictites turned upwards. One exception was a long flat helictite which was fairly straight with a saw edge about 20cm long and not quite touching the wall. On the floor were some white patches ("Pigeons from Central Station been here," said Geoff). These patches appeared to overgrow older looking deposits and are possibly a type of moonmilk. Along the eastern wall, dry pool deposits appear to be made of the same stuff.

We continued past the Pointed Finger and had a snack in the shoe change room. Geoff and Mike then continued through the squeeze downstream and started to survey up "Nu Dome" (not an aven, since you can walk up it). Jill drew wall detail in the area near the shoe change room and continued sketching those parts which were surveyed on the previous trip ie through the squeeze (a big effort), the canyon and the downstream bits. The creek was not flowing as much as last time, so the maniacal choir had gone but the rift passage resonated at about 2 octaves

below middle C as she rustled along it. In the more open creek canyon, the babbling brook sounded intriguing.

Just after a bend in the creek, the right hand wall has some small fossils, apparently brachiopods. The creek bend itself appears to be controlled by a reddish brown dyke-like structure (possibly a filled joint).

Presently she finished sketching and decided to join the others upstairs. Geoff could be heard talking to Mike. The climb up was in incredibly sticky mud into which footholds have been cut (probably by some other group years ago). Every step threatened to pull one's boots off with a slurping sound.

The passage spiralled up over itself and opened up into a large room. Geoff had lassoed a squat stalagmite and this handline gave some protection across a large exposed flowstone traverse. The room above this ends in a dome. More gloopy mud in the upper chamber made balance difficult. A large canopy protected a nest of partially cemented cave pearls. Bat guano was in evidence.

On one wall, the rocks appeared to be blue-grey limestone (not marble) with small shell fossils (brachiopods again?). Small fringes of calcite - cemented mud decorated the upper edges of the wall's boulders.

A pile of mud near the canopy led us to suspect that a person had climbed to a ledge further up the dome, but prospects here look poor and there is no breeze.

There are interesting black deposits in Nu Dome, too. Where the mud had sheared off the walls, black streaks could be seen in the remaining mud. This contrasted well with the reddish-brown colour of the mud. The black is probably a manganese dioxide such as Birnessite, maybe from the activity of microorganisms along cracks in the mud.

Jill left Mike and Geoff to sketch their survey, and wandered back down to Knockers Cavern Two. During a snack break she heard a bat flitting about (probably a horseshoe bat). She corrected some of the sketches of the creek overflow. One patch gurgled when she stepped over it. Below the aven, she climbed under the boulders and sketched the undercut section. A breeze appeared to be coming from the direction of Omega Chamber / Psi Pit area (presumably via the unstable tubes explored by Phil Maynard). She returned to the shoe change room and had a nap while waiting for the others.

In the distance they could be heard (mostly Geoff's voice), then their lights shone through the squeeze and they climbed up. "All finished!" they chortled, and changed shoes. We returned to the entrance together.

Below the entrance drop, you go past a stalagmite that looks rather like a crayback. Possibly this is where the sunlight shines in at certain times of the year.

The cockroach was again on the path so Jill put it again under the canopy so as not to be stepped on.

They exited the cave at about 7:30 pm and locked it for possibly the last time. "Bye, Sigma," said Geoff.

There was a small funnel-web spider's hole outside near the entrance. Another good reason why one should wear gloves when caving. We walked back; for once, it was daylight and easy to see the hillside.

Sigma Project Notes

Survey station flags have been left until after the map is drawn up, in case we have to go back in and correct something.

Some rigging is still in place: a red handline in Main Chamber will stay for future parties. A yellow tape anchor above the Funnel Room will eventually come out.

Having now processed the data, it's obvious that we will need to include both the streamsink and Tattered Shawl Cave on the map, even as outlines. Tattered Shawl Cave comes very close to Nu Dome, and the stream sink seems to be very close to the terminal rockpile in lower Aragonite Canyon.

