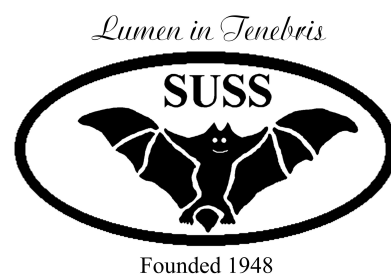


SUSS BULL 43(1)

APRIL – JUNE 2003



Bulletin of the Sydney University Speleological Society

Proudly sponsored by



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NEWS AND GOSSIP

Regime Change

At the Annual General Meeting on the 1st of May 2003, the following officebearers were installed:

President:	Richard Pfeil
Vice President:	Mark Lowson
Secretary:	Simon Goddard
Treasurer:	Brett Davis
Minutes Secretary:	Matt Fischer
Equipment Officer:	Steve Contos
Librarian:	Matthew Hole
Editor:	Phil Maynard
Safety Officer:	Martin Pfeil
ASF Councillor:	Kevin Moore
General Committee:	Caroline Curfs
	Michael Fraser
	David Connard

Help your committee. They need all the help they can get. Run a trip, send articles to the Editor, let the committee know when they've stuffed up, send articles to the Editor, go on trips, send articles to the Editor. Every little bit helps.

Sir Richard

Richard Mackay was an enthusiastic member of this club during the early exploration of Spider Cave, Jenolan. He has since established a remarkable career in several respects.

He became a member and then Chair of the Jenolan Caves Trust, a position which he continues to hold. He has served on the board of the Trust for about 12 years so far. The Trust manages four karst areas of tremendous importance – Jenolan, Wombeyan, Abercrombie and Borenore.

Perhaps less well known to SUSS members, Richard also became a Commissioner in the Scout Association, a position which he held for many years. Building upon his expertise and academic training in heritage and industrial archaeology, he was also a member of the Council of the National Trust (NSW). Later, he has held numerous positions relating to heritage protection, including on other Trusts responsible to the NSW government, and on certain international committees. He is a partner and director of a Sydney-based heritage consulting firm, Godden Mackay Logan, which he helped to establish and which is widely regarded as one of the leaders in its field. He also holds a post as an Adjunct Professor at La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Richard's extraordinary achievements were recognised in the Queens Birthday Honours List, when Richard was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for services to cultural heritage management and archaeology, and to youth through scouting.

The Society offers its congratulations to Richard Mackay AM!

Patrick Larkin

The Presidents Report 2002/2003

The last year has been a busy one for the club with a huge variety of projects and trips undertaken throughout the year.

At Jenolan, the Wiburds survey is nearing completion with a new entrance to Wiburd's connected last year. The Mammoth survey is also well underway and full advantage was taken before the drought broke to get much of the wetter areas surveyed. There have also been some trips recently to less visited parts of Mammoth including a video trip to Great North Cavern and a trip to the World of Mud section. The Christmas party returned to Jenolan and was a great success with the numbers over thirty.

While Jenolan has been a traditional SUSS favourite, there have been plenty of other trips. Alan Pryke has been tireless in the survey of Colong, with new cave being found on every trip. We had one trip to Cliefden this year. At the moment access is suspended due to insurance issues for access. This is a great disappointment to us all and I hope this situation can be resolved soon. We have also been caving around the state from Wee Jasper to Wyanbene and Borenore. Yarrangobilly – always worth the drive – was visited in October and at Easter.

NEWS AND GOSSIP

The bushfires put a damper on the summer canyoning season, finishing it before it began. Nevertheless, we were able to visit some otherwise less visited canyons. Over a dozen of us visited Dargans canyon on the O-Week trip, a nice half day trip (with a very chilly swim at the end).

Training wise it has also been a good year. We ran a training weekend in July at Bungonia that covered a whole range of topics including, beginner caving trips, knots, laddering, abseiling, rescue and rigging. It was a great opportunity for the club to get together with over 30 people attending. Two trip supervisors completed their checklist and were approved by the committee – congratulations to Megan Pryke and Martin Pfeil.

We have also seen a rise in the younger members of the club with three family days being run, caving at Bungonia and Jenolan and abseiling at Westleigh.

We had one expedition this year, with sixteen of us on a two week trip caving in New Zealand. During that time the group visited around 30 caves in several karst areas. Waitomo is a playground for cavers, with superb streamway caves. We spent a couple of days at Mahoenui. This is a very interesting area and worth a week's visit in its own right.

Finally a big thank you to the outgoing committee. They did a fantastic job of putting together an action-packed program and dealing with all the administration necessary to keep the club going.

Annalisa Contos



Stinkpot, Mahoenui
photo Alan Pryke

SLIPPERY WHEN WET

RIVER LETHE, JENOLAN CAVES

BY KEIR VAUGHAN-TAYLOR

Participants: Those on more than three trips:

Ron Allum, Dave Apperley, Paul Boler, Ian Cooper, Mike Curtis, Jarn Hodgson, Phil Maynard, Iain McCulloch, Rod O'Brien, Greg Ryan, Richard Taylor, Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Ian Vickary, Dave Walton, Alan Warild

Jenolan South of the Grand Arch.

The Grand Arch at Jenolan is more than just a spectacular entryway to the showcaves or a really cold air drain at night. It also marks the coming together of three very different drainages. At the foot of the Arch, a small resurgence flows out into Blue Lake from under Lucas Cave. This insignificant-seeming flow is the only outlet for water from the southern showcaves and the karst valley impounded behind them. The southern showcaves – some of the most spectacular in the world – are all connected at basement level by the river, but the pathway taken by the stream between the various tourist sections has been obscure.

In the last few years, the diving group has made its regular pilgrimage to Jenolan, and one of our main efforts has been to explore underneath the southern showcaves, as well as to push further upstream. The veil of obscurity has been lifted by these trips, and the course of the river now makes for an excellent cave dive. A lengthy series of survey trips has also provided a high grade map of the underwater passages, and their connections to the tourist paths of the southern showcaves. The amount of effort required to get a high grade underwater survey in silt-filled passages can be seriously underestimated. Some high-quality photos and video have also been taken in Lethe.



Jarn Hodgson and Iain McCulloch in Lethe

Photo Mark Spencer



Michael Curtis approaching the restriction at -14 m

Photo Mark Spencer

The trip reports have mostly been published in the Bull.^{1 2 3 4 5 6}

We have connected all the main pools throughout the Southern labyrinths from the Mud Tunnels beneath the Temple of Baal along the main river and out through the resurgences coming out into the Blue Lake. This cave dive from the pools beneath the Temple of Baal through the main drainage to the outside world is a classic. We have mapped the whole system except for a few small side passages. Phil Maynard coordinated the mapping data and drew up the final map. I was able to present this map for the first time at the Oz Tech diving conference in Sydney in September 2002.

The path of the River is not the path mapped and shown by sage geologist of last century, Oliver Trickett. He must have puzzled over seemingly isolated pools that rose and fell in some coded sympathy with the main flowing river. The secret of the actual position of the main river relative to these pools is no longer hidden and indicates new rivers once emerging from under the Lucas Cave.

Trickett believed the river to flow through The Pool of Reflections and then the Styx River, before entering the Pool of Cerberus. The path from there to Blue Lake on the surface was unknown.

The Lethe Dive

The first known appearance of the main drain from the South is in a pit off the tourist track in the Mud Tunnels area. When the muddy pool at the bottom was found to be one of the classic dive sites we called it Lethe, one of the other rivers in Greek/Roman legends that flows in the underworld. When first followed the dive ended in two joined chambers, with a tight flowstone blockage between them underwater. A climb over the flowstone led to the

¹Jenolan Diving. 1996 —The Year in Review, SUSS Bull 36(4): 19–31

²Jenolan Diving: February – May 1997, SUSS Bull 37(2): 68–82

³Cave Diving at Jenolan, SUSS Bull 40(1): 37–46

⁴Cave Diving at Jenolan, SUSS Bull 40(2): 40–47

⁵Cave Diving at Jenolan, SUSS Bull 40(4): 18–20

⁶Cave Diving at Jenolan, SUSS Bull 41(1): 21–24

second lake. A sloping floor and gravel squeeze marked the lowest point in the second chamber and blocked the way on.

During many dives to this spot we excavated a slot through the loose gravel, down and then up into another chamber beyond. The view of an excavation beginning is awesome. Waiting in the water-filled chamber as the lead diver begins sliding gravel to one side gives an impression of a cataclysm. The crystal clear water becomes host to an expanding pyroclastic cloud, growing rapidly and appearing like a solid wall about to slam innocent bystanders. Everything goes black and the guideline is once again a diver's finest ally.

After wriggling through the squeeze, Lethe descends first into a large room and then on to a long, low flat passage that exits into air-filled walking passage that is known as the Styx River.

The dive passage at this other end was known as "The Long Low Horrible Flat Thing" . Some half-hearted explorations of this passage had been done but no one had ever really tried hard to pass the constrictions.

Previously it was thought the Styx more or less followed the line of the waters adjacent to the Lucas Cave, in the tourist section called River Cave. This is represented by a pool of water in Lucas, a pool under the Minaret, the Styx Pool and the Pool of Reflections. The water feeding the Pool of Reflections is not Styx at all but another smaller river, a tributary to Styx that joins into Styx/Lethe at the big room on the other side of the squeeze.

Surveying in tight passages with dubious visibility required some innovation and lots of hard work. The gear we put together for the surveying involved a protractor, perspex, some hinges, a Silva bushwalking compass and a spirit level. Depths were taken from a dive computer.



Greg Ryan and Michael Curtis surveying in Lethe

Photo Mark Spencer

Lethe can now be dived all the way to Blue Lake passing through the Pool of Cerberus. The diving downstream from Styx is shallow and mostly constricted, leading out into daylight through a slot in the rubble of the walking track around Blue Lake.

