

SUSS BULL 41(4)

JANUARY – MARCH 2002



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SUSS Bull 41(4)

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News And Gossip

Well, given the last Bull was published two months late, there has not been much news to report in this one...

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

SUSS would like to say a big “hello” to all of the new members who signed up with the Club during O-Week. We hope you’ll find that you have as much fun in SUSS as we do. SUSS does heaps of great outdoor activities all year round - over the summer break we have been spending a lot of our time canyoning (as you’ll see from the number of canyoning trip reports in this Bulletin), but are a caving club too...

For those of you who haven’t made it onto a SUSS trip yet (and I guess that that’s most of you) – make sure you come along sometime soon. Jenolan is a great place to start out caving – the caves are easy and fun, and we have a decent hut to stay in (no camping reqd., and there are hot showers!). Every SUSS trip is suitable for beginners unless marked otherwise (which *will* be rare). You can come along on your own & meet new people, or convince your friends to come away on a weekend caving. Remember – uni life should be about having fun, not studying too hard!

And for those of you who are keen to see some *awesome* caves – there will be an expedition to Waitomo Caves, New Zealand over the next summer break. A reasonable level of caving experience will be required for this trip, but a few months training later in the year will be enough time to sort that out. See the trip list at the back of this Bull, or on our website for more details:

<http://ee.usyd.edu.au/suss>

MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE NOW!!

For the rest of you... it’s time to renew your SUSS membership – or you won’t be getting any more fine publications like this one. To renew, download the membership form off our website, and send it in with a cheque for the appropriate amount (or give it to a trip leader). If you *have* already renewed, please check the expiry date on your address label to confirm that we have correctly processed your renewal.

YET ANOTHER MATTHEWS...

In other news, congratulations are in order for Don and Estelle Matthews for their latest contribution to speleology. On the 5th of February 2002, Estelle gave birth to a healthy new caver called Claire. It’s only a matter of time now before she’ll be crawling down any one of a number of small passages at Jenolan that are still in need of exploration...



Don holding Claire at 4 weeks.

MYSTERY CANYONING

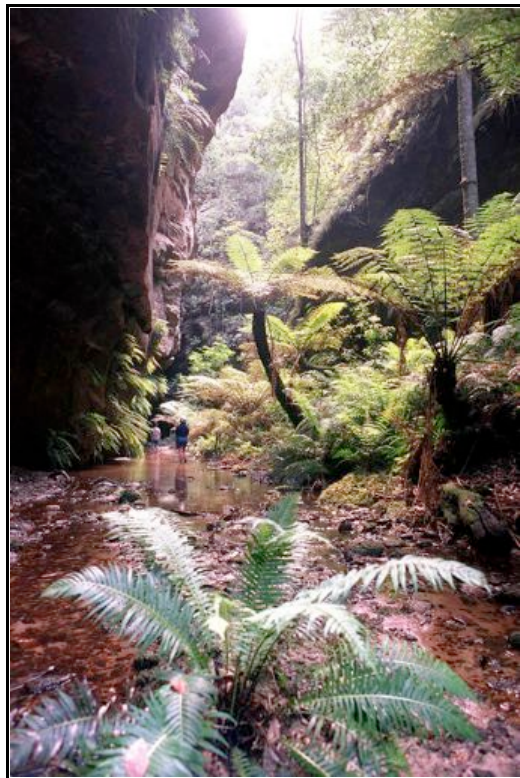
23 - 24 FEBRUARY 2002

BY MARTIN PFEIL, PHOTOS BY ALAN PRYKE

Participants: Martin Pfeil, Phil Maynard, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Matt Fischer, Max Midlen, Nenad Stilin

Our group left Sydney quite early on Saturday morning. On arriving at Newnes I was flagged down by the occupants of Alan's car. "Where's Alan?" I inquired, "Somewhere down that way", came the reply accompanied by a finger pointing down the road. Great, that narrows it down to 7km of various dead-end roads. I must've misunderstood the arrangements. I thought that the idea was to do the car-shuffle after the second car had arrived not before. Anyway after a couple of trips by different people to the end of the road and back Alan was located and we were soon after on our merry way up the hill.

It was a fairly cool weekend – quite nice considering that we had a few steep



ridges to traverse in between the canyons. It wasn't long before we came to a massive pagoda that made for some interesting and exposed scrambling. We briefly paused at the summit to take in the spectacular views that surrounded us. It was then that we encountered some scrub! Once on top of the ridge, we followed this for a kilometre or so until we reached the point at which it was agreed to head down into the creek.

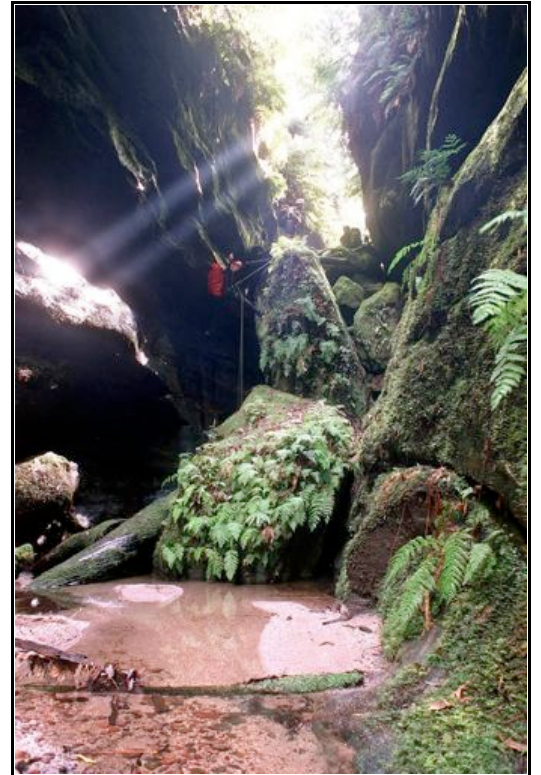
Things were going very well, that is until we found ourselves on the edge of a massive cliff that we needed to be at the bottom of! After a bit of traversing, and with no other obvious way down, we found a suitable anchor point from which we would abseil. It looked to be just shy of 20 metres, so I decided that the 40-metre rope would do. As I was abseiling down I had second thoughts about the height – the ends of the rope were not actually in sight until I was nearly down. They were about 30cm off the ground – perfect!

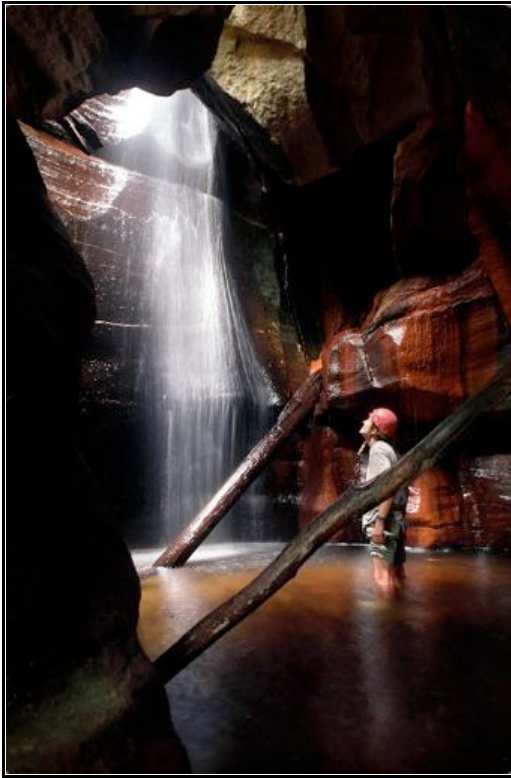
The creek was really quite nice, gently flowing beneath the rainforest canopy. The walking was very easy and we soon found an idyllic place for lunch. While everyone else was eating Phil slept like a baby!? Soon after lunch the canyon started, it wasn't a really deep and dark canyon but had a lot of little tricky climbs and bridging sections as well as an abseil or two to keep things interesting. At the end of the canyon the creek dropped steeply down to a larger

creek. From here we headed downstream, walking mainly in the creek, which was very open and fast.

It wasn't long before we arrived at our intended campsite. Nestled in amongst rainforest trees with soft ground and right alongside the bubbling creek, we were all sure to have a wonderful night's sleep. Or were we! More on that later. We quickly assembled our flies, which according to Max made the place look like a refugee camp! I think Max was just a bit jealous.

As it was only four o'clock we still had time to investigate another canyon. We went up a side creek that led into a magnificent dark slot. Unfortunately, a waterfall blocked further investigation. However one of the minor tributaries could be reversed a short





distance by scaling logs and debris. Quite an interesting exercise! The time was getting on and it would soon be dark so we headed back down to camp.

After dinner we sat around the fire and many stories and jokes were told. Some of these, especially Nenad's repertoire of bad Croatian jokes, I would not like to hear repeated!!! The hours fly by and before we knew it, it was 11. Time for bed. The nice thing about sleeping under a fly is that you really feel like you are sleeping out under the stars, or fire flies, or glow worms, or whatever the case may be. It's also nice to watch the camp fire eating away at the last tasty morsels of wood. However, flies do have there down sides. Such as during foul weather or, as Alan would discover, when the animals are about...

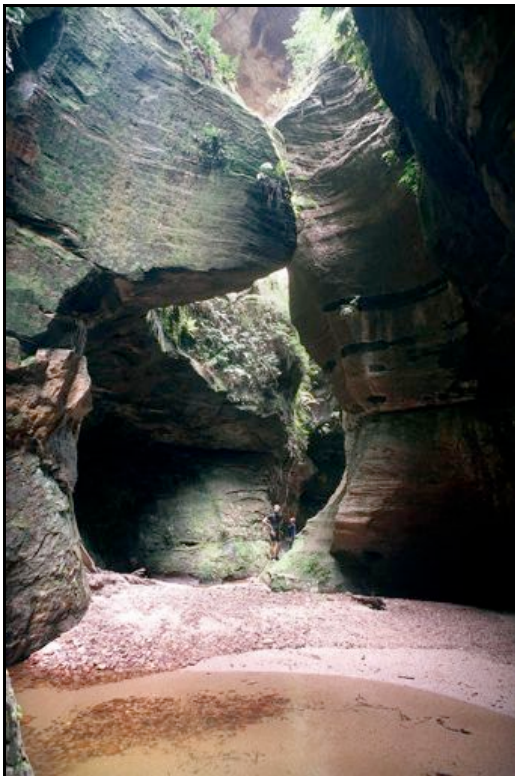
Sometime during the night I was awoken by a howl and some profanities from Alan and Megan's direction. These were immediately followed by the sound of a petrified wallaby pounding up the steep embankment trying to get away. It seems that this particular wallaby, which probably had far less than 20/20 vision, had collected Alan while on it's routine nightly hop.

The next morning we were all up quite early and from the look of the sky it was going to be another fine day in paradise. We had breakfast and packed up and again headed up the side creek we had investigated the night before. The particular pass that we needed to use to gain the top of the cliff involved some tricky & exposed sections of climbing. This did not present too many problems for us and we soon found ourselves on

top of another ridge.

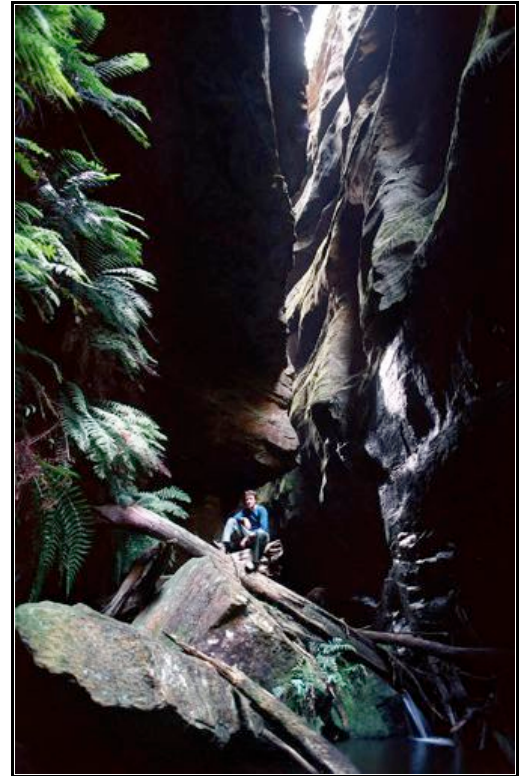
With some careful navigation and a bit of luck we soon entered what was to be our third canyon. We had a quite look upstream, only to be stopped by two very large waterfalls. The cliffs all around here were quite large. It seems that we may have come in the only way possible without abseiling and certainly the only way that the ropes we were carrying would have allowed. Phew!

By the time we arrived at the point where the canyon proper begins it was lunchtime. Again, as the rest of us ate our lunch, Phil slept like a baby! This canyon was to be the highlight of the trip. High narrow walls, waterfalls, cascades, and lots of pools filled with yabbies and fish. It was just beautiful! Alan spent quite a bit of time with his camera and tripod trying to get that perfect photo. There were certainly many photographic opportunities here.



After close to a kilometre of canyon, the creek broke free and descended steeply through boulders and scree to the Wolgan River. This part was fairly challenging and involved a bit of trial and error to find a way down. At the bottom we came across an old fire road that we followed for several kilometres and ultimately back to Newnes and the cars.

We stopped at the Alexandra at Leura for those delicious \$8 rump steaks and as luck would have it, it was also happy hour! Then back to Sydney for another week of pollution and traffic jams...



CANYONING AROUND DEEP PASS

9TH /10TH MARCH 2002

This was the “freshers canyoning trip” to the Newnes Plateau area. Two canyons were originally planned: Twister / Rocky Creek, and Deep Pass canyon, camping at the Deep Pass camp ground overnight. In the end, the group split up, and several parallel canyoning trips occurred...

Twister and Rocky Creek Canyons

BY DAVID CONNARD

Participants: Joan Chan, David Connard, Annalisa Contos, Daniel Creech, Jenny Mee, Martin Pfeil, Megan Pryke

Saturday was an absolutely freezing day – it felt like it was around 14 degrees or so, with a really chill wind blowing while we waited for everyone to turn up at the Zig Zag railway turn-off. Not the most appetising conditions for getting kitted up in a wetsuit, and jumping into a cold, dark creek. Still, it wasn't raining... yet... so on we went.

