

SUSS BULL 41(2)

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2001



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SUSS BULL 41(2)

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SUSS REGISTRATION

The SUSS Committee is pleased to report that we are finally re-registered with the University of Sydney Union... which means that we again have access to our University funding, and that we (ie. trip participants) are again covered by the Universities public liability insurance policy.

- SUSS COMMITTEE

LUNE RIVER YHA BURNS DOWN!

Sad news from Southern Tasmania. The ABC News website reported the following story on the 28th of August:

The Tasmania Fire Service is investigating a fire which destroyed the Lune River YHA and Backpacker hostel in southern Tasmania. Fire crews from Dover and Southport arrived at the blaze shortly after 1.30 a.m. The building was believed to be unoccupied. The Fire Service estimate damage to be around \$100,000.

The Lune River YHA is where SUSS has often stayed while caving in Exit Cave and the surrounding areas. The next SUSS trip to this area will obviously have to check before they turn up to Lune River, expecting accommodation...

- DAVID CONNARD

SPELEOBRAZIL 2001

Sustainable development of Karst environments was the theme of the 13th International Congress of Speleology. 500 people from around the globe, cavers, divers and scientists converged on the conference centre. Paulo Forti opened the congress, first by giving a history of caving and cave use before addressing the issues of the future. One controversial point he advanced was that the use of carbide should be banned in caves as alternative light sources were cheaper and lasted longer.

In the opening session of speleomedia, we watched the new Imax movie "Journey Into Amazing Caves" by Wes Skiles. It has very spectacular footage but leaves you wondering what kayaking down the Grand Canyon has to do with caving. We thoroughly enjoyed the rest of speleomedia and came back with some more ideas for what to do with our video.

Australia was well represented at the conference. Julia James, Armstrong Osbourne and Craig Barnes from Sydney University all gave papers. Due to clashes with the timetable, I wasn't able to attend any of these but from the animated discussions at lunch, Armstrong's papers went down exceptionally well. Myself, Steve and Penny Armstrong made up the rest of the Sydney University contingent.

Grace Matts and Nick White represented ASF at the conference and Grace also put in a lot of work their with the cave rescue commission. Nick's wife Sue, a researcher at Latrobe, presented her work on speleogenesis in the Cenozoic limestones in Victoria. Arthur Clarke was there with his digital camera snapping away as was John Dunkley.

We attended some fantastic sessions. I particularly loved the session by Giovanni Badino on the ice caves in Antarctica. He was invited by the Italian Programme of Research in Antarctica to explore caves on and around the station at Terra Nova Bay in Antarctica; a place which he knew would not contain ice caves as it is too cold. Ice caves are found in regions where the average temperature is zero and not the -20°C conditions at Terra Nova Bay. As he said, we can't tell nature what to do and to his surprise caves did exist and were up to 300 m long. He suggested they were formed by the "heat" from the ocean underneath subliming the ice.

A packed room also heard about the rescue of 7 cavers trapped for a week in a flooded cave in France. They drilled something like 17 narrow holes to try to intersect the cave and when they did they them drilled 48 cm holes and sent the rescuers down looking for them. Despite the fact that the water level in the cave entrance was higher than the rest of the cave, the cavers had survived in an air pocket in one section and were without injury.

The final banquet was fantastic. A huge all you could eat Brazillian BBQ. By the end of the evening there was raucous singing (what the other people in the restaurant felt about these mad foreigners I'm not sure). All in all it was a fantastic conference. The next conference will be held in Athens in 2005.

- ANNALISA CONTOS

THANKS FOR SRT GEAR

The committee wishes to thank David Maher for his thoughtful donation of a 20' ladder, SRT and Oldham gear including chargers. David, a past member of the Goulburn Police Rescue Squad, is retired from caving and wanted to enable other cavers to benefit from this equipment. His gesture is timely given our present funding situation, and will assist us at a time when our capital expenditure is restricted. The society extends its appreciation to David.

- SUSS COMMITTEE

NEWS AND GOSSIP

MISSING EQUIPMENT

After the week-long Jenolan trip in July, some key pieces of SUSS equipment have not been returned. Could **ALL** participants on this trip please check that they don't have the following bits of equipment lying around somewhere:

- FX2 Batteries, nos. 10 and 23
- FX2 Headpieces, nos. 5, 10, 11, 12 and 16

- SHANNON CRACK

NPWS REGULATIONS

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW) will be releasing for public comment the draft of their new set of Regulations – the rules that govern what is, and what is not OK in a National Park. The copies of these regulations that we have seen so far are incredibly draconian – making it illegal to do most of the things that we do in a National Park. Of particular interest to SUSS members will be the following two clauses: (although there is much more that is also problematic)

Clause 10(1): A person must not camp in any park otherwise than in an area set aside for camping. Maximum penalty: 30 penalty units [\$3,300]. (*ie. no more bushwalking unless you can get to a marked campsite at night!!*)

Clause 23(3): A person must not in a park carry, possess or use any equipment that is required for abseiling, base jumping, bungee jumping, rock climbing, caving, parachuting, white water boating, paragliding, parasailing or hang gliding. Maximum penalty: 30 penalty units [\$3300] (*you could be fined for carrying an old abseil rope as a tow rope!!*)

It seems likely that the purpose of these laws will not be to necessarily ban these activities, but to be able to use them to prosecute those a ranger sees fit – eg. if a ranger suspects that you've been illegally canyoning (eg. in Clastral, which is currently closed), all he has to do is wait at the car park and fine you for carrying gear – rather than catch you in the act of doing anything. Never mind if you'd actually been in some other canyon. This is of course an incredibly bad and dangerous law to make – one which seems intended from the outset to be purely discretionary - to only ever be used on an officers whim.

The final draft will be available for public comment in about 1 weeks time. When released, it will be downloadable from <http://www.npws.nsw.org.au/>. The public comment period will last for 4 weeks. All users of National Parks should be strongly encouraged to not only make a submission on this, but to write letters to sympathetic members of parliament to voice your concern.

A list of members of parliament may be found at: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/Parliament/Members.nsf>. Please take the time to write a letter to at least one of the sympathetic MPs to voice your concerns, and to spread the word to fellow park users. MPs to target will be both the independents and minor parties – eg. *The Greens*, *The Outdoor Recreation Party* (!), *The Shooters Party* (!), and perhaps the *Reform the Legal System Party*.

- DAVID CONNARD

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Your esteemed publication has a great reputation as a speleological publication of veracity and keen detail, fostered by such luminous and entertaining scribes as Vaughan-Taylor, Staraj and Rowling. It was with surprise, therefore, that I read your item "*Caving in the News*" on p2 of *SUSS Bull 41(1)*. According to this item, the story in Mens Health on caving was by "an old university friend of Chris Norton's".

I must say, I was surprised to hear this. As far as I am aware, the first time I laid eyes on Mr Mike Butler was when he arrived at the Forbes Tavern on his Razor scooter, tanned and buff as any good men's mag journo should be, to get me drunk enough to spill the beans on the secret underbelly of caving. Fortunately, as the extract from his article shows, I appear to have confused him sufficiently that no-one is likely to be able to use the descriptions given for illegal caving purposes.

Now, it is possible that I have in fact met him before at Uni, during one of those periods marked by blanks in both my diary and recollection that usually concluded passed out in a dumpster near the Graffiti Tunnel. However, I suspect that you may be reverting to the tradition established by a former SUSS Bull editor of purveying poppycock (see in particular *SUSS Bull 35(1)* p51). Whilst there are those that would defend your right to do so (see *SUSS Bull 35(3)* pp63-4), the practice not only detracts from the general gravitas of the journal, it also puts about that I am the sort of bloke who would consort with someone who would ride a Razor scooter through town. Which I did do - but only once, and I didn't inhale.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Norton

Professional Chick Magnet (see *SUSS Bull 41(1)* p1)

THE GIRL FROM IPANEMA GOES TO KIWILAND

WEST COAST, NEW ZEALAND
13-29 APRIL 2001

BY CHRIS NORTON
WITH PHOTOS BY ALAN PRYKE

SUSS Participants: Simon Goddard, Megan Meier¹, Chris Norton, Alan Pryke
Kiwi extras: Steve Pawson, Kerry Silverwood

Chapter 1: *In Search of Raro*

“So - when can we start telling sheep jokes?” asked Simon earnestly.

Not when you’re sitting in the back seat of the car of a kind New Zealander who has just picked you up at Christchurch Airport at midnight, that’s for sure. Fortunately, Steve Pawson, President of Canterbury Caving Group, seemed to be used to taking sheepish comments with a grain of salt, so we were not evicted from our temporary lodgings for the night (Steve’s absent flatmates’ beds). This was a good thing as we needed to get carbide off Steve the next morning. We also needed Steve to show us where the supermarket was, and drive us round to get our hire cars. Only then could we start telling sheep jokes. For the time being, we had to content ourselves with nervous giggles whenever Steve pronounced “Subaru” with the accent on the second syllable.

The next morning, Simon was deposited at the supermarket with orders to find lots of Moro bars and Raro, while the others picked up the cars. Simon spent the next half hour avoiding looking at the huge stands of Raro, on special, stacked at the end of one aisle. Why? Chris and Alan had led him to believe that Raro was a type of savoury-tasting fish.² Fairly strong, a bit like rollmops, but dried out and really concentrated. When the others turned up it took some time to convince him otherwise. Simon had in the meantime spent his time filling the trolley with dinner ingredients from all five food groups - canned peeled tomatoes, canned pureed tomatoes, canned pureed tomatoes with spice, tomato paste, and baked beans.

With a couple of supermarket trolleys groaning, we approached the checkout. There were a few moments of panic when the bill came to around NZ\$700, but when we remembered this was about AU\$17.95 we breathed more easily.

We collected an unnecessarily excessive 30kg of carbide from Steve, thus meaning that for the rest of the trip our vehicles should probably have been bearing large ‘dangerous goods’ warnings; and set off over Lewis Pass to Murchison. When we started sorting out the food that night, we did a quick calculation and decided that if we had two tins of tomato with every meal, we would finish the trip with only a few tins left over. This was to make for some interesting culinary experiences.

The next day was spent driving along the Buller River to the West Coast, then north to Karamea³. Karamea is pretty much the end of the road along the West Coast. Tourist guides boast its attractions as swimming and fishing. Cavers boast its attractions as the caves of the Oparara River area, including the 14km long Honeycomb Hill Cave. Honeycomb Hill is actually very easy to get into - a local tourist operator runs daily trips from the quaintly named Last Resort up to the cave. However, the tour only traverses



Kerry Silverwood wonders who bent the formation, Enduro Stream, Honeycomb Hill Cave

¹ Some might know her as Megan Pryke. But her passport attested otherwise.

² Note to would-be New Zealand visitors - this is not true. Raro is, in fact, a sugary drink base that makes up into a variety of appetising fruit flavours, such as Sunrise Orange, Sweet Navel Orange, Passion Orange, Mandarin Orange, Mango Orange...

³ Karamea (trans) - Maori for “Caramel”

about 200m of passage. The other 13,800m is a good deal harder to get into, requiring lots of paperwork and bureaucracy. It also needs a local guide, and that's why we stopped by at Waimangarau to chat with Kerry Silverwood. Over several cups of tea, we discussed the whys and wherefores of various caves, landscape gardening, outdoor education, and how you can buy a house on a half-acre block on the West Coast for NZ\$15,000 (about AU\$384.65). Kerry agreed to take us to Honeycomb the next day, and we agreed to meet him at 8am.

