

SUSS BULL 41(3)

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2001



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SUSS BULL 41(3)

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PASSING OF A FELLOW CAVER - DON MATTS

It is with deep regret that I announce the passing of Don Matts OAM JP on the morning of Wednesday October 31st, 2001, at 5:30am. Don has been ill for sometime, and, as many of you know, unable to undertake his much loved activity of caving.

Don and the Matts family have long been dedicated to, and involved in, speleology in many ways.

Don and Grace are founding members of the NSW Cave Rescue Squad and belong to many national and internationally recognised clubs and societies. Don was awarded an Order of Australian Merit (OAM) for his efforts and years of work in speleology and safe caving.

- JOE SYDNEY, NSW CAVE RESCUE

The SUSS Committee would like to join with Joe in offering condolences to Grace on her loss, and to sincerely thank her for the extensive support that both she and Don have provided to the caving community throughout the years.

- SUSS COMMITTEE

GEAR FEES FOR SUSS TRIPS

The recent changes in the club's funding arrangements with the University of Sydney Union and the Sydney University Sports Union have meant that SUSS is no longer funded for the cost of renewal and upkeep of our equipment. Although initiatives have already been put into place to offset this loss of funding, the SUSS Committee regrets to announce that the club is now going to have to start charging equipment usage fees to at least partially offset these additional costs to the running of the club.

The fee system we have decided on is as follows:

- No fees are to be charged for group, shared or safety equipment – eg. ropes or ladders, cave packs and helmets respectively.
- First time undergraduate student members (ie. provisional members) will be exempt from the fee.
- A fee of \$5 per item of personal equipment used is to be charged to all other members for the duration of the trip. Personal equipment includes battery and light sets, tents and lilos (eg. for canyoning or camping).

This fee system is designed to both encourage regular SUSS members to obtain their own equipment rather than relying on the clubs equipment, and to provide income towards upkeep and renewal of our current equipment. Trip leaders will be collecting these fees along with any other fees payable on a trip – eg. hut fees, non-member trip fees, etc. Collection of these types of user-pays fees is going to become increasing vital to the survival of the club, and your assistance in these matters is greatly appreciated.

- SUSS COMMITTEE

TRIP REPORTS

National Parks has politely reminded SUSS that various clubs are occasionally being slack in submitting trip reports *[sound familiar? I've been complaining about this with the Bull for quite some time now... -ed]*. It is very important for SUSS to maintain its goodwill with the various authorities that we comply with all permit conditions; and, where these include the submission of (or in some cases, simply the publication of) a trip report, that this gets done in a timely manner. *[and bloody well submitted for publication in the Bull too for that matter – ed]*

- SUSS COMMITTEE

THANKS TO BRIAN O'BRIEN

SUSS would like to thank Brian O'Brien (one of the earliest presidents of our club) for his recent donation of a significant portion of his archival material on SUSS, and various other caving-related material to the SUSS library.

- SUSS COMMITTEE

NEWS AND GOSSIP

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The following letter was sent to the office of "Public Affairs", NSW Speleological Council. They have kindly forwarded it on to SUSS for publication as requested in the letter.

Dear Public Affairs,

Hi, I saw your site in the computer listings of Cave Diving Clubs in Australia, I like the name of yours, and decided to write to you, and find out all about your club, and its inner workings, what types of dives you do, and where, and can I participate whenever I am there with your group? Do they have a newsletter, and if so can I get a copy of it? Also can you help me out in making girl diving friends in your group, this by placing my note on an index card, and photo to let girls that might like me see me, and write to me if they want to, maybe by placing them on your wall, or bulletin board, and if I am goodlooking enough, and you have newsletter, can I have my name, address, photo, and a note about myself to make friends girls, please let me know. I will also wonder if there are any other diving type organisations where you live, and if so can you send me their addresses, please let me know. I will close now, but please write back, until then good luck always, stay happy, dive and swim safely, and above all have a great day.

Sincerely,

Everett Cheshewalla,

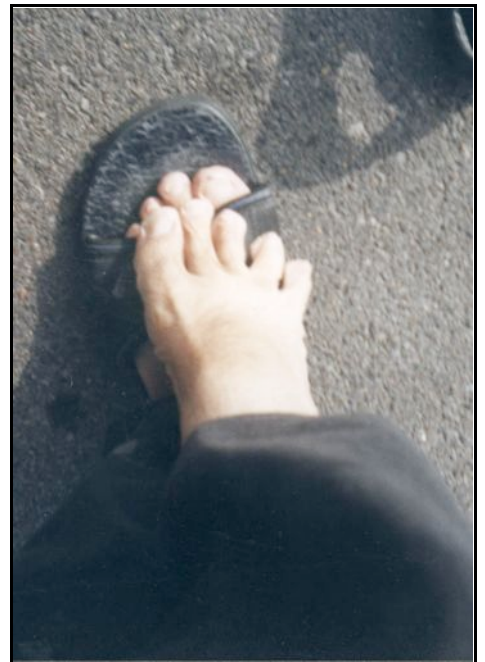
PO Box 437

Skiatook, Oklahoma 74070-0437

USA

Well, Everett, sending us a letter like that alone would not usually be enough to get you published in the SUSS Bull. However, sending us your index card and photos (especially the one of your feet) has tipped the balance in your favour... Having said that, I don't really want to encourage more photos of peoples feet being sent in. Although, come to think of it, I'm no longer going to be editor in a few months time, so maybe I should...

HI I AM A DIVING / SWIMMING CHEROKEE
INDIAN FROM THE U.S. A., I WAS WANTING TO
MAKE GIRLFRIENDS IN YOUR GROUP, EXCHANGE
DIVING TIPS, SWIM TIPS, VOICE CASSETTE TAPES, EXCH-
-ANGE PHOTOS, AND COMPARE FEET, AND IF WE MEET,
AND LIKE EACH OTHER ENUFF, AND SWIM, AND DIVE
TOGETHER, AND KISS UNDER WATER IF WE LIKE
EACH OTHER ENUFF. ABOUT MYSELF, I AM 5 FOOT
8 1/2 INCHES TALL, ZODIAC SIGN LEO, BROWN
EYES, WEIGHT 145 POUNDS, LONG DARK HAIR,
PLAY TENNIS, SWIM / DIVE, RIDE A BIKESOME.
WRITE SOON WITH YOUR PHOTO TO ME AT
EVERETT CHESHEWALLA
P.O. BOX 437
SKIATOOK, OKLAHOMA 74070-0437
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



FASTER, WEKA! KILL, KILL!

WEST COAST, NEW ZEALAND, 13-29 APRIL 2001: SECOND INSTALMENT

TEXT BY CHRIS NORTON

PHOTOS (except for the Weka) BY ALAN PRYKE

SUSS Participants: Simon Goddard, Megan Maier¹, Chris Norton, Alan Pryke

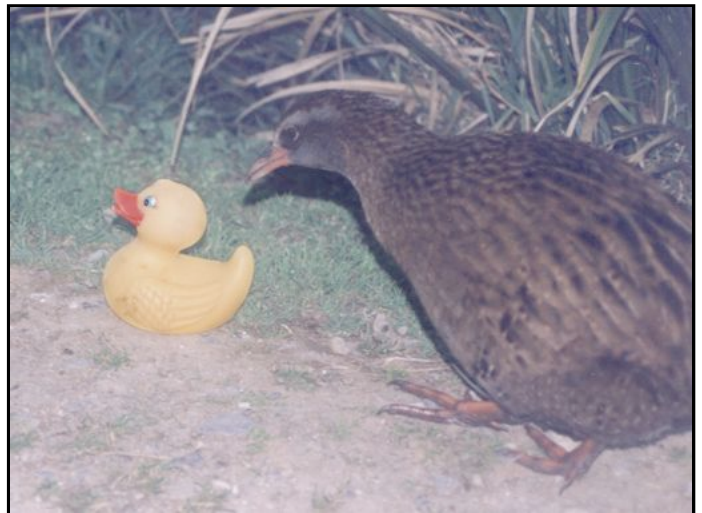
Kiwi extras: Colin Daniell, Hamish McLauchlan, Kim Thomas, Mary Trayes

In the previous instalment, our four heroes took a ride on the Metro, visited Hollywood, discovered entrances to Honeycomb Hill that even the holiday park owner didn't know about, pondered whether there were any Raro flavours that did not include orange, ate far too many tomatoes and assiduously avoided the whitebait. Stand by for more exciting adventures...

Chapter 6: Visual Impairment

There was a low hum, the lights flickered on and, in a billow of dry ice, the Perspex covers on the hypersleep capsules glided open so that our team could rise from their cryogenic slumber and once more frolic amongst the limestone. Alan found a small yellow post-it note pasted on the inside of his capsule saying "Read the last *SUSS Bull*". Blearily, he pulled it down from the shelf and browsed the article relating the first part of the trip, until...Aha! That's right! Since he and Megan had so cleverly circumnavigated the "No petrol for next 90km" sign, it was necessary for him to drive back to Westport to fill up. Upon his return, Simon announced that he was still feeling somewhat hung over after the hypersleep, and so he would not cave today. The others set off southwards to the Bullock Creek area to tackle Cataract Pot.

Cataract Pot was the only truly 'vertical' cave visited on the whole trip, and the team was soon to find out why it was that vertical caves are considered more dangerous. It's not the cave, it's getting into it that is the problem. In the case of Cataract Pot, the gods of the cave attempt to preserve their solitude by sending out a crack team of guard-wekas to keep people out. The first strike came in the carpark, where Chris' cave duck, Duckie, decided to while away the time while everyone got changed by making some sociable overtures to a curious weka eyeing the team from the distance. The weka, seeing that Duckie was off-guard, decided that this was the time to attempt to cripple the party. Sneaking in towards Duckie with the appearance of a friendly welcome, the weka's intentions soon became clear when he grasped Duckie's tender orange bill in his own pointy beak and took off for the bushes. Fortunately, the weka had left its run a little too late - Chris had just pulled his cavesuit up and was therefore able to set off in hot pursuit of the weka rather than tripping over with his trousers around his ankles, as was probably the fiendish bird's original plan. Seeing retribution bearing down upon it, the weka decided to make a break and dropped Duckie before disappearing into the scrub.



Duckie's amiable temperament made the locals suspicious. *Chris Norton*

The next hazard to be encountered was finding the cave. This was thought to be no problem, as the party was armed with detailed directions from Kerry Silverwood, that instructed them that the cave entrance was "just 50m down the track from the Cave Creek Memorial". We had obviously not learned much from our experiences trying to find Babylon the previous day by accurately following Kerry's description. Unfortunately, Kerry had neglected to tell us that in order to preserve the secrecy of the cave's location, this information was given in a special coded version of the metric system in which all units are divided by four. There was hence a fair bit of fruitless bashing around in scrub before we decided to walk some more and ended up locating the cave some 150m from where we had been searching. However, as Megan pointed out, we should have realised this - just before the track heading off to the cave was a big sign warning of danger along the path. This accorded with similar practice elsewhere - the tracks to Babylon, Honeycomb and Fox River caves all led off in the vicinity of a big sign warning of danger. Would-be West Coast prospectors would be well advised to add danger signs to the list of surface features that usually indicate cavernous areas in the vicinity.

Actually, Cataract Pot is bloody hard to miss. For one thing, there is a significant stream flowing into its entrance, which can be heard from some distance away. This stream produces the eponymous cataract, which plummets spectacularly down a 40m shaft into the cave. The Pot is in the middle of a large field of grikes, deep in lush rainforest. Chris set about rigging a rope down this

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

shaft for the team to exit on while Alan and Megan wandered off to see if they could find the other entrance, Myopia, which was a fairly obvious dirty big sinkhole just over a small rise.

Once located, getting down Myopia was a bit of a problem, due to a lack of appropriate belay trees for our rope. Although this cave is usually done as a pull-through trip, the fact that we didn't know for sure that we would find the way through made us leave a rope rigged on the first pitch, and we were a little nervous about whether our other rope would actually reach doubled down the second pitch. However, all turned out OK and we were soon all in the depths of the cave. Most impressive feature here is the 'Swoosh Chamber'¹, a hall full of huge boulders that have been sculpted into extraordinary shapes by the force of enormous torrents of water thundering past them. If you have ever wanted to see scalloping work a couple of feet across, this is the place to come. The cave ended in a large and inviting sump, and Duckie was only restrained from jumping in when it was pointed out that, at some 3m below the level of the viewing ledge we were standing on, retrieval was not likely. We contented ourselves instead by heaving large boulders into the lake and watching the splashes. Who said caving wasn't an intellectually stimulating pastime?



Contemplating dessert, Pancake Rocks, Punakaiki

their SRT gear. Finally, humanity triumphed over weka-kind, and the party returned exultantly to Charlestown to brag to Simon about their skilful defeat of the beaked fiends, and eat lamb korma with tomatos.