We rolled up to the Rocky Creek carpark at about 10am, to find it quite full, and discover an entire bucks party heading into Twister and Rocky creek just before us... not the best start. This seemed to be enough to scare off Geoff and Alan to the quieter Galah canyon, and to cause Steve Contos to pike altogether (albeit complaining of stomach pains, and looking a pretty convincing shade of green...). Nevertheless, we respectfully gave the bucks party a fifteen minute head start, then wandered off into the bush to find our way into Twister.



Taking the plunge into Rocky Ck. David Connard

Twister is a great canyon. It isn't particularly long, nor are its walls particularly deep, but it does have a lot of really fun jump-ins. None of this long-swim business like other canyons –

it's just jump into this pool, swim across, clamber out, and jump into the next one for much of its distance. It's a great introduction to canyoning, and lots of fun even if you've done it lots of times before. Martin Pfeil tells me that he finds a new jump-in every trip – by climbing up the side of the canyon where possible, and jumping back in.

As we arrived, the last of the bucks party was just going in... Surprisingly, they were pretty fast, and we didn't see much of them after this, except for the fact that the water was seriously stirred up, and you couldn't see into the pools at all. In spite of the freezing temperatures, we all had a great time doing the slippery-dips and jump-ins. Daniel surprised us all by managing to go one step higher than Martins' previously “biggest” (optional) jump-in, by climbing up (and jumping out of) a tree high up the side of the canyon. It was a hell of a jump... even just from the base of the tree - which was the only point I was game to jump from.

Twister is over all too soon, and then a 20 minute bushwalk in wetsuits follows, before Rocky Creek is reached. Rocky Creek is also a great canyon – really deep and spectacular. It's also a little like Parramatta Road in terms of the number of people going through it... We would have seen probably at least 20 other people in the time it took us to go to the end of the canyon, and then return.



One of the many jumps in Twister. David Connard



The last abseil in Galah. Geoff McDonnell

Galah Canyon

BY **GEOFF MC DONNELL**

Participants: Geoff McDonnell, Alan Pryke

At Newnes now just back from the end of the Galah Mountain Road many of the side roads now are designated "Wollemi Wilderness Walkers ONLY areas" and the road to Galah canyon (also an exit road for Rocky Creek and Coachwood canyon) is now barricaded and a 3km (each way) road walk is needed to where you used to be able to drive to do Galah Canyon. Galah Canyon is the front cover picture on Rick Jamieson's 4th Edition "Canyons near Sydney" and, like that cover picture after doing it, I would personally rate Galah canyon as a VERY good canyon to do!

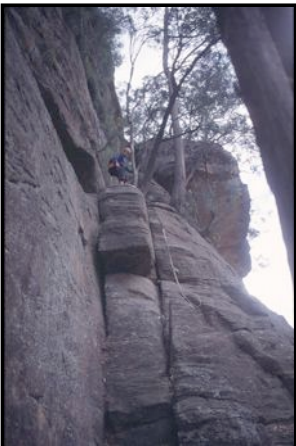
So Alan and myself set off down the road @ 11am and from the end of the road, then followed a convenient track through the bush North East right downhill and into the creek near a very 'dodgy' looking tree! (our way out!). Alan didn't like the look of this tree one bit and so we decided to abseil around the 10m drop into the creek from this point. We started then an extremely pleasant stroll downstream in

the open canyon among coachwood trees and rather impressive sandstone overhang caves on our left hand side. Soon we were actually in the creek sliding down a few little slippery waterfalls and the walls were starting to close in as it became more and more stimulating and I reckoned an abseil couldn't be far round the corner. Soon climbing around the creek on the left I spotted a coachwood tree with a sling around it just before a HUGE drop in the height of the canyon, this indeed was the very impressive 23m first drop!. Carefully I set up the abseil with my strong and very heavy 11mm 50m of rope, then went down first to assure Alan it was ok. Indeed looking back at a 20m waterfall beautiful green mossy sides I knew we were in the exciting canyon RIGHT NOW! Once down into the very shallow pool Alan was excited as well as I'd been trying to take photo's of him descending, rope packed away it was onwards to another short drop of about 6m down a waterfall, then down a log and a nice little 2m slippery dip drop into a shallow pool that we both enjoyed (once we had figured the pool was just full of leaves).



First abseil into Galah. Geoff McDonnell

Here the canyon was getting 'magnificent' nice pools of water narrower sides and plenty of abseils so near to each other that you came off of one to see the slings awaiting the next one!. The next abseil was short only another 6m, but part way down Alan spotted another sling but decided to carry on down another 6m down a log into a pool, then after testing that the rope would pull down all this distance I followed down the abseil (separated by one big boulder), pulled down the rope into the pool and swam across to the sand on the other side. More nice walking came next in tight canyon walls before the fantastic final abseil. This starts from a log jammed in the creek and although only 6m is great because you cross a round deep pool and abseil off the edge down beside a waterfall and very slippery rock, then end up standing on the log which you can see as the 4th Edition Canyon books front cover! Alan made sure I descended first so that I could attempt to take a similar picture of Alan standing on the log as that picture in the Canyon book (taken by John Gray) after several shots I retrieved the rope and very soon after a short climb down into a deep wade pool we walked out of the canyon as it had ended!



The "interesting exit" climb out of Galah. Geoff McDonnell

Well the canyon had ended but we had a 'very interesting' exit ahead of us! Martin Pfeil had warned us of an 'interesting exit' and indeed Alan pushed on 100m following a path next to the cliff's to the right before stopping at the base of a 6m vertical cliff with just a handline hanging down from a tree! Alan didn't like the look of this at all! Great time for lunch I said and so with our stomach's full Alan decided he'd better try the climb now rather than face a slow 2 hour, 3km walk down Rocky Creek. Once up Alan hauled up my heavy pack full of the wet rope and I soon climbed up this sort of cliff face slot. This climb actually wasn't too bad, but if you fell you'd be in a lot of trouble. After this getting to the higher cliff line was 'pretty easy' going, nothing difficult at all to report - we sort of followed a rough track and soon we were on the canyon edge, retracing our canyon route via this high cliff edge. Very soon Alan spotted the 23m abseil drop and again pretty soon after that we saw the slippery moss waterfall we had crossed just before we had arrive at this first abseil.



Mid-rope rescue practice claims its next victim... David Connard

Knowing that it was only a short bit of time before we would be retracing our path in the canyon, we arrived at the base of the logs and the 10m drop we had come in by! Again Alan was most distressed at the dodgy climb prospect of walking up an old mossy log to get out of this canyon. So first we explored upstream and indeed found beautiful tree ferns nice canyon like sandstone overhangs, pools and upstream we were stopped by a 5m waterfall. Glad to have seen this upper bit of the canyon, Alan decided to 'go for it' and wisely chose the 3rd log option available to exit this canyon. Following him I too found it not too bad really and before we knew it not only were we at the base of the well worn path we had walked in on but soon up this path and at the start of the 3km road back to my car. Leaving at around 4.30pm, we were at my car around 5.15pm (after the 'boring' walk along the road). Alan mentioned the possibility of doing 'Twister Canyon' but he hadn't been carrying the very heavy rope I had and with tired shoulders I wanted a rest!.

So it came to be that after a great trip through Galah Canyon we ended up walking down the road from Deep Pass North to join the other SUSSlings, and 70 or so from a Castle Hill Adventists group at the Deep Pass campsite (Annalisa and Steve had gone home by this time). After a pleasant evening hearing all about the others dual trip through 'Twister' and 'Rocky Creek' return trip in wetsuits it was a QUALITY fire and an amazingly quiet night for sleep. The only apparent 'disturbance' coming from Daniel who, whilst fast asleep that night, grabbed hard on Joan Chan's leg and shouted "don't move dick-head!" at the top of his voice. He professed to having no memory of his actions, but implied that it was not an uncommon type of event!?! Apart from that it was quiet! Morning had broken and it was time for Martin to rescue Megan and vice-versa from a rope hanging from a nearby tree.

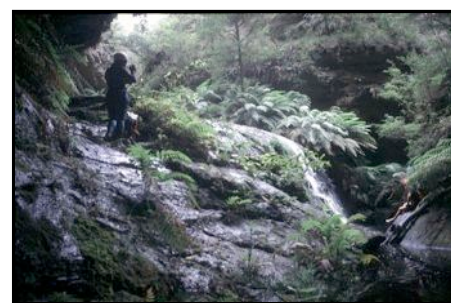
Meanwhile Alan took me via The Slot to the tagged sandstone cave nearby. I must admit I was extremely impressed both by this short 'slot canyon' and by a through trip in a reasonable cave with glow-worms and a stream passage and a remarkable exit! Soon Alan, Megan and I were walking up the hill to the cars leaving the others to play in Deep Pass Canyon, while we headed off to Stuntman. For quite a few months now Alan & Megan have had "Stuntman Canyon" on the SUSS trip list, however due to various circumstances the trip just never materialised; however today Alan had determination that it would! So we drove to the Mount Cameron car park in the Wollemi Wilderness area (convenient for the River Caves Canyon), walked back up the road some 700m and then headed off into the bush north-east until we found a creek (which Alan assured me was the start of Stuntman Canyon!).

Stuntman & River Caves Canyon

BY **GEOFF Mc DONNELL**

Participants: Geoff McDonnell, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke

Well initially I was definitely NOT enjoying it - there was plenty of fighting your way along the creek through thick ferns and the like, before eventually canyon sandstone walls came close and there was what looked like a 6m drop! However here Alan soon became Mr. Stuntman! Whilst I was rigging my 15m rope around a tree Alan soon took his glasses off (thus unable to see any danger ahead of him), slipped down the rope and into a plunge pool. Spurred on by Alan's confidence Megan slipped down into this pool whilst I did a Chicken Run and abseiled all the 'jump ins!'. Here this canyon was getting very wet with swims and plenty of 'excitement'.



Near the end of Stuntman Canyon. Geoff McDonnell

Next came another 5m 'jump in' followed by more walk through stream and finally a more imposing 7m waterfall that would be much harder to 'jump in' because of the angle of rock jutting out from this waterfall. However Alan and Megan soon abseiled the 7m and jumped in off rope-before (last down) I did much the same pulling the rope down just before I swam on. After another bend in the canyon and a couple of pictures at a stunning couple of waterfalls and deep pools, it was a walk out to the open sides and coachwood trees, and bashing a path through as we followed more open stream until we came to the junction (the end bit of River Caves Canyon). Stuntman is just that - if you know the pools are clear of debris, you could indeed jump all the pools without rope!

Megan didn't want to do another branch of **Budgery Creek**, so instead we enjoyed the marvellous grandness of the **River Caves Canyon**, taking lunch and photos within its Majesty. We met 2 other canyoneers walking through, and after about 300m we found the entrance track going back up the hill. Soon we were at the 'Natural Bridge' saddle and the completely destroyed road to Mount Cameron. A short walk back up the road going away from Mount Cameron, and we were back at the parked cars by 3pm.

Indeed it was a very pleasant weekend of canyoning under cloudy but mostly dryish skies, and every body seemed to enjoy whatever trips they did with SUSS. Early on Saturday morning I gathered quite a large bag full of various red/brown capped mushrooms in the Newnes Pine Forest (on the way to Deep Pass), however I'm very glad I didn't decide to eat any as at work on Monday a mycologist identified them as an Ammonite and of the 'special' poisonous type that legend has it "Vikings used to eat before going into Battle!". I asked why?



Exiting out River Caves the spectacular canyon. Geoff McDonnell



Squeezing through the sandstone cave at Deep Pass. David Connard

Well apparently this poison won't kill you but will FIRE YOU UP (briefly) before later overwhelming you with 'depression'. Presumably had I eaten them, I would have been like a raging bull for my canyon trip, but not too good afterwards, so beware of mushrooms in that pine forest - most are poisonous and shouldn't be eaten!

Deep Pass Slot, Cave and Canyon

BY DAVID CONNARD

Participants: Joan Chan, David Connard, Daniel Creech, Jenny Mee, Martin Pfeil

Deep Pass is a great fun place... there's loads to do around the campground there, and usually it is quiet and peaceful... apart from (as Geoff has mentioned) large groups of Adventists, and people sleep-yelling from their tents... I had brought along a Frisbee to play on the big grassy area, but there were literally about 40 tents in the way on this weekend.

The Slot is just that – a deep slot where one of the rock outcrops that surrounds the campsite has become separated from the ground behind it, leaving a spectacular slot, around 50m deep, and 1m wide. It can be entered from the top of the first boulder-pile you encounter as you walk along the track that crosses the creek to the east of the campsite. The Cave is a true sandstone cave – it is even tagged if you look closely at the entrance. It is further along the same track, where a streamway comes out of the rock wall on your left. It can be done as 50m or so long through-trip, complete with crawling, squeezing, and stepping into half-hidden puddles of water. And its' got glow-worms too...

The canyon is nearby, and can be used to return to the Deep Pass North carpark (when you don't have overnight packs like we did). Technically it is a dry canyon... although Daniel and Martin chose to get rather wet by stripping down to shorts and jumping in from the big waterfall. Thankfully today was much warmer than Saturday. There are several nice waterfalls in the canyon, a few climbs, and lots of lovely overhanging sandstone canyon walls. Most of the water can be avoided if you have a good grip on the rock... and can manage keep that grip!

There are several points in the canyon where logs have been placed across deep pools that would be very difficult to otherwise avoid. There is one such log right at the end of the canyon, carefully poised above a deep and very wet pool and small waterfall. When we got there this time, this log had been broken in half and replaced as best as possible given it was now half its former size... Someone had obviously taken an unexpected dip at this point... Needless to say, I took a few photos of people crossing it, in case the remaining half was also ready to give way – but unfortunately this didn't occur.



We returned to the campsite for a late lunch, finished packing up, and were back up at our cars by around 4pm.

Daniel crossing the now broken log at the end of Deep Pass canyon. David Connard

CLAUSTRAL CANYON BY NIGHT

FEBRUARY 9TH, 19:30HOURS - FEBURARY 10 2 AM.
BY MEGAN PRYKE

Participants: Alan Pryke, Lindsay Kearney, Martin Pfeil, Megan Pryke, Scott Hall

Canyoning at night has some advantages, not the mention that it's sort of like caving but outdoors! A bunch of five SUSSlings headed from the car park at 7:30 pm for a 6.5 hour round trip. Here's my report!