What is left to be done on this project?

- ☐ Do a surface survey as described above.
- ☐ Organise a team to survey Tattered Shawl Cave.
- ☐ Draw up the map.
- ☐ Put together the Mini Management Plan.
- ☐ Get approval for same.
- ☐ Execute any recommendations in the Plan, possibly in conjunction with other clubs.
- ☐ Remove flagging and yellow tape after map is completed.
- ☐ Survey data to be stored in several places for safekeeping. Presently it's held by Jill Rowling / Mike Lake and a copy is held on disk by Phil Maynard.

Sunday: CO₂ Pit and a Surface Survey

The next day we were woken by noisy kids who'd stripped all the green apples off a nearby tree so they could pelt them at each other.

Mike slept through it all, until Guide Dave Smith drove round to gently wake him with the now customary "Get out of bed, Mike, you lazy bastard!"

Mike, Geoff and Jill set out for the CO₂ Pit (W43). Jill elected to stay on the surface. With Mike's help for the first and last legs, she did a surface survey from W43 to Blackberry Hole using the Forestry Compass. Because of a pollen allergy, this was achieved with the aid of modern wonder drugs and the results are listed below.

Geoff and Mike, meanwhile, went into W43 and drew up walls and secondary deposits on the map based on Geoff's previous work in the cave. They claimed that the CO₂ level was up, however neither of them had felt hot or panting and Geoff felt simply awful. Jill said later it was probably low O₂ rather than high CO₂. They had observed black piles of stuff about the chamber which was initially thought to be bat guano but on closer inspection turned out to be piles of dead flies.

A helictite was noticed which appeared to be made of large calcite crystals up to 4cm diameter. These crystals were seen in other parts of the cave at a particular level as though the cave had at some stage been filled with water.

It was still daylight when the group returned to the deserted camping ground. The aforementioned kids had managed to bring down a large casuarina branch into the creek and leave mess everywhere, otherwise all was calm. We filled in trip reports and went home.

Surface Survey

CO₂ Pit W43 to Blackberry Hole

; WOMBEYAN CAVES, NSW

; Surface traverse from W43 (CO₂ cave near White Bend) to near Blackberry Hole.

; Club: Sydney University Speleological Society

; Surveyors: Jill Rowling (with assistance from Mike Lake at times).

; Equip: SUSS/SRC Forestry Compass, Geoff MacDonnell's 50m Fibreglass tape,

; tent pegs, flagging tape and a 2m homebrew Stadia Pole

; Date: 22-11-98

*prefix \W43surf

*calibrate tape 0.0

*calibrate compass -12.2

*equate 13 \surf.gb5

; From To Dist (m) Bear Elev

W43 1 2.25 - up

2 1 26.50 323.08 +6.5

2 3 26.8 194.83 -10.4

; If 2 is at 0m, note that the telegraph pole line crosses at 20.8m

; at right angles to the leg (2 -> 3)

4 3 30.0 29.0 +4.5

4 5 30.0 217.0 -11.3

6 5 30.0 345.33 +1.2

6 7 30.0 174.66 -10.0

8 7 30.0 298.58 -1.5

8 9 30.0 113.75 -5.5

10 9 30.0 314.83 +2.4

10 11 19.7 92.5 -6.8

12 11 25.7 299.92 -1.7

12 13 1.59 48.17 -5.0

;10 13 not measured 106.17 -2.5

; Station Descriptions Station Height (m)

; W43 = W43 cave tag -

; 1 = Point on stadia pole 2.25

; 2 = Forestry compass in field. 1.32

; 3 = Tip of rock on 4WD track. 0

; 4 = Forestry compass in field about 5 m east of 4WD track. 1.3

; 5 = West side of 4WD track. 0.22

; 6 = Forestry compass in field about 30m south of knoll. 1.2

; 7 = Point in field south of knoll, about 40m SE of 4WD track. 0

; 8 = Forestry compass in field, SE of knoll. 1.28

; 9 = Point in field sort of near cavers' "track". 0

; 10 = Forestry compass in field about 20m NW of cavers "track". 1.4

; 11 = Point on dead tree west of Blackberry Hole doline. 1.5

; 12 = Forestry compass next to small kurrajong tree south of 1.42

; Blackberry Hole doline.