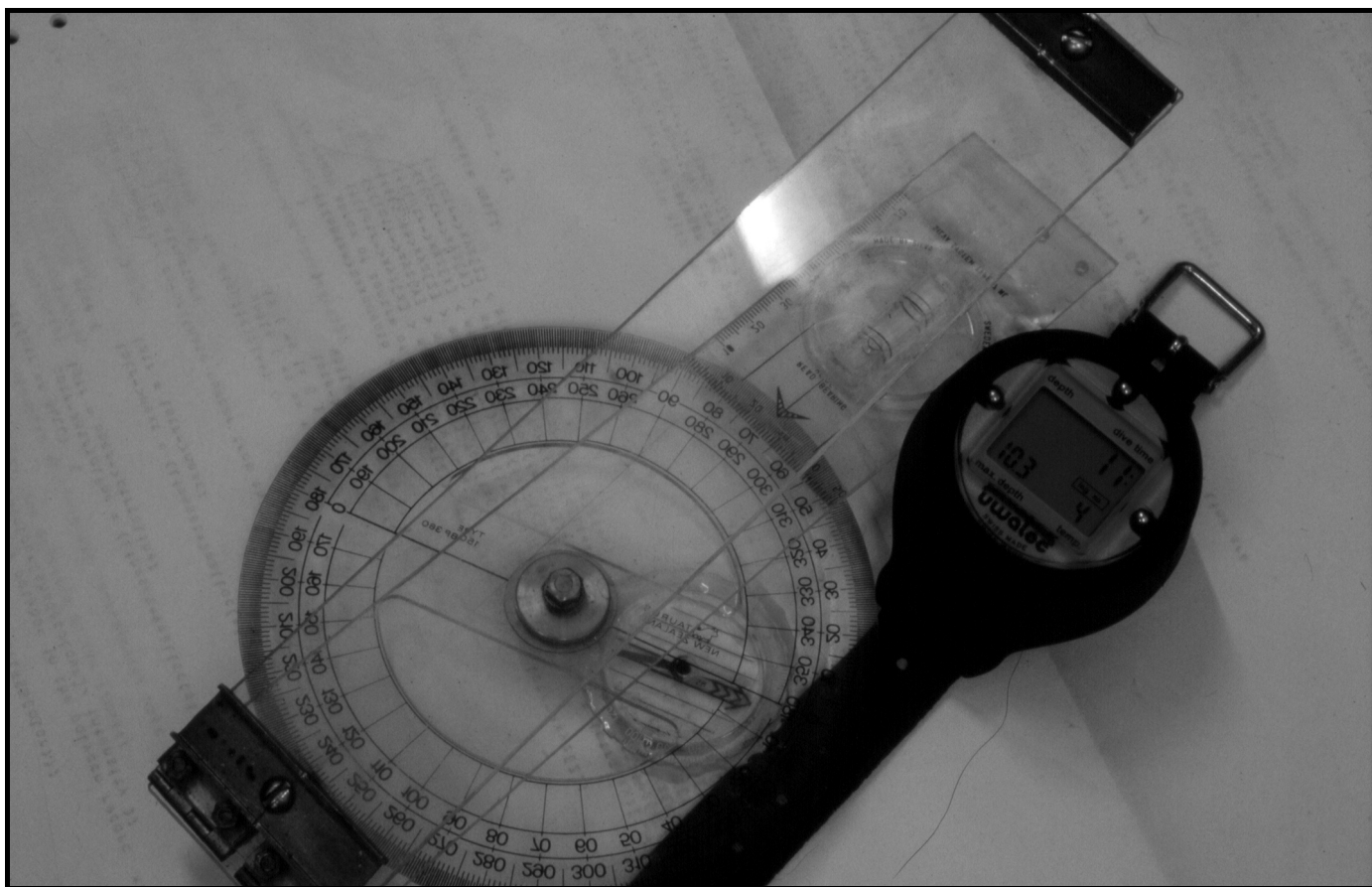
Upstream from Lethe

Considering the opposite direction, upstream and back into the mountain, the starting pit in the Mud Tunnels leads most likely to unknown caverns. Heading upstream, passage is comfortable, snaking left and right. It then turns downwards and pinches out – blocked in part by a natural arch. There is some small watery space on either side of the arch.

To my mind this lead is too daunting to push underwater but undaunted Iain McCullough manoeuvred his wraith-like body down there. He had to take off both air bottles to get around the obstruction, passing through with a regulator in his mouth and the hose going back to his bottles. Once through he retrieved them from his partner.

Iain made his way into somewhere beyond. A limited victory however, because his wriggling to get past the natural bridge destroyed the visibility and so little progress could be made finding a way on. My opinion is that there are better leads to investigate.

Beyond that natural arch the water flows from unknown cave to the South and is not seen again until the water makes a brief but dramatic appearance at the southernmost limit of the Barralong. Here waters feed an overflowing lake from the mysterious Southern Limestone. The distance of the unknown hydrological connection from this lake to the Mud Tunnels more than doubles the southern extent of the caves from the Grand Arch.



How to survey underwater

Photo Keir Vaughan-Taylor

BARRALONGA

BARRALONG, JENOLAN

BY KEIR VAUGHAN-TAYLOR

Barralong is the ultimate southern extent of the tourist cave system of Jenolan. At its far end is a healthy river emerging from an archetypal underground lake feeding the main southern river passing through a picturesque tunnel and disappearing into a narrow canyon. To follow the river downstream soon requires action on hands and knees and most people call it a day when it becomes necessary to sprawl out lengthways into the water.

The above-water journey through Barralong is quite long. The entrance to Barralong is to the left of the abandoned tourist track just before the steps cut through flowstone ascending into the 'Red Room'. At its modest beginnings in a small side passage departing the Mud Tunnels area the way on is milestoned with a series of squeezes, climbs and crawls separated by standup chamber with remnant phreatic passage. The cave passage gets bigger and more and more decorated. The formations are so highly valued that trips to this cave are tightly restricted.

The next known appearance of the southern river water between the Mud Tunnels and Barralong Lake is a small pool of water called Blue-tongue Lake. It is located just before a sporting climb leading on to the back of the main cave and a trickle of water percolates along a gravel passage underneath the climb.

Blue-tongued Lizards

Dave Walton regularly travels from Brisbane to join the Jenolan project. Interested in locating the missing parts of the Barralong river course we set off one day to dive Blue-tongue. The passage in the early stage of Barralong almost has standing room but this quickly tapers off and does not continue. The way on is to the left through a rock-pile. Once having negotiated a short sequence of squeezes a tunnel descends rapidly, almost blocked at the bottom by a squeeze. Through the squeeze is a short passage that opens up. On the left is the body of water we wanted to dive. On this occasion a stream was flowing along the canyon from a fissure to the right across the passage and into the water body. A dive line apparently placed by Ron Allum some twenty years ago runs into the water.

Dave won the toss to dive. He entered the water but returned quickly wanting to replace the existing line because it was frayed and likely to break. He set out again using his own reel but now the water was highly silted making progress difficult. The passage continued at the end of Ron's line but how far was impossible to tell. Without visibility it was not possible to continue or replace the old line. Dave returned and we left the cave. We would have to try this dive again with the sole purpose of replacing the old line.

The trip time was very short – we were out and packed up by 2:00pm that afternoon. We took the opportunity to walk to the end of the Southern Limestone and returned along the Lucas Rocks Ridge.

I felt sure this puddle had more to offer and resolved to try again. On the next trip to Bluetongue, we carried Rod Obrien's gear to the water. Rod has an affinity for tight horrible conditions and sure enough he made progress as we waited in the stream passage for well over an hour.

He had wriggled down a fissure in the bottom of the pond excavating loose gravel off to the sides of a wide but squeezey phreatic loop. He emerged in a stream canyon with air space about 15 m long and silted from one end to the other. Although the way on should have been at the other end of the canyon it was difficult to find a going route with the water all stirred up.

This passage should be part of a route going both upstream towards the end of Barralong but also passage heading down towards unknown streamway not seen again until the Mud Tunnels. After this trip we concentrated on survey work, correcting dodgy survey points and joining disconnected sections of survey, but this lead is hot and if only there was more time to do everything. The need for new cave packs is becoming ever more apparent.

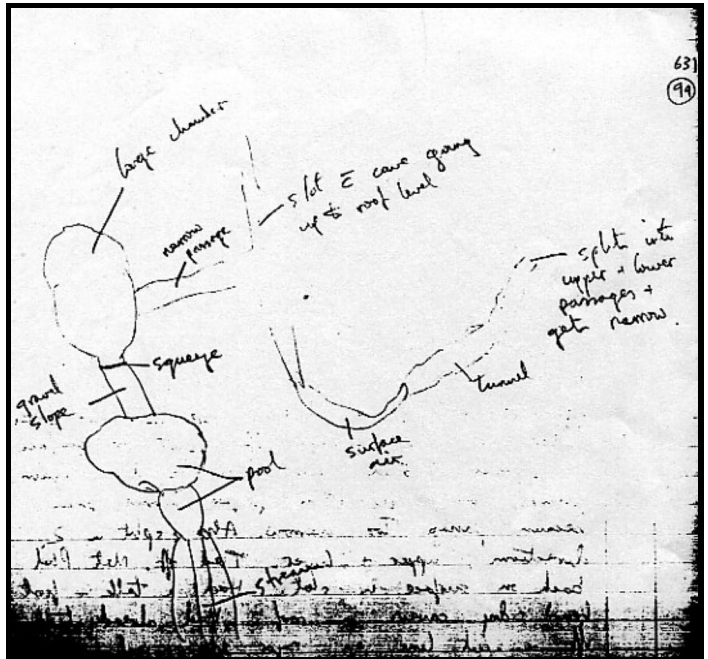
In the Beginning

Beyond all the formation, beyond climbs and squeezes and spectacular phreatic passage, Barralong presents the intrepid with a lake, about 4 m across with a sheer wall on the other side. Water comes up out of the lake and flows down a gravel streamway for about 20 m before entering a series of tight rifts and eventually sumping. The next known piece of the stream is Blue-tongue, hundreds of metres away. The lake was first dived by Peter Rogers and Phil Prust in 1985. Peter Rogers was diving with a single 88 cu ft cylinder!!! He apparently bulldozed through the gravels and Phil Prust stayed behind to dig the passage larger. A pretty stoic effort I reckon. Here's their trip report from 1985:

Solution tube in Barralong cave for dive in final pool on Saturday. 20/04/85 7h 40 min Trip into Barralong with SUSS and two guides (Dennis was one – hadn't been there for 18 or 14 years?) Dive in lake at end with large inner tube + also old wire ladder up far side. I dived first ahead of PP using old moray wet suit plus single 88.

Start dive down tunnel with gravel floor. Immediately heads into horizontal squeeze with gravel bottom, sloping down ~35–45 degrees. Got through on side after some shifting of gravel. Phil took longer to get through. After squeeze, a chamber opens up ranging from 0 – 6 or 7 m depth. Direction of water flow is not clear. One small air chamber at surface, not large enough to breath from.