Darkness surrounded us as we dropped into the canyon, the humidity was high. Glowworms are best just below the three abseils. As we gazed upwards the overhangs where the glowworms live, a different light source encouraged us to keep moving. Distant sheet lightning indicated that there was some weather instability about. We continued, our prior daytime knowledge of the canyon assisted in locating the tricky climbs, as the worn way through was not easy to see. At the last pool I requested all to turn out their lights to gaze at the glowworms as we swam across. Alan seized the opportunity to set up an ambush. Some light rain fell on the walk out, it was quite warm and the humidity created a fog that significantly increased the spookiness factor. It was well and truly wet and raining the next day when the first group arrived to do Claustral at 6:30 a.m. The enthusiasm to do something else had waned so we headed back to town.

BUNGONIA BITS

BY ANNALISA CONTOS

OCTOBER 28TH

Participants: Annalisa Contos, Steve Contos, Greg Holmes, Rachel, Madeline Florin, Nick, Simon Goddard, Megan Pryke

Proving the popularity of the one day trip, eight people turned up for a day at Bungonia, most of whom weren't lured by the original destination of two days at Wee Jasper.

After some car shuffling at the Contos's we were on our way to Bungonia. We decided to do Blowfly, a sporty cave suitable for everyone. While Megan & Steve rigged the exit, the rest of us headed down the B51 Entrance. Meeting up again at the bottom of the pitch we started off through the cave. Greg pointed out the way to the addytum - but we hadn't brought the rope!

Through the Dragons Teeth we went - confirming that no one was claustrophobic. Sounds behind us showed that Steve was following, but there was momentarily confusion while we located Megan, who had missed the way on and had climbed over the dead wallaby to continue down to the dig at the base of B16.

Reunited we proceeded through the remainder of the cave & up the two ladder pitches.

Exiting around 3 pm we headed to the look-down for lunch. There was a discussion about doing B4-5 after lunch but Simon was persuasive about heading home. We stopped off in Mittagong for a delicious Indian meal.

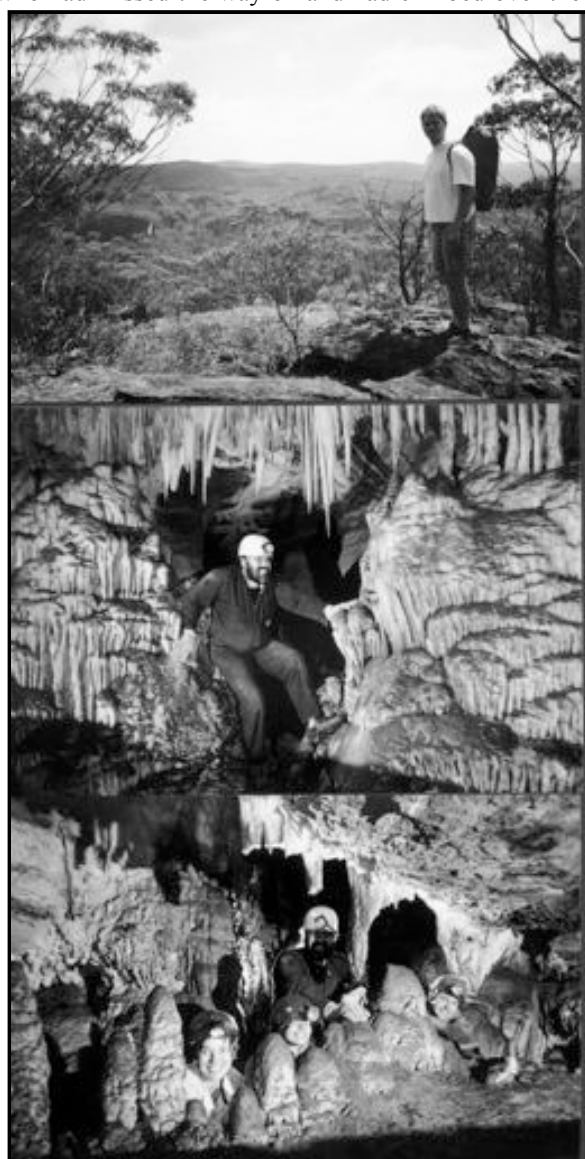
CHRISTMAS

Participants: Annalisa Contos, Steven Contos, Madeline Florin, David Connard, Jenny Mee, Kevin Moore

Held on the weekend that is traditionally the SUSS Christmas party at Jenolan, there were only a few souls who wanted to celebrate at Bungonia. Despite the low numbers, or perhaps because of them, it was a great trip with everyone able to achieve their objectives. This was Madeline's first SRT trip after having been "shown the ropes" at the Ledge the Thursday before. For her first SRT cave we visited Grill. Grill has the advantage that the two fixed ladder climbs can be rigged as pitches. The first pitch provides either two rebelay, one free hanging or a rebelay and a redirection. During the negotiation of the first pitch, the men's (boys?) under nineteen state softball team wandered through the cave, dolphins in hand. Showing a remarkable lack of concern for their heads unprotected by helmets, they stood directly under the pitch and watched Madeline descend.

We passed them and Madeline took the lead, taking us round in a nice loop, before we headed up the pitches and back to the surface. Kevin met us at the exit and we returned to the campground. We had rented the conference room next to the kitchen for a very reasonable rate. It is highly recommend to hire this room for each trip as it can be locked up. David and Jenny arrived with the food and we settled down to munch our way through our Christmas dinner. Kevin headed to his parents that evening while the rest of use bedded down to the drunken choral strains of the under 19 softballers.

The following day Jenny rigged Argyle with Dave's assistance while Steven, Madeline and I had a warm up through B4-5. After a quick lunch on the surface we joined Jenny and Dave down Argyle. Jenny had rigged three pitches by the time we arrived. Madeline headed down to the bottom, Steve made it down the second pitch and for the sake of time, I just did the first pitch. Slow and surely everyone headed back up, Jenny and Dave suffering some ill effects from the carbon dioxide. After cleaning up the conference room and a nice hot shower, we headed to Mittagong for yet another Indian dinner.



Annalisa Contos [Doesn't look like Bungonia to me...? – ed]

BROKEN BITS

*Megan & Alan's bit of the West Coast Trip, South Island of New Zealand, April 2001
this follows on from reports in previous Bulls*

BY MEGAN PRYKE, PHOTOS BY ALAN PRYKE



View from Avalanche Peak

coal for us. I pondered for a moment, then asked, "How do you light coal?" Mary's brain ticked over a second before popping out and presenting a stack of kindling. So we headed off to the mountains, with lots of useful instructions.

Arthur's Pass has changed since I rode my pushbike up in 1994. The mad one-way corners have gone and the incredibly steep bit, where I had constantly checked that my gears were at the lowest possible setting, have been bypassed by a large concrete viaduct. There are also snow tunnels. Some old road remnants are used for a lookout where you can see the concrete viaduct stretching over a large steep scree field that the old road obviously avoided.

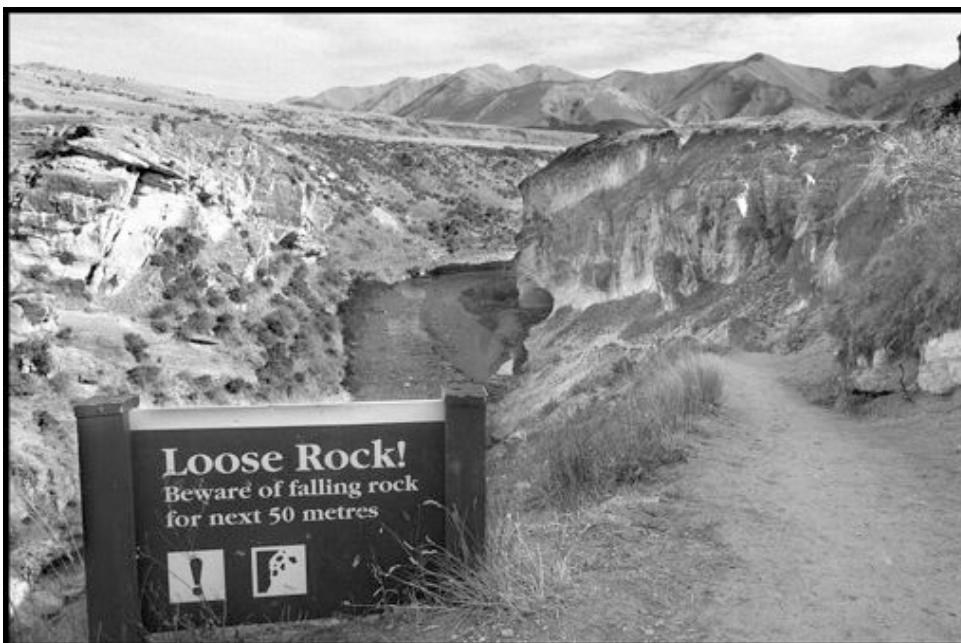
We arrived at hut just in time for an early lunch. Now, time to recall those instructions. Which order do we turn the water valves on, hmmm, was it E, H, D, G, A or one of many unlabelled ones? We studied the diagnostic chart. This pipe goes to the hot-water tank, this one to the mains, but in what order do we turn the taps on? How do we turn on the electricity mains, get the hot water

Chris and Simon were heading out of town to tackle Fox Glacier. This gave Alan and I the chance to enjoy our Punakaiki holiday house for an extra day on our own. We went for a walk after being dropped off by Chris. Later in the day we headed down the Truman Track to inspect some sandstone amphitheatre shaped sea caves.

The group had split but the adventure had certainly not run out. Alan and I arranged with Mary to stay at the West Coast Mountaineering Club Hut at Arthur's Pass. We dropped by at Mary's home to pick up our hand drawn, personalised map of how to get there. Mary was extremely thoughtful. "Oh, you'll need some coal for the stove", and promptly headed out the back to stuff a sack of

hot, oh and yes whom of the two of us shall we appoint as fire warden? Thank goodness there were instructions on the back of one of the kitchen cupboard doors, simple instructions I could follow, like turn on tap D, wait a couple of minutes for the water noises, then turn on this valve and that on and turn off another et cetera! We settled into the hut before going on an energetic walk.

We did the walk Scott's track to Avalanche Peak and returned to the township via Avalanche Peak track. It's a classic day walk, potentially dangerous if the weather turns sour. A full day is recommended, not an afternoon power walk like Alan and I had to do. The views from the top were not clear but better than that. Clouds came in from the west, changing shape and form, revealing



A sure sign of caves in the area

and concealing parts of mountains, swirling around and below us. However, we could not spend too much time at the top to watch this movie show, though it was far superior to any 70mm large screen event! We high tailed down the steeper Avalanche Track. This runs alongside Avalanche Creek for some of the way down. The water flowing down Avalanche Creek cascades turbulently and drops down waterfalls - the track running along side it is certainly not a tame track. I walked ahead of Alan who often queried if I was actually on track when he found me suddenly a few metres directly below him.

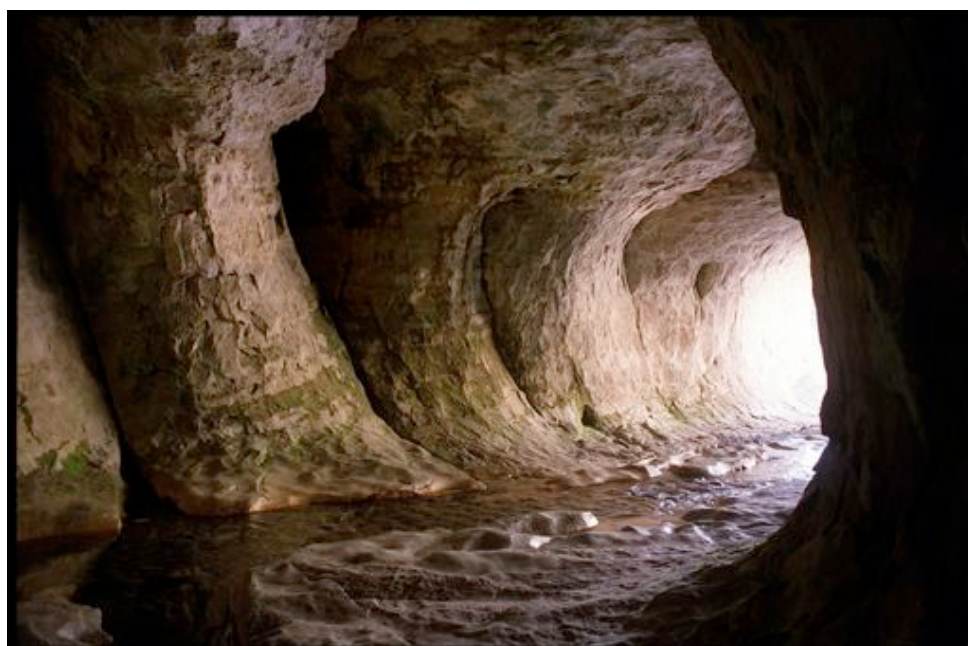


The efflux entrance, or exit if you prefer – Broken River Cave

Back at the hut we discovered the joys of being in a true mountain retreat. We fed the meter box some coins for electricity to power the lights and appliances. Then we discovered that the art of lighting coal does not come naturally. Mary had generously supplied really good, slow burning coal. Great for keeping you warm for a long time but not so easy to light. The kindling was all too soon burnt out, and the coal lumps were still just sullen, cold black rocks. I left Alan to coal lighting duties hoping that the theory of males being more inclined to pyromania had a grain of truth. I attended to the cooking as the lounge filled with smoke. A buzzing sound was suddenly heard and before we could identify the source there was a click. Darkness enshrouded us. No moon, stars, street light gloom or glowing ember to help us. The stove drew more power than lights, and we had not put aside enough meter box food. Not only that, we had no torch handy. After groping around in the dark, with our partially cooked dinner going cold, we eventually located some more coins and somehow managed to get them into the coin slot and turn the dial. A lack of coins sent us to bed early, though we managed a hot shower and with our caving lights to read Hamish's account of his canyoning trip down Avalanche Creek. I think thick wetsuits are required for this, brrr....