; 13 = Fork in small kurrajong tree (Same station as "gb5" on trip 3/2/96)

; 1.50

; Stations are all in the bush.

; Errors:

; Tape +/- 10mm

; Clino +/- 0.3 degrees

; Compass +/- 5 minutes except where otherwise stated.

Results of this:

If we set the position of Guineacor Cave at (0, 0, 0)

then Wollondilly Cave upper entrance, top NE corner of the superstructure is at (-24.49, -118.58, -4.90),

Gundungurra Cave (W7) is at (9.23, 50.24, -7.97),

and W43 is at (-48.38, 269.46, 27.52).

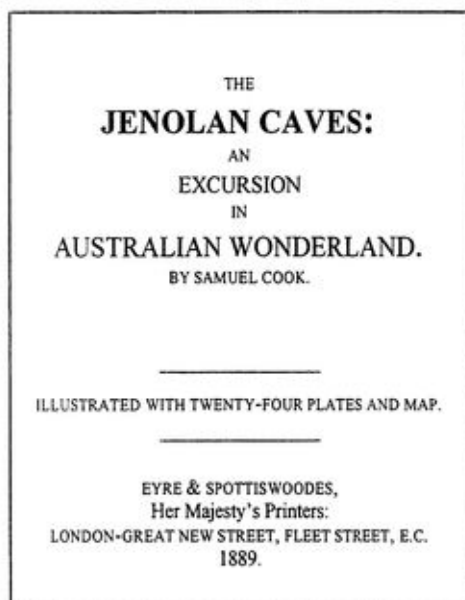
Co-ordinates are with respect to True North.

Book Review

by Don Matthews

I was in the library at the Waitomo Museum of Caves, when one of the many books and journals devoted to the underworld caught my eye. I reached for the sturdy blue book whose cover was decorated with a fancy floral script. Gold embossed letters proclaimed, simply, "Australian Wonderland". Underneath this was the Australian Coat-of-Arms, but something was wrong. The emu looked more like a rhea, and faced a heavily whiskered kangaroo that had great oversized fore-paws and a head like a greyhound. The book was in good condition, but the style of writing and naïve representation of these two animals make it look old.

I guessed that a book from a library of caving related material describing an "Australian Wonderland" could only be about Jenolan. I opened the book to the title page and the spine cracked. My guess was confirmed. My interest was especially piqued when I read the last line on the title page.



Here was a book that was published only a century after Europeans colonised Australia; less than fifty years after they were first described and explored! I was curious to see whether I would learn anything new from such an old book.

Before describing what I discovered, it is interesting to put things in a historical perspective. In 1886 one of the great natural wonders of the world was utterly destroyed. The Pink Terraces and The White Terraces were silica deposits formed from the thermal springs at the base of the volcano Mt Tarawera, near Rotorua, New Zealand. They were obliterated when the volcano erupted without warning one midnight in June. The fame of these beautiful attractions was widely acclaimed, and news of their destruction as well as the loss of 153 lives could not have failed to make news around the world. Cook was writing his book relatively shortly after the event.

Years ago I was shown some formations in Shawl Cave, a part of Lucas, that had been named *The Pink*

Terraces. There are evidently *White Terraces* in Helena Cave, a branch of Imperial. Over one hundred years ago a visitor to the caves had requested that they be so named in memory of the original natural wonders and the catastrophe of their destruction.