Chapter 2: Brought to you by the letters L, T, D, G and H

Never agree to meet someone in New Zealand at 8am when you are not long off the plane from Australia. This is 6am Sydney time. It means you need to be awake at 5am Sydney time, which is not a good thing on a holiday. Needless to say, it was well past 8 by the time we collected Kerry, and the key to Honeycomb Hill Cave, from the Last Resort - a much more upmarket establishment than the one we were staying at. It was well on the way to 9am when Kerry pointed out that the key Chris was twiddling in his hand was not the key to the cave, but another key, and we should really take it back because it unlocked the storeroom the commercial group would need to use later in the day. It was past 9am when, at Simon's behest, we then returned to our rooms to check that he really had shut the door properly.

Eventually, we were bumping along the rough road to Honeycomb Hill. We soon realised that when you load five people, plus caving gear, into a low ground clearance hire car, the clearance gets even lower. After several kilometres of banging, clunking and cries of "Oooh!" at every metal-on-rock scrape, we pulled over for a weight redistribution exercise. This consisted mostly of moving most of the cave packs out of the boot and on top of Alan in the front seat. This did the trick nicely, and the grinding clunking noises were far less frequent on the next portion of the journey.

When we arrived at the carpark and unpacked, we realised that when we moved what looked like most of the cave packs, we had actually moved just Alan's cave pack. This extraordinary object was the result of Alan asking Scott Hall to make him a cave pack 'big enough to fit my camera case in'. Scott obviously interpreted this broadly and made a pack that Alan would still be able to use if he took up IMAX photography. However, the pack is very useful, being able to fit not only all Alan's gear in, but also any injured party member that may need transport.

Eyeing the pack suspiciously and wondering just who these jokers were he'd got involved with, Kerry led us up the Oparara River to the cave entrance - or, in fact, one of the cave entrances, "L" entrance. Thanks to our trustworthy looks, we were privy to inside information about this cave, as the owner of the holiday camp where we were staying had confided that "There are actually three other entrances besides the main one", and expressed the view that "Although they *say* there are 14km of passages, there's probably about 100km of passageway there in total."



We

started off into the cave, which contains a large number of stalactites and a daylight hole. I suspect that

¹ MOA (trans) - Maori for "KFC"

the holiday park owner is a little behind the times entrancewise. Our trip up the generously proportioned Honeyflow Stream was broken up by the occasional large daylight hole, turning the cave into a lush garden with the streamway cascading over waterfalls through the greenery. Eventually we popped out at 'T' entrance, and after pausing for lunch spent the next hour roaming aimlessly through thick forest trying to find an entrance that Kerry had never actually entered before ("But I know what it looks like from the inside!", he protested.) Eventually we gave up and went to plan B, which entailed popping through a different entrance and crawling about 150m through the far less generously proportioned Enduro Stream before it took pity on us and lifted the ceiling.

At this point, we deviated to an area known as Petals, which is reputed to be very pretty. Kerry took us as far as the bottom of an awkward rift and indicated that the way on was to climb up it, then wandered off to leave us to it. Chris gingerly ascended, then looked for somewhere to tie a tape off in order to assist the others. There were plenty of things to tie the tape to, and conveniently they could all be picked up and moved around to a handy location. This meant they were no good at all for the purpose of supporting everyone's weight, so Chris went off for a wander by himself. He was taking some time, so Alan decided he really needed to make an effort to get up. No sooner had he scrambled to the top when Chris returned, declaring the area to be a loose muddy rockpile with no sign of pretties (though there could be some right at the back over some nasty muddy rocks, but he wasn't really inclined to go there alone). Chris delicately dropped down the rift once more using a technique best described as "controlled gravitationally assisted descent". After much consternation, Alan finally realised that the only way he would get out of the cave is if he followed Chris, and after checking that there really was nothing to tie a tape to descended using a technique best described as "slipping".



Exiting "T" Entrance, Honeycomb Hill Cave

Kerry let us amble down Enduro Stream at our own pace, and we met up at the start of a labyrinthine section which contained the infamous 6m Pit of Death. There were three options, Kerry informed us - climb down into the Pit (no jolly fear), crawl gingerly around the side on a narrow ledge, or pike out and go the other way. Alan, Megan and Chris decided they needed to prove that Australian cavers are every bit as hardy as Kiwis, and did the traverse. Bonus points to Megan for posing for photographs on the middle of the traverse ledge. No sooner was Megan halfway across, however, than Kerry announced there was no way he was crawling over that darned thing, and he vanished, muttering that he thought the passages joined up again elsewhere. Simon, who had not yet traversed the Pit, waved a bright cheerio and vanished behind Kerry, who he calculated was far more likely to lead him safely out of the cave. The other three toddled around for about 20 minutes, hearing Kerry's voice beckoning them from the bottom of all manner of deep shafts before everyone finally met up in the spectacular "D" Canyon - a large rift from the surface trimmed in a green velvet robe that led into the spectacularly wide tunnel of "D" Passage. After a short trip to "G" Entrance and back, Kerry led us out through "H" Entrance to the Oparara River.¹ The river was looking particularly golden-tinged at this point, and we decided that the name on the maps must be a misprint - the river is presumably more properly known as the Oparara River, and is the source for all those distilled orange flavours of Raro. We returned to the path via Honeycomb Arch and piled back into the car for another not quite so rockgrinding trip back to Karamea - presumably, the day's exertions had caused us to lose just enough weight to keep the car floor far enough above the road surface to not cause any problems. We offered Kerry the chance to come home for steak and tomato, but he declined.

Chapter 3: *The Pursuit of Whitebait*

We started the next day enjoying some of the delights of Karamea. Many of these are set out in the classic literary work "Reflections of Karamea", the only edition of which resides in the communal kitchen at the Karamea Holiday Park. Visitors are

¹ As the discerning reader will have realised by this point, whoever named the various features of this cave was not particularly imaginative.

encouraged to contribute poems to this book, and the better ones get typed up and even sometimes adorned with original artwork of nikau palms and whitebait. Whitebait, it seems, are an integral part of the Karamea experience, as every poem mentioned them at some point. The other essential part of the Karamea experience is that one's experiences can be told in not-quite-scanning, not-quite-rhyming couplets. (Example: "We whitebaited the Karamea/ For almost two weeks,/ John and Margaret were our hosts/ They really were quite sweet.") We decided that our trip to Honeycomb was definitely worth commemorating in the traditional way, so we composed a quick 10-verse poem in the traditional style which was duly inserted in the book for posterity. A sample line:

"It wouldn't be a Karamea poem/ If we didn't mention whitebait.
So now that we have done that/ Would you please turn out the light, mate?"

The holiday park owners were sad to see us go. The main holidays were over, and the whitebait didn't start to run for many more months. Still, they weren't complaining too much - the place had just been vacated by a film crew shooting a version of Conan Doyle's "The Lost World", who had decided that Karamea was the ideal setting for a film about a place untouched by modern civilisation and populated by prehistoric throwbacks. "There were all sorts of famous actors, like Bob Hoskins", the owner proclaimed enthusiastically. Oh, and they stayed here in the holiday park? Er, no, they stayed in the nicer place up the road. "But some of the sound and lighting crew stayed here!" he added proudly.

Once this onerous task was complete we were free to visit the Oparara Arch. This was up the same bumpy road as before, but to reduce the risk of holing the petrol tank in one of our cars we employed the crafty technique of taking both vehicles, thus risking holing the petrol tanks of both cars. It was a short wander up to the Arch, which is impressive in dimension and similar to what the Grand Arch at Jenolan would look like if you took out the road and development and stuck it in the middle of dense jungle with a river of Raro running through it. We decided to give the other arch, known as Moria Gate, a bit of a miss because a) we had seen the photos and it didn't look impressive; and b) we had read our Tolkien and knew that we would be in deadly peril from the Watcher in the Water if we came within tentacle distance of the entrance. We returned to the carpark for lunch, where we experienced the final delight of Karamea - sandflies.

Back in the cars once more, it was time to head south again. We stopped in for afternoon tea with Kerry before proceeding through Westport and down to Cape Foulwind. Cape Foulwind stinks, because there is a big seal colony there. The locals swear that the seal stench has nothing to do with the name Cape Foulwind, but that's a good enough explanation for me. At Cape Foulwind, we also met our first wekas¹ of the trip, which were introduced to our cave duck but which Duckie found to be

unwelcoming with a tendency to salivate upon one.



Wondering which way the exit might be, The Metro

After photographing the crashing waves and the sunset for a while, Chris stuck his hand absentmindedly in his pocket and pulled out Kerry's front door key, which he'd been given to mind a couple of hours ago and guarded so well that even its owner couldn't get it. So while Alan and Megan proceeded to Charlestown to suss out our next accommodation, Chris and Simon drove 30km back north to return the key. This, it turned out, was a good thing, because

when they took the direct route to Charlestown upon their return they saw the sign that said "No petrol for 90km", which Alan and Megan, taking the back route from Cape Foulwind, had missed. Alan and Megan had also made the mistake made by many travellers in NZ of believing that if something is shown as a town on a map, there will probably be petrol there. Unfortunately, at

¹ *Weka* (trans) - "A very stupid bird" (Connard, 1999); alternatively, Maori for "Chocolate pudding" (Connard again). A weka is sort of like a cross between a duck and a chicken, only with an intellect vastly inferior to either.

Charlestown, there was no petrol, nor even a general store. There is a motor camp, a club, a tavern (which is, encouragingly, called the Cavern), and that's about it. Charlestown's level of civic pride is attested to by the fact that of the six or so streets in town, one of them is called Rotten Row. Charlestown's industries are tourism, recovering from mining, beer drinking, and whitebaiting.



Ensuring you silhouette yourself artistically is a requirement in Split Level Passage, The Metro

Chapter 4: All Stations to the Nile

Ananui¹ Cave, better known as the Metro², is one you have to share. Its commodious, flat passages make it an easy target for tourist operators, and it comes as no surprise to arrive at the carpark to find several buses parked at the end of the road. It comes as a bit more of a surprise to find heavy earthmovers tearing a swathe through the picturesque rainforest through which the path wends. The brochures for Underworld Adventures, who run both dry caving and rafting trips to the cave, bill a "20min walk through rainforest" as one of the attractions of the trip. However, it seems that 20 minutes worth is a bit too much rainforest for some, so the company is putting in a tramway to get visitors to the cave that much faster.

A suspension bridge over the Nile River brought us to the cave entrance without getting our feet wet. Once inside the cave, we realised we would not be exerting ourselves overmuch either. A wide path was laid out with string strung between 8inch high concrete mounds, winding its way through the cave. These markers were, it turned out, a mixed blessing. They keep the path well marked - until you are unwise enough to bump one of them, as Simon did at one stage. Not only did the concrete mound topple from the side of the path, the sudden jerk on the string brought down another 25 or so. Oh dear. Chris, further on in the cave, stuck to admiring the formation, and hoping a tour didn't come past. After a few minutes, the markers were back in place - but a final 'adjustment' saw the whole lot topple down once more and the exercise had to be repeated.