The next morning we followed the departing instructions, turning off all the valves in a different order to make sure pipes were drained, putting ashes away and putting salt in the toilet to prevent the water from freezing in the cistern - something that this girl from the wide brown warm land had never heard of. At the Arthur's Pass visitors centre we gathered some very useful information on Cave Stream. I had popped by there in 1994 so I knew it was on the way (like 50m off the road!). And who do you think was at the counter of the Arthur's Pass visitor's centre, well ex-Hills Speleological Club caver Graeme Kates!

Now, in 1994 when I passed by Cave Stream, I would not have said, "Hey those rocks are limestone!" This time I returned as a caver, the grey rocky terrain actually signalled the possibility of caves. The very unobtrusive roadside sign saying "Cave Stream" was just another clue. The cave's name is Broken River Cave, Cave Stream is the name of the reserve. But we did not need the name 'cave stream' to think caves, a name like broken river suggested sub-terrain waterways to us! The car park is about 40km from Arthur's Pass heading towards Christchurch.



Looking out to the resurgence entrance – Broken River Cave

The cave has three hundred and sixty metres of passage, I assume that this is not just the main passage only but includes some side passages. From the outside you can see the very obvious dry creek bed that at one



Water sculptured passage – Broken River Cave

stage looped around the hillside, until the water found a shorter route. From the car park, the resurgence is to the left and the resurgence to the right.

A couple of European tourists had just finished reading the Department of Conservation information sign and were taking off for the downstream entrance when as we parked. We then had a read for ourselves. “Take a warm hat and warm clothes and shorts and thermal clothing if you have it, a torch each, expect to get wet up to the thighs, have a change of clothes to get into later”, or something to that effect. No formal permits, no automatic lighting, here’s a wild cave, in an alpine area with cold water, but it’s fun, so go have a look and experience caving!

The recommended route is to enter from downstream, it gets the committing part done with first. The downstream resurgence has a round large passage with large scalloping in the rock. The other tourists, prepared in shorts, had not entered into the realms of wet feet and darkness as yet. They were contemplating the deeper water, trying to peer around the mysterious corner, still in the light zone where the chilled air numbed their sense of adventure. Alan and I arrived, donned in our wetsuits, booties, dairy boots, caving helmets, torches and backup torches and Alan’s waterproof camera box and tripod. I think the sight of our preparedness was the final straw. They felt inadequately prepared and decided that they would stick to dry feet adventure, though watched us wistfully as we proved that the water was in fact thigh deep, Alan making not-too-comforting noises as water contacted the higher regions of his body, confirming their apparent sensible decision. But they missed out on experiencing this great water-washed, stream-way cave.

We inspected most of the side passages, which occasionally looped back to the main river passage though usually at a higher level. One of them had a tape hidden at the top that enabled us to return to the stream passage, I assume that it is hidden so those who head take the stream passage only don’t get tempted to go off track. The limestone walls are a light colour, so this easy access cave is a great spot for some stream-way cave shots! Alan set to work with camera and tripod as I spied out for potentially better shots, inspecting small side passages. The exit has some permanent stainless steel rungs to help climbing out of the cave and a chain to help you crawl along a ledge.

Back at the car we relaxed, ate lunch and spent some time drying off. We wondered when Chris and Simon would be passing by, as surely they would be tempted by a sign saying ‘Cave Stream’. However, they had headed straight through to Christchurch for some retail therapy. We met up with the shopping lads in a Christchurch holiday park, thus ends my account of the Pryke only NZ adventures.

As is the case on all trips, everyone contributes. Though usually the trip leader has the most stresses and interest in making it all work. So thanks to all, and especially to Chris for a great trip.

CAVES OF THE WEST COAST, SOUTH ISLAND, NEW ZEALAND

BY CHRIS NORTON, PHOTOS BY ALAN PRYKE

Introduction

The West Coast of New Zealand's South Island provides a wide variety of caves of low to moderate difficulty, and two weeks in the area will provide you with time to see some of the best. The scenery is spectacular too - large limestone bluffs tower above the creeks and rivers which run down to a ragged rocky coastline often cloaked in a misty haze. Around 2.5 metres of rain each year ensures the hills are covered in extremely lush and thick scrub which is semi-tropical in appearance. Add in reasonable accommodation, friendly natives and one of the few currencies of a developed country valued less than the AU\$ to make this a highly attractive destination.

This article focuses on three major caving districts - Oparara, Charlestown and Punakaiki. These areas can all be found at the northern end of the West Coast. Best airport to fly to is probably Christchurch, mainly because of all the facilities available upon arrival; although Nelson is slightly closer. Cheap car hire at Christchurch (or anywhere in NZ) can be tracked down via the internet on <http://www.travelplanner.co.nz>. We hired from AAA Car Rentals, second on the list but still one of the cheapest. For assistance obtaining carbide in Christchurch, contact Canterbury Caving Group. President during our time there was Steve Pawson, ph (03) 348 7366 (h), pawson@tui.lincoln.ac.nz. Website: http://www.geocities.com/ccg_nz (NOTE: When calling NZ numbers from Australia, phone 0011 64 + number, omitting the '0' in front of the area code.)

Due to all the rain, it is wise to seek accommodation at a motor camp rather than pitching tents if at all possible. Motor camps have communal cooking facilities, showers and laundries and you will be able to lock your gear in your rooms while away at the caves. At around NZ\$15 per night per person, they are reasonably priced.

Normally these sorts of articles contain detailed descriptions of how to find the caves referred to. Out of deference to the wishes of local cavers, some locations will not be described in detail here. However, the author would be happy to share the secrets with you - or even better, talk to the extremely friendly locals. There is a dearth of cavers on the West Coast and they are often only too happy to find someone to cave with! **Kerry Silverwood** (father of Neil, who has put in guest appearances on several SUSS trips) claims to be getting 'past it' but will leave you puffing and panting in his wake. He is retired and lives at 12 Banbury St, Waimangaroa (just north of Westport) - ph 03 789 9750. **Hamish McLauchlan** is a member of Poutini Potholers, a recently formed West Coast Caving Club, and is a very active caver along with his partner **Kim Thomas**. They are good contacts for caves around Punakaiki, and can be found at 11 Seddon St Ruanunga, ph 03 762 7844 (h), hmclauchlan@doc.govt.nz. **Mary Traves**, also of Poutini Potholers, has dedicated an enormous amount of time and effort to prospecting around Point Elizabeth and has been responsible for the discovery and mapping of most of Te Ana Puta. She also co-ordinates cave search and rescue on the West Coast. She lives at 31 Pitt St, Ruanunga ph (03) 762 7414, maryt.ruanunga@xtra.co.nz.



Oparara Arch

At around 10-12°C, the caves in this area are warm for NZ, although still cooler than what most NSW cavers are used to. Remember also that while moving through the caves you will keep quite warm, but cool down rapidly if sitting still for long periods. Due to the high rainfall, flood entrapment is a major risk in many caves so survival gear is essential. You are also likely to get fairly wet in some caves. Most of the caves are horizontal with no SRT gear required, though there are a couple of worthwhile trips that can be done with ropes including the unmissable Fox River Cave. Maps of many of the caves have been printed in NZSS Bulls (available in the library), but are also available on the CD-ROM published by NZSS and kept in the SUSS library. For any caves which you intend to do yourselves, copies of these maps are pretty much essential.

A final word of warning - on the West Coast, services are rare. The only two major towns with supermarkets in the area described are Westport and Greymouth. You are recommended to do major shopping before leaving Christchurch and use these for perishables only. Banks are few and far between, as are petrol stations - there is no petrol in the 90km between Westport and Ruanunga.

OPARARA REGION

The Oparara region lies near Karamea, which is pretty much at the end of the road heading north from Westport, and around 6hrs drive from Christchurch via Lewis Pass. The Heaphy Track starts just north of here, heading up to Collingwood at the far north of the island. Accommodation is available at the Last Resort (03) 782 6617, <http://www.lastresort.co.nz> for \$20/night (fairly swish place), or at the cheaper and more basic Karamea Holiday Park out of town on the south side of the river (kitchen available but BYO cooking utensils) (03) 782 6758, <http://www.holidayparks.co.nz/karamea>

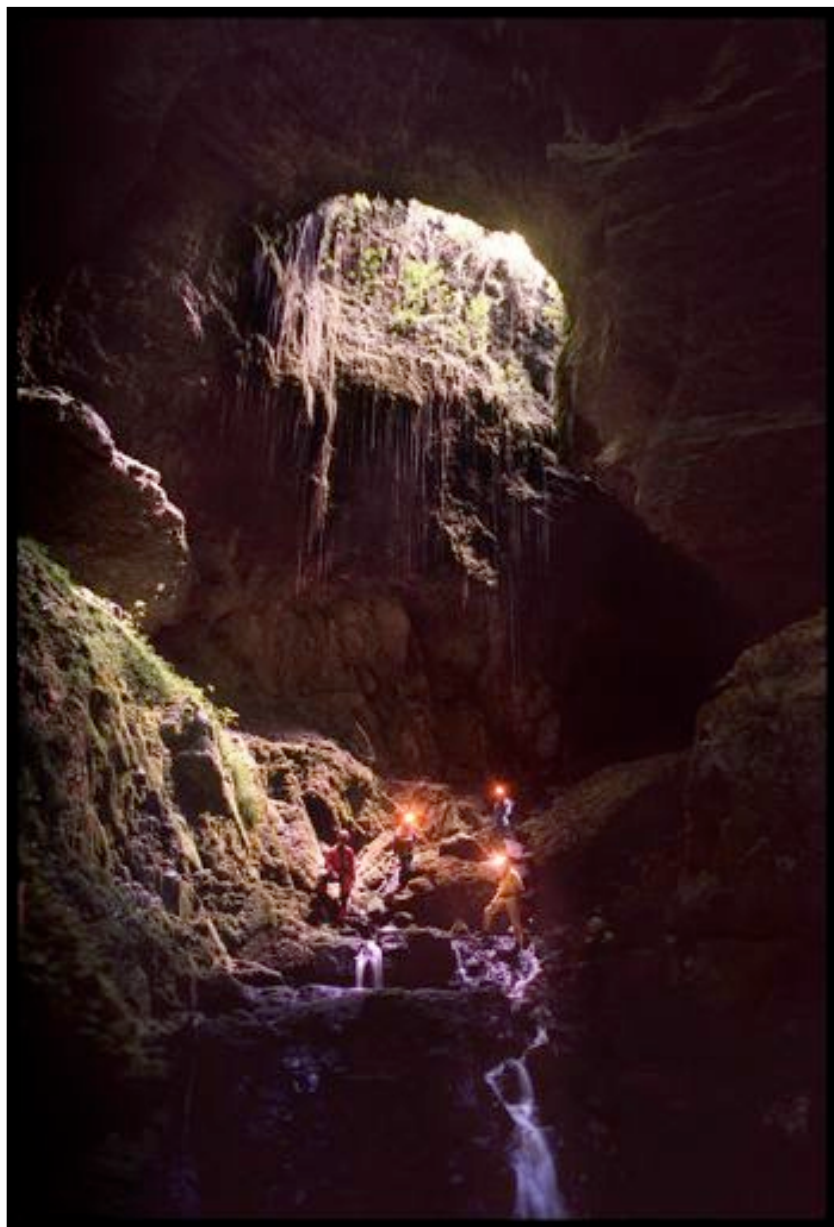
The main cave here is Honeycomb Hill Cave, but there are a number of smaller caves in the vicinity which we did not get a chance to visit (eg Nautilus, Star Draft, Crazy Paving). If you leave yourself 2-3 days here you should be able to see everything worth

seeing, including Honeycomb, Oparara and Moria Gate arches and any small caves recommended by the locals. A topo of Karamea, showing no end of dolines and vanishing streams, is available in the SUSS Library.

If you have a bit more time to spare, chat to Kerry Silverwood about Megamania. About a day's walk in, most people use helicopters to get their gear up to this colossal recent discovery north of Karamea. With about 12km of passage (from memory), there's heaps to do, and probably heaps more to find.

Honeycomb Hill Cave

With a surveyed length of almost 14km, and over 70 entrances, it is amazing to think that Honeycomb was only discovered in the mid-70s. The cave provides an extraordinary range of caving experiences, from the open Honeyflow Stream to the confined Enduro Stream, the mazelike eastern section and the extraordinary "D" Passage and Canyon. The cave contains a very important fossil record of New Zealand's past, including many bones of the Moa and Haast Eagle, and for that reason access is very tightly controlled by the Department of Conservation (DoC). Officially, parties must number six with all members being members of the New Zealand Speleological Society (NZSS); however, they permitted our party to visit so long as we were all ASF members and were led by an NZSS guide. DoC needs written proof of your ASF membership, and needs you to nominate your guide and your precise route through the cave. They also tell us that access conditions are currently under review and if anything access will get more difficult. Permits are formally administered through the Karamea Field Office - contact Mal Hansen on (03) 782 6852, fax (03) 782 6639, mhansen@doc.govt.nz. It took us 6 weeks to get a permit so plan in advance! We also found the office