I was in New Zealand principally to cave at Waitomo, but only the week before had driven to see the thermal attractions in and around Rotorua. At the museum in Rotorua, I learnt more of the Pink & The White Terraces. Driving around later I came as physically close to where they once stood as I am ever likely to. Yet it was Cook's mention of the Terraces in "Australian Wonderland" that set my understanding of them in stone.

It is not known whether Cook ever went to Rotorua, but he confidently proclaimed:

The pink and the white terraces of New Zealand, which before the recent eruptions attracted so many tourists, did not excel in splendour the caves at Jenolan.

Whether the beauty of one excelled the beauty of the other, here was a link between the Jenolan Caves of Cook's time, and the Jenolan Caves of mine. This link made for a fresh new perspective, and hence a better understanding and appreciation of the Caves.

Although the existence of Jenolan Caves was first reported to colonial Australians in 1841, it wasn't until decades later that they were to see any sort of tourist development. Even then, development was slow, as Jenolan was a full day's journey from Sydney. By 1889, many of the tourist caves and most of the "wild" caves in McKeown's Valley were still to be discovered and explored. Samuel Cook, the author of *Australian Wonderland* would have been describing a different world.

In 1889 The Orient, generally praised as the most beautifully decorated cave at Jenolan, had never been seen by anyone, or anything. Mr Cook may have noticed a breeze through a rockpile in some far corner of The River Cave but would not have imagined what lay hidden away behind the dark recesses.. Maybe he walked up McKeown's Valley and paused at the towering wall of limestone on the west of the creek before he came to the Playing Fields. He may have marvelled at an intriguing hole impossibly high up in the rock face, and more than likely paid no notice to spider webs down near his feet covering a wombat burrow diving in through the earth around a limestone outcropping. Would it have surprised him that The Roost was no more than a small space in the limestone, whereas the hole in the ground would eventually be tagged as J174: the main entrance to one of the major caves at Jenolan?

Although there was a lot about Jenolan that the author of my blue book could not have known, he would have had access to information that today we can be certain has been corrupted and distorted, and maybe forgotten. Confident that I would discover something new about Jenolan, and amused at the irony that I was reading a one hundred year old book in New Zealand to learn something about caves in Australia, I made myself comfortable with my book and settled in for an engrossing hour of reading.

The Preface is a classic piece of writing that jars endearingly when read in this age of global awareness. With all of the restraint of a man who lived in a world where great land masses had never been explored, and mermaids still possibly existed, Mr Cook enthused eagerly:

Of all the caves in New South Wales those at Jenolan are the most beautiful, and well-travelled men admit that they are unrivalled in any other part of the world.

This praise is followed by the almost obligatory "words are too poor to express..." followed by an attempt to express the inexpressible.

In Chapter 1 – HOW THE CAVES WERE DISCOVERED – Cook details the discovery of Jenolan by Europeans in 1841. Anyone who has spent any time at Jenolan can relate the tale of convict McKeown's capture by James Whelan. Whelan set out to find McKeown, a minor felon believed responsible for thefts from nearby settlements. In so doing, he stumbled across the caves. This story has always been too simplistic to satisfy anyone but the dullest visitor. The very existence of McKeown has always been open to speculation, as very few hard facts about him exist. If he was real, where are the official records of his existence and death? The most interesting theory advanced to me recently was by Henry Shannon. In Henry's favourite version of the McKeown legend, McKeown was indeed real (as is generally accepted) but because of what happened to him, his death was never officially recorded. Henry recalled a meeting of JCHAPS where it was suggested that Whelan not only captured but *lynched* the unfortunate convict. The Australian landowner at that time would have been quite capable of performing such an act. Understandably, he would have been reticent about owning up to it.

Unfortunately Cook's version of the tale offered no new insights. Except to discover to my dismay yet another spelling of McKeown, I learnt that perhaps it was only two men who went out in search of the convict, instead of the squatter Whelan leading a trio of troopers I had imagined – having confused the Jenolan legend with the song made famous by Banjo Patterson.