Main passage appears to continue lower down on R hand side of chamber. Goes a short distance before surfacing into a slot. All fairly silty. Dry cavers can reach this area from above by crossing pool and climbing up old wire ladder. Pushed on round to end of slot on surface and followed ~5m until forced to dive again. Pushed about 10–15 m before turned back because passage too narrow. Also split in 2 directions, upper and lower. Tied off. Met Phil back on surface in slot. Had a talk and first heard dry cavers in roof. Had already tied off and cut line on major sharp rock so we tied off again and went ahead. Went in further 10 meters than earlier before turning back. Put in about 50 m of line. Phil had pushed a lot of gravel out of the squeeze so return journey was easier.



Peter Rogers' sketch map

The slot they reached in the middle of their dive can indeed be reached by dry cavers over the back of the lake and up the vertical wall. At the time, their push beyond this slot represented the furthest penetration of the Jenolan system to the south.

The Outer Limits

I dived at most southerly end of Barralong with Patrick Larkin, Simon and Judy McCartney years ago.^{7 8} One of the difficulties of diving past the lake was reported in 1985 when Peter Rogers and Phil Prust managed to dig through an obstruction at the bottom of the lake and squeezed through into a tall underwater chamber. While Phil remained digging the return squeeze larger, Peter proceeded to lay line finding an air surface with a vertical rift where Phil eventually joined him. Peter was able to hear voices atop the rift and determined that this would be another access point for diving

On advice from the head guide, Mr Ernie Holland later dives to the furthest extent of Barralong bypassed the early obstructions by scaling the wall on the opposite side of the lake. A Tyrrolean hauling system raised the heavy dive gear to the cliff top from the other side of the lake. At the top of the cliff is a continuing passage with two squeezes terminating near the vertical shaft with water at the bottom, a cold breeze and the dive line laid by Peter Rogers. Dive gear has to be lowered down the shaft with caving tapes. Divers descend a caving ladder and gear up in the confines of a narrow rift.

On the push trip led by Simon McCartney, I was the last diver of a foursome. For the whole trip I saw nothing but a dim yellow light because the three previous divers had turned the water to custard. We were wearing back mounted tanks in those days. The dive is quite long and may have side passages, I don't know. The last section of the dive is an upward vertical rift. It was tight in this rift with back mounts and a way up the slot had to be found by searching back and forth along the rift to find a route wide enough. Patrick pretty much gave up cave diving after this trip.

The rift surfaces in a shallow lake and a small river feeds the lake from an incoming passage. There is more crawling through river passage and the last sump silts out as soon as you put your foot in it. At the time of this trip I was very fit. While Simon made the final push in the furthest sump I took my diving equipment off and climbed every aven and tunnel there was. It was particularly muddy and slippery but I can say with certainty that all leads were explored. Simon returned from his sump having found a system of rift passages all apparently silty and tight. We were all exhausted and felt we had done all we were ever going to do with this cave.

⁷The Paradox in the Barralong, SUSS Bull 28(2): 31–33

⁸The Most Important Item when Cave Diving, SUSS Bull 28(2): 34–36

Times have changed however and now the trip presents an interesting logistic challenge.

Divers now containerise dive gear into cave packs. The journey through the sensitive and beautiful caverns is now more efficient and cave-friendly. The effort involved in exploring tight underwater passages is greatly reduced by side mounts and small, high-pressure tanks.

Scaling the cliff on the other side of the lake and transporting diving gear down the shaft consumes hours of time and it follows that the process has to be reversed for the return trip. For the divers, some air is conserved because of not having to pass the alluvial barriers but the cost is enormous in terms of time and exertion to the team as a whole. If it is possible to negotiate the alluvial gravels then the dry caving time and effort can be greatly reduced. The problem is that exploration and mapping in this area will take many trips.

In the light of these considerations we ran a preliminary exploration to the Barralong Lake one more time, on the 23rd of June 2003. The objective of this trip was to reconnoiter the lake bottom and try to navigate a reliable and safe way through the gravel.

Michael Collins and I entered the Barralong lake's edge at 12:45 having taken our team nearly two hours to transport equipment to the end of the cave. This is a far cry from the epic carry trips of the past. The modern gear really helps, and keeps our porters happy.

The lake was already silted but clearing a little along a tunnel at the bottom of the right side of the lake. At approximately 4 meters depth I encountered the squeeze but a glimpse of a route mostly blocked by undulating alluvial gravel could be discerned just before the siltation cloud enveloped the view. Alluvial gravel beds are composed of millions of 4 mm pebbles and may be scooped to one side. After some digging Michael and I returned to the lake where we began alternating turns, diving to the pebbles in the passage and scooping the gravel onto the right side using our hands. After 45 minutes we clawed out a distance of four meters and could see a large chamber ahead. In 1985 Peter Rogers had apparently slipped through on his first push and I can only assume he had advice from Harry Houdini.

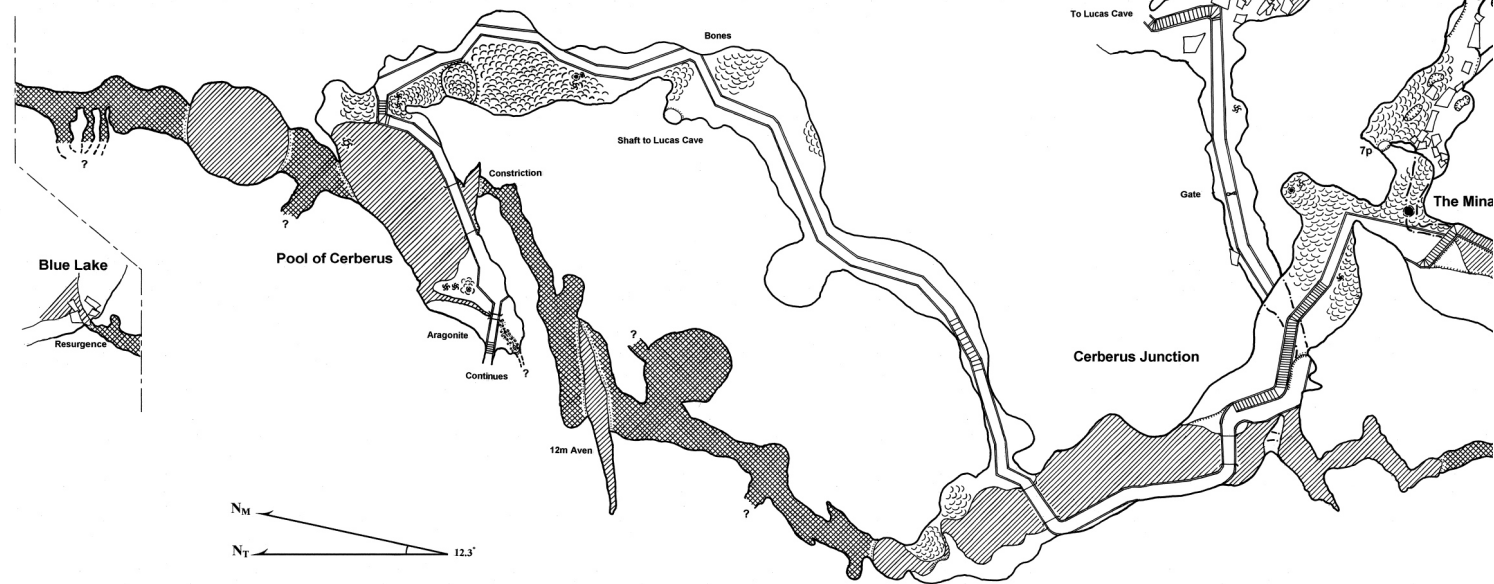
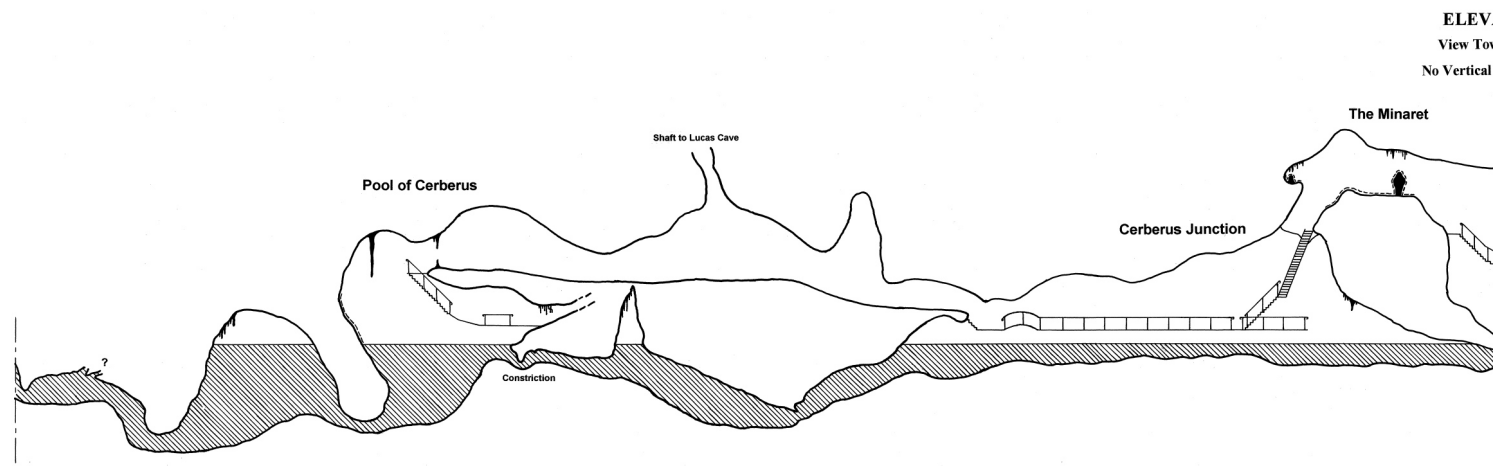
On the fourth digging session I slid into into a large vertical chamber from a slot in the wall, cascading pebbles into the chamber. The movement of sediments filled the first part of the chamber with a cloud but cleared some distance into the room. Following what seemed to be the main passage proved fruitless with the passage snubbing out. I returned to the squeeze to exhume more gravel, wanting to guarantee an easy route back.