On the way, Chris suggested they call in at Punakaiki², where they would be moving tomorrow, to check out the house they would be moving into. Punakaiki is yet another small town whose industries are tourism and whitebaiting. Chris directed Alan to a Punga pine fence, behind which, at the end of an extensive garden, lay a moderately sized house with a verandah nestled at the foot of the large limestone cliffs. "No, it can't be this place," opined Alan, "this is far too nice." However, Chris was finally able to convince him that there was accommodation in NZ that was nicer than the motor camp, and what's more, it was still hideously cheap. Things were certainly looking up.

Chapter 7: Abyssinia Bound

We stowed all our gear in the cars and bid farewell to Charlestown, heading south for Bullock Creek once more. Here, we met with three New Zealanders - Colin Daniell, from Christchurch, and Hamish Maclauchlan and Kim Thomas from nearby Runanga³. They were here to show us Abyssinia, the latest major discovery in the Bullock Creek area.

Hamish and Colin found Abyssinia about a year ago. They were just wandering up a valley and happened to stumble into a doline with a big walk-in entrance. This is in an area where there hasn't been anything much found for about 30 years. Over the last year, they have been systematically exploring the cave and ticking off leads. The task isn't done yet, either, but they have generously offered to take us into their cave and show us what it's got.



The team prepares to get deep down and dirty in Abyssinia. Rear: Kim, Chris, Duckie, Hamish, Colin Front: Simon, Megan

¹ Unofficial Australian name.

² *Punakaiki* (trans): Maori for "pancakey"

On the walk through the dense jungle up to the entrance, Hamish tells us that Abyssinia is the first of a new generation of cave names for Bullock Creek. It starts and ends with the letter 'A'. The next cave they found was called Beelzebub. Hamish is keen to see the tradition continue, so perhaps the next couple of discoveries will be Colic and Damned. Eventually we reach the entrance and proceed in. Hamish notices Alan's generously proportioned cave pack, which he quickly dubs the Tarpaulin. Alan is instructed to abandon it as we pass through the first real squeeze of the trip so far, up into the Pleasuredome, which is the home to Abyssinia's formations. There is some struggling to fit the camera box through the squeeze, but it is eventually managed and pictures are taken. After glancing at his watch, Hamish informs us that this is the sole photogenic section in the cave and it would be a good idea to leave the camera behind - a very, very good idea. Alan takes the hint.

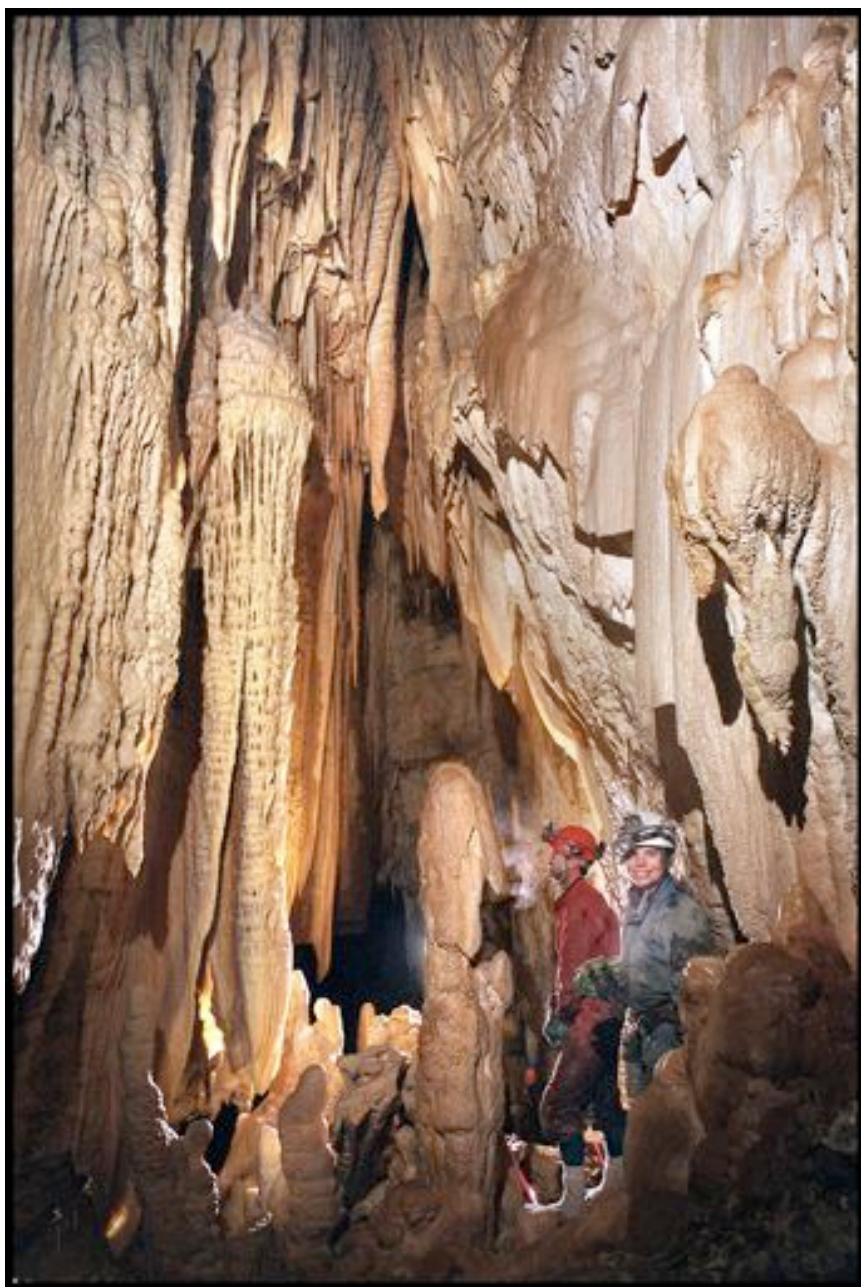
Most of the caves at Bullock Creek are low-level, highly active stream systems, and are characterised by clean-washed walls adorned with the odd bit of flood debris. Unlike these caves, which are entered from stream level, Abyssinia is entered from a high-up fossil entrance, and the top section of the cave is reasonably large with lots of loose breakdown. Being a freshly discovered cave which has not seen many visitors, many things move around here. You have to be careful. The upper level passages then drop down to stream levels, which are prone to flooding and look much more like Bullock Creek standard. The whole cave, however, is developed along the characteristic NW-SE trend of the entire system, and fits neatly into a blank spot on the map.

We had brought with us some digging tools, as Hamish wanted to push a going passage down at the level of the main stream passage. When we reached the streamway, Hamish remarked on how dry it was, and told us to go and refill our carbides from a sump upstream. Megan toddled off, only to return with a puzzled look on her face - Where was that sump again? Hamish gestured impatiently back the way she had come. "But the passage just keeps going down", she said.

Curiosity piqued, Hamish decided to take a look for himself, and was delighted to find that what had always been a sump when he had been in the cave previously was now bone dry. It's amazing what you can find when you have a drought as long as three weeks. He dived into the non-sump, followed by the rest of us through a silty tube round several bends before popping out in a large open chamber. The exultation was dimmed a little, however, when Hamish realised that this was a part of the cave that had been visited before (albeit from above water level). While he pottered around, Colin led us Australians off to keep us occupied in another part of the cave where we were less likely to find new things and scoop Hamish's booty¹.

After making us grovel in the gravel rather a lot, Colin showed us a tall draughting rift that hadn't been climbed up yet. It looked very promising, particularly as there was a substantial looking log wedged near the top. Colin and Chris both chimneyed up, but the last lip on the rift was too difficult. However, the breeze was highly evident near the top of the rift. Perhaps there was booty to be scooped here after all. Colin made a mental note to return with stemples or tapes or something.

We ambled back to the main stream passage where Hamish was happily digging away in his dig. However, before too long we realised that it would need lots more work than we would be prepared to put into it today (like,



The Pleasuredome, Abyssinia

³ *Runanga* (trans): Maori for "that place just a little bit north of Greymouth"

¹ Important tip for would-be international cavers: never scoop your hosts' booty. Some people think that's a kind of personal thing that you only do when you know one another very well.

about 10,000 years worth of active stream flow to create a passage big enough to crawl down), so we called it quits and wandered up to the surface once more.

All in all, a very different day's caving in a new cave. We adjourned to the pub along with the kiwis where we ordered a few beers, didn't order the whitebait platter and talked about all the other caves we were going to do in the next week. Hamish started getting envious and wondering if his employer really needed him the next day. He complained of feeling all faint and light-headed in the sort of way that is usually improved not by sitting at a desk, but by spending time in a cool and damp environment. We bid him adieu until next time, and started moving the crates of tinned tomato into our new luxurious accommodation. This came complete with a Trivial Pursuit set, and obviously a game was in order. However, this was a special New Zealand edition. Many of the questions were about obscure New Zealand achievements ("Name the New Zealander who just missed out on Bronze in the hammer throw at the 1972 Munich Olympics"), and for the ones that weren't, the answers were either "England", "London" or "Chile".



Impersonating hieroglyphs in Twin Tubes, Xanadu

Chapter 8: We Finally Beat the New Zealanders at Something

Today we had planned to go to Xanadu. Those of you who read the trip report of Chris' last trip to the West Coast would remember the three important things about Xanadu:

- It is a phreatic maze.
- It floods to the roof.
- You shouldn't go near it if it looks like raining.

Today, it sort of looked like it might rain. We were just deciding to give Xanadu a miss when up drove Hamish. He was clearly suffering from severe Mondayitis and needed to be taken underground quickly. So plans and caution were thrown to the wind and we decided to risk a trip into the entrance series of Xanadu.

Chris was disappointed to find that Xanadu still did not have the name 'XANADU' written above the entrance in big black letters, as it had been some six years ago. Still, we managed to find the cave all right. Finding your way once inside the cave, however, is a different story. We had a map, but that didn't help much, as the mapmakers had decided it was too difficult to draw the whole cave and had shown just a choice selection of passages. We also had a local guide, but the symptoms of Mondayitis were clearly assailing Hamish and we still managed several well-executed circles and backwards manoeuvres in traversing our way through the cave. The water-washed phreatic passages gave Alan some good photographic opportunities, gave the others a chance to sit around posing for a while, and gave Hamish the chance to try to find the way on. We did manage to thread our way through the maze and into the lower levels, but we remembered that it sort of looked like it might rain and prudence advised us to turn around. Thanks for the tip, Prudence. We exited the cave through a scramble out a daylight hole. It was a slippery climb, due to the large quantities of daylight flowing down the sides, but we eventually made it.

For the rest of the day, we decided to do a Kubla Khan through trip. First, however, we had to find the cave. Hamish got us to duck down an awkward-looking little hole that did not show much sign of visitation. We soon found out why, as the route led from a tight mudslide into a well of cascading rubble before reaching the relative safety of a low rift. No sooner had we undergone a long and awkward process to get everyone down safely when Hamish announced that this was definitely not the cave, and we should go back. Chris was the first to leave, and, while waiting for the others to emerge from the cave without maiming one another, decided to drop down to the stream and poke around under some boulders. Somehow or other he found himself tipped out into a big hallway, 3m wide by 6m high, which looked very encouraging. Even better - he could hear the strains of the others grovelling up the mudslide coming from amongst a pile of rocks. Before too long, everyone was together in the cave and set about looking for the route on.

Again, this was not a simple task. Hamish had only been in the cave once before, which enabled him to proclaim sagely "This is not the way" every so often, but did not permit him to find the actual way. It didn't help that the map seemed to show corridors in a significantly different location to where they actually were. Oh well.

Megan kept muttering that Kubla Khan was supposed to be big and full of pretty things. We assured her that, if she had gone to a proper Kubla Khan, like the one in Tassie, it would be. Obviously, we commented, the NZers don't know how to make a decent Kubla Khan. That should wipe the smug smile off their faces. They may have multi-kilometre caves, raging streamways, huge bluffs of limestone full of holes and systems over 800m deep, but we have a better Kubla Khan. Ner, ner, ne-ner ner.



Remembering to remain artistically framed, The Keyhole, Xanadu

That night, we threw a dinner party at our place, and invited Debbie Corden, a local caver and adventure tour guide, and Mary Traves, also from Ruanunga, who was going to show us the very unusual Te Ana Puta the next day. We might have invited more, but although our house nominally slept 10, the table was only big enough for 6. We served a wonderful gourmet meal of chicken tikka, cooked the traditional Italian way with lots of tomato puree. As the evening drew on, we turfed out Mary and Debbie and raced round to Pancake Rocks at 11pm to see the blowhole performing at high tide. The blowhole certainly sounded impressive - shame there was no moonlight, it might have been nice to see it...

Chapter 9: Copping the Flax

Point Elizabeth, about 20 minutes drive south of Punakaiki, does not readily come to mind when the great West Coast karst areas are mentioned. Nonetheless, it is a pretty significant chunk of limestone, protruding from the coastline prominently just north of Runanga. Accordingly, when she heard stories about a cave in the cliffs at Point Elizabeth, Mary just had to go and investigate.

Her investigations were worthwhile. Wandering round the point at sea level at low tide on a calm day, she found the large seaward entrance to a cave she named Te Ana Puta. The cave has over 1km of passage, much of which is muddy and unremarkable. However, from wandering the passages, several holes could be spied leading upwards to shaded daylight. What would the cave be like in high seas? There was only one way to find out - find the daylight holes on the surface.