The first of these caves was discovered in 1841 by James Whelan, who lived on the Fish River, near what is now the Tarana Railway Station. Having been robbed by a man named M'Ewan, he accompanied a police officer in search of the desperado, and tracked him to the romantic spot which forms the centre of the cave reserve, where he was captured.

In 1889, the tourist would have had to allow four days to visit the caves. On the first day, he might leave Sydney at 9.00am, arriving at Tarana at 4.15pm. On the way, he would have passed through towns like Parramatta and Penrith, where "peace and contentment seem(ed) to rain". In Chapter 2 – THE APPROACH TO THE CAVES – Cook paints a rosy picture of a young colony in all the splendour of its youth. Some of the names of towns are vaguely familiar. The train journey over the mountains would have passed through "Bloxland's platform". For the history buffs, Cook reminds us that:

Near to the railway line is the track found by Wentworth, Bloxland and Lawson.

I have no idea why Gregory Blaxland's name was spelt this way. The tourist would probably have travelled to Oberon on the first night of his journey, and made out for the caves early the next morning, arriving in time for lunch.

In Chapter IV, we learn that one of the most famous features at Jenolan had, albeit briefly, another name. Cook tells us that the Devil's Coachhouse –

...had been since named The Easter Cave, because of a visit by some distinguished member of the government service during Easter, which in New South Wales is now as favourable a holiday time as it was when kept as a festival in honour of the Goddess of Light and Spring.

Early visitors to Jenolan Caves broke off formations and took them away as souvenirs. George Lucas, the member of parliament after whom the Lucas Cave was named took a barrel load of broken formations into parliament to demonstrate the damage that was being done, and that would continue until such time as legislation was passed to protect the caves. Today's visitors demonstrate restraint by not looting the treasures, but merely standing back and considering them in respectful reverence.

Inscriptions exist throughout the Jenolan Caves. In The Elder Cave, walls are covered in signatures and dates and messages. At one time it was accepted practice that the discoverer of a cave had the right to sign his name on the wall on a bare piece of stone or formation... This may have served a purpose then. Many old inscriptions are of undoubted historical significance now. Nobody signs the walls of caves today, accepting that there are other means by which information can be recorded. By not signing our names, we demonstrate humility.

As today's generation of cavers consider the follies of our ancestors, as well as the often complicated and highly restrictive management plans in place today, it is easy to flatter ourselves that we are the only ones with any appreciation of the *real worth* of the caves. Whatever that might be. In Chapter V, THE NIGHT CAVES – Cook shakes us from this delusion by observing:

The smoke of candles in a quiescent atmosphere like that of the caves, cannot fail, in process of time, to have a deleterious effect.... In (the caves') illumination there should be neither smoke nor heat, and it is a question whether within their precincts incense ought to be burned, even to King Nicotine. ... Sooty hieroglyphics remain unto this day as an evidence of vanity and folly.

Cook closes by noting that his beloved caves were "...now in telephonic communication with the telegraphic system of the colony."

Australian Wonderland is a step backwards in time. Apart from the copy in the Waitomo Museum of Caves, I have no idea where you might find this book. If you are ever fortunate enough to get hold of a copy – enjoy browsing through it, and consider how Jenolan has changed over the last hundred years, and how it is changing even now.

Notice of Proposed Constitutional Amendments

The Society has received three suggestions for amendments to the SUSS Constitution, which are set out below. This article constitutes the notice required by cl 25 of the Constitution of the intention to move these amendments.

The amendments will be voted on at the Society's Annual General Meeting on Thursday 6 May 1999 at 7:30pm in the Holme Common Room, University of Sydney. The vote will take place prior to the election of office-bearers, so any amendments made will apply to the subsequent election. Society members will have the opportunity to speak for or against any of the proposed amendments prior to the vote.

In order to be accepted each proposed amendment must be carried by 75% or more of members present (in person or proxy) and voting at the meeting. Abstentions are not counted.