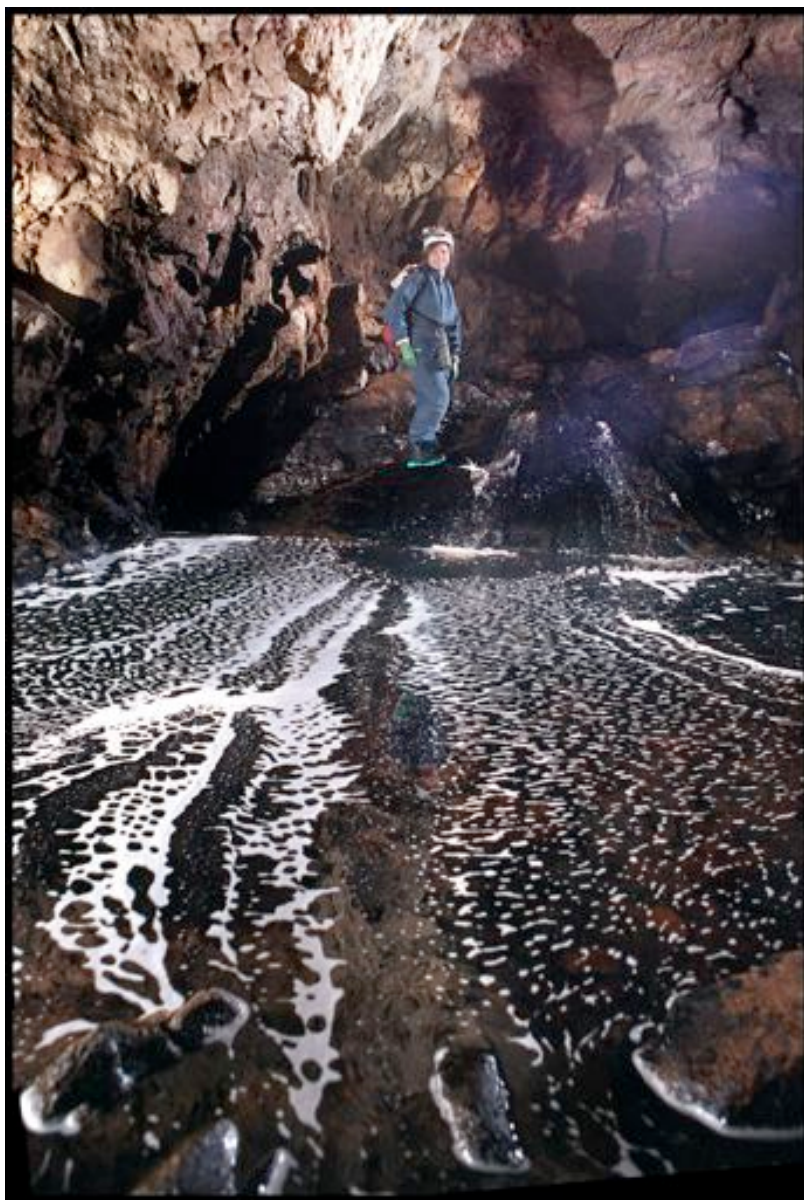
Daylight Hole, Honeycomb Hill Cave

was more usually attended in the early morning or late afternoon, and was unattended for long periods. If you are having trouble contact the Westport Office (see comments on Charlestown below). The Last Resort leads tours that pass from the “L” Entrance to the “A” Entrance, a very short distance - don’t waste your money.

Access: Drive north of Karamea for about 9km to a turnoff on the right marked with a sign to the Oparara Arches. A rough dirt road travels for around 14km along a creek before climbing over a ridge and down the other side to the parking lot for Oparara and Moria Gate arches. Another 2km along the road, it ends at a parking area where signs point to ‘Caves’. This is not the way to Honeycomb Hill, which is in fact along the track beyond a locked gate. Large signs warn of horrendous penalties for passing this point without a permit. The well-built track will take you to the “A” and “L” Entrances. After that, follow your guide.

Description: Your local guide will make sure you have a good trip and don’t get lost. This is merely an idea of what to expect.

The route we followed first went up the Honeyflow Stream, where we didn’t even get our feet wet. The streamway passage is occasionally interrupted by large daylight holes above, so that the passage opens out into lush green gardens before plunging into darkness once more. The stream enters the cave at the spectacular “T” entrance. About 100m north of here, it is possible to re-enter the cave and follow the Enduro Stream, which is low and crawly for about 150m before opening into walkthrough passage. The ‘Petals’ area is off to the left, which is awkward to climb into and only 2 of us attempted it; the high-level breakdown gave us the willies and so we didn’t find the spectacular formations that are reputed to live there. Back into Enduro, about 400m of narrow streamway is navigated with wading up to your knees before climbing out on the right into a mazelike section of upper levels that will bring you out into “D” Canyon, a series of intersecting grikes. “D” Canyon disappears underground into “D” Passage, an enormous tunnel with beautifully sculpted streamcutting in the roof. A maze of passages on the right will, if followed correctly, take you to the “M” Entrance, where a scenic balcony overlooks the Oparara River and from where it is a short walk downstream to Honeycomb Hill Arch.



Honeyflow Stream, Honeycomb Hill Cave

CHARLESTOWN REGION

The Nile and Four Mile Rivers near Charlestown are the home to a number of worthwhile caves. So long as you don’t mind sharing some of them with the adventure tours that run out of the Charlestown Pub, three or so days in Charlestown could be spent very happily. Charlestown is also close enough to Punakaiki to make it a viable base for trips to the caves in that region as well.

The Charlestown Motor Camp, ph (03) 789 6773 costs around \$15/person/night. Although they say rooms sleep 4, this translates to 2 cavers plus their gear. They have a well equipped kitchen, but most facilities and the front gate are locked between 10pm and 7am so don’t come back too late in the evening.

Permits for Metro Cave are available from the Buller Area Office of DoC in Russell St, Westport Ph (03) 788 8008, fax (03) 788 8009 - talk to Martin Abel or Phil Mohi. The area is shown in adequate detail on the Paparoa Park Map (1:50,000) in the SUSS library.



Hall of the Refugees, The Metro

The Metro (aka Ananui Cave)

The Metro is an active streamway cave with dry upper levels, reputedly around 8km long. Much of the cave consists of spectacular linked phreatic tubes, although there are some dry breakdown areas as well. About half of the cave is visited by adventure tour groups so be prepared to meet people every so often. If you bring wetsuits and inner tubes you can have great fun copying the adventure groups by rafting out the resurgence and down the Nile River. You will need a permit and key from DoC; a nominal requirement is that 2 members of the group must be NZSS members but ASF membership will suffice. Unfortunately there does not seem to be a copy of the map of this cave on the NZSS CD, but DoC should be able to give you a copy.

Access: The location of the Metro is no secret; it is marked on the Paparoa Park Map. Drive down the Nile River Road that runs west from Charlestown (the road the motor camp is in). The road ends at a large parking spot beside the river, where a walking track leads off through the forest. At time of writing, the adventure tour operator was building a 'tramway' through the forest to a point near the cave entrance, and the walking track crossed back and forth over the tramway route. Eventually you reach a clearing where the adventure tour groups get changed, and the track soon afterwards meets a suspension bridge over the river. The adventure company leaves their inner tubes piled up here. Cross the bridge and continue upstream a little further until the track climbs steeply uphill to the main entrance, down Whiteline Passage, where the gate is installed.

Description: Much of the cave is very clearly trackmarked for the use of the adventure tours, which detracts a little from the experience but makes the main section of the cave very easy

to navigate. Make sure you get a copy of the map, though, if you want to see other parts of the cave. The first thing to do is get rid of your tubes and wetsuits - along Conference Walk to join Overflow Passage down a small fixed ladder, then through Double Passage and Pigalle to the Main Stream Passage where you can leave your gear. Now it's time for some touring.

Back into Double Passage to look at the northern end of Hall of the Refugees (passage through the Hall is prohibited due to sensitive stals), then up Scalloped Passage and along the Dog Walk to the spectacular main entrance. This section is all trackmarked. Although the stream overflows into this entrance in flood, it is actually captured a fair way upstream. Poke around the northeast corner through the stream course, where there are lots of glowworms, until you get back down to your wetsuits again. Back up to the main entrance, wander out and along a rough track leading west to the Bone Entrance. Eureka Hall contains quite a lot of bones, as does the Sticky Trap Passage off to the side.

Back through Eureka Hall to Pollen Passage, which contains many sensitive sediment banks with old pollen deposits (keep to the track to avoid damaging them). Once out the Pollen Exit, you can dive straight back into the Kakapo Entrance, which funnels down through a small hole into Kakapo Hall. The route after Kakapo Hall is not entirely obvious, leading through a long series of crawly passages to Chamonix Hall. There are some very pretty formations in the side tunnel that runs off to the east halfway between the two halls.

From Chamonix Hall, the passage is more walk-through once more, and you can return without too much difficulty to the marked tourist track in the vicinity of the Conference Chamber. Back down Conference Walk and into the southern sections of the cave including the remarkable Split Level Passage and the beautiful phreatic tubes leading off to the north from here. At the connection with Overflow Passage the route spirals over boulders to emerge at the Dragons Teeth, a long row of pointy stalactites and

stalagmites. We did not visit the southern rockfall due to lack of time. Back up through Overflow Passage to look at the southern end of the Hall of the Refugees before collecting your tubes, donning wetsuits and wandering down the Main Stream Passage.

The only section guaranteed to be tubeable is the Lake area at the far end of the cave, but you should get about 200m of tubing in before being spat out the resurgence into the Nile. You can continue tubing down most of the Nile (walking around shallow bits) until you reach the suspension bridge again.

Hollywood

Hollywood is a sporty and complex little cave, and a map is pretty much essential for finding your way around its intricate network of narrow streamways and interconnecting crawlways. Its name comes from the profuse decoration in the upper level of the first streamway. The round trip below takes most parties about 3-4 hours.

Access: Off the Four Mile Road, which runs west from the main road about 4km south of Charlestown (unmarked). Park in a carpark at the far northern end of the oxbow-like loop to the north (see parkmap). Locals can give you precise directions on how to navigate the maze of tracks in this area.

Description: The entrance funnels steeply down loose rocks, one of which is held up with a wire trace. At the end of the funnel, drop down through some short holes into a rift passage, and proceed east. The floor soon drops away and it is necessary to drop down a nasty chimney to a more appropriate level - some may find a handline of 8m or so of assistance here. Proceed along the narrow rift midway up, at one point traversing over the top of a large well. A short distance past the well, you can go either up or down. Both ways 'go', but up is the preferred route if you want to avoid the awkward 'torpedo tube'. The upper route leads via a crawlway to an upper level of decorated ledges above Streamway One.

The streamways are generally narrow, although without excessive amounts of water and you will only get your feet wet. The normal 'round trip' is along the upper levels of Streamway One to Pushing Shit Uphill, then upstream along Streamway Two to the Rat Race connection to Streamway Three. Proceed downstream and take the route running north back to Streamway Two, then climb out of here up into Sacrilege Passage and return to Streamway One. Remember to climb back into the upper levels again when exiting.



Tubing out the resurgence, The Metro



Upper levels, Streamway One, Hollywood

Te Tahi

Another one to share with the adventure groups, Te Tahi ('The One') can be done as a through trip, either wet or dry according to your taste, involving an abseil down the impressive Hi Hi shaft. Well worth the effort is the trip to see the skeleton of a small whale in what looks like an impossible position in a remarkable side passage. You should check at the pub to find out what time adventure groups are due in the cave so that you don't clash. The 'sporty' trip can be done by a fast party in under 3 hours. If you are quick about things and don't dawdle, you could do this cave after Hollywood in one long day.

Access: Along the Four Mile Road to the southernmost point of the road before it turns north towards the oxbow-like loop where the Hollywood carpark is. There is a small clearing on the side of the road where 2 cars can be parked. A track leads steeply down through the bush to the lip of the Hi Hi shaft. The track is well maintained with steps due to the adventure groups that visit here.

Description: A 40m rope is recommended for the entrance pitch if rigged from the tree on the side of the shaft - you may need a longer rope if rigging from the very top of the shaft. If you are willing to take a risk, leave your SRT gear in a pack tied to the bottom of the rope ready to be pulled up from above (but keep one set with you for when someone needs to abseil down when the pack gets caught...). The route is along a tall rift - keep on top of the muddy rocks rather than down at stream level. Down a short drop rigged with a fixed ladder, then proceed along until you intersect the stream. The adventure tours exit the cave by going upstream at this point, but even if you want to go this route, make sure you go downstream to see the rest of the cave.

Don't follow the water immediately downstream but along a high bypass on the left, which rejoins the stream by way of a 3m climb down (awkward). The next section of vadose streamway is very pleasant, with some formation on the roof. After 200m or so, the passage becomes diagonal in shape, sloping right to left - keep high on the mud banks on the wall on the right. These ultimately lead into the rockpile of the Smoko Room, where the route on (down over rocks to the left, then back underneath the room to the right) can be difficult to find as the cave changes from its predominantly east-west trend to north-south. After the Smoko Room, the passage becomes low through the fun Rat Run, about 70m of tubes approx 80cm-1m high with puddles in the floor.

The turnoff to the Whale Passage is hard to find. If you come to a climb up a rope handline, you have gone about 15m too far. Backtrack and look for a narrow passage leading off to the south, shortly before you can stand up, initially through tight flattener. The passage then turns into a narrow serpentinous rift and it is necessary to chimney above a dropoff down to some sumps before entering the Whale Passage proper. This consists of 100m of tall rift passage that is so narrow you must proceed sideways with only 2 or 3 places wide enough to rotate your body. Skipping down this passage rapidly is a very surreal experience. Don't miss the whale, which is at about thigh level at one of the wider sections of passage. A backbone and large ribcage are evident, and the passage actually cuts through the skeleton which is embedded deep in the rock.

Upon returning to the main passage you have two options. Continuing up the handline climb will soon bring you out at the Ha Ha exit near the Nile River. You can figure out the way back to the cars through the nasty scrub (best idea - find the road, and fast). Alternatively, if you don't mind getting damp, backtrack to where you first joined the stream and go out the sporty way. Go upstream, climbing up a few waterfalls, until you reach the nasty looking Hickford's Hole. At this point, the stream switchbacks back and forth as it passes through squeezes, guaranteeing a complete soaking. More crawling in the streamway ensues for a while, until you can climb up through a hole on the left hand side into a large walk-through passage. Turn left, and in the upper left hand corner climb up a serpentinous rift ('the Worm') into another large chamber with a daylight hole. The actual exit is at the far end of the cave, and a walk through the puna palms skirting the doline will bring you to the road about 30m from your car.

Other caves

Other caves in this vicinity not visited by the writer include the Hole in the Wall Arch (photos look specky - just to the north of Hollywood, and discernable on the map although not labelled); Golf Course (a streamway cave with lots of holes in the stream) and Name Later.

FOX RIVER (NTH OF PUNAKAIKI)

Situated near the almost non-existent township of Tiomoana, Fox River contains two of the 'must see' caves of the West Coast, Babylon and Fox River Cave. Punakaiki (approx 10km south) is the nearest town of any significance. Unfortunately, cars must be parked by the side of the road and it is a 1hr walk to the caves.