Easier said than done. For the top of Point Elizabeth is covered in a dense forest of flax plants, their leaves weaving together into a dense wall of greenery. The gaps between the flax plants are filled with thick, sharp gorse bushes, strategically placed to take the

odd nibble at the ankles of hapless cavers struggling around in the flax. There could be an entrance 5m from you and you



Probably not the right way, Kubla Khan

gorse bush with blobs of luminous pink. But even this was of little assistance, since the Dazzle had faded over time. Strike three. There was nothing for it but to hack and flail around with the hedge shears and hope for the best.

Mary must have known what she was doing, however, because before long the ground was dropping away from under us and we were slithering down into what seemed to be a doline, cunningly concealed by flax. The flax gave way to kiekie, which provided some convenient handholds as we dropped into the doline and piled on top of one another in the confined area above the pitch into Bent Pot.

Our trip had been specially timed to coincide with high tide so that we could witness Te Ana Puta's most spectacular feature. As Megan stood at the top of the shaft, rigging, we got the first intimations of it. Every now and then the cave would exhale, suddenly and emphatically, accompanied by a swooshing noise and much ruffling of the vegetation. Eventually Megan had had enough of the constant snorting in her face, and she disappeared into the Pot, followed by the others. Chris, at the tail end, brought a rope protector tied to his wrist to fasten to the rope, and was greatly surprised when a sudden harrumph by the cave saw the protector blown straight upwards. Oo-er. He secured it in place and joined the others.

Once in the cave, the task was to find where all the huffing and puffing was coming from. Some might consider this to be a foolhardy task. Who knows - it could be a malevolent giant weka, just waiting to gobble up the next cavers unwary enough to stumble into its slaving beak. However, we suspected otherwise. As we crept along the corridors, the gusts grew stronger, causing our carbide flames to falter; and they were accompanied by an occasional muffled roar that was growing louder and

wouldn't know it. Add to this the occasional thick winding stem of kiekie and you have yourself a very difficult cave prospecting exercise. This is why it took five months to find the first shaft, Bent Pot, which has now become the main entrance to the cave.

We met Mary down at the Point Elizabeth carpark with a stiff, icy wind blowing strongly in from the west, chilling us as we changed into our caving gear. Fortunately, the path out to the end of the point wound up the hill and into dense forest where we were out of reach of the wind. Mary, suffering from a bung knee, took things easy while the rest of us raced off to the clifftop to begin experiencing the joy of flax for ourselves.

We quickly realised that Kerry Silverwood was right when he told us we would have no hope of finding the cave without Mary. Then Mary arrived, and we realised that even with her there, prospects were not greatly improved. Taking a small drain in the path as a marker, Mary produced a large pair of hedge shears and plunged into the flax.

She told us that last time she had been here, about four months ago, she had cut and marked a distinctive trail through the flax leading straight to Bent Pot. Obviously, flax grows fast, since there was no sign of the path left. Mary was ready for this eventuality though - she had tied some of the flax leaves into overhand knots, at about head-height. All we had to do was look for the knots and follow them. We cast about for knots. "What, like this one?" inquired Alan, holding up a dead knotted flax leaf lying on the ground. Strike two.

This was not to stop us, however. "Look for the Dazzle," commanded Mary. Dazzle? What the heck is that? Luminous pink spray paint, apparently. Mary had marked the occasional



louder. Hmm, perhaps we should have brought weka repellent after all. We hoped it would be put off by our tomatoey body odour.

We emerged into a large chamber. To one side a washed scalloped tube wound down and over a ledge that gave a surreal and ever-changing view of a turbulent chamber below. The water surged chaotically back and forth. Every fifteen seconds or so, a wave would crash into the chamber with a roar that snuffed carbide flames and shunted a pulse of air back through the cave as it sealed the entrance to the outside world. There would be a few moments of blackness, then as the sea drew its breath once more a pulsing light would begin again to illuminate the rattle of raked cobbles streaming down an unseen beach in the clutch of the swell.

When one tired of this sight, one could move into the main chamber. Less surreal, although more all-encompassing, another rocky ledge served as a natural amphitheatre for the display below. Even huge logs were tossed and heaved around effortlessly in the whirling waters. The forces on display here certainly rivalled, if not surpassed, those of the Swoosh Chamber in Myopia - this was surely the Chamber of Death by 1,000 Swooshes¹. After some time watching the forces of nature doing their stuff, you had to wonder if, compared with falling into the pit below us, meeting a hungry giant weka wouldn't be the easier option.

There is only so long that you can sit looking at waves crashing into a cave. This is because, eventually, the tide goes out and they stop doing it. But while it lasts, the view is pretty darn spectacular and hard to tear yourself away from. The thought of Mary twiddling her thumbs up on the surface seemed to do the trick though, particularly when coupled with Alan running out of film.

We ascended the rope with the cave still thundering and panting beneath us, to find that Mary had not been idle during our absence. The narrow route bashed through the flax to reach the cave had become a hedge-sheared highway,



The Dazzling Mary Traves

¹ Another unofficial Australian name.

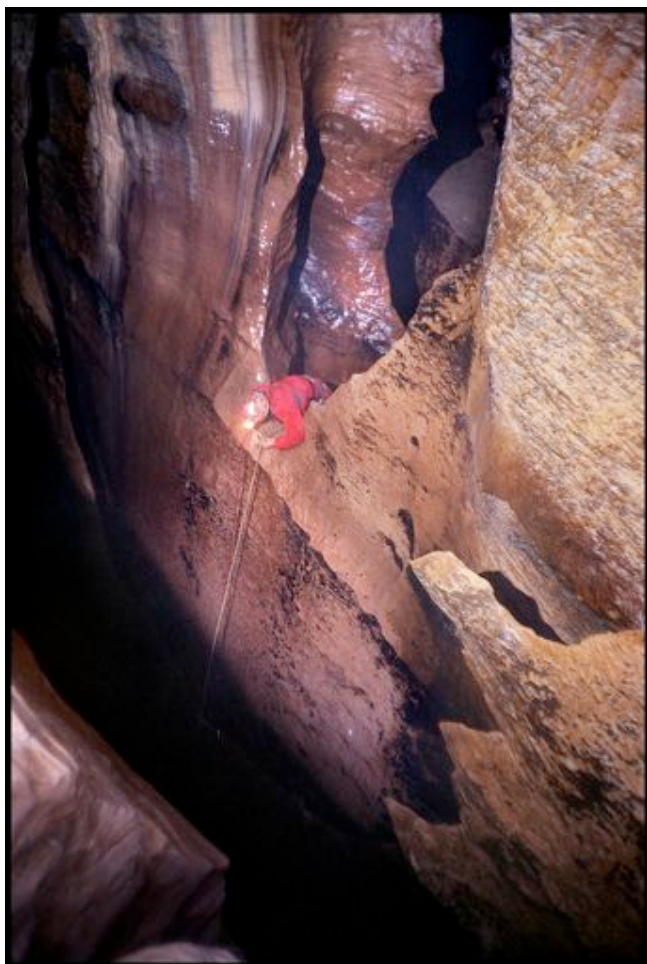
complete with pink Dazzle road markings. Mary led the way back to the track, exhorting us to tie knots in the flax. Barely a leaf was left unknotted. By the time we left the place looked as if it had been attacked by a bizarre alien art and craft collective. It is highly likely that if you correlate the appearances of crop circles around the globe and Mary's passport, there will be a close match.

The receding tide meant we could wander back along the beach. Mary gestured up the bluffs above us and pointed out all the areas on the Point that she was yet to prospect. Occasionally she ropes Hamish into the trips, because Hamish has some big loppers that can cut things the hedge trimmers can't. We retired to Mary's for afternoon tea, then for a short walk to Coal Creek Falls and off to play sandcastles on the beach. With very big grains of sand. Okay, rocks. Finally, it was off to Hamish and Kim's for some homemade pizza. Mmm, yum, oh boy. Here was our chance to have a break from our endless tins of tomatos. Of course, the pizzas were made with a good deal of tomato paste on the base. Hamish obviously enjoyed far too much of his own hospitality as he ended up agreeing to wash Simon's cavesuit for him.

Chapter 10: Outfoxing the Fox

It was the last scheduled day of caving, and we had picked a biggie. Fox River Cave may be easy to find - there's a tourist track that leads right up to it, not to mention a conveniently placed warning sign close by the entrance and even more warning signs that ensure you will turn your attention to the interesting Lower Cave rather than stuffing about with the tourists in the Upper Cave. However, it's by no means a simple task to negotiate. Arguably the most technically difficult cave on the West Coast, what should be a nice horizontal streamway doddle is guarded by a series of deep rifts.

Chris had visited the cave on his last occasion here, accompanied by Kevin Leong and Ian Cooper. Ian's stay was shortlived when it turned out he had brought the pack of unwanted caving gear rather than his cavesuit, harness etc. Chris and Kevin, lacking both etriers and bolt plates, had employed prussik cord instead but once they achieved the main passage were so drained of energy (and so lacking of wetsuits) that they did not continue. Chris therefore had a score to settle, and was determined to get much further than he had last time. So we called up Hamish, who had some etriers and was not afraid to use them.



"What, down there?" Hamish looks back down the bolt climb in Fox River Cave

The first obstacle was a short hop across a rift 20m deep. No probs - although some people started blanching and calling out for handlines and other wussy things. Dear dear. By the time we caught up with Hamish the first pitch was half rigged. Chris followed while Hamish contemplated the way on. There was a red fixed rope hanging down the climb, but this looked to Chris suspiciously like the one that had been there 6 years ago, and it hadn't looked too crash hot then, so it was definitely to be left well alone now. The magic etriers were produced, and Hamish was up the wall faster than you can say Punakaiki 2,560 times. Some more delicate manoeuvring to pass the next big rift, including an interesting belay job for Chris sitting in a big puddle of water known as the Pudding Bowl, and finally it was time for the others to start dawdling across.

The other side of the rifts in Fox River Cave is a pretty darn spectacular place to be, with a substantial river churning along the passage, over cascades and finally rattling down a chute to go tumbling into the bottom of the last rift. Okay, maybe not as spectacular as the Chamber of Death by 1,000 Swooshes, but still pretty darn speccky nevertheless. Fortunately, we had our cave duck with us, although Duckie had to be supervised closely lest he dive over the edge of a cascade and set off rather too quickly to explore the big waterfall. All the action was upstream - at least, all the non-fatal action - so upstream we went.

The nature of the cave actually makes it a bit difficult to go upstream. The cave passage obstinately cuts across rather than along the jointing for much of its length. This is why the big rifts are there in the entrance. This is also why travelling along the streamway is a mixture of swimming across pools, climbing over big blades of rock and banging your shins on annoying little bits that stick up just under the surface where you can't see them properly. Thank goodness for the cushioning properties of wetsuits. After a short lunchbreak, Hamish, Chris and Megan decided to power ahead and see how far they could get by 3pm. Alan ran around attempting to take photos with Simon's small waterproof instamatic camera, while Simon succumbed to the clutches of the foggy demon that haunts glasses-wearers in wet cold caves.

Although the cave upstream of the rifts is generally fairly horizontal, it throws the occasional little obstacle in to make things more colourful. There is a brief scramble over a rockpile, and many climbs up small waterfalls and cascades. Best of all is a 3m waterfall, which although climbable on the side still takes great glee in trying to insinuate itself down the front of your wetsuit, and requires a couple of manoeuvres with the head pretty darn well under the force of the water. Exciting stuff. The waterfall scored big when it managed to find a ticklish spot on Megan and send her sprawling into the pool of water below, but was eventually placated.

Towards the back of the cave, what has generally been a tall and narrow passage suddenly broadens out significantly into a huge tunnel, and the sloshing through mostly knee-deep to waist-deep water with the occasional swim suddenly turns to a saunter along a rocky riverbank with an ankle-deep stream merrily lapping at your boots as the roof soars high above you. There are actually some formations here, too! The odd passage leads off steeply to the side, and there is a significant amount of rockfall in evidence. Hamish darted up a passage following the stream, only to find that the passage closed in and became impenetrable. Well, darn. And right on 3pm too. About face time.

The journey back was a lot quicker, not least because there was no need to climb up things, and with the exception of the 3m waterfall most of the obstacles could be passed by a technique that comprised elements of jumping and the less elegant “semi-controlled falling”. Eventually, the rifts were crossed, the cave derigged, and we hauled everything back to the cars. Thanks for everything Hamish, even for washing Simon’s cave suit - not that you’d know it now...

Epalog Eppilag Epilate The Last Bit

And that was it for the official part of the trip. That evening and the next morning was spent cleaning gear to a fit state to pass through quarantine, and dropping some borrowed gear back to Kerry. Chris and Simon then debunked down to Fox Glacier for some ice climbing, and to peruse the wonders of WaterWorld at Hokitika where you can thrill to the headline displays of eels and whitebait. Megan twisted Alan’s arm and persuaded him that another night in the nice little house would be very pleasant, before they both went and climbed a bloody huge mountain near Arthurs Pass and paid a surprise visit to Broken River Cave on the way back to Christchurch. Once back in the big smoke, we presented Steve Pawson with a box containing half a dozen tins of tomatoes (which he accepted with slightly bemused gratitude), and a problem (in the form of the unused carbide in a quantity big enough to get him kicked out of home if the landlord ever found out).