We wanted this transport corridor to be established as one without obstruction. Michael took another turn returning to this place one last time for another clearing session. All the moving of pebbles in the squeeze created the highway we wanted but the large chamber was fully silted. Michael felt his way along the right hand wall in the unexplored direction and found a tunnel big enough for a diver and clear of gravel. This is the way on. We are set up for a push on the furthest southern extent of the Jenolan caves and a more accurate underwater surveying effort will begin on the next trip.

This had been a one day trip and we had to drive back to Sydney. Nevertheless we did an inspection of what happens to the stream that flows out of the Barralong Lake. After crawling down gravel-filled passage the river terminates in a deep sump blocked on the surface by formation. By slipping your legs into the water along the passage and up there is at least one small airspace further on. Something like a large octopus wrapped itself round my legs in the airspace. I rapidly extricated myself bringing the monster with me for a fight to the death. The monster was a huge deflated tractor tube and is likely to be the same tube mentioned in the Peter Rogers trip report. In those days the tube was inflated and used to float across the lake. I dragged the half water filled tube some of the way back to the main chamber intending to remove it. It was too heavy to lift up some of the climbs and I didn't have my knife to let the water out. Next trip we'll get it out.

The Barralong lake represents the best diving lead at Jenolan at the moment. Upstream beyond this is a large valley with no known stream cave. All of the dry leads at the end of Barralong have been exhausted (although the air goes on into a bedrock slit beyond the rift where dry cavers can reach). It just remains for us to push the river using modern dive gear to see where we can get to. Large imponderables await.

Blue-tongue is another good lead, since a glance at the Barralong map shows several hundred metres of blank space between here and the arch which blocks upstream access in the Mud tunnels. This is also a relatively easy place to reach with dive tanks, compared to the back of Barralong. As well as being a much shorter trip, this dive site is before the well-decorated zone of Barralong, and there is nothing delicate to avoid with the gear. All-in-all, Barralong has exciting prospects for the coming year, and we'll try to take full advantage of that.



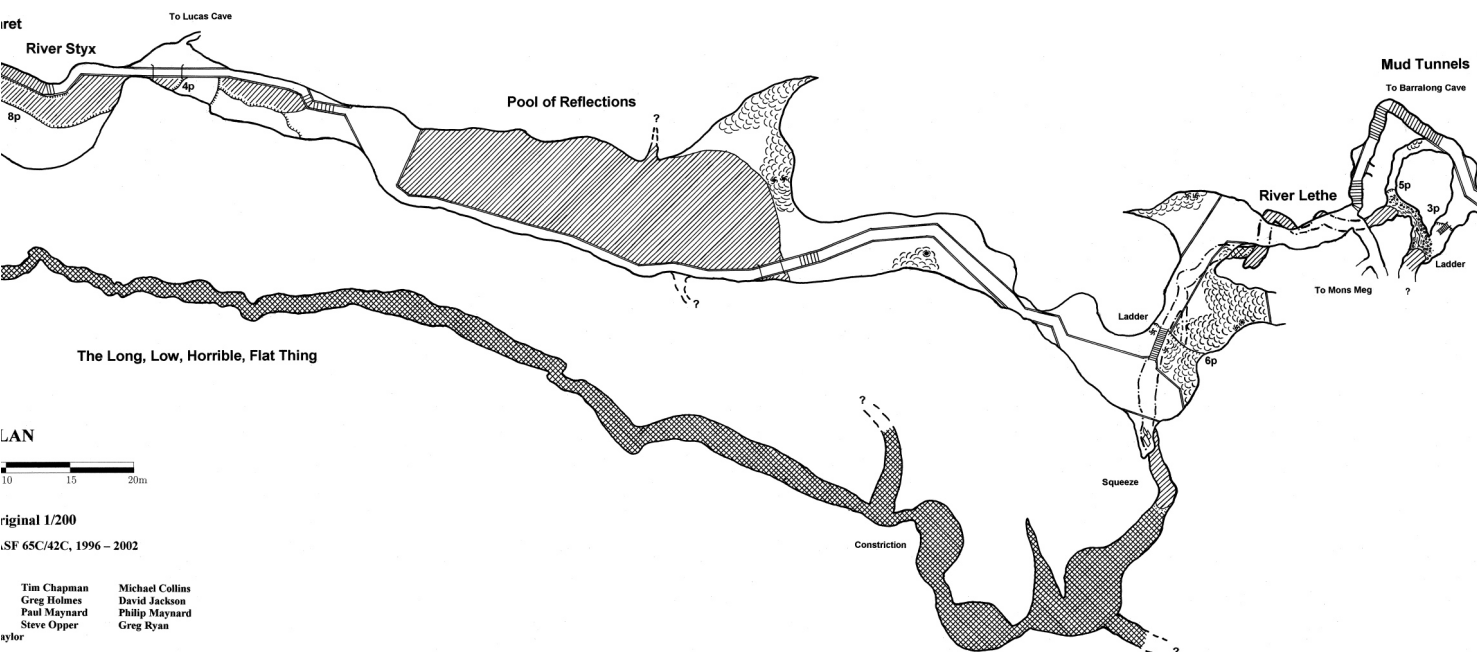
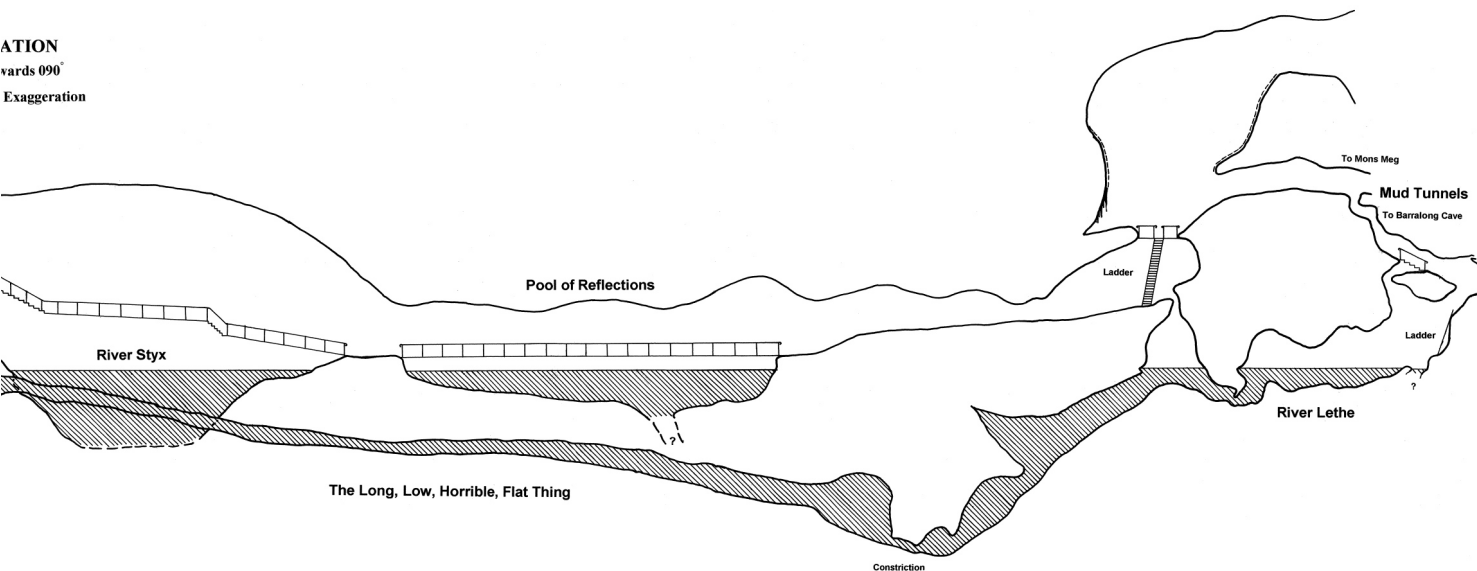
J10 RIVER CAVE **JENOLAN, NSW**



Scale of O
Surveyed by SUSS to A

Surveyors
Ron Allum
Ian Cooper
Heidi Macklin
Max Midlen
Al Warild
Cathy Brown
Mike Curtis
Angus Macoun
Tim Moulds
Keir Vaughan-T

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Exaggeration



LAN

original 1/200

SF 65C/42C, 1996 - 2002

Tim Chapman
Greg Holmes
Paul Maynard
Steve Oppen
Michael Collins
David Jackson
Philip Maynard
Greg Ryan

aylor

WAITOMO TRIP — JANUARY 2003

COMPILED BY MEGAN PRYKE WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM SIMON GODDARD, MIKE HELMAN, MARK LOWSON, GEOFF McDONNELL, CHRIS NORTON, MARTIN PFEIL AND MICHAEL TAYLOR

PHOTOS ALAN PRYKE

Participants: Annalisa Contos, Steven Contos, Simon Goddard, Mike Helman, Sean Hill, Mark Lowson, Phil Maynard, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Geoff McDonnell, Verity Morris, Paul Nelson, Chris Norton, Martin Pfeil, Richard Pfeil, Michael Taylor

The first wave of Waitomites arrived at Auckland airport at varying times on Saturday. By 3pm we had gathered enough drivers and cars for the first of the shopping rounds, leaving Chris to collect Paul. Breaking into teams of two per shopping trolley, each armed with an A4 sheet of shopping items, we scoured the shelves of Manakau Foodtown. Chris eventually turned up with a jet-lagged Paul who had flown from LA via Sydney, and had many irate negotiations with United Airlines en route. The smallest of the hire cars, a Ford Festiva, was converted into a shopping trolley by lowering the back seats. The cars were well and truly packed as we continued south. After a late dinner at Hamilton, and a slight navigation error getting out of Hamilton, we arrived at the HTG hut to claim our fridge, freezer and accommodation space around 11pm. The hype of unpacking had not died down by the time three more SUSSlings arrived from a flight that landed in Hamilton just before midnight.

Sunday 19th January

Caving! Andrew Matthews arrived to say hello. After much chatting we somehow arranged ourselves into three groups heading to the one place to park to do Virginia, Warren's Self Respect and Nemesis caves. Colin Campbell, another ex Aussie living in New Zealand, now a member of Auckland Speleological Group (ASG) also dropped by. The trip was really underway...