Any member is entitled to appoint another member as proxy by notice in writing signed by the appointing member. The notice must identify the member appointed as proxy, and must be produced on demand by the chairperson.

Each of the three amendments is to be dealt with separately and is independent of the other two amendments.

A. Graduands and postgraduates

Explanation: At present, the Constitution requires at least seven members of the 13-member Committee, including the President, to be either a graduate, undergraduate or member of staff of the University of Sydney.

This proposed amendment expands the class from which those seven persons can be drawn to include graduands (former undergraduates who have fulfilled the requirements for graduation but have not yet graduated) and postgraduate students of the University of Sydney.

Proposed amendment

That cl 4)(a)(i) of the Society's Constitution be amended by inserting the words "graduand, postgraduate student," after "graduate".

B. President

Explanation: At present, the Constitution requires at least seven members of the 13-member Committee, including the President, to be either a graduate, undergraduate or member of staff of the University of Sydney. If amendment A above is passed, this class will be expanded to include graduands and postgraduate students of the University.

This proposed amendment removes the requirement that the President be a member of that class.

Proposed amendment

That cl 12)(3)(b) of the Society's Constitution be amended by deleting the words
", including the position of President,".

C. Webmaster

Explanation: The Society Committee currently consists of ten office bearers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Minutes Secretary, Senior ASF Councillor, Editor, Equipment Officer, Safety Officer, Librarian. There are also three ordinary members of the Committee.

This amendment proposes:

- i) adding an additional office bearer - the position of Webmaster,
- ii) deleting one of the ordinary member positions, and
- iii) making associated necessary changes to the election procedure and other textual amendments.

If the amendment is accepted, the duties of the Webmaster may be provided for in the Society By-Laws, which may be made and amended from time to time by the Committee.

Proposed amendment

That the Society Constitution be amended as follows:

Clause 12:

Subcl 1(b): delete "three", insert instead "two"

Subcl 2 (i): delete "and".

Insert after subcl 2(j): ", and (k) the Webmaster."

Clause 13:

Subcl 5(ii): delete "four", insert instead "three"

Subcl 7(ii): delete "three", insert instead "two"

Subcl 8 (ii): delete "three", insert instead "two"



The advertisement is a black and white graphic. At the top, the word "wildsports" is written in a large, stylized, lowercase font. Below the text, there are three main visual elements: on the left, a person in climbing gear is rappelling down a rope; in the center, a cover of the "wildsports Mail Order Catalogue Winter 1998" is shown, featuring a photo of two people in a snowy landscape; on the right, a person is rappelling down a rope. At the bottom, a black banner contains white text: "CLIMBING, CANYONING, RESCUE, TRAVEL, BUSHWALKING, CAVING" in all caps, followed by "CALL NOW! 1800 812 910 or 9264 2095 (Sydney)" and "for your FREE wildsports catalogue or ask for store details".

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A Canyon Too Far

Starlight Canyon, 4 July 1998

by David Connard

Participants: David Connard, Ashley Kaar, Nick Hatzipantelis, Betty Boo (?), Julie (?), Geoffrey McDonnell, David & Katie Wingrove

This canyon trip even started with bad omens - first with Julie pointing out all the cemeteries and panel beating shops along our way, and then the all-too-cold temperature read-out so proudly displayed in Lithgow McDonalds pointing out that yes, although it was 9:00 am and sunny, it was still only 2.8 degrees outside. Brrrr. It was to be a cold day.

Aside from myself, Geoff McDonnell was the only Person in the group of eight to have attempted this canyon before. He, however, was cheated right at the very edge of the canyon, when a party member conveniently dislocated their shoulder and had to be assisted back to hospital. I, on the other hand, had been cheated in our previous attempt, when the impressive underground section had been flooded and we had to bail out and walk over the top. And so it was, that no-one had been through the ill-fated underground "star-lit" section of the canyon...