For our final dinner, we found a nice Thai restaurant which assured us they used no tomato or whitebait in their cooking, then wandered down Riccarton Road cruising the icecream parlours and admiring the odd bit of public works infrastructure. Our departure from the island was, as with our arrival, under cover of darkness, involving a 3:45am alarm and a 4:15am taxi (damn you, QF66!) before we were whisked home to a country where, although the caves are small, you can be sure of two things: safety from weka attack, and moderate tomato usage.

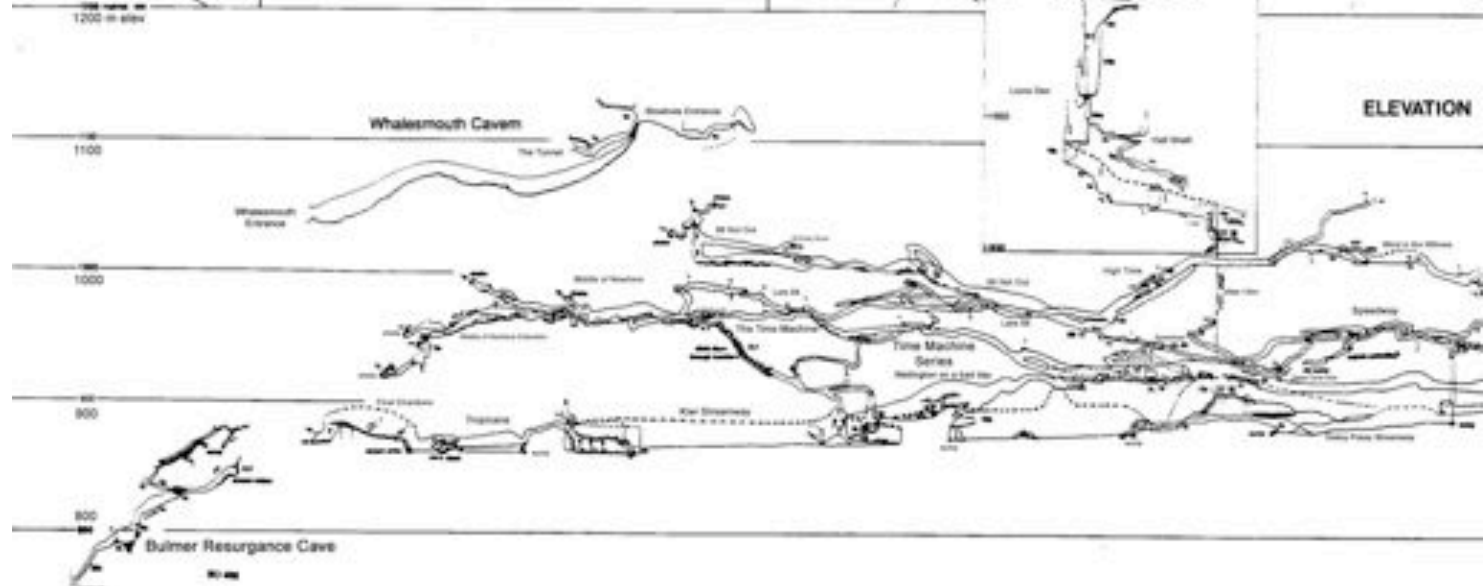
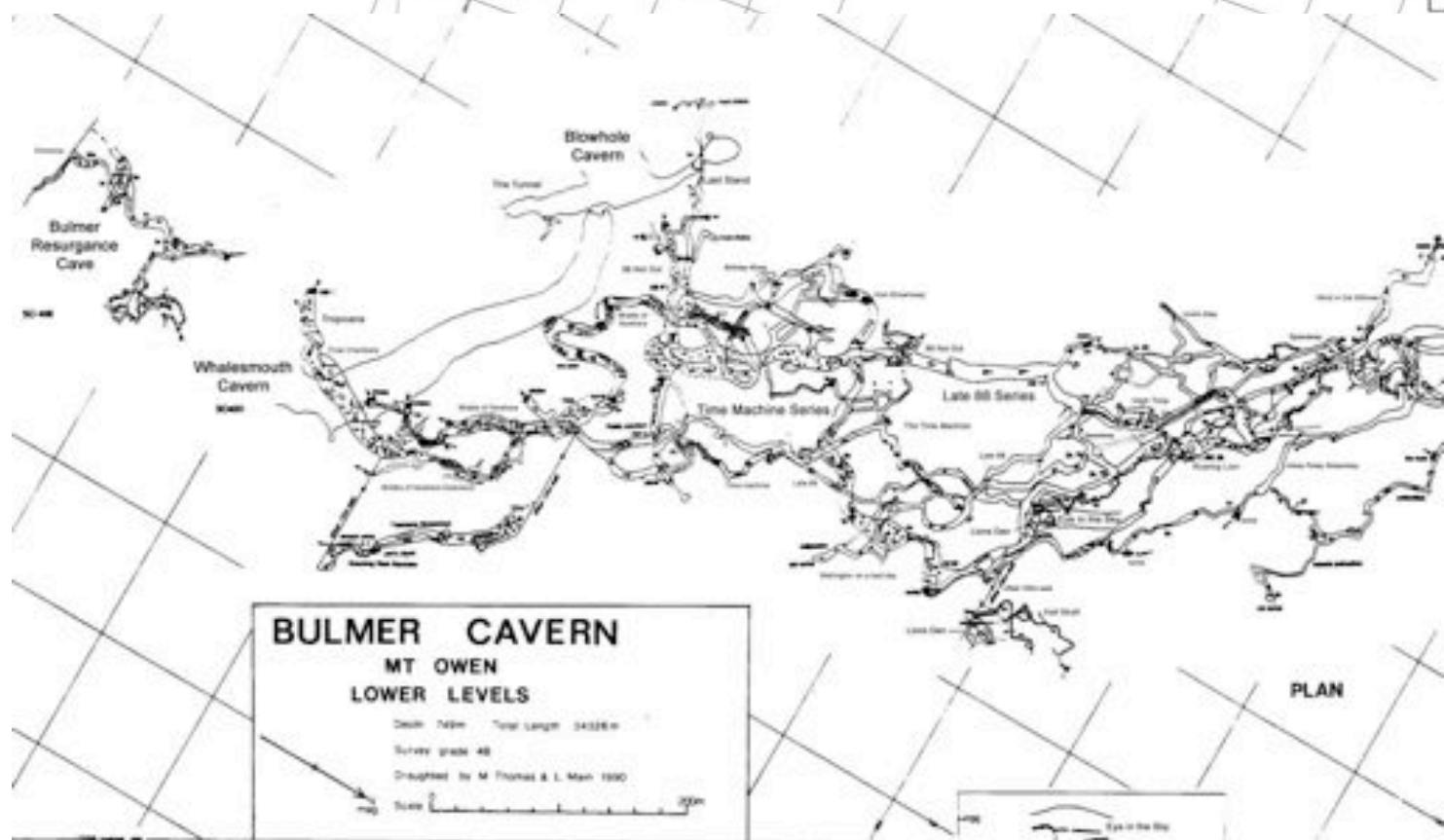
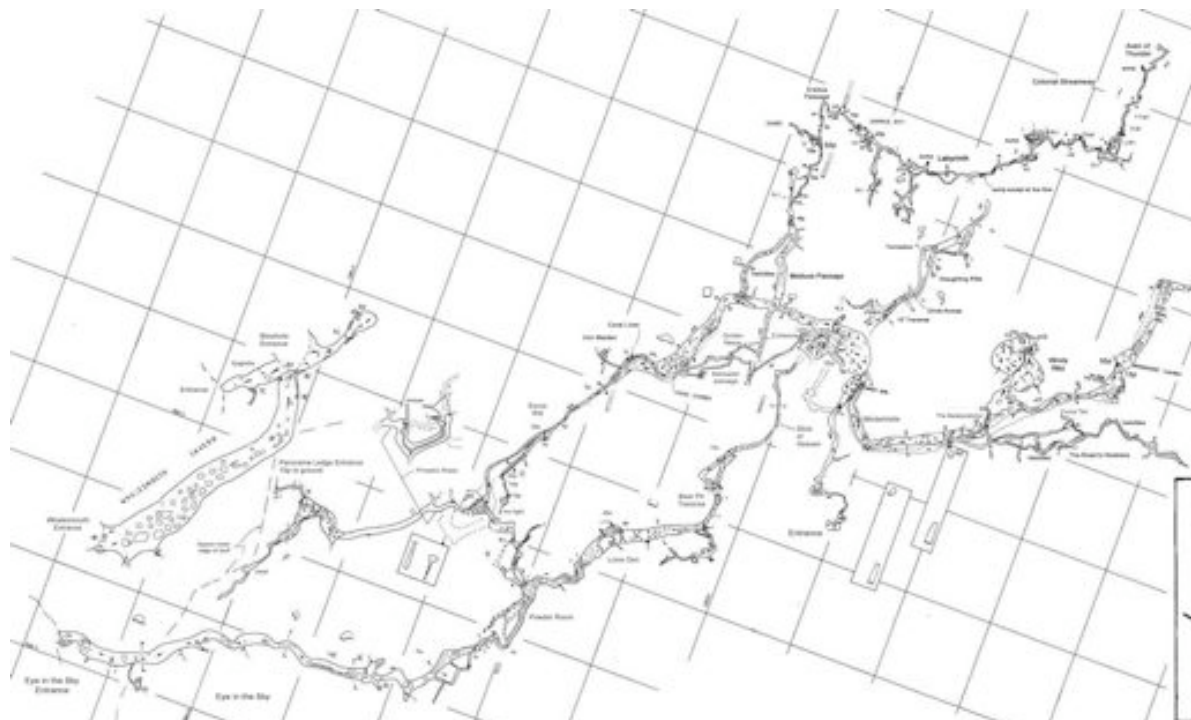
THANKS

Special thanks for this portion of the trip to our NZ friends Hamish, Colin, Kim and Mary. Hamish and Colin have already been rewarded for