Meeting Our Nemesis

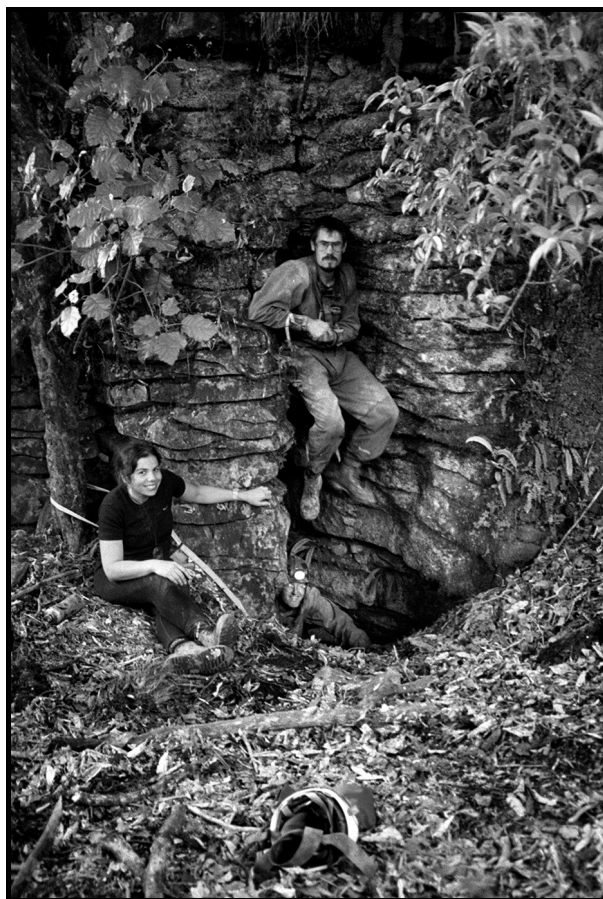
BY MEGAN PRYKE

Geoff McDonnell, Martin Pfeil, Alan Pryke and Megan Pryke

Andrew not only teed up the relevant permission but also kindly walked us to the entrance of Nemesis cave, some two or so kilometres across those Waitomo hills, many of which I am certain are the higher bits left after the land slumps into dolines and tomos. Nemesis starts as a tight rift at the base of a doline, but not too far in the floor disappeared. I found myself in a rift above a thirty-five metre pitch, which widened out into a high chamber only a metre or so below. Andrew was certainly right about the need to be on a well-anchored rope here!

What New Zealanders call a 'Waratah' was used for a rebelay rig. As waratahs are an Australian native plant, some clarification was sought from Andrew. Well, a Waratah is also known as a star picket or a steel fence post. I found this artful rigging device straddled across two shelves, backed up with some yellow tape. I secured a rebelay using a small Y anchor with tapes and three karabiners then completed the descent.

At the base of the pitch I got bored and wondered off. I headed down to an intersecting passage, with a stream junction, though the stream does not continue along navigable passage. The intersecting passage coming in from the right takes you over some flowstone, through a boot sucking muddy bit that, thankfully, does not last too long. Where this passage terminates the ceiling and walls are coated with white formation. I quickly headed back thinking that the others would be soon down, I was reluctant to go through the muddy bit too many times, therefore I called for Alan and Geoff to have a look as I could hear them at the junction. I waited for Martin to arrive,



Entrance of Nemesis

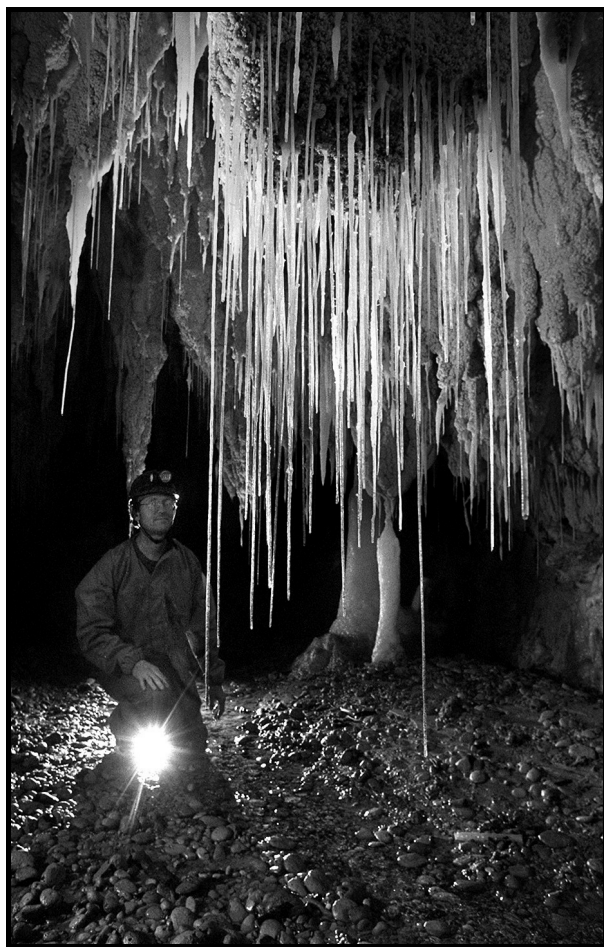
figuring I would see his light from where I was as Alan and Geoff engaged in photographic exercises. Eventually Alan started calling for something, I went back a bit for a short moment to hear what it was, but unfortunately missed Martin going past who had seen the sketch map and was heading into the cave further, in another direction.

We headed back to the intersection; Martin was nowhere to be seen. As the cave had not been visited too often a short climb had to be done cautiously as the thin flowstone crust could break away in clumps. After the climb we crawled through a small passage where lack of kneepads was compensated for by soft mud. We met an agitated Martin coming back out, who had headed off where he thought we would have been.

The route came out to a streamway with a profusion of long straws. The ceiling would be high enough to walk through, but the straws made it a crawl in places. We headed to the upstream end before heading back to take the obligatory photos. This of course took some time. To avoid straws the model would be kneeling, almost prostrate in the flowing stream. So much for the New Zealand definition of a dry cave!¹

Back at the pitch I ascended first. The narrow bit near the rebelay proved more awkward on ascent. I crossed the rebelay with no problem but continuing further along the rope took me sideways into a tighter part of the rift, with no footholds below. After a period of much scuffing I took a rest, having made no progress. The others below, noting the silence, inquired whether I was OK. "Yes. I am definitely safe", I assured them "Do you need help?" I obviously had not allayed their concern so I expanded my response: "It's a little awkward, but I am on rope and safe. Just taking a break to working out some other tactics." I made a few vain attempts to haul myself up using my lead ascender. I then found that I could not get the weight off my ascenders as the rope was sideways and the lead was pushed too far up (or across) the rope. Standing up in my foot loops would not help, nor could I get find a convenient foothold as the rift belled out at right angles from my belly button down. A small ledge gave some reprieve but getting up from this ledge was difficult due to it being overhung and tight passage above.

I woefully examined some great handholds that were out of my reach. I knew that I would not be able to haul myself up with arm strength, but speculated on whether I could use the tape in my pack to create a more conveniently placed foothold. I got out the tape, but this was pointless, as I could not reach these anchors even lasso style. I



Nemesis Straws

took another break. I fleetingly thought about whether there would be any advantage on getting someone below to prusik up to provide a human foothold.

"Nemesis, you wont get the better of me!" Unflinchingly I shimmied straight up, with elbows, including the use of my injured one, hips and eventually knees as I got a bit higher. Once up a few metres the passage was slightly more accommodating. Yes, I was through. And annoyed that I had given up on the first attempted technique so early.

I had realised I no longer had the tape with me, but figured that the others could collect it on their way through. But I did not figure that the tape would wait until Martin started ascending to slip down the pitch, shrouding Martin's shoulders and head as he started to clip onto the rope.



Snowcone in Nemesis

¹Kieran McKay, 'Nemesis – near the Mangapu Resurgence, Waitomo', NZSS Bulletin (176) December 1995

Next it was Alan who came up asking what the problem with the rebelay was. He was quickly informed to stop prussiking and go straight up, not across. We offered assistance with the pesky camera-laden pack. Eventually Geoff went through the same process after de-rigging the Waratah.

Sunday p.m. BBQ

We had been invited to a BBQ hosted by Van Watson. The sunset was spectacular from the small knoll that the BBQ was on, however I arrived too late to witness this. Given that those who had arrived earlier, such as Chris and Phil, had drunk a few beverages before any food was cooked I wondered if this reported sunset had more to do with over-stimulated imaginings.



Annalisa in Flood Caverns

We then returned and went upstream which proved to be great fun with lots of climbing, waterfalls and even some pretty bits in a chamber through a side passage off the main streamway.

It was then time to exit the cave up the pre-rigged handline. The crux move was a haul up to a hold followed by a short traverse. Myself, Annalisa and Megan were able to get up with 'leg-up' assistance from beneath. Then Alan, who had no one to boost him up, required ascenders and a rope.

The 4 km walk back to the car was at first an interesting exercise in scrub bashing, and unaided navigation through unfamiliar territory. Alan and myself pushed ahead trying to remember our way back. We eventually conceded that we were lost and that the GPS was required. But the GPS was with Megan who was with Annalisa and who were both nowhere to be seen or heard. Letting the truth get in the way of what could be a good story, the group eventually regrouped and consulted the GPS to discover we were only 600 m or so off course.

In summary, an excellent large streamway cave. Great fun and highly recommended.

Mangawhitikau cave

BY MIKEY HELMAN

Chris, Martin, Richard, Mikey, Mark

Dubbed as *the* trip to do in Waitomo, this cave was guaranteed to be an enjoyable one. We headed out to the property on a beautiful summers day. When we arrived I found out I had left my caving boots behind. I was only

Monday 20th

Sometime in the wee hours of Monday morning the final wave arrived; Annalisa, Steve and Verity. Eventually they emerged and had brekky. Again today's trips took us all in close proximity to each other. Mangawhitikau, Flood Caverns and a non-caving walk up Mangawhitikau Gorge, which entailed some cave-like exercise.

Flood Caverns

BY MICHAEL TAYLOR

Alan and Megan Pryke, Annalisa Contos, Michael Taylor.

The Flood Caverns streamway cave is a downstream continuation of the Mangawhitikau system and is known to be only metres from it.

The group was led to the cave entrance by Andrew Matthews. The route taken was thought not to be the most direct but was definitely very interesting with numerous electric fence crossings.