Fox River Cave

An absolute must, although also the most technically difficult cave of those described here. The travails of this cave mean that, despite being known for some time, it was only comparatively recently that it was properly explored. After an irritating bout of SRT and bolt climbing to rig four pitches around the entrance, you end up at pretty much the same level you started off on. Only difference is, you are now in a passage filled with a raging river. Bring a full-length wetsuit for this one as hypothermia is a real risk - the water is truly cold. This cave should not be entered after heavy rain or if rain is forecast - better yet, wait until you have

had a week of dry weather if you can before attempting this cave. You are wading or swimming for most of the way. Inner tubes can be brought but will only be used intermittently and are not really essential. The awkward rigging means the cave will take you all day.

A word of warning: some of the bolts in Fox River Cave have been poorly placed, others are decaying and their safety is dubious. At time of writing Hamish McLauchlan had asked DoC for permission to rebolt the cave; permission could be a long time coming. Check with the locals or DoC as to the updated story. The bolts are all climbing bolts, so bolt plates rather than the conventional Petzl hangers are necessary. Etriers are highly recommended for both climbs.

Access: Easy. A tourist track leads right to the entrance from the road (approx 1hr walk).

Description: When you get to the entrance, forget the DoC markers attempting to lead you into the insignificant Upper Cave, and instead take off past the danger signs into the Lower Cave. Walk along the large rockpile-filled passage for a while, climbing over rocks until you reach a deep rift cutting across the passage. First person will have to step courageously across the rift into a small notch on the other side, then climb up and secure a long (8m or so) tape around a boulder and down the wall for others to climb up in relative safety.

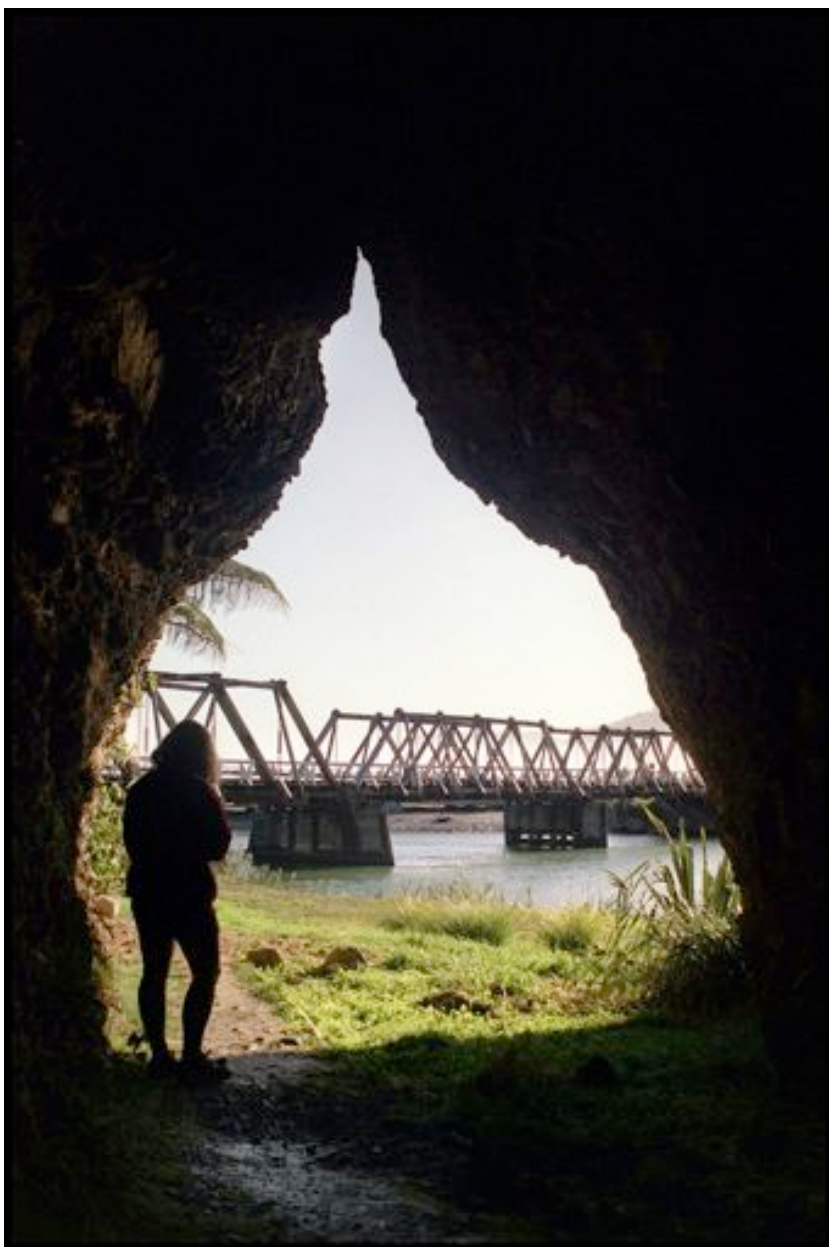
Next obstacle is two big rifts cutting across the passage. Some fiddly SRT and climbing is required, and a 50m rope should (just) be sufficient for everything. First, rig off the huge boulder and rebelay to the bolts just over the lip (rope protector on the lip is a good idea). Descend the first rift, and climb up the other side (it is preferable to climb up using the bolts on the wall; the fixed rope left here is of unknown provenance and safety).

The bolts you tie off to up the top are also dodgy as is the very rusty metalwork which does not seem to have changed since my first visit here circa 1994 - and they looked pretty bad back then.

Some nifty moves are now required. Abseil down to the small ledge about 3m below, protect the rope at the lip of this ledge, and abseil down into the next rift. Whatever you do, do not be seduced by the crashing waterfall to your right to abseil all the way down the rift. Swinging over onto the large wedged rock to your right. Climb up here to a big round basin (the Pudding Basin). From here, a very awkward bolt climb leads across and up onto a ledge. Tie off the rope at the top of the climb. Subsequent people do not need to climb up to the Pudding Basin, but just land on the rock part way across the rift and change over to ascent. When returning, loop a sacrificial sling around a blade of rock on the far side of the ledge and abseil down double-roped. If the rope won't reach doubled, stretch it across the rift and abseil down the tail, then get someone at the top of the rift to pull the rope down and feed it to you.

Once this is accomplished the rest of the cave is straightforward, if sporty. Stumble, swim, wade, splash your way upstream. Curiously, the river spends most of its time defying the east/west bedding and punches its way in a roughly northerly direction. As a result, a lot of big sharp limestone blades protrude from (or lurk just under) the water. There are some fun small waterfalls to climb (and jump down, cautiously, on the way back), and eventually a delightful 3m waterfall. Don't worry if you slip off it, the water beneath is reasonably deep (though jumping is not advised here). Soon afterwards, the passage becomes pretty enormous, and the river runs over cobblestones at only ankle depth. The main river emerges from a rockpile choked passage; other large passages lead off for some distance but all end in rockfall.

Note: A subsequent visitor has noted that there is now a sign in Fox River Cave advising that the fixed bolts are unsafe.



Bridge over Fox River



Formations in Babylon

Babylon

The entrance to Babylon was first sighted by cavers prospecting the opposite side of the valley. A difficult climb on a compass bearing straight down and up again through horrendous scrub brought them out precisely on target, where a large chunk of cliff has fallen through into a vast passage. Babylon's entrance series is a phenomenal sight and is one of the most awesome underground chambers you will see.

At time of writing, a gate had been placed at Ishtar Gate, although no padlock was in place and a proposed permit system was still being drafted. Contact DoC Buller office in Westport (see Charlestown description above) to find out what the permit requirements are; although the cave is likely to be administered through the Punakaiki office. Beware of floods here too - the Euphrates River near the entrance can rise up, making exit a dangerous proposition. If this happens, there is nothing to do but sit up on the Ziggurat and wait.

Access: A steep and initially indistinct track leads straight up the hill to the Babylon entrance, 200m ASL, from about 7/8 - 15/16 of the way along the Fox River track. Ask a local for how to find the track, which we found easier to notice going in reverse.

Description: The first section is BIG. The entrance passage continues for 550m at a height of about 50-75m and a width of 15-40m. After clambering down over lots of rocks, the Euphrates Plain is reached where the river gurgles over sandy banks. The Ziggurat is a rockpile some 80m high, with a dome in the roof 30m above the highest point, and the view back down the main passage is truly spectacular, particularly as it is flanked on the western wall by the beautiful formation of the Hanging Gardens. Keep to the marked routes down the entrance rockpile and while climbing the Ziggurat to minimise the risk of dislodging rocks.

Down the other side of the Ziggurat, the route passes through the Ishtar Gate and drops down a couple of climbs. The map becomes less clear at this point. Double back under the route and drop down once more into a long chamber from where the river can be heard once more down to your right. The route, however, lies at the far end of this room, where it is necessary to climb up about 3m into a formation-lined but muddled passage that turns to the left and then drops you onto a big mudbank. Traverse around the mudbank on the right hand side then down into the main passage once more, where the river bubbles along on the left.

The passage climbs up and over a hill. You can continue down the other side and over another rockpile to a chamber with fairly good decoration and the end of this section of the cave. However, from the top of the hill, if you look up to your right you will see a passage leading off well above the ground. This is the route to the Kish, the best decorated part of the cave. Unfortunately the Kish is awkward to get to. Opposite the passage, a slope leads up to the start of Ray's Reach, a climb up a wall and across a sloping ledge over the top of the main passage into the route to the Kish. This is very exposed and we chickened out, for which we copped much flak from the Kiwis. Moral: bring a Kiwi with you to do the climb. There are a couple of threads along the route

for protection, and once you are across you can double-rope abseil down from the far end when returning - a 50m rope is apparently sufficient, though due to the risk involved in the climb a dynamic rope is advisable.

Although the cave does not look very long on the map, the walk in plus finding the track plus the climb into the Kish means this is definitely a full day undertaking. Don't start too late.

Other caves

Another cave in the vicinity is Armageddon, which is the sink for Cave Creek North (which resurges in Fox River Cave). This cave is rarely visited as it requires a min half a day walk each way to get to the cave, as well as a day to do, so it is effectively a 3 day undertaking. The cave ends in a huge collapse doline called Gethsemane, which by all accounts is very spectacular; however, the collapse that created this doline has probably irretrievably blocked any connection between Armageddon and Fox River.

The Inland Pack Track starts at Fox River, and can be followed through Dilemma Creek Gorge down to Bullock Creek. This track is reputed to be very worthwhile, especially through Dilemma Creek and up side trips to the Ballroom Overhang and Waterfall Creek. Karst features abound in the limestone landscape. The conventional trek from Fox River to Bullock Creek takes the fleet of foot only half a day or so. You can continue from Bullock Creek down to Punakaiki along the Pororari River, but that section is reputedly not nearly as interesting.

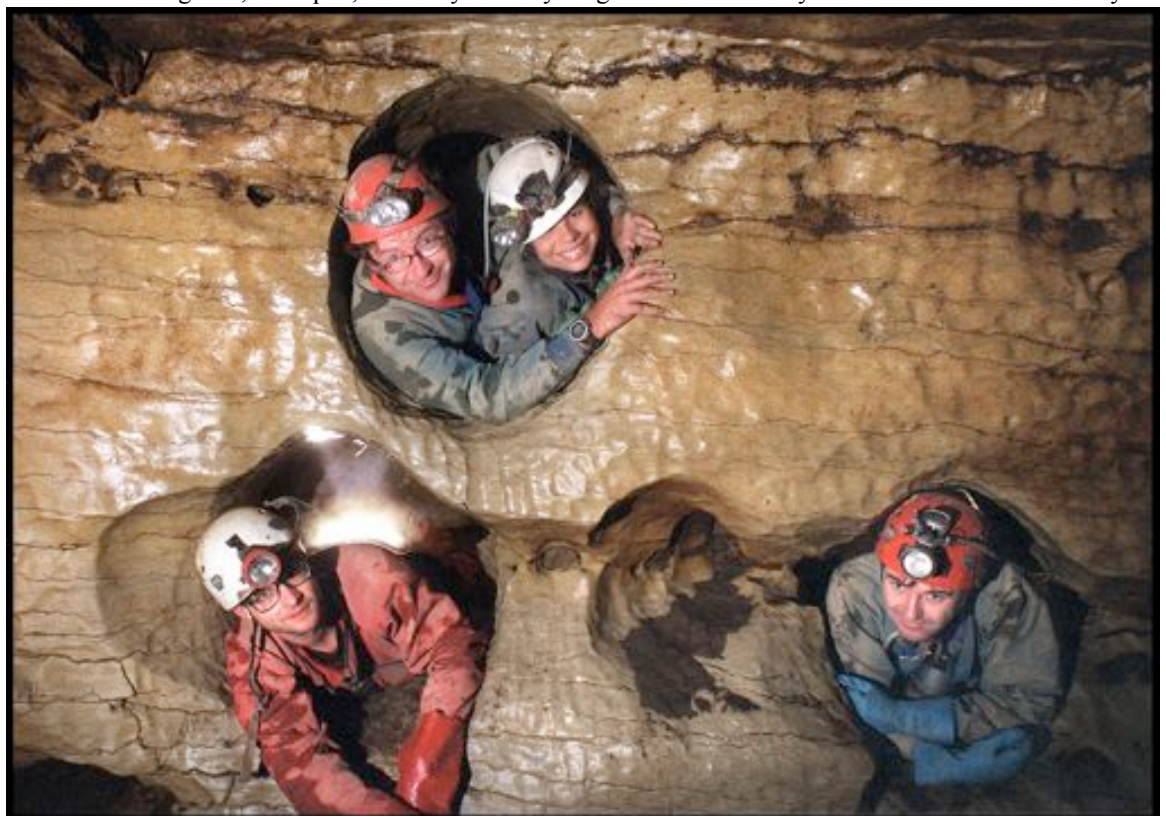
BULLOCK CREEK/PUNAKAIKI REGION

Punakaiki is a tourist town, although it still doesn't have a supermarket, bank or petrol station. The main tourist attraction is the layered Pancake Rocks at Dolomite Point, which feature a surge pool and blowhole at high tide when the sea is rough. For cavers, the main attraction is the nearby caves and karst landscape.