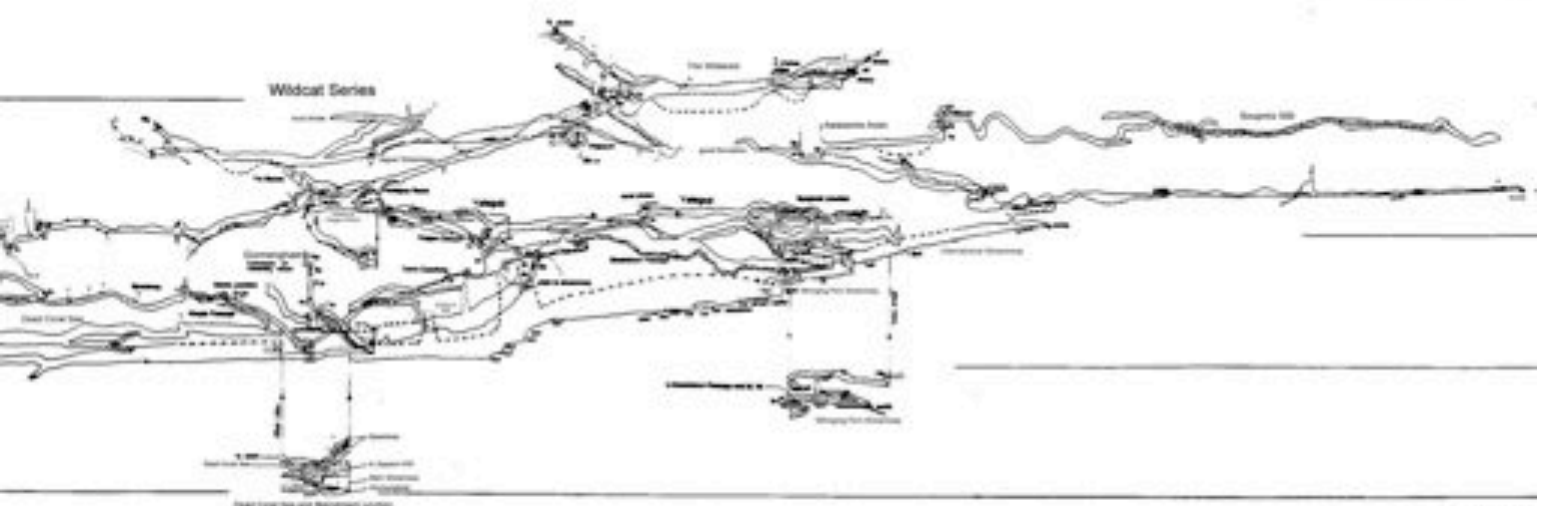
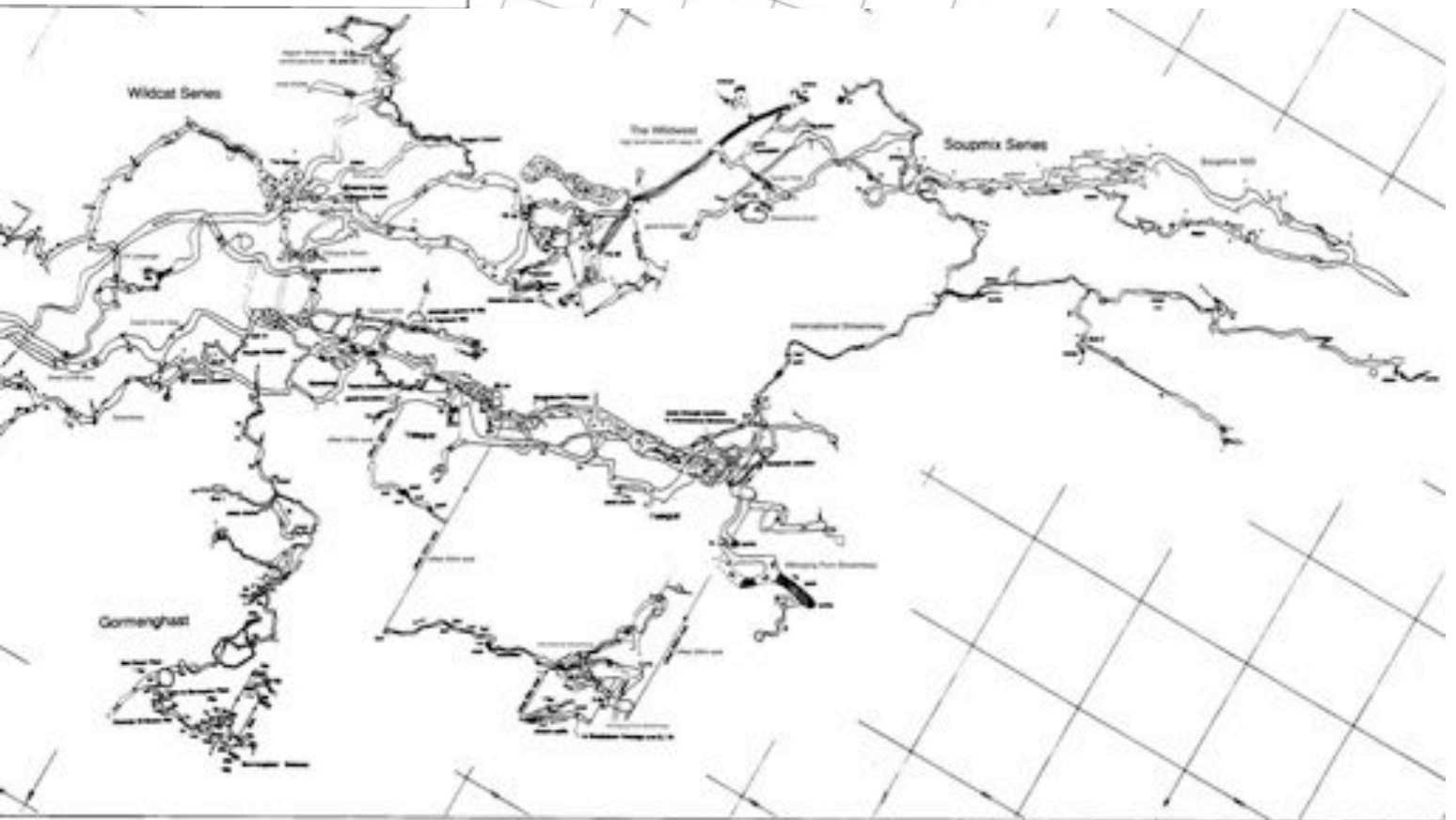
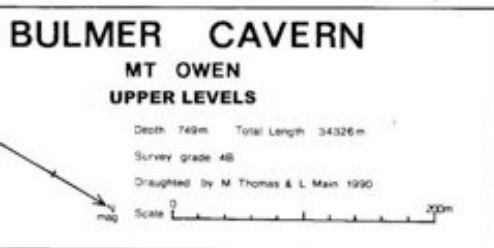
their consideration – they returned to the tall drafting rift climb in Abyssinia and were rewarded with discovering two new entrances and passage that took the cave to over 3km long. No doubt Kim will join them there real soon. And Mary, we would love you to find another major cave at Point Elizabeth. Really. But make sure the path to it is napalmed regularly.



C'mon everybody now, do that conga



Bulmer Cavern,
as it was 10 years ago



BULMER CAVERN - JUST LIKE FUN, ONLY DIFFERENT

An expedition-style trip to Bulmer Cavern, Mt Owen, New Zealand.

DECEMBER 31ST TO JANUARY 12TH, 2001

BY PETER HAYES



Greg Holmes having conquered Bulmer Lake

Participants: Carol Layton, Greg Holmes, Matthew Ridley (SUSS), Tim Moulds (MUCG), Daniel Marsden, Rebecca Hayes, Peter Hayes (RSS), Phil Round (ACG), Heidi Macklin, Jason Morgan.

Background

Bulmer Cavern is located on the southern slopes of Mt Owen in the vicinity of Bulmer Lake. The cave is approximately 50km long and 880m deep. It is the longest cave in New Zealand and also the third deepest after Nettlebed and the Ellis Basin. An underground camp was originally set up in the “Octopus Room” (on the lower level) to assist with exploration. This camp has subsequently been moved further into the cave, into the “Soupmix Series”. This new location is at the end of the “Soupmix Series”, just before the pitch leading into “Where the wild things are”. The rope must be pulled up from this pitch each night to prevent the ‘wild things’ getting into camp.

The lead-up

We all first grouped up in Nelson at the airport before embarking on a mass food shopping trip (10 people, 4 trolleys and \$500) and a briefing from Carol imploring us not to require rescuing this trip. Carol was determined that her trip was not going to involve any rescue operations. Daniel had been on the ground in Nelson for a few days before the trip, organising a base for our operations. Phil (Kiwi guy) had teed up some accommodation for us all in a flower orchard near Motueka. The flower orchard is owned by an ex-caver by the name of Big Bruce. Big Bruce has not caved in the last twenty years but likes to keep in touch with cavers as they are ‘such interesting people’.

Thanks to the efforts of Daniel and the generosity of the guys at Kaiteriteri Sea Kayaks, a ten seater van was at our disposal to transport everyone to Motueka. With the assistance of our on-the-ground local (Phil), we were able to get all the party members and their stuff to the flower orchard.

We unrolled the maps for the cave and had our first real look at what we were getting ourselves into. The maps were big. Each consisting of four A0 sized sheets 3 or 4m long. It took us a while to decide how we were going to take these incredibly large pieces of paper through the cave. Our solution ended up being taking digital photos of sections of the map and printing them out on Big Bruce’s computer. We ended up with lots of low quality but satisfactory maps.

Being New Years Eve, we thought a party was in order. We bought a case of beer and partied on into the night. I was in bed by 6:30pm and I believe that Daniel held out the longest going to bed at around 11:15pm.

We awoke early on New Years Day to pack the food into barrels supplied by Phil, and repack our gear. Daniel and Phil flew to Bulmer Lake in a helicopter with the majority of the gear, whilst the rest of the gear and people headed down to Owen River to begin the walk in.

Bulmer Lake

The walk to Bulmer Lake is quite pleasant, but you must be prepared to wade rivers and climb upwards. The walk takes around four hours for most groups; we took six (it must have been the heavy New Years Eve!). The track is quite easy to follow but we still managed to lose it a few times.

Bulmer Lake sits in a very impressive basin set amidst towering limestone walls and very steep scree slopes. The lake itself is crystal clear and full of little swimming things. There is an excellent kitchen area set-up, and a dining area with views over the lake. There are several small but excellent spots for camping, although in general, very few flat areas.

Finally, we go underground

We split into three basic groups for the first day of activity. Rebecca, Daniel and Phil stayed on the surface to track down various entrances to Bulmer Cavern and also to other caves. Tim, Greg, Heidi and Jason rigged the main entrance of Bulmer Cavern and found their way through to Panorama entrance (the main entrance used for access to the cave – once it is found). Carol, Matthew and Peter headed down the “Road to Nowhere” in search of fantastic helictites.

The sections of the cave currently being pushed begin after the “Soupmix Series” campsite. The trip goal was, therefore, to reach the “Soupmix Series”, and if time permitted, to push. Initially, two groups started on the route to the lower level, via the “Lions Den” (seven pitches which drop nearly 200m). Carol and Daniel made it down to the lower level and had a bit of a poke around “Wellington on a Bad Day” and “The Speedway” while the other group consisting of Greg, Tim, Rebecca and Peter turned around after reaching the last pitch of the “Lions Den”.



In the “dining room” attached to the “kitchen”. Tim, Daniel, Rebecca, Peter and Matthew. Carol Layton

Due to a recent rescue of Kiwi caver Kieran Makay from the “Soupmix Series”, all of the rigging throughout the cave to this point was fantastic and it was not necessary to take in any further handlines or ropes.

While we were underground, Neil Silverwood and two Irish guys (Mark and Simon) turned up at the Bulmer Lake camp after having walked over from Mt Bell where they had been doing some prospecting. Neil, Mark and Simon were having a rest day before heading into Bulmer Cavern for the next five or six days. Neil agreed to show three of us into “Soupmix Series”, while we would leave markers for Heidi and Jason to follow later.

We also enjoyed a well earned rest day after our trip down the “Lions Den”. Nobody went underground so we all ate too much and developed lovely tans as we lay around the lake.

Soupmix Series

January 5th found Carol, Daniel and myself preparing to enter the cave with Neil, Mark and Simon to spend the night in the “Soupmix Series”. We had quite a late start, but after packing up food, warm clothes and thermarests in preparation for a cold night in the cave, we headed down the “Lions Den” and into “Late 88 Not Out” to wait for Neil to show us the way on. Carol, Daniel and I also carried rope and carbide through the cave to assist Neil with his prospecting.

A trip into the “Soupmix Series” of Bulmer Cavern goes something like this:



The Bulmer Karst Field. Looking across to the valley containing Bulmer Lake. Several entrances are visible in the distance. Greg Holmes

Walk for half an hour from camp along the pavement karst to “Panorama” entrance. Descend the 15m climb onto the “Panorama” ledge (quite a spectacular and exposed spot) and follow the small phreatic tubes until you reach a short ladder down. Trudge along the commuter route into the cave - there are around 4 handlines but nothing difficult until you reach the “Lions Den”.

The “Lions Den” starts with a handline to the top of a 4m ladder, followed by another handline to the top of a 15m pitch with two hanging rebelay. There is then another handline to the second (40m) pitch with a really tricky start, followed by another handline to the third (35m) pitch with a waterfall and a redirection. At the bottom of this pitch and waterfall, you then climb around a ledge and a mud slope (avoiding thoughts of the 30m drop below), before reaching another handline at the top of the fourth (30m) pitch. There is then a climb down and along a rift until you reach the fifth (10m) pitch. The rift continues to the very wet sixth (10m) pitch.

“Castration Corridor” begins at the end of the sixth pitch, and size really counts. Daniel was heard muttering the whole way through ‘small as a mouse, I’m small as a mouse’. Carol found it quite easy. My overalls are now in shreds. I think Murphy’s Law of caving states that ‘if it can get snagged, it will’. “Castration Corridor” finally peters out by simply losing its floor before the seventh (20m) pitch with four or five rebelay.



Descending a hand-line somewhere in the cave. Greg Holmes

From “Roaring Lion” (base of “Lions Den”) a 20m pitch is ascended to the start of a series of 2-3m diameter phreatic tubes - “Wellington on a Bad Day”. At each intersection of tubes, you have a choice of three identical routes, each one of these routes leads to another three identical routes. Due to the likely nature of getting lost at this point, we decided to sit it out and wait for Neil to catch up and show us the way on.

After an hour of sitting in the cold wind and huddling for warmth, Neil finally showed up and away we went. Every time I stopped to look around to make sure I could find my way back, I nearly lost sight of Neil, on we went. At least in this part of the cave the going was really easy and we were quickly into “Late 88 Not Out”.

After another short up pitch, we climbed into an impressively large tube, and then through a fair amount of

relatively easy cave until we got to “Wind in the Willows”. From here we ascended another short pitch into a very windy little passage and slid down a sloping handline. The handline led down to a room, then followed by a small tighter section, leading into a 10m pitch with one rebelay but only 6m of rope which left a disconcerting down-climb to the bottom. We were really starting to notice that after the “Lions Den”, the rigging was a little more sparse and not quite as well equipped. From the bottom of this last pitch was another up pitch of only 4 or 5m.

After some more easy passages, it was time for a carbide change. We then headed up to the “Octopus Room” (the location of the previous campsite), and then on again. From the “Octopus Room”, we continued along more very large passages, leaving trail marks for Heidi and Jason to follow, and which would also prove very useful for Carol, Daniel and myself to follow back out once we no longer had Neil to show us the way.