As suggested, prior to entering the cave we rigged an 'easy' 6 metre climb out with a handline off a ledge from a second entrance to the cave. From here it was planned that we would exit the cave and hence avoid the need to lug ascenders. So, with wetsuits under our cave suits and masses of photographic equipment we went caving.

The entrance pitch was about 20 metres with a bit of loose rock at the top. The pitch dropped us onto a muddy cave floor, which sloped down to the surging streamway. At first we ventured downstream getting submersed up to our necks and videoing with big bright video lights.

wearing sandals. Oh well. They would have to do. It was latish in the morning and we had a big cave to do. Mark lent me his wetsuit booties to wear under my sandals and I put a pair of socks over the booties to protect them. We trogged up (including wetsuit) and walked down the hill to find the cave entrance. Chris and Martin had been to the cave before but had done the trip as a downstream through trip. A new rule was recently implemented where you could only do the trip upstream after someone drowned in the cave when they jumped into a pool with aerated water and couldn't float.

We didn't find the entrance straight away and as a result got very hot and sweaty. I managed to get so thirsty that I drank over a litre of my 1.25 litres of water. I figured it was going to be a cold and wet cave that wouldn't make me too thirsty so I would be all right. (You are best not to drink the water in Waitomo caves as it is all sourced from runoff from farmland.) We finally found the right hole which had a funky dead sheep near it. So it wasn't long before we were underground to try and escape the smell.

The first part of the cave is a chimney down to a wet passage which runs horizontally to a pitch head. A rebelay must be rigged over the exposed 30 m pitch which has a nice drop of water falling next to it. Very refreshing. Once down the pitch you bend back the way you came and follow a passage which for a tall person like me who was wearing sandals was a real struggle. Add the vision obscuring fog of a wet cave, the early signs of dehydration and the pace of a Norton trip and you have the makings of a very uncomfortable and exhausting period of time. The heat that one generates when rushing through a physical passage with a wetsuit on is truly quite overwhelming. And when I get hot, I don't function very well! But, we eventually made it to our destination. The stream welcomed us in all its rushing glory! The group all lounged around cooling off in the cold of the river and ate some sugary items to get the excitement levels up. And so our real trip began.

Bring on the fun.

Let's see how I go with these sandals!

and so we arrived into the daylight – our escape from the cave.

Oh, you are wondering about how the journey went? No, you just want to know if I survived with my sandals don't you. Well, with flying colours actually. You don't need boots to do Mangawhitikau!

Yes, the journey was quite amazing. Swimming through deep pools, climbing waterfalls, wading through amazing passages with pillars of layered limestone that looks just incredible. The uncertainty of the survival of a member of the group when they decided to drink 2 litres of the dreaded cave water. The uncomfortable shock of moving a stick out of the water in front of you only to find it slither out of your hands and into the darkness of the water. The 15 metre chimney down a smooth vertical shaft that can't be the way on but it is! What more can I say? All in all it was an amazing experience. And the sandals did the job fine!

We were particularly lucky when arriving at the exit. We encountered a group departing the Rap, Rock and Raft tour area of the cave and managed to hitch a ride with the bus back to the main road. Quite frankly it would have been a horror to walk out that way which we were planning on doing. Even the bus ride seemed like a long time, and it is all uphill. Something five dehydrated cavers (except maybe for the person well hydrated on sheep poo and fertilizer water) would really have struggled with. In the end we made it back to the car. Those too stuffed to do anything sat around patiently waiting for Martin to de-rig the entrance.

Monday p.m.

Back at the hut to clean up and go to dinner. Dinner was yummy gourmet pizzas at one of the few places to eat at Waitomo. We then went and did Rurakuri following the BWR route. Making a long human chain with lights out going through a section with multitudinous glowworms was a real highlight. We certainly felt lucky. Thanks Andrew!

Tuesday 21st

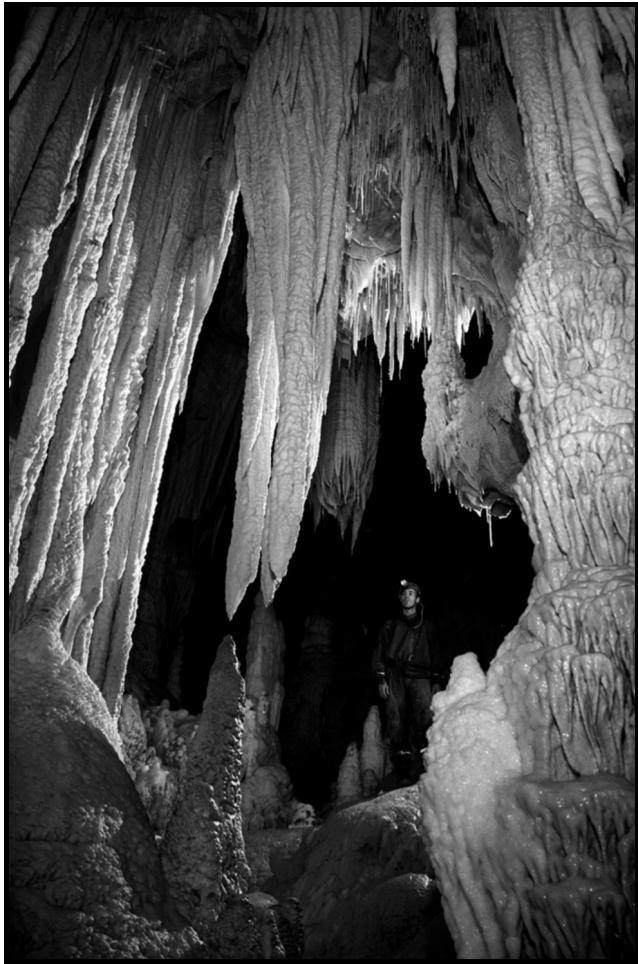
Time for Luckie Strike, Waipuna and another trip to Warren's Self Respect. Chris, Simon, Paul and Sean headed off for Rotorua to visit Wai-Taupo, Kerosene Creek and to experience skydiving without getting more than 10 metres off the ground.

Warren's Self Respect Gunned Down

BY MEGAN PRYKE

Participants: Alan Pryke, Michael Taylor, Michael Helman, Megan Pryke, Geoff McDonnell, Martin Pfeil and Verity Morris

Yeeeeee-owwww..... A crop dusting plane screamed into view just as we pulled onto the farm track. Verity was concerned when she saw a trail of white chemicals dropping from the sky, so was Michael who probably did not agree with techniques employed to fatten up beef. Actually, I think all of us were at least a little concerned. We consulted the closest person we had in horticultural matters, Geoff, who reported that it would be definitely be a



Temple of Pluto, Warren's Self Respect

ernous air raid shelter. We engaged in interesting balancing exercises as we took off our harnesses in an attempt to keep them relatively mud free at the bottom of the pitch.

We entered the decorated Temple of Pluto. I noticed a nice opportunity for a formation-framed picture and realising that Alan would not want to miss it I beckoned him down to inspect. The placing of models and flashes involved a short climb. Upon my return from flashing duties I stuffed a flash gun in between my outer trog suit and thermal layer. At the base of a short climb, before a word could be uttered the flash broke loose and became aerial, taking off in an immediate downward direction over a very steep flowstone slope.... There was nothing to be done now.... The anxiety of the flash's fate heightened with the sound of each crunching impact. At this stage I found my voice involuntarily commenting on each bounce with monosyllabic, exclamatory words. Well, actually, it was the one word spasmodically repeated. The final splash! It was as if each bounce had been a wave building up with the concluding splash the final collapse following a suspenseful apex. The flashgun had reached an early retirement.

The cloud that befell the group with the falling flash incident quickly subsided as we focused on continuing. I set up a handline for a traverse – if somebody made an unfortunate slip here they could end up at the same level as the flash. With its depth so graphically demonstrated only a few moments before no one had a desire to go down this route. This drop is called the Black Abyss. Alan murmured, "Well of course you wouldn't have dropped it in something with a name like 'Dinky Hole'".

I inspected a possible route, looking for a hole to pop into and hopefully find a 20-foot drop. Well, I decided that this hole was too large and the drop, whose depth was indeterminable unless on rope, seemed more like a pitch than something to be negotiated with a handline. Inspecting the survey later I think this may have been the Throat. Giving up on this route I popped back to the chamber area and headed up over flowstone. By taking a right turn and heading through boulders I located a smaller hole through rock, and a much friendlier looking chimney. It fitted the verbal description I had so I hollered back to the others. A six-metre tape was set up for the chimney climb to the intermediate level.

We hurried down the winding stream passage that took us to the bottom of the Black Abyss, looking out for the remains of the flash. It was found, though not in water. The LCD screen was cracked and the batteries had ejected as predicted. Even without the weight of the batteries the flash had little chance of recovery. Alan spent some time

major worry if it was herbicide, which can be aerially dropped as there were strains designed to target particular plants, but it was probably fertiliser. It really did not help that Geoff was not able to say if fertiliser was really bad or not. "Well it's definitely not good, definitely". I was warned that we might be sprayed by the farmer when organising permission to cross the property. "If the farmer thought there would be a problem he would not have let us in the area", I concluded, hoping to lessen the anxiety. "But they're farmers", Verity exclaimed. "I guess that means that they know of the dangers", I reasoned. "Yeah like with DDT", said Michael. Well, I did not want to tarry too long speculating about whether any offspring we may have in future would have three heads. So I thought it best to get active.

We embarked on the walk to the tomo as the plane persisted in its task. Although not directly underneath its path the wind carried plumes of particles along our course, bringing with it a tangy taste of something. This was not good, and to make matters worse we seemed not only to be in the general area being sprayed but seemed to be becoming target practice as the plane got closer with each round. Eventually we made to the shade of native trees. Safe. Or so we thought. While donning our SRT gear the plane made a direct overhead swoop. Pip-pop-patta! It sounded like a deluge of rain, but it wasn't. Small pellets ricocheted through the bushes, appearing on the ground around our feet and some directly dropping into the tomo! There was some relief that it was not liquid spray but solids. Although it seemed that we were being targeted, there was a delay in the opening and shutting of the aerial droppings done to avoid fertilising areas that did not need it.

A pre-rigged entrance pitch sped up the progress to the caver-

drying out the flash and FireFly slave unit as we settled in for some lunch. I found the four batteries nearby. The slave proved more resilient than the flash it served.