One hazard of the Metro is dodging the occasional express trains

¹ Ananui (trans) - Maori for "Tourist"

² Metro (trans) - Maori for "crummy Mazda model"



Chris seeks divine guidance from the straws after losing his map, Hollywood

However, so long as you keep clear of the track marking, the cave has much to entertain. Much of its several kilometres of passage is walk-through in nature, but once you venture from the tourist path there is much fun to be had crawling around mazes and getting disoriented in the black depths of the main stream passage. Many photos later, when it's time to go, blow up your inner tubes, put on your wetsuits and jump into the lake at the end to float out the resurgence and into the Nile River.

Despite water levels being down ("It hasn't rained for about *three weeks!*", the locals said gravely), we still enjoyed a fun ride back down the river to the suspension bridge. Our only regret? That we forgot our cave duck.

A day in the Metro and the subsequent immersion had the added benefit of getting our gear nice and clean for the next day's trip, out along the Four Mile Road to the twin attractions of Hollywood and Te Tahi. Simon quickly solved the problem of still-moist cave gloves using the microwave, and we were soon thrashing around in the scrub following an interesting map drawn by Kerry that bore only marginal resemblance to the scenery. Somehow, however, we tumbled into a doline and decided to explore.



Chris abseils into Ta Tahi, wondering if he's left the oven on

Kerry had told us that if going into Hollywood, we should try to cut down on the number of packs taken. We soon found out why. The entrance doline drops steeply into a narrow rift which does not at all do justice to the name it has been given, Hollywood Boulevard. Much of this rift is traversed shuffling sideways on little ledges several metres above the floor. Some of the rift is traversed sideways in a horizontal position on little ledges several metres above the floor. However, you eventually emerge into the relatively spacious confines of Streamway One, which has some nice decorations in the upper levels.

Unfortunately, we didn't make it far beyond Streamway One. This is because the map of this somewhat intricate cave somehow worked its way out of Chris' overalls and down into the depths of Hollywood Boulevard. Accordingly, we ran around aimlessly popping down passages that always seemed to lead us back to Streamway One. This was a disappointment as it meant we missed out on Streamways Two, Three, Three Point Five and Zero, let alone meeting Elvis the Pelvis (a deceased moa). We left the cave wondering if the streamways were named by the same wit who named the Honeycomb Hill entrances.

Dispirited by a cave that was actually a bit sporting for a change, Simon elected to sit out of the afternoon trip into Te Tahi¹. So it was Alan, Megan and Chris who abseiled down the 30m entrance shaft, then watched their SRT gear get pulled back up the pitch along with the rope. Could they find the way out? Only time would tell...

Te Tahi is also visited by Underworld Rafting, but not quite so often, since this trip is a lot racier than anything you can do in the Metro. The cave is relatively untouched by their presence, although there is now a set of steps leading down the steep slope to the abseil entrance. That entrance intersects the main streamway after a

¹ *Te Tahi* (trans) - Maori giggling. In keeping with this theme, entrances are named "Ha Ha" and "Hi Hi" (pron *hee hee*).

few hundred metres, where it is possible to go in either direction. Electing downstream first, the team negotiated an awkward climb and was soon crawling along the Rat Run in search of the so called Whale Passage, where we were told there was a whale. Eyeing the flattener dimensions of the entrance to the passage, we weren't so sure. Memories came back to me of Keir's habit of naming spots at the end of horrible passages with names like Santa Claus' Fairy Grotto that suggested they contained features of interest to lure unsuspecting but curious cavers through godawful passage. After a short bit of crawling, however, the roof shot up high - and the walls closed in tightly. At least we weren't crawling any more. In fact, the passage was tremendous fun - tight enough that you had to negotiate it sideways, one foot behind the other, and could only turn around in two places, loping along the passage with the walls rushing past you was an eerie experience. As Chris and Alan discovered, it is even eerier when you are loping rapidly along while looking backwards at someone coming towards you making evil faces and laughing maniacally. This led to the appellation "Blair Witch Passage" being bestowed upon the corridor.

And then, after over 100m of passage like this, there is the whale. OK, not a gigantic blue whale, nor even a moderately gargantuan humpback - this is one of those little dolphin-sized whales. But its backbone and ribcage are very evident - fossilised in rock with the cave passage cutting straight through it. And no, I'm not going to publish a photo - you have to go see it for yourselves.

Returning from the whale, it was time to head upstream. Having studied the map, which showed the passage narrowing to not much more than pen-width with lots of water, Chris had brought along a wetsuit jacket. Alan and Megan looked at him accusingly. The first little bit of cave involved climbing some interesting waterfalls. The next little bit of cave involved lots of flat-out crawling in the water. The next little bit of cave was just a continuation of the former, with more flat-out crawling in the water. Sort of like Wyanbene, but with more water and less roofspace. Finally, however, the cave opened out once more, and a route up to the surface was located, appearing at the bottom of a doline full of punga palms.

Night had fallen whilst the party were in the cave, which made it difficult to find the way back to the road. However, after calling out to Simon, hearing his voice, and then walking in the opposite direction, we worked out where to go. A very thorough day's caving.

Chapter 5: By the Rivers of Babylon, and Other Easy Listening Greats

Although there are other caves to do at Charlestown, just two weeks is not enough time to see everything on the West Coast, and we decided to start venturing a bit further from our base. We thought that it was fitting that the day after Hollywood, we did Babylon.

To get to Babylon, you wander along the side of Fox River¹ for a while. Just how much of a while was a mystery. It is around 50 minutes walk to Fox River Cave, which is a lot of path to look along. Fortunately, Kerry had told us the turnoff was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way along the path. Unfortunately, he was wrong. However, we did notice a warning sign along the track, soon after which there was a break in the vegetation that turned out to be the route to the cave.



Beware of whales, Main streamway, Te Tahī

¹ Fox River lies about 20mins drive south of Charlestown, and is notable for being one of six places in New Zealand whose name does not contain the letters 'a', 'u' and 'i' in some permutation.



Euphrates River, Babylon

The story goes that a group of cavers was prospecting around the bluffs on the southern side of Fox River when someone looked over their shoulder and saw a huge landslip with a hole at the bottom of it over the other side of the valley. Curious, a compass bearing was taken and the group walked directly down one side of the valley and directly up the other. I have a sneaking suspicion that the route used today is the same track. It is certainly a direct and steep route, rising about 200m above the path, and is unpleasantly slippery when, like this morning, it has been raining. Megan and Chris got to the cave first, and settled back to listen to untold profanities evaporating from below as Alan and Simon came to terms with the thick vegetation and giant nettles.

The entrance passage to Babylon is truly immense. The floor drops away steeply from the collapse entrance into a vast hallway, about to 50m high and 25m wide, where you can make quite an impression reciting the opening words from the old Commodore 64 computer game *Impossible Mission* - "Another visitor? Stay awhile...stay forever!" in appropriately sepulchral tones, followed by maniacal laughter. (Come to think of it, you can make quite an impression doing that almost anywhere, even when welcoming clients for business appointments or opening the door to your dinner guests.) For the first hour or so, you are not so much caving as bushwalking underground, up, down and over big piles of rocks, along the Euphrates River (which provides the cave's mandatory duck habitat), and then emerging at the foot of the Ziggurat, a huge cone of rock about 100m high filling the passage in a giant chamber. Wow. Mind you, the atmosphere of sullen foreboding and dark grandeur was slightly

diminished by the propensity for some members of the party to hum the tune of "The Girl from Ipanema"¹ throughout most of the first section of cave. The sense of isolation that one would expect to experience climbing a huge rockpile is somewhat lessened by hearing the walls reverberating not with the reflected clatter of tumbling rocks and the amplified tick of dripping water, but rather with easy listening elevator hits.

After climbing over the Ziggurat, things get a little more intimate, as you descend through rockpile until you find cave passage once more. The more obvious bit of passage is a huge riverway, but that goes chundering off back the way you came. Less obvious is a muddy tunnel so small you actually have to bend down at one spot before the cave opens out to comfortable sized passage once more, and the underground bushwalking resumes again.

We had come down here to go to the Kish, a reputedly pretty bit of the cave. Unfortunately, to get to the Kish, you have to climb Ray's Reach. Most of Ray's Reach is a piece of cake, involving not so much climbing up as walking along a rock ledge (albeit a slippery, outward sloping ledge, with a drop of about 15m below you - they like their cake laced with dynamite in NZ). That much might have been do-able. The really dicey bit was the short scramble up onto the ledge, the crux holds for which appeared to be bits of rock sticking out of a loose mixture of mud and gravel. Chris and Megan both had a couple of shots at it, but at the crucial moment someone would remind them of what happened to the last SUSS member who tried climbing unbelayed 15m up in a NZ cave, and they hurriedly retreated. This was a discouraging turn of events that not even a few choruses of "The Girl from Ipanema" could cure, so in low spirits we gave up on the Kish and contented ourselves with taking shots in the back of the cave.

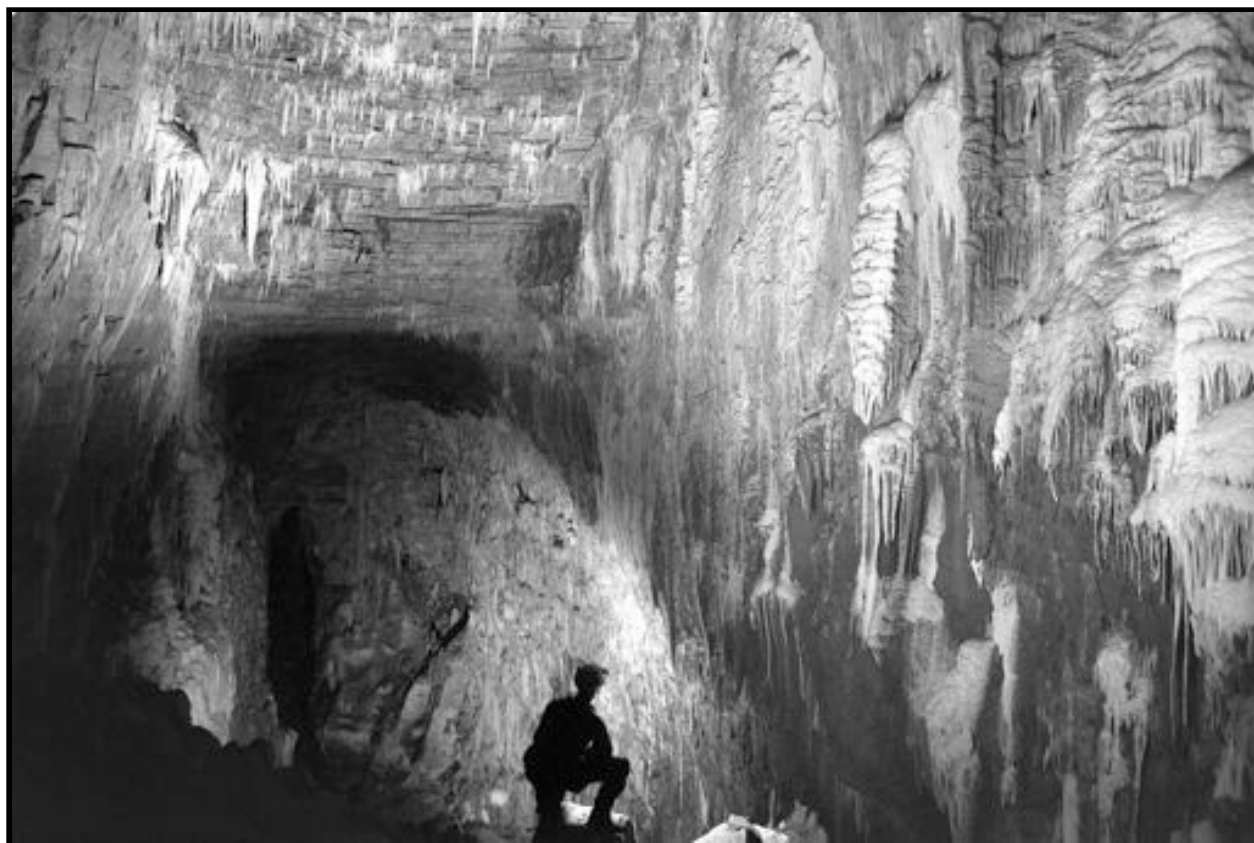
(During a later discussion about the climb, NZ caver Hamish McLauchlan ventured the view that "Yeah, it is a bit committing, but you just have to remind yourself that lots of others have done it so you will probably be all right." Of course, you may also take the view that since lots of others have done it, that awful accident is long overdue.)