We travelled through many more passages and straddled many bottomless rifts until we came to a short handline up across and back down. The anchor point on this handline really was less than satisfactory. The rope was looped around a short stubby stalagmite and Neil advised us not to jerk or depend on the rope. This did not inspire us with confidence, especially since the formation appeared to be clinging precariously to the limestone. More passages, then another very short down-pitch followed by a scarily wide bottomless rift. Then a short handline back up after a nerve racking traverse along a very loose sloping ledge. Follow lots more passages with little climbs and the occasional handline on the slippery bits, a stroll along the “100 yard Mosey” which was anything but ‘a mosey’, and then a short handline to assist you swinging to the top of a climb down into the “Texas Pots”.

After climbing through the “Texas Pots” for a short distance, take the first squeezy rift on the right, descend around 25m passing the dodgiest redirection in existence (you need to ensure that you put it back in place after you have knocked it out), then onto the “Awesome Aven”. Clip onto the handline and work your way down a series of rebelay to the pitch before descending 55m with two fairly sharp redirections.

The bottom of the “Awesome Aven” is, well, awesome. A stroll along the flat sandy floor leads through a narrow canyon (eliciting thoughts of John Wayne movies) to the first climb of three. Each of these climbs was about 6m.

Walk, climb, crawl along a little more cave before reaching yet another super dodgy traverse to negotiate a 90 degree left-hand bend above yet another seemingly bottomless pit. This involved a pelvis grinding manoeuvre around the flowstone using tenous holds that were really not obvious until Neil pointed them out. All of us felt uncomfortable stretching from delicate formation to delicate formation while unroped, once again, Neil assured us that a number of people had used the formations as hand and foot holds and the holds were perfectly safe.

We finally arrived at the “Soupmix Series”. Unfortunately after 12 hours of strenuous caving, I was not in any condition to fully appreciate the wonders of this passage. However, the sheer wonder of it all revived me somewhat. “Soupmix Series” consists of two kilometres of beautiful gypsum passage eliciting many oohs and aahhs from all.

The highlights of the “Soupmix Series” included a garden of selenite spears, each around 40cm long, and “Avalanche Alley” - a passage several hundred metres long covered in moonmilk 30cm thick.

Carol set up camp for the night in the “Soupmix Series” campsite between Daniel and myself (three people on two thermarests under one sleeping bag in 4°C temperature) with only one command – ‘No Erections’. After that, Carol was most friendly snuggling up to whichever one of us was shivering the most. Despite the temperature and inadequate bedding, we all had a fairly good nights sleep.

In the morning, while waiting for the sun to rise, we enjoyed warm Raro and tea, and some porridge. We were unable to get out of bed before 10:30am due to the cold, and were therefore treated to a brief history of the exploration of the area by Neil, as well as hearing how he kept his sanity on his numerous week-long trips down the cave.

After finally getting out of bed after 12 hours, we bid farewell to Neil, Mark and Simon and headed out of the cave. With a few side trips to check out points of interest that hadn’t been investigated on the way in, it took around 9 hours to make the trip out. We arrived back at “Panorama” entrance just on sunset, and were rewarded with spectacular scenery the whole way along the pavement karst to camp.

Heidi and Jason followed the previous group into “Soupmix Series”, using the track marking set up earlier. They then met up Carol, Daniel and myself at “Wind in the Willows” as we were on the way out.

While Carol, Daniel and I were underground, Tim, Greg, Rebecca and Matthew went for a second trip around the upper levels of Bulmer Cavern. They entered via “Panorama” entrance, visiting the “Powder Room” on the way to locating “Eye in the Sky” entrance.

Greg and Tim decided to follow Heidi and Jason a few hours later with the intention of seeing how far they could get through in a day trip. This time, they reached “The Roaring Lion” (the bottom of the “Lions Den”) but wandered around lost, missing the track marking that had been placed the day before.

Matthew and Phil entered the main Bulmer entrance for a quick photography session in “Medusa Passage”. “Medusa Passage” provided an impressive display of large helictites.

Above ground

The following day, the entire group (apart from Heidi and Jason who were still well and truly underground) decided a quick trip into Bohemia was in order. Bohemia is a 10km long cave with impressively large chambers and fairly good formation that requires no SRT other than two short ladders. Our tiredness must have shown as we turned back after a very short while and missed the largest chambers and the most impressive formations.

Around 10pm that night (as we were finishing our dinner), Heidi, Jason and Simon arrived back at camp. Simon was one of the party who had intended to stay in the cave for 5 or 6 days, but he decided to exit early due to back problems resulting from a fall while conducting survey work around the Mt Bell area a few days earlier.

January 8th turned out to be another rest day with all party members caved out for the time being. We spent the afternoon packing up camp in preparation for our early departure the following morning.

It was a fairly uneventful trip out with everything happening according to plan. Once again we



One of the entrances. Greg Holmes

relied on the generosity of the guys at Kaiteriteri Sea Kayaks and especially to John who gave up his day off to pick us up from Owen River and drive us to Motueka. That night we took John and Big Bruce out to dinner at “Big Mammals” to thank them for all their generosity.

Takaka Hill

After our warm up session at Bulmer Cavern, it was now time to get down to business and undertake the feature cave of the trip. The trip had originally been a caving trip to Takaka Hill and in particular Harwoods Hole. Somehow the trip had been hijacked and become an expedition-style trip to Bulmer. Nevertheless we had come to NZ to do Harwoods and Harwoods we were going to do.

Harwoods Hole is a ‘bloody’ great hole in the ground with a few kilometres of spectacular and fun stream passage at the bottom. The initial descent involves a 176m abseil into the hole and we had brought along a 200m rope specifically for this drop. Carol kindly rigged the abseil while we all slept in the rain at the top. Unfortunately, Carol ran out of enthusiasm whilst rigging the two rebelay, and ascended back up to announce that she would sit it out at the top as she had already been through the cave in the past. The rest of the group abseiled down and proceeded through the cave.

After Harwoods, the group started to part and head their separate ways, although the majority of us spent the next day lazing around at Kaititui on the beach whilst waiting for various connections. Some members continued holidaying whilst others were on the way home.

Finally

This great trip would not have been possible without the fantastic efforts of Daniel Marsden in organising the transportation around the place and our valiant trip leader Carol Layton. Thank you also to Big Bruce (Bruce Limmell) for generously offering accommodation and space to sort out our gear.

STRANGE WATER DIVINING @ WIBURDS

**JENOLAN CAVES,
9TH APRIL 2000**

BY MARK STARAJ

Participants: Mark Staraj, Annalisa Dixon

Ian Cooper led this trip to Wiburds where we entered via J58 only to find our entrance into Lake Chamber blocked by a stream in the flattener. Since there was no water visible in the streambed outside the cave this strange situation warranted a closer look. Accompanied by Annalisa I set off northwards and “upstream” to find the mysterious source of the stream in Lake Chamber. Meanwhile Ian took the others in via J92, for a visit to Yawning Gulches. Later we were to meet up in River Section for some surveying but this was not to be.

The attached map illustrates the findings both within and without the cave. It is a very rough appraisal with the representations based loosely on previously published maps with no direct survey linking them. When all the Wiburds data is collated and ordered it is planned to have all these observations more rigorously treated in the Hydrology paper. For now, so that this material is at least available in its earliest form I have provided these rough maps to help assist in this discussion.

Measurements are very sketchy quantitatively as flow rates were based on estimated cross-sections and timed travels of leaves etc., or where this was unavailable – helmet fill rates. However for general conclusions based on comparisons this is more than adequate.

Most notably beginning with observations furthest upstream:

Watersend Cave/North Wiburds Bluff

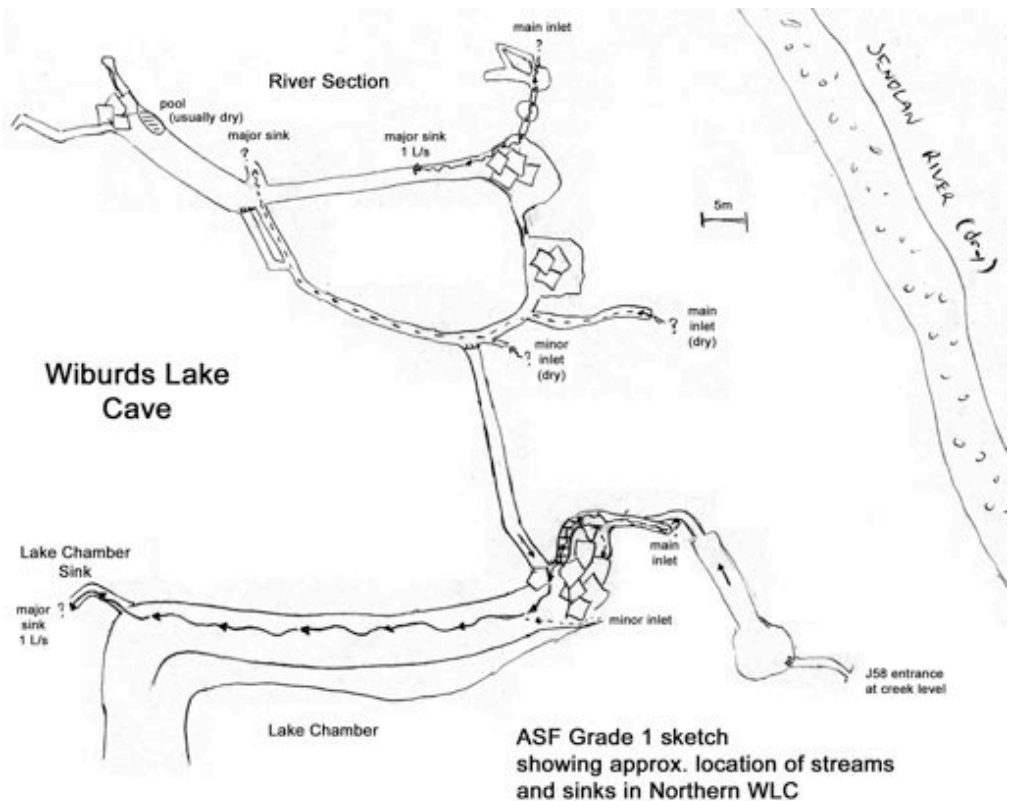
This is the northernmost cave known in the northernmost outcrop of limestone. The Jenolan River bed runs past the foot of this bluff where too the cave begins around 2m above the bed of the river and descends to a metre or so below it. Most commonly the Jenolan River sinks up to some 100m upstream from here where the riverbed runs down the east side of the valley. Then its course

swings dramatically across the valley to abut North Wiburds Bluff and then shortly downstream swings back to the east where it remains for a few hundred metres before swinging back west about 150m north of Wiburds Bluff.

Under the usual conditions of the Main Sink being upstream of Watersend Cave, no water is present within the cave. When the river runs as far as the Bluff it has been frequently observed to have a large pool lying at the cave's bottom. This is totally expected.

Today was unexpected. The cave was dry. But the river was flowing very strongly past at an estimated 50 l/s. This rate did not vary between 30 m up or downstream of the Bluff.

Going downstream the river gradually petered out after some 200m or so and before it reached the eastern side of the valley. Some 200-300m north of the Rowe Hut where there is a tiny outcrop in the creek bed was a small pool with the remains of a fish. Evidence of the recent retreat of the river.



Wiburds Bluff/Rowe Flat

The river bed swings dramatically from east to west at the northern end of Rowe Flat, where a chimney marks the remains of historic Rowe Hut. The river here has cut deeply into the sediment banks, which are up to around 6m high. Three-quarters of the way along this bend was a resurgence from out of the northern bank at its base! We estimated the flow to be around 20 l/s. It flowed around the bend southwards towards Wiburds Bluff as far as the next short bend to the east. At its final sinking point it was 8 l/s, having diminished from 15 l/s over the previous 10m.

This sinking point is some 50m in a direct line from the exposed northern margin of Wiburds Bluff. The first gully to the north of Wiburds contained only around 0.0075 l/s, a mere trickle and this was some 200m up the gully.

Wiburds Lake Cave

Within the cave the following was noticed: *(These observations courtesy of Ian's group)*

Yawning Gulches No. 2 (southern end of the cave):

1. a stream trickling in from the south at 0.2 l/s
2. a stream trickling in from the east (under the rockpile) at 0.3 l/s

Perched Sump (off 22 Passage, which leads to Yawning Gulches from Lake Chamber): Full. (22 Passage itself was dry).

Henrys Dig (deepest point in the cave, and at the southern end near Yawning Gulches): Stream entering passage leading to the dig at 1.0 l/s.

(The following observed by Annalisa and myself)

J58 stream (that which runs into Lake Chamber from the flattener): 0.5 l/s. (the smaller stream running out of the rockpile into Lake Chamber was little more than damp).

River Section (northern most section of the cave and close to and below the Jenolan River bed):

1. First stream encountered north of Lake Chamber – dry.
2. Second stream which enters River Section from the north – 0.5 l/s which sank after around 20m.

A short drafting cave containing a stream bed that lies between the river bed and the climb up to J92, towards the southern end of the bluff. This was dry. Previous dye testing in this cave failed (surprisingly) to show a link into any known part of Wiburds Lake Cave.