Michael started pushing for talk of finding and rigging the pitch to the streamway. He started to investigate a drop into a canyon, which he managed to climb down. It looked a bit dodgy for me so I decided to rig the rope, which was backed up on a boulder and anchored to a stalagmite closer to the drop. Well, it was the pitch down, which is in two stages. Michael abseiled down the lower and longer second pitch, which the upper pitch overhung so it could not be seen from my vantage point. Martin followed him and I came down to rig a rebelay between the pitches. It was reported from below that the nineteen-metre rope just made it. A bit further along we reached the active streamway level; the stench of something dead kept us moving.

We explored upstream first. The stream passage was tight and the walls coated with dark manganese in areas. Alan led us up another fork, which was supposed to be a small loop trip. As we shimmied through the small passage, Michael and Mike both expressed a desire to know when the loop was to be completed. We ploughed on until we reached a terminal aven; we had been misguided. A quick survey check. "We are in this aven below Neugler's Nook, gee this survey is confusing", Alan pleaded and took off in full reverse insisting it was worth the visit. Arthur's Pass, an alternative and vertical tomo route drops into this passage, dripping through an aven from above.

We then retraced our steps, passing by the stench which marked the passage back out and explored downstream. Much to Michael's approval the passage was comparatively larger. We turned back when the pools started getting deeper and we headed out. While others prussiked up I quickly inspected the 'straight and narrow passage to stream', however I did not wish to expend the energy needed to climb back up a drop so did not venture too far.

The evening gear cleaning took a while due to the copious amounts of mud accumulated to our wet trog suits and to our boots then to our SRT gear and rope. Again, I was part of the last group back to the hut. Though we did get some nice photos, at least up until the Black Abyss incident...

Looking at the survey now I am still a little confused over how the cave fits together. The difficulties of interpreting a two dimensional representation of a cave that has various overlapping levels, especially a large cave where the scale causes the survey to be simplified in places, is apparent, however it does invite one to go back and see for themselves.

Wednesday 22nd Jan

Today a through trip in Fred was planned. Paul, Phil, Sean, Verity and Michael went underground into Mangawhiti-kau Cave. Annalisa and Steven sped off to Rotoroa to see the bubbling mud, boiling water and geysers.

Fred & Rumbling Gut

BY CHRIS NORTON

In through the right way: Mike Helman, Geoff McDonnell, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke

Not quite in through the wrong way: Mark Lowson, Chris Norton, Martin Pfeil, Richard Pfeil

It's perhaps a sign of how many caves they have at Waitomo that there is such a diversity of names for caves. Some are inspiring (Nemesis, Lost World, Ringlefall). Others speak of epic terrors to be found within them (Purgatory, The Ripper, Mudball). Then there are the prosaic (Mason's Glowworm Cave, Millar's Waterfall), the unpronounceable (Mangawhiti-kau) and the just plain silly (Warren's Self Respect). We could debate the most unappealing cave name (during our trip there, several people suggested Goddard's Cave or Yank fit this description, although this was mainly to stir up Simon & Paul respectively) but if there is an award for the most unevocative name at Waitomo, it would have to go to Fred.

Having said all that, Fred is actually not a bad cave, Guv, containing a not 'arf decent streamway and a fair share of wizard decoration. Or so they tell me. For, despite my best efforts, I didn't get to do it.

There are two entrances to Fred. One is the nice entrance that drops down a big open shaft straight into the streamway. The other entrance rejoices in the dubious name of the 'Sweat Shop Entrance' and leads into a side stream renowned for requiring chimneying along on narrow ledges that break off on you. Being good little troglodytes we'd done our research and found an article by Phil Maynard that informed us that the pitch down the main entrance was 60 m, and the Sweat Shop entrance featured a 30 m abseil to a 'ledge' followed by a further 15 m drop. Megan and Alan had also both been in the cave before and done a through trip. Alan decided that it would be a good idea if his group went in through the streamway entrance and out through the Sweat Shop. Hmm, perhaps he knew something we didn't. But we took his word for it.

The first attempt was on our first full day at Waitomo, but was thwarted by an inability to get in touch with the farmer to get permission. However, the second attempt seemed much more promising. We had permission. We had two parties. We had what we reckoned was enough rope. We had GPS co-ordinates for both entrances from Colin

Campbell. And we had two keen parties of likely lads (and an even more likely lady) ready to investigate just why this cave had such a crummy name. And so it came to pass that we were bumping along a farm track in the midst of a large mob of sheep looking for an airstrip.

A word about New Zealand airstrips. There are a lot of them marked on the maps. Do not be fooled. These are not large 500 m strips of macadam with windsocks and landing lights. These are not even long level strips of grass. They are generally bits of land that have less trees, fences and sheep on them than the other bits. They can be on an interesting angle – or, in the case of the Puketiti Station airstrip, run up one side of a hill and down another. (The airstrips at the international airports tend to be a little more robust, however.) The Fred airstrip, with its knee-high grass and pronounced slope, didn't look very airstriplike, but what the heck, we weren't actually going to try to land any aircraft on it, so what did we care?

Time to split up. Both Alan and Martin had GPS units, which we checked at the car. Although no-one in the Sweat Shop party had actually been there before, the plan was that the GPS would lead us right to the entrance. In a burst of brilliance, Alan decided that Martin should take Alan's GPS to the Sweat Shop entrance whilst he took Martin's to the main entrance, and leave the GPS's by the entrance. The rationale for this was that when we came out umpteen hours later in the pitch dark feeling tired and mentally vacant we would be able to use a GPS that we actually knew how to use to get back to the car, rather than trying to figure out someone else's. Of course, this meant a very basic course had to be given to one another in how to use the other's GPS, but finally we were ready to go. Satellites were in position, bags were packed. However, just as we marched up the hill, Megan muttered softly "There are other tomos in the vicinity."

Whoa there. What does that mean. In the postcode area? We knew that. 100 m away? 50 m away? 10 m away? Megan started drawing a complicated map in the grass with zigging and zagging fencelines. Have you ever tried to draw in knee-high grass? "Perhaps I should go with you", she suggested.

"No, no, the GPS will lead them right there. Nothing to worry about", said Alan. So we set off in our opposite directions.

Our entrance was about 600 m away, according to the GPS. We were now to remind ourselves of the delights of beeline navigation by GPS, as the unit led us through an electric fence, several large clumps of blackberries and a swamp. However, we were soon closing in on a patch of forest ringed by a zigzagging fenceline that probably looked just like the one Megan didn't manage to draw in the grass. 40 m, said the GPS. 30 m. 25 m. 20 m. 15 m. And then we hit the forest.

If you haven't been to Waitomo, you may not appreciate the nature of the topography. Okay, first imagine J-Lo. Lying down. Like in that scene in U-Turn where....never mind. Well, the undulations are similar to that. Being farmland, the land has generally been cleared of most native vegetation, so most of the landscape is paddocks. But every now and then, there is a whopping great hole in the ground, and because this isn't too good a place to graze sheep, such holes are generally ringed by a fence and a small patch of dense vegetation. (I'm not going to stretch the J-Lo analogy any further or I'll get into trouble.) Once you get inside one of these patches of vegetation, you'd be forgiven for thinking you were in the jungles of darkest Borneo rather than in the middle of a sheep paddock. And, as we very swiftly discovered, the jungles of Borneo are really very good at hiding your GPS unit from satellites.

We had been 15 m away from the cave, but about 5 m further on, we were suddenly 25 m from the entrance. Then 40 m. Then 85 m. Then it was 10 m in the other direction. Not very useful. However, we knew it wasn't very far from where we were. Sure enough, we found a tomo. But, as Megan had rightly pointed out, there were other tomos in the vicinity. One tomo was located about 3 m from the first tomo. There was another one about 10 m from that. And so on.

We spread into search pattern and narrowed down the likely candidates to three. By a rigorous traditional selection method, we picked one, and started rigging a rope. Martin, with furrowed brow, said he thought we could do a bit better than eeny-meeny-miney-mo, and decided to go for another sweep with the GPS. He wandered off into the paddock again and walked slowly towards the forest in an attempt to get as accurate a fix as he could on direction and distance. Looked like we'd probably picked the right one. Chris clipped in and jumped over the edge.

One thing was for sure – this cave didn't seem to fit the description we'd been given. We'd been told about a fairly nasty pitch that was sloping and covered in cruddy vegetative matter – this pitch was a beautiful vertical shaft. We'd brought a 44 m rope for the initial '30 m' drop, but this ran out about 10m above the bottom. Luckily we'd brought another 20 m rope, and even more luckily, Chris had tied it on the bottom of the big rope when he'd packed it, so getting down wasn't too much of a problem. However, once at the bottom, there weren't many places to go. There was one route – a small cleft to one side led down some crumbly climbs into darkness. Did it go into Fred? Undoubtedly, yes. Was it humanly navigable? Undoubtedly, no. Not wanting to spend time bombing lots of 50 m shafts in the hope that we might suddenly find the right one, we decided to call it quits, and Martin was dispatched to try and find the others and let them know that if they planned on finding a rope at the other end of the cave, they might be waiting a long time.

We derigged and ambled back to the car, this time by a less direct route that was, however, free of swamps and blackberries. We met Martin at the airstrip – he had been able to intercept the others. We toyed with the idea of following them down the main entrance but decided that 8 cavers x 60 metres of prusiking = one long wait + 8 cold dinners, and so decided to move on.

But where to? What was a nice short undemanding cave for four people that we might actually have a chance of a) getting permission for and b) finding?

Flicking through the books, we found a name that rang bells with Chris. He'd been to Rumbling Gut on his first trip to Waitomo in 1991. Never been back, but he thought he could probably find his way through – particularly as the cave had been the scene of an embarrassing navigation-related incident in '91 that Mark Staraj will never let Chris live down. This stiffened his resolve to go back and get it right this time. Even better, Chris was pretty sure he remembered what the cave entrance looked like. Better still, we knew which road it was on, knew it was close to the roadside, and had a GPS reference. The clincher was that the farm manager was only too happy for a bunch of crazy cavers to loiter under his property.

Of course, although the cave was only about 10 minutes drive from the Fred airstrip, we had driven for 30 minutes back to the hut to get the road map, the cave map, and to call up for permission, only to have to turn around and drive back the other way. However, eventually we were en route. People were strangely quiet in the car. Maybe they were worn out from too much not going caving that morning, or maybe it was just the soothing sounds of Chris' industrial death thrash music, but soon three out of four cavers were sound asleep. As luck would have it, though, the driver stayed awake, so tragedy was averted. Chris had to shake Martin awake as we approached the cave to get a GPS reading, and then Richard and Mark were dragged blearily out and told to gear up.