¹ *Ipanema* (trans): Maori for "brothel". Bet the folk from 2CH never realised...

We emerged, blinking, into the last of the sunlight and set off on the long trek back, with Alan and Simon vocally expressing their delight at renewing their acquaintance with the giant stinging nettles. Over dinner of chicken korma and tomatoes that night, as we were about to plan the next day's activities, we were interrupted by an ominous voiceover proclaiming.....

"To Be Continued..."

"Oh rats" we said. "We'll have to wait another three months when the next *SUSS Bull* comes out to find out whether Alan and Megan will remember to buy petrol, how to find a cave in 2m high flax using pink spraypaint, what happens when Duckie meets a malevolent weka, why there are only three answers in NZ Trivial Pursuit, and whether the team will be able to use up all their tomatos." We settled into our bunks for the 12-week hypersleep, hoping that no rascally alien would break into the motor camp before the time was up and seek to propagate its species in the warmth of our intestines. Don't you hate it when that happens? Ruins the holiday.



Kicking boulders down the Ziggurat may be fun, but is not advised

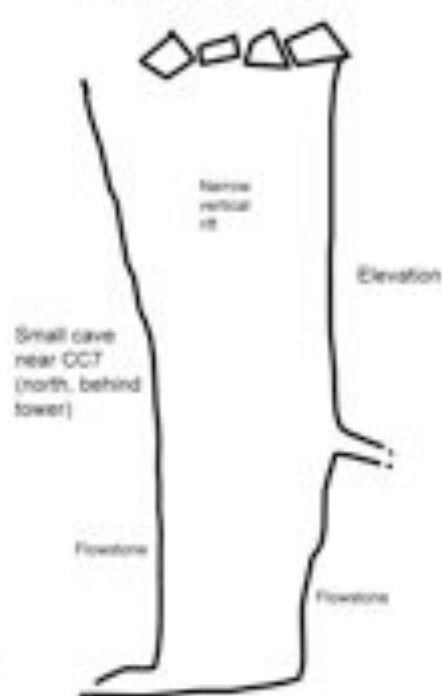
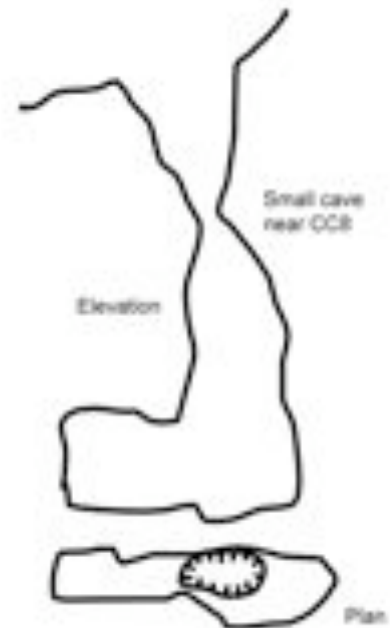
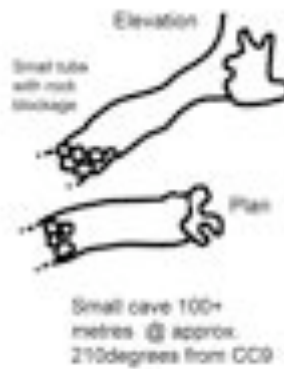
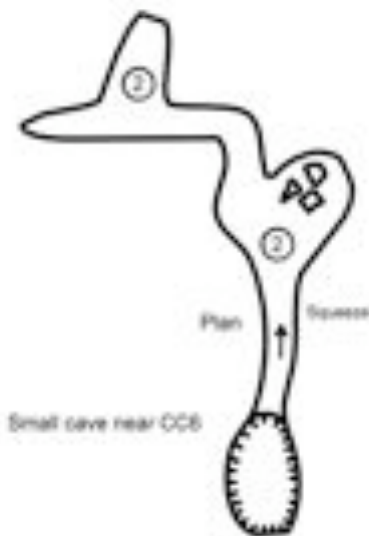
THANKS

Special thanks for this portion of the trip to Steve Pawson and Kerry Silverwood. May your carbides never flicker, your Raro never run dry and your wekas always taste of rich dark chocolate. May you also find the extra 86km of passage in Honeycomb Hill someday.

Small Caves at Church Creek

Untagged and tagged holes,
ASF Grade 2 only, bearings not shown.

Sketched by Alan Pryke and Matthew Fischer
June, 2001



Small Caves at Church Creek

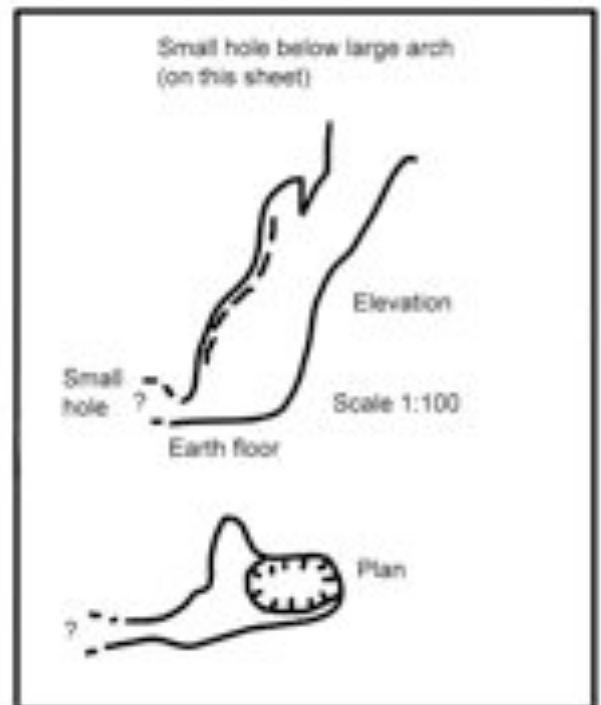
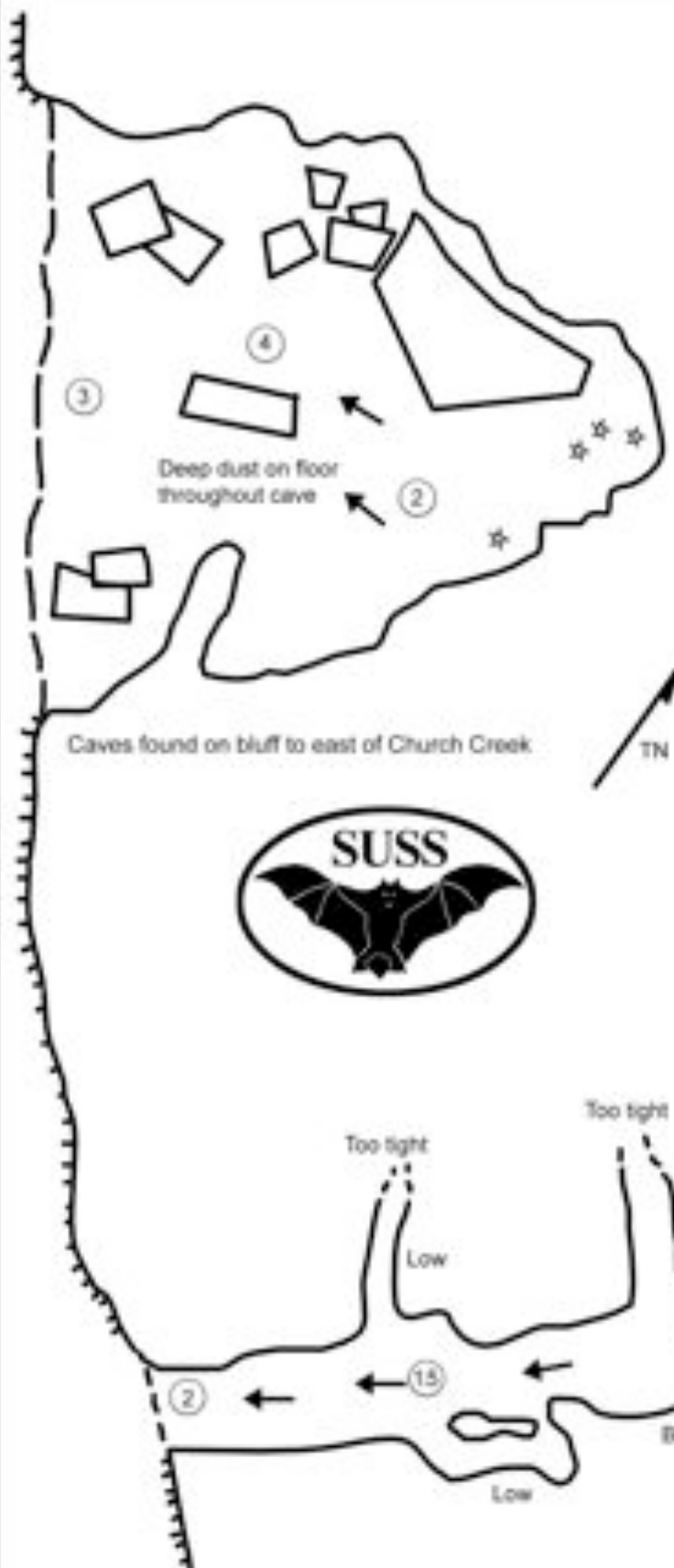
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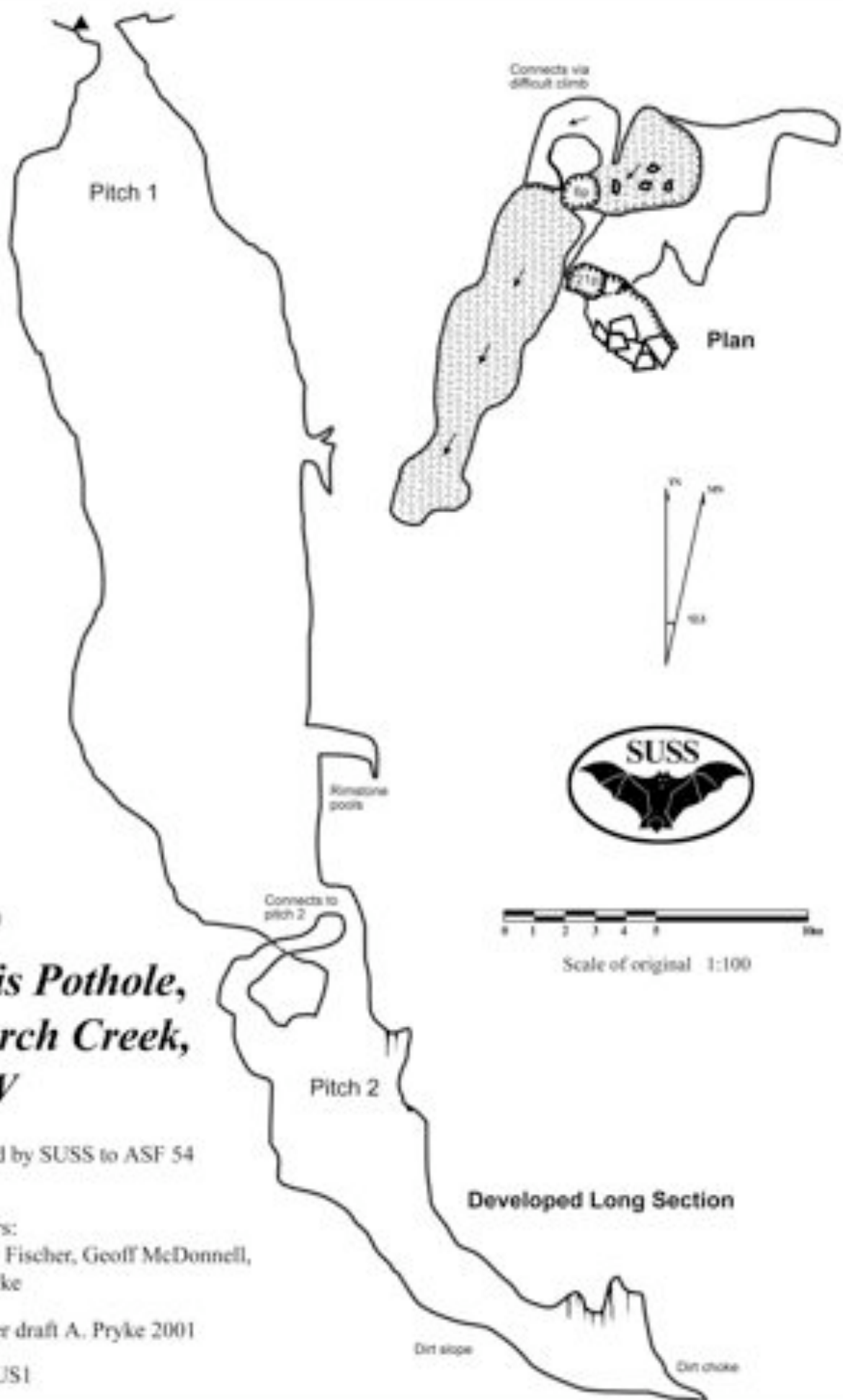
Untagged holes,