THE place to stay at Punakaiki is "the bach" (pronounced 'batch', which is Kiwi for 'holiday house'). With three bedrooms, around 8 beds, full kitchen, woodburning heater, shower, washing machine and extensive library of airport fiction, you can't do better for NZ\$60 per night (the same cost as for four people in the motor camp). Fits four comfortably, six OK, eight is starting to push it a little but still manageable. On the corner of the main road and Owen Street, it is owned by Chris King and John Lightfoot - ph (06) 877 6566 - who live in Havelock (a long way away). The only drawback is all the Kiwi questions in the Trivial Pursuit set. Website available at <http://www.holidayhomes.co.nz/westcoast/punakaiki.htm> If you can't get into the bach, try the motor camp ph (03) 731 1894 - a vastly inferior option.

The closest caving area to Punakaiki is Bullock Creek (marked on the Paparoa Park Map). Bullock Creek is a textbook example of stream capture, with the main creek sinking at the Taurus Major Submergence upstream of the caves, only to emerge at Cave Creek some 2km away in the next valley. This part of the system is non-navigable. However, the caves that form the overflow system, just downstream of the submergence, are open, and very much young and active. Only a few dozen metres of as-yet unentered passage prevent the possibility of a complete through trip from the Kubla Khan system to the resurgence at Cave Creek Cave, although a voice connection has allegedly been made.

A word of warning though - the Bullock Creek System is highly flood-prone. Once the submergence overflows, the stream advances quickly and the caves can fill to the roof within a couple of hours, taking weeks to subside. Anyone stuck in there when this happens is in a bad position. Pay close attention to weather forecasts and



Penguin Holes, Xanadu

heed the advice of locals. Don't go in the caves if there is a mere hint of rain. In addition, the caves are highly mazelike, and the only map I have seen - the Bullock Creek System map - is a very large and unwieldy thing that draws in main routes while omitting dozens of side passages.

Xanadu

A huge phreatic maze, Xanadu is a fun cave to play around in, but heed the flood warnings.

Access: See the Bullock Creek System map, which shows the entrance.

Description: How do you describe a 3D phreatic maze? This description offers only the general bare bones. Grab your map and pay attention. Bring a compass. If all else fails, look down at your feet and follow the stream back up to the vicinity of the entrance. Remember - there is far more passage than is actually shown on the map! Better still, bring a local.

The normal route takes you down narrow rifts towards a distinctive feature known as the Twin Tubes - two lovely tubes about 1.5m in diameter side by side. Turn left out of the tubes then follow the right hand wall around to the Keyhole - a distinctive passage that is the scene for many photos. Continue on and try to find the Worraworra, which is a small slot in the right hand wall which drops down very steeply to a lower level. Proceeding further you will find the Wine Rack (also known as the Penguin Holes) - 3 phreatic tubes that beg to be photographed. The floor of this passage is constantly changing with the floods - sometimes the passage is walkthrough, sometimes a flat out crawl. When you came to a long flat room (just above where it says 'Xanadu' on the map), look for "the 45", a steep slope leading back up to higher levels. Continuing onwards past this point (particularly past Gordon's Dip) into the lower reaches of the cave is highly inadvisable unless you have made a pact with God not to send any precipitation your way.

Back up the 45, a thin passage leads off to the northeast and eventually drops into a room from which it is possible to follow a stream upwards and back through the maze towards the top. If you are lucky you can find the 'tomo entrance' which is further west of the main entrance (and not well marked on the map) - it is much easier to climb out here than it looks if you climb up behind the rocks on the side of the chamber. To get back into the creek from the tomo, you need to climb a fixed handline further up the hill before dropping back down again. Otherwise, muddle back to the main entrance.

Kubla Khan/Cairns Catacombs

Less mazelike than Xanadu, but every bit as flood-prone and active, a round trip through this system is possible but the route is hard to follow - as we found, or rather, did not find. Again, note the major flood danger. Allegedly, it is easier from a routefinding point of view to go from Kubla to Cairns - but this involves a tricky climb scaling a feature known as the Great Wall of China; bring a handline.

Access: The general location of the entrance can be found on the Bullock Creek System map. We managed to find two alternative routes into the cave, neither of which are particularly recommended. Apparently the route of choice is just behind the tomo entrance to Xanadu, although I warned a little to my nice clean route through the boulders in the creekbed.

Description: Best to bring a local. We did and we still didn't get beyond the first few hundred metres in Kubla. Be warned that some of the things that look like connections, aren't. Also, don't bank on being able to get up (or down) the Black Hole of Calcutta. This is not the route you want to take!

Abyssinia

This new cave was discovered by Hamish McLauchlan and Colin Daniell in 2000. It is a very exciting find as the entry is significantly higher than the rest of the known system. The top levels consist of old breakdown passage with a couple of chambers featuring formation (a rarity at Bullock Creek). The lower levels are more characteristic of Bullock Creek, and the system slots nicely into the overall geology in the area with its general south-east trend.

Access/Description: Contact Hamish or Colin if you are interested in this cave.

Cataract Pot/Myopia

For something a little different, try this quick SRT through trip that takes you down to the other end of the system. If you have SCUBA gear you can dive the sump in Cataract and get spat out Cave Creek Cave. If you don't, content yourself with a sporty afternoon prusiking up the 40m waterfall pitch out of Cataract.

Cataract Pot was found ages ago (it's pretty obvious, with a waterfall thundering down a specy shaft just off the walking track). Myopia was found much later - although it's only 40m or so from Cataract, no-one bothered looking there as they were always so

busy frigging with the rigging at Cataract. The cave is best represented by a separate map on the CD (Myopia does not appear on the Bullock Creek System map).

Access: The cave is about 10mins walk down the Inland Pack Track towards Punakaiki from the carpark at the end of Bullock Creek Road. A local will tell you precisely where.

Description: It is recommended that you do this trip from Myopia to Cataract Pot. The route is easier to find, plus the pitches in Myopia are a little more loose and cruddy, and less friendly to SRTers.

First, rig a 50m rope from sturdy trees down Cataract. The rope runs over a prominent tree route which serves well as a rebelay, giving only a very minor rub. Make sure the rope reaches the bottom!



High tides surge into Te Ana Puta

Wander over to find Myopia (the map will tell you which direction to go - it's not far at all). For those new to the cave, I suggest: First, rig a single 30m rope down the first pitch (from trees on the northern side of the wide collapse doline). Abseil down and locate the head of the second pitch (two bolts with maillons left in the wall on the right hand side at the north-western end of the doline). Rig a 35m+ rope doubled through here, and leave at least one person up the top. The first person down should immediately search for the Traverse of Death by doubling back under the pitch and travelling horizontally to find a rope strung between bolts. The traverse is down a rift with an awkward 12m drop below you. After the traverse, squeeze over a flat rock and continue across the rift and climb up on the other side, where light from Cataract should be visible. Got that? Send a message back to the person at the top of the second pitch that it is OK to come down and pull down the rope.

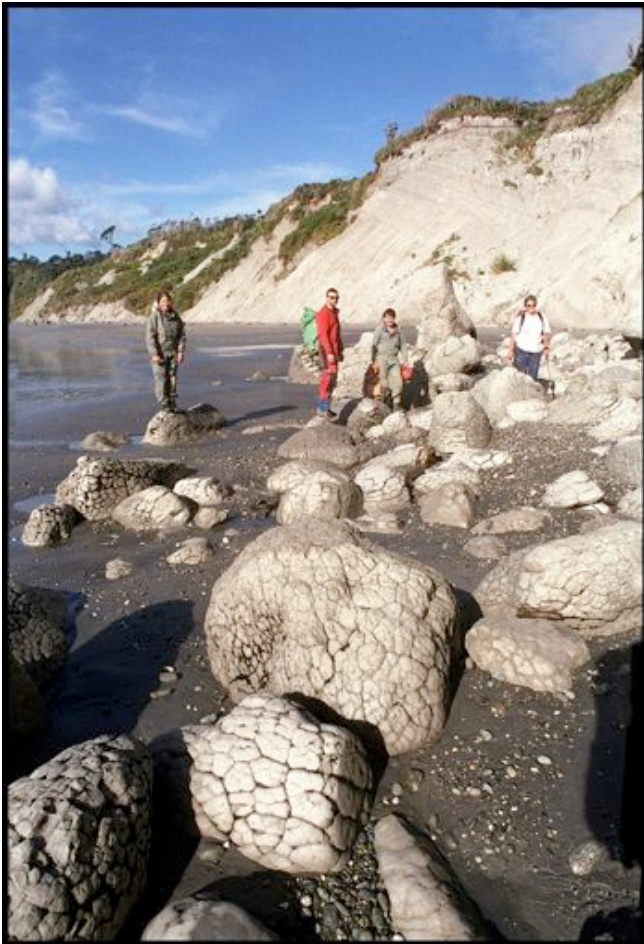
Don't go out Cataract yet - go back in a south-easterly direction from the pitch base and find the main chamber in Myopia. Enormous boulders have been sculpted into amazing shapes by the force of incredible torrents of water. The sump at the end connects to Cave Creek Cave. This room is probably not a smart place to be when the Bullock Creek System floods.

Going back over the Traverse of Death and towards the Cataract pitch once more, you soon find yourself on some boulders with a view upwards through a large 'window' of the waterfall cascading down the shaft. The rope is on the other side. To avoid a drenching, scuttle round to the right, where a passage leads behind the waterfall and pops you out at the pitch. It is sensible for people to wait at the 'window' area while someone is prusiking to avoid getting wet, and to see the spectacular sight of their companion apparently ascending through a torrent of water (although in fact coping only a bit of spray). Anyone who has done the entrance pitch to Cauldron Pot in Tassie will have an idea of what to expect with this neat exit.

Other caves

Don't forget to do the walk to Cave Creek Cave, about 1hr return from the carpark at the end of the road. Aside from its karst significance, Cave Creek was the scene of a terrible tragedy in 1995 when a cantilevered platform over the cave collapsed. If you bring a wetsuit and inner tube, you can go exploring in the cave for about 400m up to the sump that forms the connection to Myopia. Kerry Silverwood tells us that when water levels are up (and the caves are therefore too dangerous to enter) fun can be had tubing all the way down Cave Creek to Punakaiki.

There are a couple of other caves in the vicinity mentioned to us - Flip Flop (with a couple of pitches, also allegedly beautifully clean washed); Thunderdome (a through trip that is allegedly a yucky mudbath); and Tunc (whose nature is no doubt attested to when you find out that its name derives not from the Latin, but is in fact an anagram).



The beach at Point Elizabeth

TE ANA PUTA (POINT ELIZABETH)

Point Elizabeth is located at Rapahoe, about 20mins drive south of Punakaiki. There is one known major cave there - Te Ana Puta, which opens onto the ocean. You need to pick your time to visit this cave, depending on what you want to see. At high tide, the lake about 1/3 of the way down the cave fills up, almost to the roof, and you will get very cold and wet going from the northern to the southern section. However, if you wait 'til low tide you will miss the truly remarkable experience of being in the main sea chamber while it is 'performing'.

Access: The sea cave entrance can be entered only at low tide in calm seas. This is not that often! Otherwise, the best entrance is via Bent Pot (for the northern part of the cave) or Emtee Hole (for the southern end of the cave). Both these entrances are located in extraordinarily thick flax, with gorse bushes and kiekie not helping matters, and the only way you are likely to find them is to ask Mary Traves to accompany you and blaze a trail for you (see phone no. above). It took five months of concerted searching to find Bent Pot, even when its existence and rough location was known from discovering it from below. There are a few other tomo entrances, but these are yucky.

Description: The abseil down Bent Pot is only a few metres, but the need to tie the rope back necessitates a 15-20m rope, plus a protector for one nasty bit. While abseiling down Bent Pot during high tide, the cave will occasionally suddenly exhale, with such strength that ropes being lowered down the shaft have been known to be blown straight back up again! This means you are in for a good show...

At the bottom, proceed a short way down a steep muddy slope and then turn off to the right. Avoid sliding down any muddy slopes - getting back up can be tricky. Instead, follow the air pulses and the muffled roar of the waves to get to the *Chamber of Death by 1,000 Swooshes* (unofficial name). This is a cavern about 20m by 20m with an opening to the sea at one end, through which the waves pound to swirl around the grey cobbled beach below you.

There are two viewing points. The main viewing point is from high on the back wall of the chamber, from which the entire chamber can be seen. However, a more eerie lookout, although more subtle, is from a tube on the left that leads down into the water. Here, the waves occasionally leap up almost into the tube.

Away from the chamber and back towards Bent Pot, the steep muddy slopes lead down to the (tidal) lake and the route to the southern section of the cave, which I am told is rather muddy and not that great. In the southern section you can do a round loop called the One Way Trip on account of a few steep slides to be negotiated using gravity. Exit is possible via Emtee Hole.

BROKEN RIVER CAVE (CENTRAL SOUTH ISLAND)

Those driving coast-to-coast via Arthurs Pass should stop off at Broken River Cave. Broken River is (very) roughly 30km east of Arthurs Pass, and the cave is signposted on the north side of the main road with a developed carpark and tourist track to the entrance. Most tourists chicken out when you have to start wading, but you can do a through-trip if you don't mind doing some wading. There are some upper levels too to explore. The water is cool but if you're quick thermals rather than a wetsuit will suffice.

BY ANNALISA CONTOS

After the highly successful Speleo Brazil conference [see *SUSS Bull 41(2)*] held in Brasilia, Steven and I jumped on the bus with some other conference participants (representing Germany, Australia, Croatia, Slovenia, USA, Hungary, UK and Japan), destination Goias. It was a full days drive to Sao Domingo. We stopped along the way to walk around the doline of Bucco de Arracas, a very impressive doline with two large caves heading out either side. We bundled back into the bus and continued the journey. Most dozed on the bus, these naps being interrupted by sudden braking and swerving often followed by sharp bumps as the driver was unable to avoid the potholes in the road. Some were so deep as to have been worth tugging up for. These quaint features are such a problem on the Brazilian roads that they may be identified on Brazilian road maps as the sections with crosses superimposed over them.



Sao Domingos

We stayed in probably the most upmarket hotel in town, with every room having an ensuite and the proprietor still grumbling about having narrowly missed out on his first Michelin star that year. Steve went into a state of shock at the fact that it didn't have a door, so laying in bed gave you clear line of sight into the bathroom, and ensured you didn't overindulge at breakfast. The hotel provided breakfast and dinner, breakfast again being fresh fruit, bread and the Brazilian breakfast cake. Unfortunately we had been spoiled by the pre trip and dinner was enough to make me at least avoid meat for the rest of the trip. The meat that wasn't eaten that night was served up the next day. And the next day, and the next until it was all eaten, dammit!