Rumbling Gut is a through trip. Chris had memories from his last trip of popping up in the middle of rolling farmland with no idea of where he was, so Alan's GPS was packed securely in the cave pack before we disappeared into Phosphate Pot. Despite its name, Phosphate Pot is a horizontal entrance, and in its early stages is pretty uninviting, being tight and sinuous. However, the cave soon opens up into decorated passage. Being a small group, and equipped not only with a former visit but also a map, we visited most parts of the cave in doublequick time. The passageways around Phosphate Pot connect to the main stream passage via Last Minute Crawl and an interesting climb. The stream is not large by Waitomo standards (around Tuglow size) and to me, the streamway portion of the cave is very reminiscent of Tuglow, involving a reasonable amount of sporting clambering up, down and over things. Despite the stream making its presence known by lots of noisy waterfalls and things, you don't really come to grips with it until the dying moments of the cave where there are some interesting pools and climbs to be negotiated, including a fun traverse across a pool balanced on a cable. So swift was our progress, and so warm was the cave, that Mark spent some time wallowing around in the pools just to cool off. Eventually we emerged after around 1.5 hrs underground.

The surface around the submergence entrance had changed markedly since Chris' last visit. What was previously rolling sheep-dotted hills was now a dense pine forest. Aha, but we had our GPS to tell us which way to go, right? It turned out that the GPS didn't want to work deep in a doline surrounded by pine trees. We wandered uphill for a bit so that the unit could finally acquire satellites. We discovered that Alan's GPS took about six minutes to locate satellites even in the thinner sections of forest. This wouldn't have mattered so much if it didn't also have an automatic power-off feature that switched it off after five minutes. However, we finally got it functioning – we were headed in precisely the wrong direction of course. A circuitous route was taken following ridges around the cave doline. This was made all the more difficult by the fact that some helpful soul, in an attempt to thin out the pine forest to assist GPS users, had cut down every 5th tree. These trees were left lying randomly strewn around the ground. Of course, the GPS insisted on leading us the most tree-infested route, and we only cleared the forest about 100 m from the car. By this time, we were both overheated from thrashing around in our thermals, and soaked from the light NZ rain that had accompanied our journey. But at least we had got some caving done, dammit!

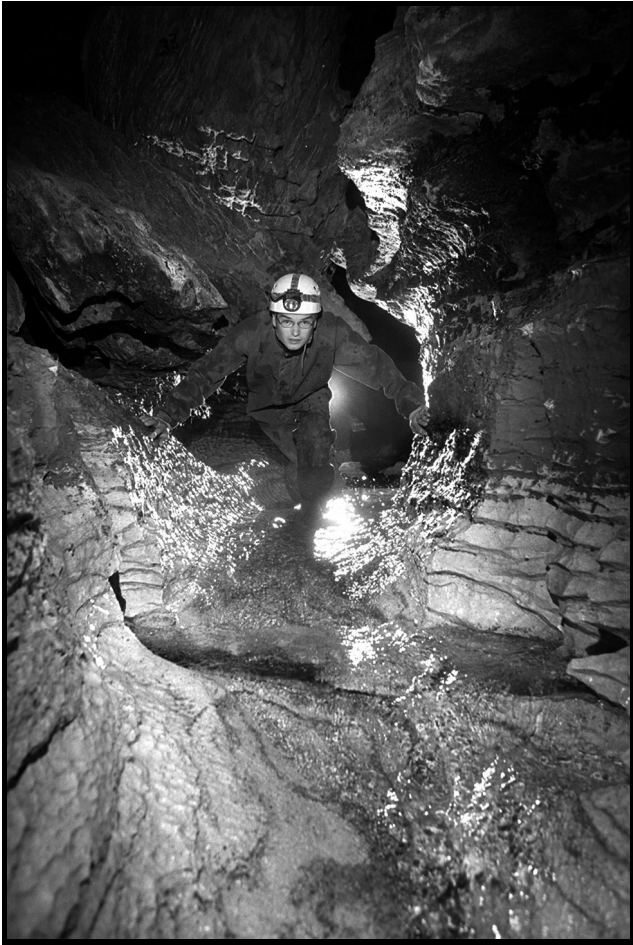
The other Fred party was back much later that night, and as predicted their dinners got cold. Megan looked at Chris reproachfully and said "I went over to the Sweat Shop entrance and walked right to it!" Um, yeah, but she knew which of the many tomos it was. Later investigations (after Chris had to go home – damn!) proved that the tomo we'd abseiled down was right next to the correct one. However, that investigation also proved that the entrance pitch was about 50 m followed by 20 m, not 30 m / 15 m as suggested. Even if we'd found the right hole, we wouldn't have had enough rope. So grab your copies of SUSS Bull 40(4) and change those figures on page 5, folks!

In the Next issue!

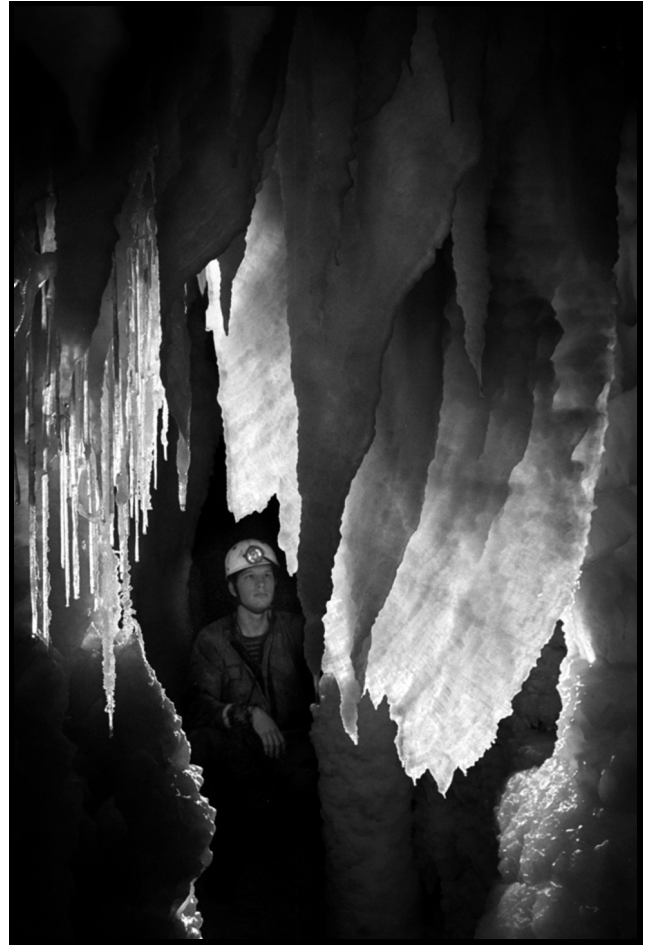
- Read about the wonders of Puketiti station!
- See if we dare to publish what really happened in Millar's Waterfall Cave!

To be Continued....

PHOTO GALLERY



Mark Lowson in Skyline, Mahoenui
photo Alan Pryke



Mike Helman in Stinkpot, Mahoenui
photo Alan Pryke



Martin Pfeil in Nemesis, Waitomo
photo Alan Pryke

PHOTO GALLERY



Nemesis, Waitomo
photo Alan Pryke



Flower cave, Puketiti
photo Alan Pryke

TRIP LIST: JULY 2003

SUSS General Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00pm (for a 7.30pm start) in the Common Room of the Holme Building at the University of Sydney. The Holme Building is close to the Parramatta Rd footbridge on the northern side of campus. The Common room is on the first floor (enter from Science Rd).

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

July

5–6 Wombeyan. More mapping, in Bullio & Mares Forest Ck. Contact Phil Maynard, 9908 2272 (home).

5–11 Jenolan. A chance to get away from Sydney for more than a weekend, accommodation at the Cavers cottage. Contact Ian Cooper, 6362 9028 (home).

12–13 Tuglow. Just a short drive from Jenolan. Tuglow is a large streamway cave on the picturesque Kowmung River. Contact Richard Pfeil, on 9713 9460 (home).

19 or 20 Mid-winter Canyoning. A one day winter canyoning trip. Join David Connard, 9428 1608 (home).

26–27 Wyanbene. An extensive streamway cave south of Braidwood with a bit of everything. The following day visit Marble Arch or if you can do a bit of SRT come to Ridge Mine Pot (if we find it) Contact Megan Pryke, 9524 0317 (home).

August

2–3 Jenolan. Our regular trip to Jenolan is on again, accommodation at the Cavers cottage. Contact Brett Davis, 9747 4818 (home).

6 General Meeting. 7:00 pm Holme Reading room.

9 Training Day. SRT training day. Come and learn the skills necessary for vertical caving. Contact Steve Contos, 9488 7742 (home).

16–17 Cleifden. Permit pending. Visit the pretty caves of the central west and stay in the luxurious cavers cottage. Contact Martin Pfeil, 9713 9460 (home).

23–24 Wee Jasper. A weekend of Fun, games, laughter, ropes, metal, scouts, mud and batshit. Abseiling equipment required. Contact Brett Davis, 9747 4818 (home).

30–31 Fordham Canyon. A fantastic multi-pitch canyon on the Shoalhaven river. For experienced canyons only. Contact Martin Pfeil, 9713 9460 (home).

September

4 General Meeting. 7:00 pm Holme Reading room.

6–7 Jenolan. Our regular trip to Jenolan is on again, accommodation at the Cavers cottage. Contact Phil Maynard, 9908 2272 (home).

13–14 Tuglow. Springtime on the picturesque Kowmung River. Contact Richard Pfeil, 9713 9460 (home).

20–21 Abercrombie Caves. Permit Pending. These caves are located south of Bathurst. Contact Brett Davis, 9747 4818 (home).

Christmas/New Year — Two Tasmanian trips:

20–25 December. Mole Creek. The classics. Some very pretty caves, vertical experience needed for some caves.

26 Dec–4 Jan 2004. Junee – Florentine caves. Slightly more obscure Mole Creek, Gunns Plains and Junee Florentine caves. Research has begun and the problem is choice with so many honeypots! Competent SRT cavers only for the vertical, wet caves. For both trips contact Megan, meganandalan@optusnet.com.au, 9524 0317 (home).