ASF Grade 2 only

Sketched by Alan Pryke

June, 2001





CC9 **Willis Pothole,** **Church Creek,** **NSW**

Surveyed by SUSS to ASF 54
 2001

Surveyors:
 Matthew Fischer, Geoff McDonnell,
 Alan Pryke

Computer draft A. Pryke 2001

2CC9.SUS1

THE CHURCH CREEK STEEPLECHASE

CHURCH CREEK CAVES
JUNE 9-11TH, 2001

BY MEGAN PRYKE

Present: Alan Pryke, Geoff McDonnell, Matt Fisher, Max Midlen, Megan Pryke, Phil Maynard

“Ah, the perfect day. Blue sky and grey rock”, thus said Matt Fisher. The latest SUSS Church Creek trip was indeed satisfying; having completed what was set out to be done. Well, at least for my own objectives, as I had no plans on going to Billy’s Creek

Our first objective was to rig and descend Willis Pothole. A 36m rope was rigged with two redirections near the top and one rebelay just before the bottom. There was about one metre of spare rope if that! The last pitch could be avoided by a tricky climb, that is a little exposed, that some chose to do. It doesn’t take long to explore Willis Pothole, apart from the rigging and time taken surveying. The survey indicates that the continuation of this cave is heading towards Donnelly’s Creek. Some people actually refer to Church Creek and Donnelly’s Creek as two different karst areas, though the limestone seems connected. There is a small section of what is perhaps just overburden on Mt Armour ridge showing on a 1960’s SSS map¹.



Alan abseiling into Willis Pothole (CC9)

Phil noticed a lone frog at the bottom of Willis Pot Hole. The karst index describes the cave as having accidental troglodenes. Frogs were also noted in the cave when first discovered in 1968. But I am wondering: Why have frogs accidentally ended up at the bottom of a thirty-metre plus hole in the early 1970’s and in 2001? Is it accidental? The cave is close to the ridge top and the surrounding area is not moist, being mostly limestone and poor shales. The area on top seems too dry to support amphibious frogs. If these frogs did not come from on top then the other alternative is that they entered through the bottom. Could these frogs be not so accidental as one may have understandably assumed? Could they have originated from the thick scrub at Donnelly’s Creek and come upstream? Could these frogs live a tenuous existence inside CC9 living off insects that fly in or fallen debris?

Next it was off to Jago Cave (CC11), the hole that defeated Coops on the last trip and is described in the karst index as “unexplored but definitely a cave”. On this trip Max and Matt proved to be slimmer than Coops, and now we can say that the cave has been explored by SUSS, well at least explored to the top of a tight rift, the bottom of which could not be seen. Alan decided that perhaps the way to test the depth would be to tie a rock on the end of a rope and lower it down. Phil was dubious but agreed. A suitable rock was found, tied on, lowered, but before it reached the bottom a quick retrieval test rendered the rope stuck! Uh-oh! Eventually the rope was freed but the idea was abandoned. We headed to camp, minus our SRT gear and some rigging, left strategically higher in altitude than the base camp, and settled in.

The next day we set off to visit Lewis Cave to check the survey that was done on last year’s trip. Nothing was missed. Although we had found Lewis Cave last year, it still took some time to relocate. We remembered that it was just near a fig tree. Well, it was surprising just how many fig trees are in the area!

A promising but tight hole that Ian Cooper had noted last year located near McCaw Cave was sought. Again, the slimmer Matthew was keen to check it out and he confirmed that it did not open out to a huge pitch, as anticipated by some. We explored some other holes and potted about, examining cracks in the hope of finding something of consequence. Alan found a small chamber cave, but that was about it.



An innovative approach to cave tagging

¹ Stop Press, August 1968, page 135.



Burrs took a liking to Max's telly tubby suit

While on high Phil espied on the limestone bluffs across the other side of the valley a very likely looking hole. The temptation was too much. This area had not been explored by any of us to date. We emerged out of the bushes with our full caving kit on, to find a group of curious bushwalkers, who were very surprised to say the least. Max looked a sight as various burrs and cobbler's pegs had taken a liking to his 'Telly Tubby' suit. We scurried down the hill and up the other side of the valley. Matthew's spirit of exploration was on a roll, he even found a small cave on the way. The likely looking hole, spotted easily from the other side, is a large overhang cave, with an extension out the back. The floor was covered in a thick layer of fine dust. We obviously were not the first to discover this.

On the way back some of us went down the northern side of the bluff. Up in the cliff a round hole that can only be seen from that side was spotted. Alan wondered if this could be the lost Manson cave that is reported to have a window overlooking Church Creek where one can "admire the outside scenery"¹.

We relocated Fife Cave for some real caving. After so many small caves, Fife Cave seemed huge. I was determined to see the downstream end this time so headed off that way. Phil and I exited as Phil was running out of light while the others disappeared upstream.

On our last day we tied up loose ends and headed out. We took the opportunity to explore the area actually on top of Cathedral Rocks. We found Cutler Pothole (CC7), which was covered with branches and debris. I descended the small pitch, unfortunately there was not much more to the cave than can be seen from the top. We also found what seems to fit the description of CC19, though no tag was found. Matthew bravely descended this rift chamber that was ten metres deep, at the base three metres long and one and a half metres wide. We soon found that limestone boulders with sharp rillen karren covered with a slight sprinkle of rain is not a nice combination! It's slippery and spiky - sort of oxymoronic! For some reason, after swearing not to do so again, my pack ended up with the fifty-foot ladder. Oh well, at least I was saved from carrying it up the really steep bit.

References:

Pryke, Megan, Seeking out the Lost, Church Creek June 10-12th, 2000, *SUSS Bull* 40(2-3)
 Matthews, Peter G., "*Australian Karst Index 1985*", Australian Speleological Federation Inc.
 Battye, Bob, "Church Creek Caves", *Anthodite Vol ?*

CAVE RELATED ABSTRACTS

MORPHOANALYSIS OF BACTERIALLY PRECIPITATED SUBAQUEOUS CALCIUM CARBONATE FROM WEEBUBBIE CAVE, AUSTRALIA

(FROM *GEOMICROBIOLOGY JOURNAL* VOLUME 18 ISSUE 3 PAGES 331-343)

A. K. CONTOS, J. M. JAMES, B. HEYWOOD, K. PITT, P. ROGERS

In this paper we present a previously unreported morphology of bacterially precipitated calcite (determined using XRD, FTIR and SAED) occurring subaqueously in Weebubbie Cave. Observations using FESEM and TEM revealed spindle shaped crystals with curved {hk.0} faces lying parallel to the c-axis. Calcite precipitated under conditions designed to mimic the inorganic solution chemistry of the cave revealed a different morphology. These differences between the crystals suggest that the formation of the cave crystals is a consequence of biologically activity.

¹ Battye, Bob, "Church Creek Caves", *Anthodite Vol ?*, pg 4.

Note This may have been a reference to another Fife Cave entrance. Bob Battye's article says that it seems that this cave has never been found since Bob Lawrence apparently found it in the 1950s. It is described as being not too difficult to access with some scrambling.

LAKE BLOODY HELL DRY BYPASS AND THE SUSS WATERFALL (RE)DISCOVERED...

COLONG CAVE, APRIL 2000

BY MEGAN PRYKE

(editors note: this was not actually a SUSS trip)

Cavers: Mark Farrugia, Gary Roberts, Alan and Megan Pryke

It's Friday night and rain is falling near Oberon and Shooters Hill. We arrive at Batsh camp, the rain has thankfully stopped and camp set-up is completed by midnight. In the morning we pack up and set off with overnight gear to the camp spot between the confluence of Lannigan's and Cave's Creek, the weather is marvellous, bringing with it the optimistic spirits that had been washed away by last night's rain. The efflux is pouring out of the cave quite strongly, Cave Creek has water cascading over rocks before it disappears underground. It looks like the low, low levels will be sumped.

We caved through to Kings Cross via the lower entrance (Onslow Cave). The nearby lake has calcite rafts forming on the surface. We established last trip when Colong was in flood that this lake was probably a perched sump as the flood waters did not pour into the lake, but rather into a small plughole in the floor. Alan leads us via a convoluted way back to Kings Cross.