An early morning drive up for all involved saw us get off to a late start of around 9:50 am - which in hindsight is probably too late for this canyon in the middle of winter when the days are so short. Our party's slow walking pace, combined with our navigational entertainment saw us have lunch at the canyon edge at around 1:30pm. Our two GPS units completely failed to help during our walk in through the untracked scrub on the ridge-top west of Starlight. Although they consistently gave the same readings, they were also consistently at least several hundred metres off our true location.

We reached the abseil into the dark section soon after. Not having been into this bit before, I ventured down with both apprehension and prusik loops, and was immediately impressed by the dark chasm and imposing waterfall that greeted me... a little more water than I had expected !! Nevertheless, I managed to cross the pool at the bottom without getting my feet wet, and the water entirely disappeared soon after. So with enthusiasm, I charged off into the darkness, intending to confirm that the underground section wasn't flooded before the others abseiled in.

I went through a fair distance until the canyon narrowed right down to a squeezy bit with a sandy floor. Faced with a slightly squeezy climb down, but an obvious continuation of dry canyon, I decided that I had seen enough and went back to call the others through.

Everyone was suitably impressed with the abseil, and the darkness of the chasm beyond. I waited for everyone to come down, and only got the first inkling of trouble as the last person was coming down. (?) had gone off exploring, and now returned to ask 'did you go as far as the water?'... uh-oh.

After frantic discussions, we decided to leave the rope in place, while I tackled the waist deep pool conveniently located just around the corner from where I had initially turned back. It looked cold, and lead away out of sight around the twists and bends of the canyon. Although it was damn cold, we were lucky in that the waist-deep section was only around 3m long. There followed several ankle deep bits, and two more unpleasant thigh-deep wades. So I had to go right to the end, then go back to call the others through, and then do it all again a third time to get out. I suspect that this was all a little more than the beginners, Betty and Julie, had been bargaining for. All future parties should make sure that the first person into this section checks the entire length of the dark section, and that they carry prusik loops in the event of having to back out. We probably would still have gone through had we known the water was only waist deep, but it would have been nicer to give people the choice while still at the top of the abseil. It is easy enough to walk over the top of the dark section, and abseil in soon after if it does turn out to be flooded.

After that, we made it through the rest of the canyon in reasonable time, reaching the Wolgan River soon after 4:30pm. The sun was due to set soon after 5:30pm, and I thought we'd make it back to the cars shortly before 6pm. Unfortunately, the road back by the Wolgan turned out to be a little trickier than I remembered. There are a couple of confusing branches after the shale mine, leading to different parts of the industrial ruins. In particular, there is a low road that follows the river, and a high road, that seems to be much more direct.

Through our different walking paces, our party had become slightly separated by this point of the track. Geoff McDonnell and co. were well ahead, and had chosen the low road. Julie and I reached the intersection, and at Julie's encouraging chose the high road (she remembered it from a previous trip). We intended to follow it a little way to confirm it, and then coo-ee back to Nick and Betty, who we assumed were somewhere not far behind us. The replies to our coo-ees then seemed to come from the low road, below us, and we assumed that they had chosen this path. However, I got more concerned by the time the paths

again intersected, and decided to stop and wait for the other group. Julie and I were most surprised, then, to see Geoff and co. appear from the road behind us - somehow at our slow pace we had overtaken them. So, Nick and Betty were even further behind, and were probably going to choose the longer low road.

So we did not begin to get concerned until about 1hr after we had returned and they still had not arrived. We then sent David to cross the river in his car and wait at the end of the road, with instructions to come back in half an hour if there was still no sign. After the half hour had gone, we sent another car and three more people to find David, and to set off with warm clothes and any food we had left to look for them. We agreed to go to the Police by 11pm - around 4 hours after they could reasonably have been expected back.

By this time (8pm), the temperature was already almost zero degrees, and still dropping rapidly.