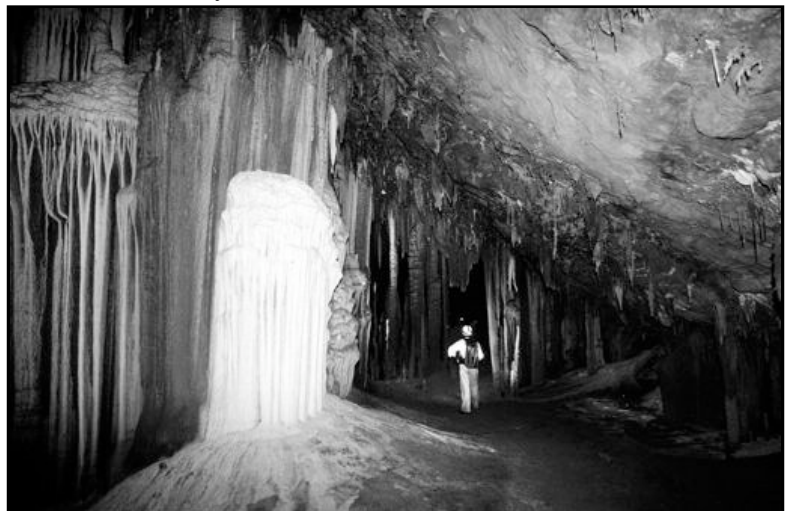


White flowstone in Sao Mattius

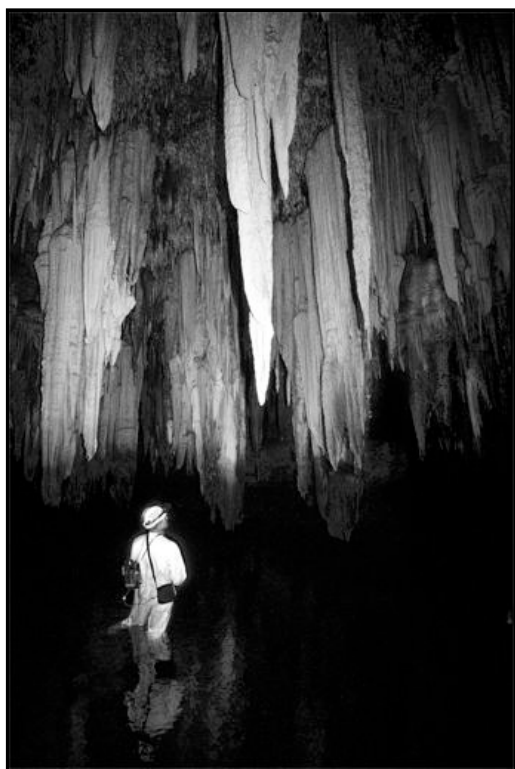
possible. The local guide Hamiro took us to some beautifully decorated high level passages before we split into two groups, one fast and one slow. I joined the fast group, which was trying to make it to a waterfall within the cave. With no time for photos we moved quickly over rockfall and through large well decorated chambers. At one stage the roof became very low and we were crawling along the river with no end in sight. We asked William, Hamiro's son who was accompanying us how much further this section was. In reply he held up two fingers. We weren't sure if that was 2 minutes, 20 or 200 metres so we keep going. After about 100m the passage opened up again much to our relief. We had agreed to return at 4:30 as our tour organiser kept getting into

Sao Domingo was about two hours from the cave by bus (but only one hour in a 4WD). The first day we visited Sao Mateus Cave. The cave has over 23 km of surveyed passage, with a strong stream running through it and numerous fossil passages higher up. As well as the size it was incredibly well decorated. I would compare it to Kubla Khan although I suspect Sao Mateus would win. The Croatians managed to shoot 4 rolls of film within one hour. They were very annoyed as the cave got better and better. We covered 2 km of the cave and it was disappointing that we lacked the time to make a proper trip of this spectacular cave.

Steve was not well on the second day, probably suffering from the high food quality. He decided to play it safe and stay at the hotel. However he lived a little dangerously trying the local "cure" for stomach ills, bark juice. The rest of us were glad we weren't ill and headed to Angelica. Again the cave had a huge river running through it and wonderfully decorated high level passages. The water was wonderfully warm, and the Canadian caver Kirk swam where



Sao Mattius



Streamway in Sao Mattius

trouble from the hotel proprietor for bringing us back so late. We reached the waterfall minutes before our agreed turn back time. And then of course there was a delay while everyone took photographs. The waterfall was impressive for the volume of water flowing over it, although it was not a particularly high waterfall, probably 5-7m.

The third day we visited Sao Bernado. The cave is about 1km from where we entered to the exit. Again very well decorated with a range of formations and some beautiful cave pearls and miniature forests. The most impressive part of the cave was the convergence of the river with another about half way through the cave. After this point the river was so strong we had to cross it in pairs with arms linked over each other's shoulders to keep our footing.

The final day we visited Terra Ronca (The Earth Snores). This cave justified carrying our SRT gear half way around the world. Steve, Kirk and Ayumi climbed up the cliff to abseil the 80 m entrance pitch, while everyone else watched on. Again the cave was huge with a large river running through it. The cave is in two sections, with a 500 m canyon section joining them. Everyone was impressed when we reached a section with cave fish. The local guide brought along some bread that sent them into a feeding frenzy. The final chamber of the cave, St Valentine chamber was impressive for its size - 50 m by 100 m, and the size of the decorations, being huge columns. Again we were disappointed we didn't have longer to photograph. It would take several days to get photos that captured the chamber well. All in all it was a fantastic trip and if you are ever in that part of the world it is well worth making a trip to the area.

COLONG EXPLORATION

1-2ND SEPTEMBER, 2001

BY ALAN PRYKE

Participants: Max Midlen, Dave Noble (SUBW), Martin Pfeil, Matthew Fischer, Alan Pryke, and a visitor from Mexico

Friday night, Niagara cafe: The gang is amused by the daggy drag show occurring upstairs.

Friday night 11pm, Batsh Camp: The weather has cleared!

Saturday morning, early: Up and at'em! Got the gang going early... we saddled up and hit Acetylene spur... and camped at the bottom in the not-so-leech-infested area not far from the cave.

We got organized and headed in. I led the group on a tour, including Lannigan's, Hall of Columns (including the climb to the upper passage), Kings Cross, High Tunnel and the complex connection to the Pride of the Valley, then from here down through Snook's tunnel to the cleft. Lots of cave needs to be surveyed up there!

We then began surveying, starting where we left off on the last trip (April, 2001). The Amber cave only required a few legs before we reached the Crystal Pools junction. I had a bit of trouble keeping up with the sketching, as the legs were long, and the surveyors were interested to explore!

Matt headed up into a small gour pool beneath a small aven, and returned noting a large area beyond. We postponed the survey and went to explore this mystery area. A large, obviously well-troged area of cave was found that I had no idea existed (later proved wrong... this is the crystal pools!).

A large rift headed up to who knows where, so we negotiated across some dodgy holes to a higher level with some good formation, and obviously less traffic. Helictites and interesting displays of large formation were found here, and in one corner an interesting feature comprising of a stalactite/stalagmite combination, connected by a straw at an unusual angle, making a strange column. Max, in ferret mode, tried a bit of extension here, noting a small hole enthusiastically! This continued for some metres before becoming too small for ferrets.

We left the area and headed down to the Pulsating River to explore what I thought would be a possible connection to the Big Rock Room (beyond the Beach). We all climbed in to the Rockfall Room, then found the wobbly slab squeeze (eeugh!) into the Gravestone Zone. A couple of cavers were reluctant to come through, but eventually we assembled in the dodgy rockfall.

I left with Martin (through Leap of Faith Pit) around through the sump (still dry!) to Beach Chamber and The Big Rock Room, then through the unusually dry sump passage to the Reverse streamway overflow extension, to a rift I found with Megan on a previous trip.

At the appointed time Martin blew on his 4000 decibel whistle to try to establish a sound connection with the others, spread out in the Gravestone Zone. No response. Another whistle. Nothing. Martin tried again, and I said to be very quiet as I thought I heard something. A soft thunk was heard...we were close! We relocated to a second rift (Oops, the original one I discovered with Megan, actually!) where I thought we might be closer. I thumped some rocks together. Then a definite response, then voices! We had found them! After a time shining torches into holes and failed handshakes, a physical connection was found. This rift is quite dodgy, and seems to have seen no one before, as the dirt has no compression from people climbing.

Matt was the first one through, squeezing up to meet us. The hole was quite tight, but do-able. I decided to make the hole more comfortable by moving a small pointy rock. Unfortunately, this small pointy rock held up a large boulder, which slipped into the connection! ... Not enough to close it, but enough to be worrying! I managed to slip through by avoiding the rock on the other side. Phew!

A quick reccy of the Gravestone Zone was made noting many more holes, then we headed out to dinner via Leap of Faith and the Lower cave.

Sunday:

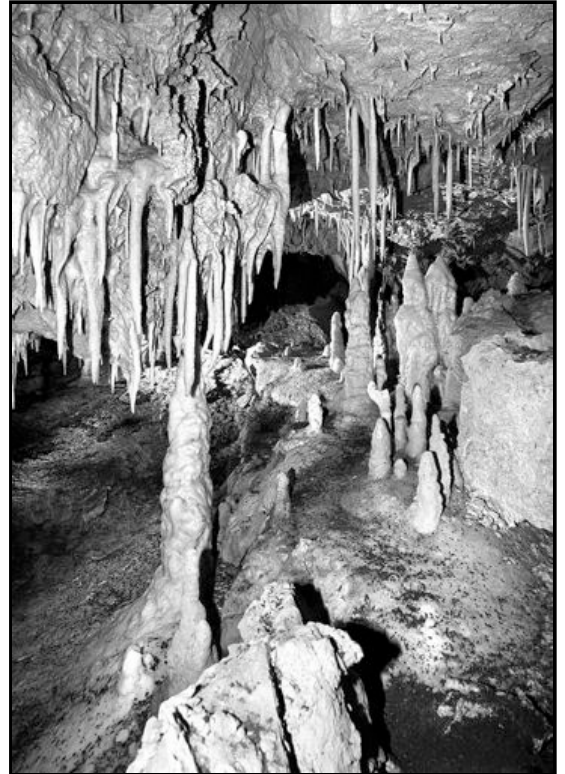
We headed into the Landslide, and up to the Hole in the Wall chamber to get some of the climbers into the leads! Martin had a go at the corroded flowstone slope and found it rather hairy! Max thought he'd have a go and soon was reporting to us from the top of the climb that it closed down and went nowhere. Surprisingly he noted two rusty old bolts at the top. This is quite definitely the highest part of the cave we have found so far.

The deep rift also received attention, and a rope was set up. Dave held the fort at the top, whilst Martin and Matt disappeared. Matt bravely headed on into the vertical unknown.

I headed back around to the lower section of the loft and made a voice connection through an impenetrable rifting aven. Surveying through here would be very difficult, as much rock is loose (a-la Warbo!). After a bit more poking around, we headed back down though the Landslide with a coating of bat poo.

The afternoon consisted of a tourist trip sump-wise to the Beach and Big Rock Room; the streamway flattener to Woofs (a few ooh-ahhs) then back out via the tourist (high) route, and the lower (Onslow) cave.

A successful full weekend of exploration! ...And Dave was quite happy to have been lent some kneepads to compliment his t-shirt and shorts caving outfit!



Formation in The Loft. Alan Pryke

TRIP LIST: MAY 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.

May

4-5 Jenolan. Become almost famous with a bit part in a two bit movie. Bring your kneepads, thermals and mud make-up for a video trip to Great North Cavern. Contact Annalisa Contos 9557 9475 (home).

11-12 Abercrombie. Come and see the delights that are Abercrombie. Contact: Ian Cooper.

12 Malaita Walls. A multi-pitch abseil involving small ledges to balance on, this trip is for people with previous abseiling experience. Spectacular adventure, contact Martin Pfeil 9713 9460.

18-19 Church Creek. If you have never been, it's time to go. Location well worth the visit. Hike in & camp by the Cowmung River. Contact Matthew Ridley on 9489 6675 (home) or 93517 154 (work).

25-26 Wyanbene and Big Hole. Wyanbene is a very interesting streamway cave . Camp within sight of the cave entrance. SRT experience required for those wanting to stand on the bottom of the Big Hole. Contact Megan Pryke on 9524 0317 (home).

28 Committee Meeting. Cheap pasta night at the Forest Lodge Hotel, 6.30pm.

June

1-2 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.

6 General Meeting

8-10 Colong. Get the most out of the long weekend caving at beautiful Colong. Contact Alan or Megan Pryke on 9524 0317 (home).

15-16 Cliefden. Unusual warm caves, an excess of cows, and a great hut to stay in. A great weekend awaits you! Contact David Connard on 9428 1608 (home).

25 Committee Meeting. Cheap pasta night at the Forest Lodge Hotel, 6.30pm.

July

4 General Meeting

5-6 Navshield. Megan wants to get a SUSS team together for this big rogaining event. Contact her on 9524 0317 (home).

20-21 Wee Jasper. Spend the Winter Solistice weekend at Wee Jasper. Accommodation will cost about \$20 a head with 8, even less with more! Nice warm, large maze caves to visit and accommodation to spend the long night. Advance notice or commitment wanted due to accommodation arrangements. Contact Megan Pryke on 9524 0317 (home).

27-28 Training Weekend Bungonia. An event not to be missed! Vertical work, knots, ladders and beginners trips, it is all happening on this weekend. Don't miss this great opportunity to learn some more caving skills. Suitable for all experience levels. For more information contact Annalisa Contos 9557 9475 (home).

30 Committee Meeting. Cheap pasta night at the Forest Lodge Hotel, 6.30pm.

January 2003

Waitomo, New Zealand. Two weeks of glorious caving. You've all seen the photos in previous Bulls – and if you haven't been there, it's time to go... Anyone interested? Contact Annalisa Contos 9557 9475 (home).