In the Maze area Alan sends Gary, Mark and myself in different directions to have fun working out how these passages intertwine. The adventures continue in the Low Tunnel where we find the Helictite Tunnel loop. Argonite looking formation and small helictites are in the loop and in the Low Tunnel at the southerly intersection of the two passages. Mark and Gary decide to test out cave photography. In the meantime I set off to inspect a major branch off the Low Tunnel to the right at a dyke before Amber Cave is reached, it went to a sandy sump.

The photography is still happening so I wait with Alan in Amber Cave. I really want to see if the Pulsating River has enough water to pulsate so head off. Before I get too far Alan requests I come back as Gary and Mark may wonder where we have gone, so I end up just popping around the siphon area and explore the options of how to get to the Pulsating Pointer room. Gary and Mark arrive and we have a snack before heading off to the clefts, past Marilyn Monroe, the Golden Terraces and through to Woofs Cavern. We do not inspect Woofs part one but continue to the furthest part of Woofs Cavern, known to some as the Lofty Chamber.

In Woofs Cavern I remind Alan about a hole in the ceiling that had water pouring out when we were last there. Alan climbs up into it but no luck, it becomes unnegotiable very quickly. We continue to the Beach via the flattener. Alan and I go off to see if the way to Lake BH is negotiable, and this is most probably going to be a fairly quick excursion considering the water levels. Alan had first seen information on Lake BH in an SSS Stop Press article published in the 1960s. We discovered it for ourselves on a January 1999 SUSS trip¹ when the water levels were very low, and was visited on another trip later the same year to find the water level had dropped in the lake significantly. Well, as expected, the water is up to the ceiling. Disappointed, but not surprised, we turn back.

Mark Staraj had sent us a snippet from an old SUSS bull which gives an account of a trip when a lake with a 7 ft waterfall pouring into it was discovered in Colong². We had been speculating about this being Lake BH with higher water levels than our previous visits. Thus when Alan notes another lead previously unexplored by us it was definitely too promising to give up on. We head through this lead to find more passage amongst rock fall. Enthusiasm is on the rise when the extremely encouraging sounds of splashing water are discerned. Amongst the rocks we poke here and there for a way through, the sounds of splashing water alluring us. We tested possible ways, using the sound test to eliminate the various options until bingo, two squeezes were negotiated and we pop out at the lake, and yes there is a 7ft waterfall, and the lake is full to the brim! With the added waterfall feature the lake looks more impressive than last time.

I have heard anecdotal information about the a Colong feature being called "The SUSS waterfall" to be near Piano Cave. The discovery of this waterfall seems unlikely to have been made by a SUSS member due to the closeness of the entrance and the fact that Colong was known about a long time before SUSS' formation. Personally I think it that as Helen Turton's article is the first known account of reaching this spot via this bypass, which



The stalactite points to the way to the Pulsating River area

¹ *SUSS Bull 38(3)*, R&R at Colong by Carol Layton - vague reference to a very blue pool.

² *SUSS Bull 20(4)*:50 Trip Report Colong May 31/June 1 1980 by Helen Turton



Gary in the wonderfully scalloped marble passage that was found beyond Lake BH

required time and effort to move rocks, indicates that SUSS was the first to find the waterfall. In previous documented visits there was no waterfall as the area was accessed in a dry period when the sump was dry. In any case, it makes more sense to me that this waterfall would be more appropriately named the 'SUSS waterfall' rather than the one near Piano Cave, but it could be that there are two 'SUSS waterfalls' in Colong, logically it would seem that Lake BH is the destination of the true SUSS waterfall.

The depth of the lake is unknown. One thing is

for certain, there is more water pouring into this lake than in the streambed in Woofs cavern. Also, the water drains somewhere underneath the lake, we think it may be the main feeder for the efflux. When it cannot drain quickly enough it flows back towards the Beach Chamber and causes the outflow passage to sump. The outflow from this has been noted by SUSS on other trips³. There is a large volcanic dyke bearing 330 degrees at the lake, and many loose looking boulders.

As you look from the edge of the lake (being careful not to get too close to the steep muddy embankment), back to where the dry bypass route comes out there is an archway made up with three or four large boulders locked together with one fist sized rock acting as the lynch pin, it looks like a potential suicide exploration area thus we had not noted the dry bypass route before. In fact on our previous visit we made a conscious decision to stay clear of the feature. If you ever perchance visit the Lake via the dry bypass route be careful, cross over to the top of the waterfall and be careful. There is a tempting route that could take one underneath these boulders just after the second squeeze, it looks a bit dodgy and probably best avoided.

Alan and I had to go back for Gary and Mark, Alan is pleased he'll be able to push the leads up and over the waterfall into some rifts he found on an earlier trip. Going back through the squeeze is not as quick as the gravity, assisted way in. Alan has even more trouble having longer limbs. Making the squeeze bigger is not an option with the way the rocks are jammed together, everything but bedrock has been moved and the remaining rocks balance something else bigger above! Alan eventually gets through by heading into the squeeze so that his back bends against a rock.

We then head back out via Woofs, the clefts, the shortcut and the Lannigan's Cave (the upper entrance). We are all beginning to tire, Mark especially so, not having much caving experience. After being in the cave for nine hours vegetation aromas fill our nostrils. It is close to full moon and the moonlit clouds look magical with our dark adjusted vision. It will not take long to fall asleep once we snuggle into our sleeping bags!

The next day was yet another beautiful day! None of us wake early enough to enjoy the morning bird chorus that is often heard at this campsite. Today we are off to the Landslide. I get as far as the Landslide before I depart with Mark to finish packing up and leave Alan and Gary to their own devices. Carol arrived sometime p.m.

I am not sure exactly what happened but it seems that the rest of the team got to witness Pulsating River working, very annoying! It has been described as hearing a loud banging sound, followed by the stream bed filling up very quickly with water and eventually drying out. Estimates of this cycle are approximately one hour. Whatever siphon or hydrological feature that causes this, it does not work at low water levels.

It's always exciting to discover something in a cave, even if one is not the first to do so, discovering for ourselves is still a good experience. With the many maze like and parallel passages, Colong is sure not to disappoint anyone who seeks the thrill of self-discovery! I have not been on a trip there recently without discovering a few more pieces to the puzzle. Alan's sketches and maps indicate directions in which more maybe found. It's one of my favourite caves for this reason, and certainly worth multiple visits.

³ *SUSS Bull 36(4)* Where's the Water?, Colong, 22-23 February 1997 by Chris Norton

CAVES AND CHARACTERS OF THE PERUAÇÚ RIVER VALLEY, BRAZIL

(near Fabiao, Minas Gerais, Brazil)

9TH – 14TH JULY, 2001

BY STEVEN AND ANNALISA CONTOS

Fortunately, the speleology and archaeology of the Peruaçu region is worth the drama involved with getting there. Due to fog in Buenos Aires our flight to Sao Paulo was cancelled. Being the land of “manãna”, there was little concern on the part of the airline staff that we had to be in Montes Claros within 36 hours. After a significant amount of time at the ticketing counter, we were told that we would be able to be delivered to our destination; instead of arriving in time for the 5pm Sunday flight, they could get us there for the 9am Monday flight. Of course, there was no truth in this at all, they were simply sick of the sight of three tourists who had the temerity to travel halfway around the world and expect to be able to board flights they had tickets for. No spaces became available, so we missed the start of the tour. On the bright side, our tour organiser José Labegalini (subsequently voted President of the UIS) made the airline pay for a taxi to drive us to our hotel, some 250 km away in the “city” of Itacarambi. We caught up with the tour that night in possibly the only local restaurant able to cook for 14 people simultaneously (although service was never fast, a common feature in Brazil). A delicious meal included some very tasty fish caught from the São Francisco river, which the village sits on and forms a major trade artery of the region. Afterwards, José treated us to some slides of the caves we were to visit.



Local cave art

10/7/01

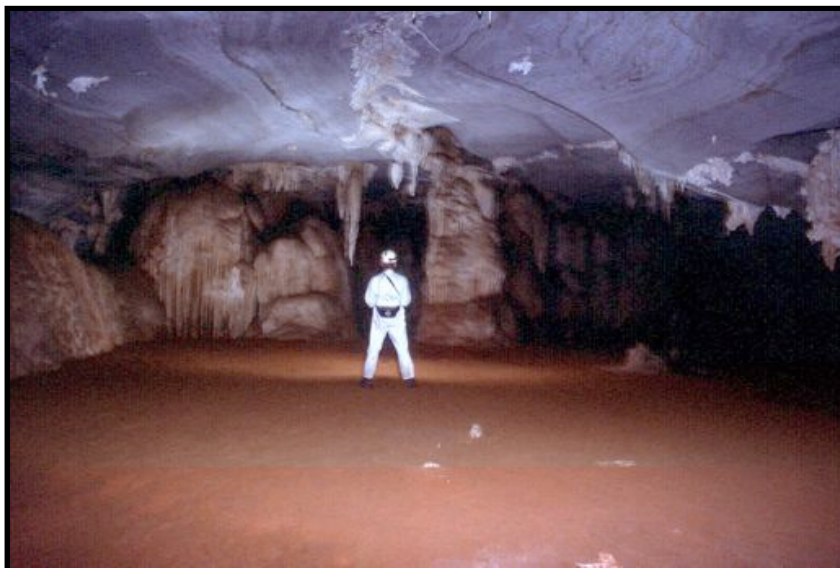
After a typical breakfast of fresh tropical fruit, including papaya, watermelon and sweet sugar bananas, bread with ham and cheese and Brazilian breakfast cake, we hopped into the mini-van and headed out to the caves.

The Peruaçu valley was first surveyed for caves in 1975, however some of the major caves must have been known and inhabited for thousands of years previously. Expeditions in the 80s led to some 60 caves appearing in the literature, however at the present time it is stated that 80% of the canyon remains unexplored. Incidentally, the Speleological Group of Monte Sião (EGMS) is keen for foreign help in continuing to find vast innumerable, and some of their members were represented among the organisers.