Meanwhile, Julie and I waited. After an hour, we decided that it would be better to drive to the top of the Wolgan Valley, and get mobile reception and call the Police to at least inform them of the developing situation, so they would be in a better position to quickly respond if it later became necessary. And we waited by the side of the road for any sign of our other cars to come past.

Luckily, Nick and Betty were found by the search party. They had reached the intersection, and after checking each one for a distance, they had decided that they didn't know which road to take. So they stopped in the middle, and built a fire to keep warm and dry their clothes, and waited for rescue.

They returned to the campsite, and when our car was missing decided to head to Lithgow. They of course spotted us by the side of the Newnes Road, and stopped. The police were informed all was ok soon after 10pm.

There are many lessons to be learnt from this incident. It is the responsibility of the tripler to keep any party together and in sight whenever possible; it was failure in this that led to this situation. Even if you are confident that people are in earshot - that is not always enough.

Secondly, mobile phones can play a vital part in any rescue situation. The tripler should either have one, or find out if anyone else has one before setting off. By driving to the top of the Wolgan Valley, we were able to use the mobile phone to put us into contact with the police, and also wait for the return of our own search party (who had to drive past us). This early police contact would have then helped a rescue team get underway very soon after our own search team had come back with a negative result, if this had actually occurred.

Perry's First Real Caving Trip

Jenolan Caves, 6 - 7 March 1999

by Perry Judd

The first weekend of March saw another one of SUSS's monthly trips to the Jenolan Caves. For most of you hard core cavers would have been just another weekend getting down and dirty in big black muddy holes. For me it was my first "real" caving trip. After seeing the Tassie slides on the Thursday night at the meeting I really wanted to get into it, even though we were repeatedly told that "you don't find any caves like this in NSW". So early Saturday morning everyone met at the Cavers' Cottage. I stupidly hurried to arrive on time only to find half the people weren't there yet and the ones that had stayed the Friday night were only just getting out of bed. Who knows what they got up to on Friday night? They tell me that you cavers do some weird stuff when it gets dark!

Around 10 am we split into two groups. Annalisa took a group to Frenchmans for a tour and Mark led a group of gullible adventurers to his wonderful ("I know it goes somewhere") dig site somewhere up the end of Mammoth cave. After a couple of hours of scrambling, crawling, gut sliding and squeezing through places unnaturally small for the human body (including the aptly named 'Primeval Fear') we arrived at the end of 'Ice Age'. After a short break for lunch, which for me consisted of mud-flavoured LeSnaks, we were put to work. The buckets just kept on coming as Mark and Don frantically tried to reach that elusive river. There were some opportunities to rest however as Ian found

greater interest in defacing the rock with his pocket knife while claiming that he was collecting samples for later study! Alas, my hopes of breaking through on my first ever caving trip were dashed, but about 3 or 4 metres progress was made until the tube sumped up again. I was even lucky enough to have a refreshing swim (albeit involuntarily) in the underground river on the way back. Susan also enjoyed the opportunity to take a dip and would have been swept away if it weren't for the gallant efforts of Mark who risked damage to the crown jewels by giving her something to hang on to. I'm sure that's what I saw but it was kind of dark down there! As if we weren't buggered enough after these escapades we were dragged off for an Annalisa-Special tour of the show caves.

Sunday was a bit easier with Ian taking a group of us through Hennings and Wiburd's Lake Cave. Don, Mark and some more gullible people went digging again. I think they must have some repressed sandpit-separation anxiety from when they were kids. Apparently Don even likes to dig in the wrong direction just for the fun of it!

Basically it was a great introduction to caving. If I lived in Sydney I'd be back for more but I live up in sunny Queensland where the caves are so much more abundant... *not!*

I'd like to thank Annalisa for fitting me in on the trip and everyone else for being so hospitable. However my mother would not like to thank you as I snuck my caving clothes in the wash on my return. Her washing machine will never be the same!

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Lumen in Tenebris



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