Some conclusions & speculations:

Watersend Cave

The usual explanation for an absence of water like this is the occasional blocking of the path water takes between the river bed and the cave. But the two are so close together it is really hard to credit that with *that* much water in the river that there is *no* water in the cave – not even seepage. Also the river had been running for some time evidenced by the signs of retreat such as pools, further downstream. Hence water should be expected. Outside the cave there is no evidence of any change, let alone one that would block water from entering the cave such as a fallen tree, or collapse of rock or river bank. It has been reported before that this is the southernmost sinking point of the Main Sink during normal (no flood) conditions and that pools in Watersend were the norm (eg. Shannon 1975).

Is there another explanation? Further south a similar scenario has been recognised with Serpentine Cave [Scott 1993]. The current assumption there is that the sink feeds more than one conduit with the visible one becoming relegated to a secondary, overflow route. However there is no defined watercourse within Watersend Cave. One possibility may be that since this is a sinking point then there is an underground conduit and pools within Watersend represent ponding from a restriction. That the pools no longer form may show that the restriction is being cleared out. If so we should expect Watersend to remain mostly dry in future. Although we did not observe water sinking here it is quite possible up to 10 l/s could have been diverted without our crude methods detecting it.

The progressive submergence of 50 l/s just downstream of Watersend is in agreement with Shannon's observations (refer map) of a sinking point here of 60 l/s. We did not proceed far enough upstream to note whether the normal location of Main Sink was still drawing the 60 l/s shown by Shannon [1976].

Shannon, H. [1975] *SUSS Bull.* 15(10) p226.

Shannon, H. [1976] Notes on geology, geomorphology and hydrology. In Welch, B. (Ed.) *The Caves of Jenolan 2: The Northern Limestone*. Sydney University Speleological Society.

Scott, M. [1993] Hydrology. *The Caves of Serpentine Bluff, Jenolan Caves, NSW. SUSS Bull.* 33(1):27.

Rowe Flat Rising

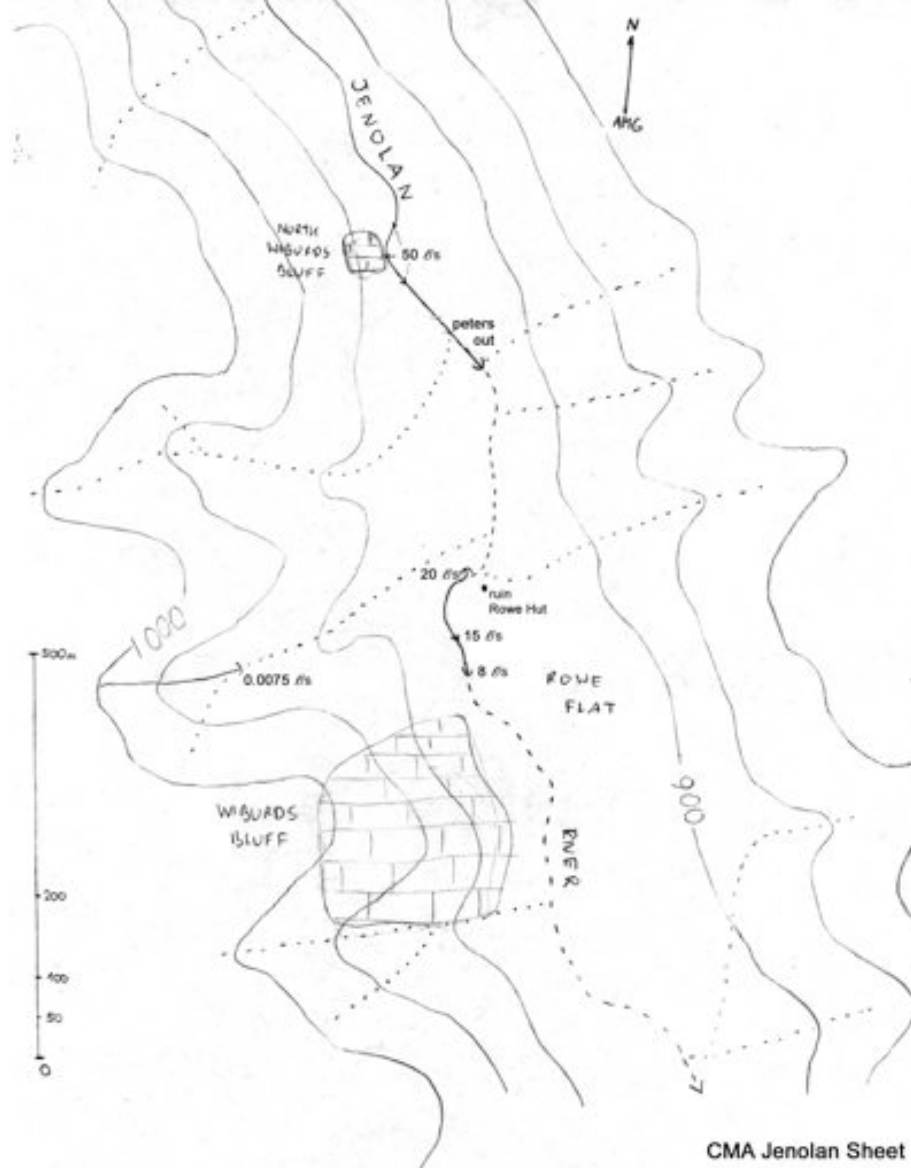
Now this was a curious sight indeed and not one I recall hearing mention of. Given that there was next to no water sinking in the side gully to the north then it is presumed that this a part of the river sinking to the south of Watersend Cave, resurfacing from the alluvium. Just why it would appear from this one point rather than across the whole breadth of exposed bed is interesting. Could it have followed an older, now buried, course of the riverbed? This may too explain why it is rarely seen – it would only be noticeable and present when the river had retreated from Wiburds Bluff, but not back as far as North Wiburds Bluff. The missing 30 l/s is either being drawn into the alluvium en route or else is meeting a sink now buried. There are dolines around the place – there are 2 just south of Watersend Cave on the western side of the river course for instance – and what might be revealing is seeing whether any appear to lie in an approximate line from the sinking south of Watersend Cave with the rising at Rowe Flat. If one exists it may betray the location of the sink for the disappearing 30 l/s.

River Section & Lake Chamber, northern Wiburds Lake Cave

This section contains 3 streams. Being the most northerly area in WLC it is expected that streams would flow here before anywhere else. Two anomalies require explaining. Firstly while only the northernmost of the 3 streams was flowing in River Section, further to the south than River Section there was still a stream flowing through Lake Chamber. How could that possibly be? Secondly the observable flow within WLC was only a small fraction of that seen sinking a short distance to the north of the cave. Where is all the missing water?

On the question of the missing water there are two clear possibilities. One is that the extensive alluvium of Wiburds Flat is soaking it up, the remnant only finding its way into the cave. Alternatively one must postulate another underground conduit. It would have considerable capacity and be a more preferred route. This conduit is not today a known part of WLC.

Given that the alluvium is already fully saturated as evidenced by the Rowe Flat Rising I conclude it is not the case that the excess water is disappearing into the alluvium storage. So for now I consider it likely that another streamway exists to the



north of the known extent of WLC.

A more complicated scenario to explain is that of the missing streams. It is necessary to unravel this by first looking at where the water for these streams is sourced from – Wiburds Flat, either from a stream sink or indirectly from the alluvium.

Scattered across this flat are numerous dolines, some of them up to 2m deep and 4m across. It is likely that water within the sediment finds its way into open joints that dip down to the west and empty into WLC. Ian Cooper has also commented on the presence of these [2001]. This would explain the series of parallel streams entering WLC from the east, the number of which is at least 5 and maybe as many as 8. Also some of these joints are probably fed directly by sinks in the Jenolan River bed itself where they traverse beneath it. The seepage from the alluvium then may explain why there was a stream in Lake Chamber although the river appeared to be sinking too far north to feed it. As for the dry stream beds between Lake Chamber and River Section I believe this is because the streams braid as they progress into WLC. Evidence of this can be seen within the cave. The stream flowing from J58 splits into 2, perhaps 3, separate streams just as it reaches the flattener linking into Lake Chamber. Where it enters Lake Chamber 3 streams appear and recombine to flow as one. In River Section it's been observed that as flow increases in the most northern stream then progressively the stream ways to the south begin to flow until all streams between River Section and Lake Chamber are running. Since this can occur without the surface stream sinking any further south it seems to say to me that there is a common source for all 3 streams and that at some point the first overflows to the second and thence the third. Again, the more southerly streams recombine and then flow northwest into the main passage of River Section to "recombine" with the most northerly stream.

Cooper, I. [2001] Geology. Spider Cave Special Issue. *SUSS Bull.* 38(4).

Yawning Gulches Area (inc. J56 & J202), southern Wiburds Lake Cave

Two streams were trickling into Yawning Gulches. This area abuts the gully separating Wiburds Bluff from Century Bluff to the south. The stream trickling in from the south is then understood to be from surface run-off in the gully. The one entering from under the rockpile from the east is I think more likely to be derived from the alluvium as described in the section above than to be also from the gully. All the observations seem consistent with this.

J56 is at a relatively shallow depth compared with the other streams discussed and is found under a blind gully that once would have operated as a stream sink taking water directly into the bluff. A more recent example of such a blind gully can be found

further north. Therefore J56 is probably a conduit taking water directly from a nearby sink. Interestingly dye tracing done here did not show any connection with other streams in WLC.

Also present in the same depression is J202. J202 has not previously been checked for active streams. Both entrances are in fact “windows” onto the streamways found within them rather than entry points, so it is quite possible that the streamways are related if not in fact one and the same. Both entrances draft strongly but both peter out in narrow constrictions. Until further work is done and their exact relationships with the main cave are understood, these two caves represent a baffling but exciting possibility of bypassing Henrys Dig.

I say baffling because it would be very surprising indeed should J56 in particular fail to connect into WLC as hinted at by the negative dye trace, given that it is mere metres away from the bluff. Exciting because although today Henrys Dig is the main gateway for a link between WLC and the Woolly Rhinoceros, a way on through the Dig is improbable if not impossible.

THE SUSS LITERARY SUPPLEMENT, REVISITED

Sushila Thomas has forwarded this entertaining excerpt from Peter Carey's latest novel (Carey, P. (2001) *30 Days in Sydney: A wildly distorted account*. Bloomsbury: London, pp164-166).

Somewhere in the valleys of the Blue Mountains...

“This book has been a disaster, said Sheridan quietly. It is a total fucking disaster.

I thought you had a publisher.

I do, I do have a publisher.

Congratulations.

No, he said vehemently, I swapped my marriage for a publisher. I came up here for three years and now it is done. I haven't got a fucking marriage and all I have is a book. Do you know what she said to me? You burned up all my goodwill. What the fuck does that mean?

But I thought Clara was the one who wanted you to get out of soaps. She thought you were wasting yourself.

Well, she did give that impression, Pete. But while I came up here to write the book, she was working eighteen-hour days. She did not complain until she hated me.

That seems unfair.

It's not to do with fair, mate, it's all about her father. I'd kill the fuck if he was not dead already.

I'm sorry, I said.

The truth is I hate this place now, Pete. I used to be so happy when I was here, but now it feels like a tomb.

But you've always loved the mountains.

Yes, he said, I have always loved the mountains. I sort of had the idea that I belonged here. My brother still farms up toward Lithgow. My grandfather had his first selection in this district. When he was a young fellow he went dancing in a cave not far from here. That was not a cave like this, it was a huge deep cavern with a proper sprung floor that the cattlemen built. When you see it you'll marvel at it, the things that men will do for sex. Yes, this is my place, but I should never have written the book. Even if it turns out I have written Ulysses, I'll regret it. I'd rather be writing soaps again. I wouldn't argue with the cunts this time around.

He held out his hand but I did not understand what he wanted.

Give me your tape bloody recorder.

Why?

Why do you think? I'm going to give you your fucking earth story. He snatched the tape recorder from my hand and, having turned it on, he sat beside me at the table.

You know, he said, on the day after she said her goodwill had been burned, I came up to abseil down Danae Canyon.

Let me explain some shit to you. Well, first you know Sydney sandstone is very soft. It's a soft bastard so the creeks cut through it like a knife through butter. You'll have a little creek that started out its life running along at the bottom of a V but over years it cuts down and it cuts down until the V has become a Y and the shaft of the Y may be only six foot across but it can be hundreds of feet deep and the walls are all eroded in the most beautiful sculpted shapes and on the sides you'll get hanging gardens of ferns, and spiders and lizards that don't live anywhere else in the world, that have perhaps lived here for a hindered thousand years. It was my mate skink who got me into this.”

And now for a different account of Danae...

THE D CANYONING TRIPS

DANAE AND **D**IONE **D**ELL: **D**ECEMBER 1-2, 2001

TEXT BY **M**EGAN **P**RYKE, PICS BY **A**LAN **P**RYKE

Participants: Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Scott Hall, Max Midlen, Phil Maynard, Jonathan Smith

Danae Brook. It's a pretty name, it's a pretty brook, I mused while hopping over moss covered rocks and pebbles, underneath a canopy of greenery as the brook babbled. The canopy gave way to open sky, and the brook descends over an edge into a rushing waterfall. Now it was no longer brook, but canyon!