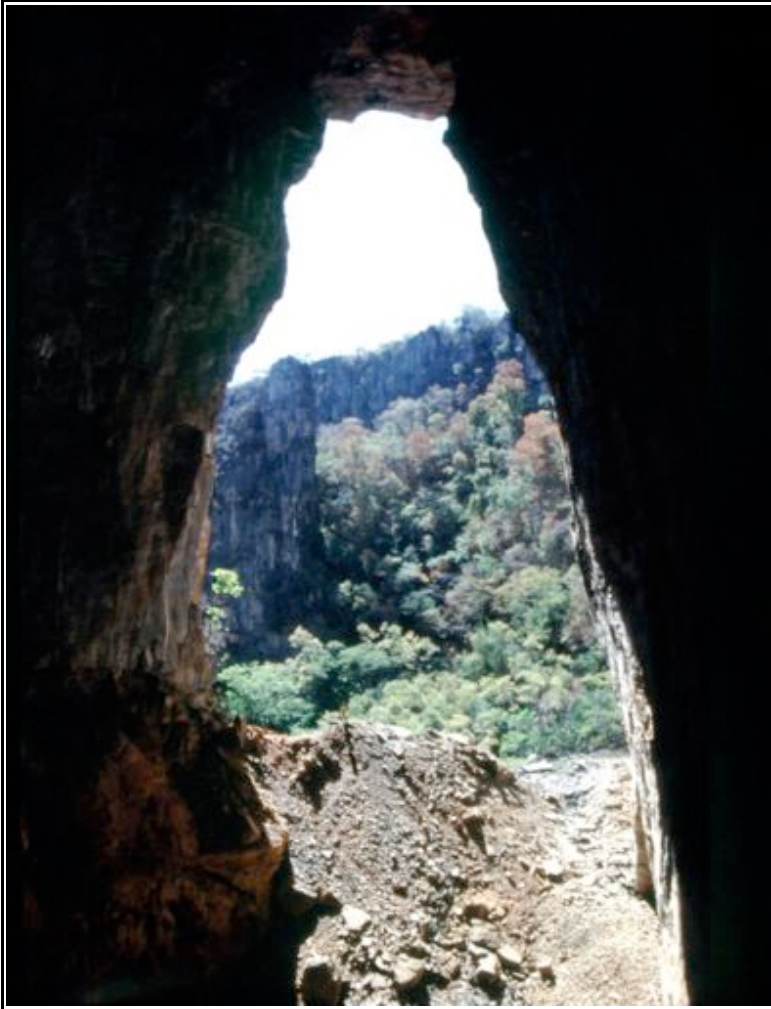
Before we got down to the proper caving, we inspected some archaeological sites sporting amazing collections of Rupestrian rock art. The Peruaçu region is noted for its archaeological tradition, also largely unexplored and undocumented. We were lucky to have Prof. André Prous accompanying our party, who has been, and continues to be, very active in excavating, researching and documenting the archaeology of this region, among others. Four separately identifiable periods or traditions are represented in Peruaçu, the form of the art moving from charcoal and stone scratchings up to 10,000 years BP to yellow and red ochre paintings dated 2,000 – 3,000 years BP. The first site we inspected was Lapa do Limoeiro (Lemon Shelter), where some dark paintings were just visible to the imagination. More engaging was Lapa do Desenhos (Drawing Shelter), where well-preserved paintings of the latest tradition reached 6 metres above the ground in places. At Lapa do Boquete (Little Wood Shelter), an active dig (archaeological dig, it isn't expected to “go”) has obtained carbon datings of 13,000 years BP at roughly 1.5m. An intact burial was dated at 7,000 years BP, and the upper layers yielded grain stores, indicating that the later inhabitants of the caves subsisted by agriculture.

Lunch was typical of the rest of the trip. Local bread, ham and cheese were supplemented with chocolate, a brick of unprocessed sugar cane extract, and the national soft drink, guarana. The guarana is good stuff, with an effect like caffeine minus the jitters. It even tastes pleasant, and the local cavers carry it around in cans, since you have to try really hard to find anything approximating a squeeze in these parts.

The cave for the day was Gruta Bonita (Beautiful Cave). On the way we climbed some of the tower karst for a view over the valley. The pinnacles near the edge of the limestone were very shaky and it was an adventurous few who went that bit further for a good shot of the valley. Bonita cave afforded the only true dark zone cave of the whole trip and



Passage in Gruta Bonita



The Arch of André.

The picture below is a close up of the small figure that can be seen (follow the long shadow) a little left of centre in the arch.



technically minded, these oddities draw 40 amps at 127(!) volts, and appear to have been remanufactured after the end of military dictatorship in Brazil. The same company is currently working on a line of submersible hair dryers.

11/7/01

The Arch of André lies on the first sink of the Peruaçu river, past Bonita and Boquete. We passed these two caves before arriving at Gruta Dos Troncos (Trunk Cave), where fallen blocks from the ceiling have dammed the river to create a lake. The need to swim across was negated by a fortuitously placed log washed in by a flood. The wet caves in Brazil are a balmy 21°C, which the Brazilians believe to be unbelievably cold and best avoided if possible. The cave has no dark zone, and leads over collapse blocks to a 300m canyon before reaching Gruta Dos Cascudos (Cascudos is a type of fish). This is also a cave without a dark zone, and leads into another canyon to reach Arco do André (André's Arch). André's arch is a bridge connecting the cliffs forming the main canyon, and reaches 80m above the canyon floor. There is a connection from the wall of the canyon under the arch to a doline on the ridge, which we climbed to exit the canyon. The doline (Abrigo Monte Sião) has some small paintings of the second oldest tradition, and we ate lunch before climbing out to the ridge and returning via Lapa do Veado (Deer Shelter), a small cave near Bonita which sports paintings of, you guessed it, deer.

In the evening we stayed in Fabiao (the small town closest to the caves) for dinner instead of returning to Itacarambi. The town is small, but has a great eatery that looks like a very small bar or café from the street and reveals a large seating area around the back. Our party represented Australia (3), New Zealand (1), USA (2), Japan (2), Romania (2), and Croatia (1), and there was enthusiasm on the part of our Brazilian hosts to reveal to us the national drink and one of the jewels of Brazil, the Caipirinia. Sugar cane is a common cash crop, and rum is distilled locally everywhere in Brazil where it is known as Caçhas. Caçhas is the most popular spirit in Brazil, helped by the fact that it is cheaper than metho- about AUD\$2 per litre. The popular commercial brands are clear and sharp, while the local product is usually varying shades of molasses and is almost always preferred. The caipirinia is

the one with the lowest roof. In one section of the cave it was necessary to bend down! This explained the behaviour of André and his assistant (usually referred to as "the mad Frenchman"), typically refusing a helmet and light in favour of a walking stick. At first it appeared that we had scored the local dolphin-and-beanie brigade to be our guides, but the caves are so large that you usually only need a light if the sun sets. It soon became apparent that we were over-equipped by local standards. The cave goes for ~400m, large at the entrance with huge columns dividing the chamber. Towards the back is a constriction which leads to the dark zone, which features large quantities of flowstone, cave pearls and helictites. Another small cave, Lapa do Indio (Indian Shelter) was visited on the way back.

Dinner was again at the only restaurant that could take us, and the only shame with this place was that we couldn't admire its prime riverfront aspect, since our days ended necessarily late. It compensated by serving excellent river fish. A boot garden was planted at the Hotel Nacional, the best accommodation in town. The showers here deserve mention, since they are typical of low-budget accommodation in Brazil and are so unlike anything experienced elsewhere in the world. You have to pay a fair whack in US\$ before you'll get hot water on tap. Otherwise, picture an enlarged shower head with two non-colour-coded, possibly uninsulated wires snaking out of the wall to it. Turning on the tap causes the lights in the hotel to dim briefly, and the temperature is adjustable between cold and luke-warm by means of a switch on the side (which you operate with wet hands). For the

simply rum (60-100mL approx, turn the bottle up and count to five) over sugar, ice and fresh lime. The result is excellent and a great pre-dinner drink. Obviously, it made the evenings much merrier and the mornings much harder, but we resolved to take this cultural exchange seriously.

12/7/01

On the third day we proceeded up the other branch of the valley to Gruta do Janelão (Large Window Cave). On the way we passed another small shelter with a panel of Rupestrian paintings. Janelão itself has three windows, which presented some interesting photographic opportunities. Photographers were well represented in the group- 6 out of 11 were in the serious amateur class, while José himself toted a Nikon F5 and a small fortune in lenses- yes, into the caves. There were also two video cameras, and every cave convinced us that the 19-35 mm lens had been worth every cent. The most interesting shots were usually too wide for a 28mm, and some of the caves were too large and dark to have a hope with film- slave flash units were useful to add interest to scenes that would otherwise be a dark background with some figures in the foreground. Unfortunately, our slaves were playing the classic game of working perfectly above ground but refusing to play whilst caving. In any case, Peruaçu has its best scenery above ground. The pace through Janelão was a little fast to set up the best shots, so Annalisa and Mladen, the Croatian, returned the next day to try again.

After leaving the cave we needed to pass through a window in the canyon walls into a doline to gain access to the ridge. From the ridge we could return over the top of Janelão. The cave in the window is Lapa dos Bichos (Animal Shelter), and it is said to contain animal pictographs on the ceiling, which were painted by climbing the columns and stalagmites. I don't believe anyone in the party paid the slightest attention to the pictographs, since we were attacked

by bees on the way. The path leads past a beehive that we could not spot, but was obviously too close for the bees' liking. The first sign that something was amiss came when the Frenchman started swatting vigorously at some flying insects. Sustained and strident swearing in French indicated that a hasty retreat would be prudent. Several people were stung, mostly on the head- the bees get caught inside your helmet and go to town. The first people to reach the window started a smoky fire which allowed some respite. As soon as the bees backed off we left quickly. Thankfully, the bees were the native variety rather than the aggressive Africanised bee that is taking over the Brazilian wilderness.

Following dinner was a slide show, where José provided a projector and anyone with slides handy displayed them. We held this in the courtyard (or de facto boot garden) of the hotel, accompanied by plenty of duty free scotch and local moonshine. The weather was much warmer over our entire stay than we had expected, despite the fact that Brasilia (the location of the congress) is on a similar latitude to Brisbane.



The appropriately named Gruta do Janelão (Large Window Cave)



This is not a marshmallow, but instead a cave-pearl gone wrong, in Janelão01

(Steve swears that it's not his hand holding it... - ed)



Cave pearls (above) and calcite encrusted pebbles (below) in Janelão



On-Rope safety, demonstrated in true Brazilian style

13/7/01

Our final caving day saw Annalisa and Mladen returning to Janelão to take some more shots, the Romanians and Americans heading further up the valley with André to visit an archaeological site and the rest going to Lapa de Rezar (Rezar shelter), the closest cave to Fabiao on the programme. A reasonable hike brought us to the base of the cliff, where there is an incredible panel of Rupestrian paintings in the São Francisco style (the earliest). Many have been filled in white, but it was fascinating to study the paintings up close and at length. This cave is unusual in that it has an enormous entrance (70m) but it is not on the principal course of the river. The cave itself was one of these big-enough-but-not-really-a-dark-zone-to-speak-of

affairs. It was dry, with not a lot of visible formation, and it chokes off after ~150m. I utilised our 50W video light to paint the back of the cave for José—surprisingly, it worked quite well. More photo and video taking occupied the rest of the trip, and a miscommunication with the bus driver led to us walking most of the way back to Fabiao.

The remainder of the trip involved getting everyone on the flights to the congress, and staring in disbelief at the sheer volume of baggage the Americans had decided they couldn't live without for a one-month trip to Brazil. The trip was a big success (a rare success, if you listened to the stories of previous congress participants), mainly due to the superior organisational skills and warm hospitality of José, the dedicated support of his assistants, and the expertise of André. By all accounts, this trip was one of the best.

WELLINGTON CAVES

a poem by Geoff McDonnell

Hello David- Just thought I'd write you a poem on a card

As I have the time and don't like to work too hard!

I've traveled out west to Wellington Caves with SUSS

Staying in Orange at Ian Cooper's home.. easy NO fuss!

Just an hours drive away we viewed 3 tourist caves there

The Cathedral, Gaden, Phosphate Mine with pretty formation everywhere!

After a sunny lunch we 6 surveyed in *Lime Kiln* and *McCavity* Cave..

Facing Dangers of CO₂, water + boulder squeezes made fit only for the brave!

Deep blue water at "Bondi Beach", full of calcite rafts

then a difficult scaling pole traverse surveying- but lots of laughs

Historic caves revealed Diprotodon ancient skulls + bones

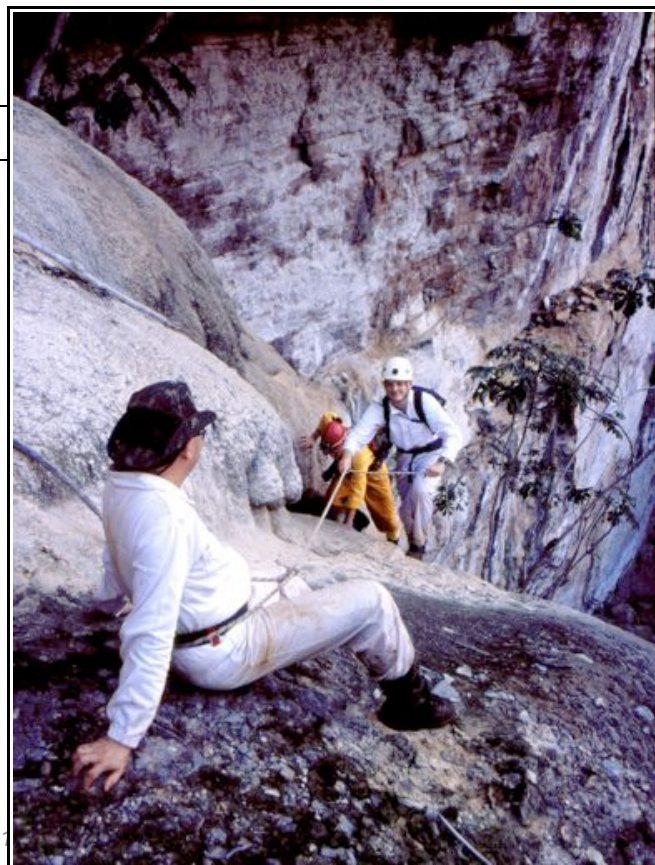
when huge creatures roamed this land and made their homes!

Surveying for Wellington shire council let us stay for NO fees!

In a Motel room with beds for 6 and golf course views of trees

Going home it snowed, fields all hushed and white today- a REAL driving test!

Never mind, heater 'on' and home ok... A weekend to remember one of the Best!



SUSS WINS SPELEOSPORTS

SEPTEMBER 8 2001

BY MEGAN PRYKE

NSW Cave Rescue squad lived up to its name, saving NSW cavers from the threat of no Speleosports in 2001. There was a great turn out of cavers from a range of clubs joining NSW cave rescue. The weather was fantastic, warm with blue skies and the bath tubs full to the brim!

The course started with a cave gate, the lock had to be tackled with an arm, or arms if slim enough, extended though a hole where one could not see what they were doing, though a few smarter people found a small spy hole! Then knots had to be tied correctly before grovelling underneath the delicate *'Stals of Death'*, though hells drain to the 'gour pools' (dry ones), then negotiating the narrow track marking, through a squeeze (an old 4WD bumper bar), up the cave ladder and abseil through the basketball hoop, across the wall traverse, to the tyrolean rope, weave through the NHVSS *'Ball of Terror'* that took some up to four minutes to negotiate, then sloshing through sumps requiring complete submersion before finding the endangered bat underneath a large green tarp to emerge at the finish.

Carol Layton, hot favourite in the women's event was feeling the pressure. Tara Green from RSS had upstaged even Angus Maccoun's score. Carol's fitness from her recent caving expedition in Spain gave her the edge. She took out the women's with a comfortable margin.

Jason Moule made great time, well ahead of Chris Norton. He was certainly the hot favourite. But the speed, at which Gerrard Collins from ISS negotiated the course, dashing across from the bathtubs to find the endangered bat under the camouflage green tarp, said it all. Shaving almost a whole minute of Jason's time, he was almost certainly in an unbeatable position.

Team scores were very close. Albeit the SUSS team prevailed to take home the Spelean perpetual trophy. Final results are as follows:



The SUSS winning team: Shannon Crack, Scott Hall, Chris Norton, Carol Layton and their motivational mascot, Kimmy. Photo: Alan Pryke

Team		Supercaver Female			Supercaver Male		
Club	Time	Name	Club	Time	Name	Club	Time
SUSS	13:10	Carol Layton	SUSS	7:25	Gerrard Collins	ISS	5:56
RSS	13:26	Jenny Whitby	NHVSS	8:57	Jason Moule	HCG	6:57
NHVSS	13:40	Tara Green	RSS	8:58	Chris Norton	SUSS	7:54

This year's generous sponsors included Mountain Equipment, Paddy Pallin, Mountain Designs, Onrope, Eastwood Camping and Alpsports. All these stores have great gear required for caving and for outdoor activities. Many thanks to them for their support.

Many participants went on to enjoy the culinary delights of the cavers' dinner that RSS whipped up. RSS speleosports participants had to leave the event early enough to prepare for the dinner, it was an enormous effort and credit to RSS. A stage was decorated as a cave, well as least a papier mache that looked something like cave formation! Evening entertainment included a slide show presented by Andrew Perry, an adventurer who crossed Bass Strait in a sea kayak, not a lone venture but one that certainly required determination, preparation and a will to get things done!

Speleosports 2001 – (some of) The Obstacles



The first contestant, Andrew Perry from RSS unlocks the gate



Andrew Perry, the first to experience full body immersion...



Iron Man Shannon Crack emerging from the bath tubs



SUSS in tyres



The Terror Traverse



The Stals of Death

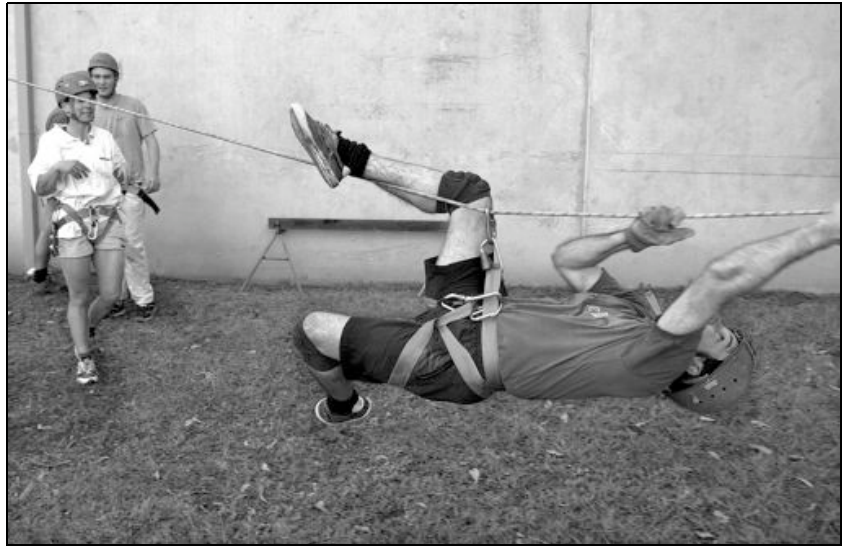
Tying knots



SUSS Bull 41(2)

Here bat, nice bat, where are you bat? Nice battie...
Darn, almost at the finish line.





Left: the ladder climb
Above: Whooosh... that was Chris Norton on the rope traverse
Below: the Bumper Squeeze



Left: the abseil
Right: tricky track marking gave a chance to practice minimal impact caving outdoors.



Below: the most feared obstacle of them all: The NHVSS Ball of Doom and the Tumble of Terror all rolled into one.



TRIP LIST: OCTOBER 2001

SUSS General Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00pm (for a 7:30pm start) in the Holme Building Common Room at the University of Sydney. The Holme Building is the building closest to the Parramatta Road footbridge on the northern side of campus. The Common room on the first floor (enter from Science Rd on campus).

For updates to this list, check out the SUSS website at: <http://ee.usyd.edu.au/suss>. Detailed information on each caving area (plus other useful information like what you will need to bring, etc.) can be found in the *Beginners Handbook* section of the SUSS website.

PLEASE NOTE: it is YOUR responsibility to inform the trip supervisor of any relevant medical conditions which may in any way affect your fitness, such as asthma, diabetes and the like.

October

4 **General Meeting:** Annalisa and Steve Contos: Slides of caving in Brazil, and the recent Speleo Brazil conference

6-7 **Wyanbene.** To Wyanbene, or not to Wyanbene? That is the question... (This could be the first SUSS Wyanbene trip in sometime that actually runs...) Contact Sushila Thomas 0414 915 681 for details.

13-14 **Jenolan.** SUSS's regular caving area. Come and experience the fun of caving, in some of NSW's better caves. Contact Phil Maynard 9908 2272 (home) for details. One-day trips may be possible - ask the trip co-ordinator for details.

21 **Watta Canyon.** Is October too cold for canyoning? In the Southern Highlands - almost certainly yes... But there's only one way to find out - call Greg Holmes 9908 2272 (home) for details.

23 **Committee meeting.** Forest Lodge pub, 6:30 pm as usual! Cheap pasta night.

27-28 **Wee Jasper.** Take two! (the last trip didn't make it off the ground) Contact Steven Contos: 9557 9475 (home) for details.

November

1 **General Meeting:** The highly sought after Dave Stuckey will present another exciting 3D slideshow. Come and wear the funny glasses.

3-4 **Abercrombie.** Why does SUSS rarely go to Abercrombie? Let's find out. Contact Sushila Thomas for the beginning of details 0414 915 681

10-11 **Jenolan.** Familiar SUSS stamping-gently ground, with a luxurious hut to rest your weary heads in at the end of the day. Possibility of one-day's caving, ask the trip supervisor. Contact Shannon Crack 9557 6267. Alternatively, this trip may turn into a Kelly's Falls canyoning trip. Once again, check with the supervisor!

17-18 **Wellington.** Limestone in a rural setting. Contact Keir Vaughan-Taylor on 9816 5210 (home).

24-25 **Kanangra Main.** Brave the canyon (surely there's something more profound to be said about this?!) with Greg Holmes, 9908 2272 (home).

27 **Committee Meeting** 6:30pm Forest Lodge Hotel Abercrombie St. Last chance to play speleopolitics for 2001.

December

1 **Danae Brook.** A premier canyoning trip in the Kanangra area. Experienced abseilers only. Contact Megan Pryke 9524 0317 (home) and build up an appetite going canyoning in preparation for...

1 **SUSS Christmas BBQ.** Celebrate the end of the Uni year with a good feed and good company, followed by...

1-9 **Jenolan.** Our annual Christmas week-long trip. Contact Annalis Contos to come along for all or part of the long-week - 9557 9475 (home)

6 **General Meeting:** Al Warild will keep you on the edge of your seat as he regales us with tales of danger and excitement from Spain..... 7pm in the Holme Building Common Room, Sydney Uni.

15-16 **Stunt Man** canyon, with Megan Pryke. No need to be a stunt-man or woman, just contact Megan on 9524 0317 (home).

22-23 **Tuglow.** In case you've not been taken over by Christmas fever, and even if you have, cool down at Tuglow. Contact TBA

25 **NO COMMITTEE MEETING! Have a lovely Christmas.**

26-1st Jan **Buchan.** "Where are the Buchan caves? In the Buchan ground!" ah hah, very funny. Follow Chris Norton down muddy narrow potholes and have a happy New Year at Homestead Cottage (lots of fresh cherries growing in the garden, mmmm.....). Contact Chris 9959 3613 (home)