Scrambling down the left to the top, we ignored the first potential abseil. Unlike other Kanangra canyons I had done to date, Danae is undisputedly canyon. Abseils, up to 31m long (depending on your rigging) take you further into its depths. Splashing waterfalls, cool pools to swim across, deep and incised, narrow and dark. Alan attended to camera duties, exempting himself from any rope handling.

After the abseiling section the boulder pile began. I had heard that Danae has a long stretch of boulders. What I did not expect was the altitude lost in the boulder section of the creek! It was hot, the brook had disappeared somewhere below and was not seen again for a long time. Along the sides of the now gorge section of Danae stood an impressive grove of red cedar.

We took a quick breather at Kanangra Creek before the ascent. The ascent starts at approximately 150m lower in altitude than Murdering Gully so therefore is longer. The large Kanangra country views were enjoyed as we walked out along the ridge and over the plateau. Wilderness mountain vistas extending as far as the eye could see under the blue, cloudless sky.

Doing Danae is a long day. The trip is varied. If you have the fitness and appropriate experience it's a must!



Into Danae's dark depths



Maxing out the fun

Christies Creek offered some comfort, we had a little bit less ascending to do, especially compared to the previous day. Yay! More Kanangra views to absorb, including tracing the route down Dione Dell, spotting anchor points which were only seven hundred metres away as the crow flies from one of our viewing points! On the contour map each waterfall has a name. Why the overall waterfall series / canyon name is Dione Dell I am not sure. Maybe it has something to do with the ubiquitous letter "D"?

The group halved overnight. The next day Alan, Max and myself decided to do a leisurely trip down Dione Dell. "We'll knock it off in four hours or so, only a few of us, no need to hurry". Well, whether due to our casualness or our determination to abseil through as much splashing water as possible (water levels being on the low at this time), it took about six hours to complete. I think slight stiffness from the previous day had something to do with it.

At the end we peeked our heads down Margaret Falls before heading out up a steep ridge. Being well below us seeing



Hmmm....boulders all the way to the bottom! Yiecks!



A contented Phil at Kanangra Creek, only 150m lower than Murdering Gully

INTERIOR REDECORATING AT TUGLOW

TUGLOW CAVES,
29TH SEP – 1ST OCTOBER 2001

TEXT BY DAVID CONNARD, PHOTOS BY LINDSAY KEARNEY



Formation in KKK chamber

through lower streamway section. Two other people with warm enough thermals chose to follow him. The rest of the group instead climbed down into the lower streamway below the tape-swing and went back upstream to see what could be seen of the swim section.

Both the lower and upper stream sections of Tuglow really are truly excellent examples of sporty streamway caving – some of the best in NSW. Every time we go there, I always think we don't visit Tuglow nearly often enough. But then again, every time I walk back up that hill, I seem to change my mind.

That night (and thank god it was that night, not while still in the cave!!), the food poisoning started to kick in... To this day, I'm still not entirely sure what it was that caused the food poisoning – it could have been the water, or it could have been what we ate for lunch or dinner... or then again, maybe something else entirely... But whatever it was, all I can say is that the Tuglow campsite at Grid-Iron Bends is not a good place to get food poisoning. And yes, as a result, I did throw up in Jenny's shoes... but in retrospect, that was nothing compared to the act of throwing up through the still-closed fly screen of the tent around 30sec previously. And that's probably enough said about the entire sordid affair. Except perhaps to add that my tent has had a thorough washing since (and now, in my humble opinion, smells entirely like fresh-cut roses).

Participants: Ken Anderson, David Connard, Lindsay Kearney, Tara Larby, Chris Norton, Jenny Mee, Verity Morris, Sushila Thomas,

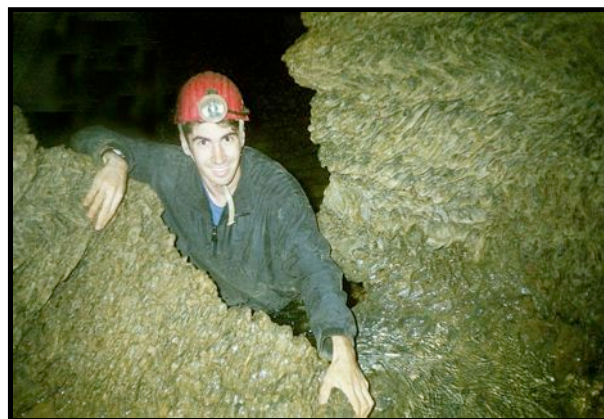
This was meant to be an easy, long weekend Tuglow trip. None of those terrible, midnight walks down the hill on dark Friday nights, or the equally annoying staggers up the hill on Sunday afternoon after a hard stretch of caving. No, given that we had three full days, the plan was to take a day to walk in, set up camp, swim, play frisbee, and drink lots of port... Next, would be a full day to do the cave, and then a third day to walk up the hill back at a comfortable pace...

We arrived at Boss Peak at around 1pm on Saturday, and after lunch and the hot walk down we all jumped straight into the creek to cool off. After some minor reconstructions to the campsite area, it was time to crack out the Pringles, frisbee and the port...

Sunday morning saw us all up bright and early, ready for a hard day's caving. A significant amount of effort was put in by a number of us to replace the log that once crossed the Kowmung River at Grid-Iron Bends... but with no success. We still had to get our feet wet to cross the river.

The cave itself was all pretty straightforward. We headed straight for Knights Knobbly Knob chamber to admire the pretty formations and to stop for a quick bite to eat. From there, the group split up after reaching the streamway, one group climbing down the small waterfalls to the top of the main waterfall, and the other group heading up to the back of the cave.

On the way back out, Phil decided to do the climb down from KKK chamber to the base of the waterfall, and swim out to



Lindsay climbing one of the streamway waterfalls



Verity climbing one of the upstream waterfalls

The next day, we packed up camp, and collected our things as best as was possible. At around 9am the food poisoning started to kick in for Jenny too, and we were both feeling like death warmed up by the time it came to start the walk out.

All I can say after this experience is... thank god for the toilets at Jenolan Caves; and, never, *ever* leave your tent fly-screen fully done up (leave at least an inch or so...), just in case you have an emergency like this in the middle of the night...

Other than all that, it was a great Tuglow trip! On the way home Chris visited a bottle shop in Katoomba that was offering a special deal on 3L Heinekin bottles... the results of which were seen shortly afterwards at my wedding to Jenny... It just goes to show that you can get away with throwing up in someone's shoes, as long as you remember to rinse them immediately afterwards.

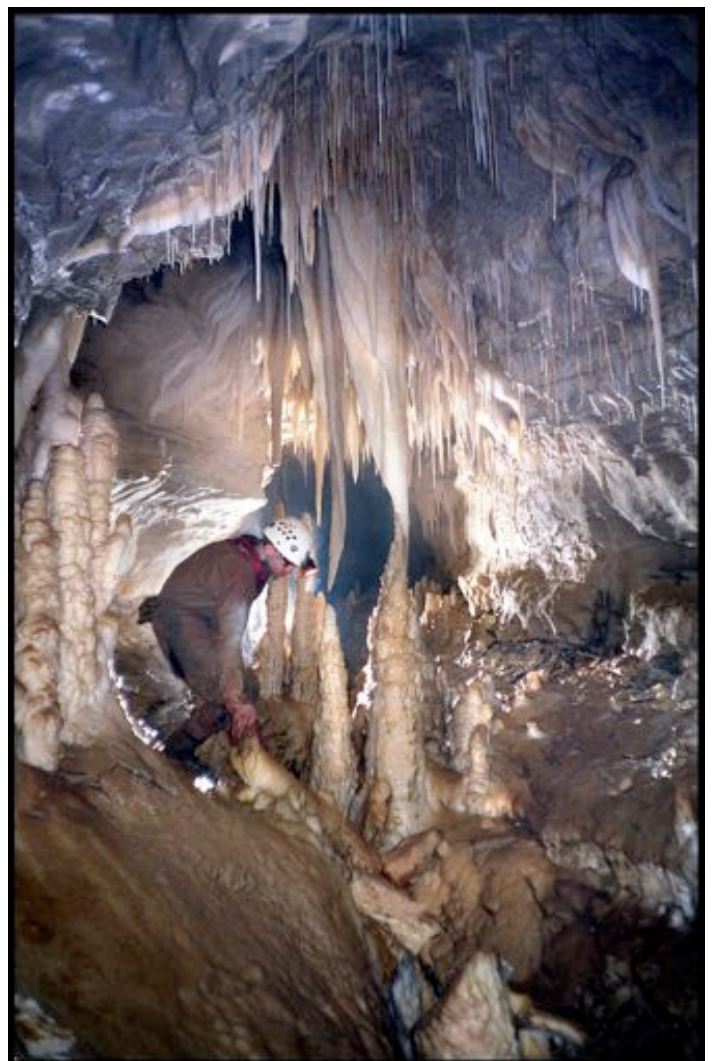


Ken climbing back up the first downclimb in the upstream section after KKK chamber

PHOTO GALLERY



Chris Norton ascending Cauldron Pot in a dentists coat (!), Tas. Greg Holmes



Simon Goddard in Hollywood, South Island, NZ. Alan Pryke

TRIP LIST: FEBRAURY 2002

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.

February

9-10 Colong. Join Alan Pryke as he continues to explore and survey these convoluted tunnels. Contact Alan on 9524 0317(home)

16-17 Kelly's Falls. If the bushfires have not burned up the waterfall, Dave Connard intends to abseil it. Contact him on 9437 6762 (home).

21 Trip Safety Meeting. This is for anyone concerned with how to manage SUSS safely. Convened by our safety officer, Greg Holmes. Contact him for details: (home) 9908 2272, (mobile) 0411 445 413

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

23-24 Mystery Canyon. Canyoning season continues with Martin Pfeil leading us astray: (home) 9713 9460.

March

2-3 Wollongambie: Wollongambie is not a cave, it's a canyon in the Blue Mountains! SUSS has lilos you can borrow, or you can bring your own, and float down the river, gazing at beautifully sculpted canyon walls. Some parts are quite deep, which makes easy lazy floating, and even diving off rocks. Some parts are shallow and you'll end up clambering over river boulders, walking in water. All in all it's a relaxing, soggy, lazy day in the clean outside. Great for the new SUSSlings we hope to meet at O'Week

7 General Meeting: Al Warild somehow manages to go on long, adventurous, caving expeditions several times a year, and then gives us a slide show to show us what we missed out on! At this meeting he'll have a presentation on Patagonia, an isolated, rugged, extreme-weather area of the world! Come and see how far you can extreme caving can get, and relax in the knowledge that nothing in NSW gets this wild.

16-17 Jenolan: Jenolan is SUSS's most familiar caving area, just past Katoomba in the Blue Mountains. This trip will probably involve some project work rather than just traipsing through the caves - surveying and mapping the caves and checking out possible leads that may go into unknown parts of the caves ("how many undiscovered caves are there?"). There's a hut to stay in that has hot and cold running water, fully functional kitchen, and mattresses to throw on the floor to sleep on - it's luxury! So anyone who'd like to really get into caving and take a hot shower afterwards should contact Phil Maynard on 9908 2272

16-17 Burrinjuck: Burrinjuck is a man made dam. In the flooding of the region, a little hummock, known as Cave Island (because it was limestone and had caves in it!) was drowned. Alan Pryke has had word that the water levels in the dam are very low at the moment, and there's a possibility that some of the larger caves on the island may be exposed and explorable. Contact him on 9524 0317 to go along

16 Training Day: There's a possibility for a general training day for caving. Contact Annalisa Contos if you're interested 9557 9475.

23-24 Colong: This is another cave area in the Blue Mountains. Colong cave is a fun cave with lots of bits of passage to poke your nose into, and some big caverns with beautiful formation as well. Usually people camp on Friday night, walk down to the cave on Saturday morning, and camp again on Saturday night. SUSS has 3-man tents and lilos you can borrow, and other participants on the trip often have gear they can share (like stoves). Contact Greg Holmes 9908 227 229 (mobile).

29-1st April Kunderang Brook: About 6 hours north, near Kempsey, is a reputedly lovely bush walk that passes some caves as well. A steep walk down to the river is then followed by 4 days of following water courses through isolated, luscious bushland. This is a Kempsey Speleological Society trip, and SUSS has been invited. Phil Lardner is their leader - 6566 5238..

29-1st April Yarrangobilly: "Yagby" is down in the Snowies, between Tumut and Cooma. The whole area is picturesque, rolling hills, river flowing by, kangaroos popping around, March flies trying to suck your blood. There is the old Post Office cottage to stay in, the rooms of which have very interesting stories - the headless baby room for one! The caves at Yagby are colder than around the Blue Mountains, but they are absolutely spectacular. Full of gorgeous formation and different types of crystal, great passages to wander down. Contact Megan Pryke 9524 0317.

April

4 General Meeting.

6-7 Jenolan: SUSS is back to its usual monthly trip to Jenolan. Probably a lot of long awaited project work about to happen, so come along inspired to work hard and sleep well in the luxurious cavers cottage. Contact to be advised