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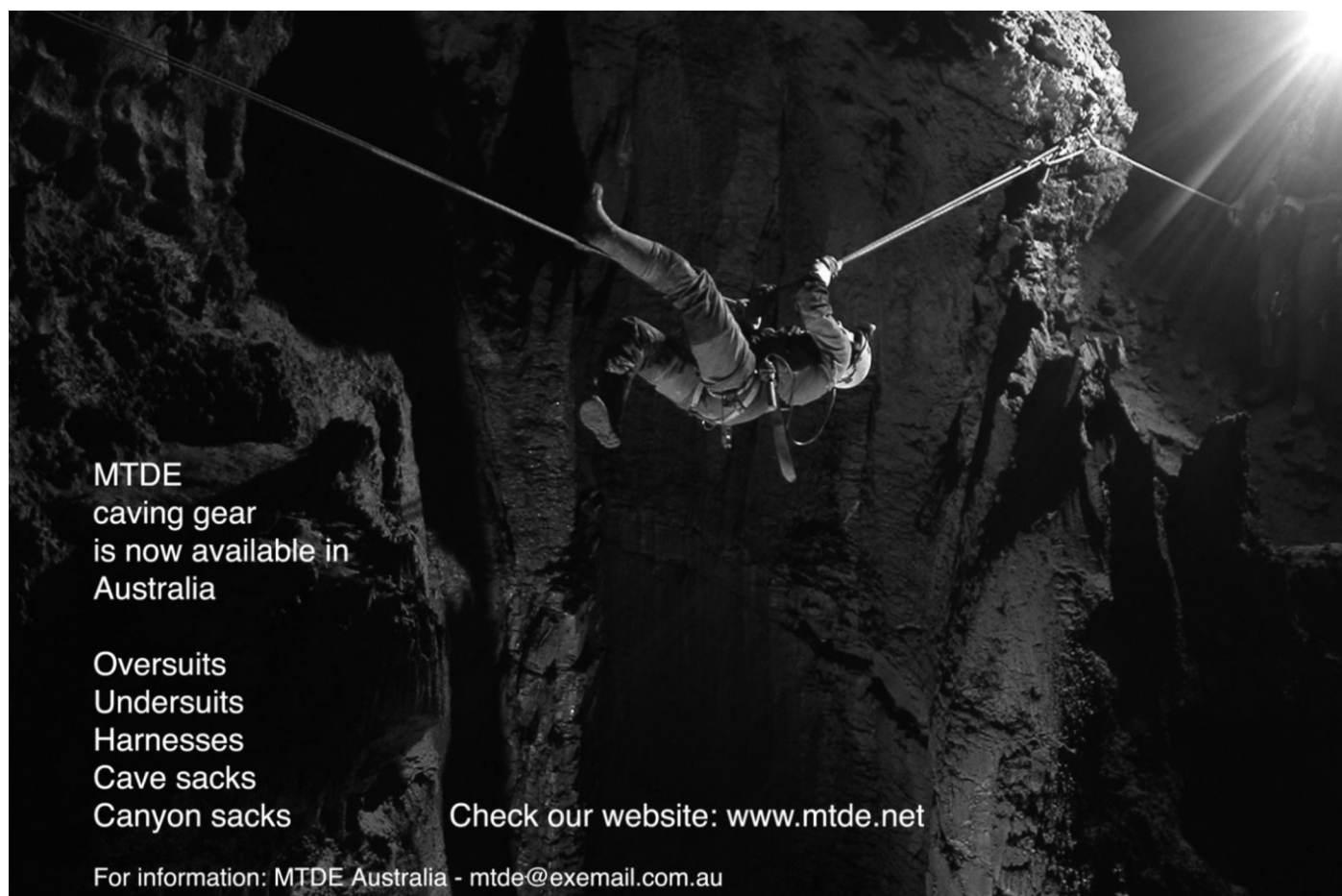
Bulletin of the Sydney University Speleological Society

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Cover Photo: Nettle Cave, Jenolan
Photo Alan Pryke



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Lifting the Lid on Nettle Cave

The Daily Telegraph, 16/12/2006

By Peter Trute

It was once the introduction to the underworld wonders of the Jenolan Caves for wide-eyed holidaymakers.

Nettle Cave, a winding cavern distinguished by unique rock formations and illumination of its pastel-toned walls through a natural skylight, was a must-see for visitors to the caves west of Sydney since tours began in 1846.

But 74 years ago Nettle Cave was closed off and abandoned in favour of the more exotic limestone caves discovered nearby.

Now this forgotten piece of Jenolan's history will be returned to the public when next week it opens for the first time since 1932.



Michael Fraser and Felise Azevedo in Nettle

photo Alan Pryke

It is a sign of the beauty of Jenolan's other magnificent caves that Nettle could remain closed for so long, Jenolan Caves historian Rob Whyte said.

"It was pretty much a stock-standard part of every visit to Jenolan in the 1800s, you had to do Nettle Cave", he said.

Nettle is distinguished from others, such as the striking Orient Cave, by being partly open to the elements. It runs off Devil's Coachhouse, a giant stone arch named after a terrified camper who had a vision of Old Nick steering a horse and carriage through the opening.

Jenolan guide Ted Matthews said the exposure to wind and light meant Nettle's ancient stalactites and stalagmites were more weathered than the delicate white and pink crystals of fully enclosed limestone caves.

"But just look at it, it's fantastic and has such a spooky feel to it," he said while taking *The Daily Telegraph* on a preview tour yesterday.

“There’s such a variety of structures and expressions by the calcium carbonate that creates them over such long periods of time.”

Among the 400 million-year-old formations in Nettle Cave is a feature found nowhere else in the Jenolan system. They’re known as stromatolites but visitors to the caves called them craybacks for their resemblance to the curved back of a crayfish.

Stromatolites’ ridged surfaces are formed by an interaction between the calcium carbonate and the bacteria which thrive in the in the light and moisture.

Nettle Cave took its name from the thick covering of stinging nettles which still grow on the hillside around its entrance. It’s that sting in the cave’s tale which put it out of business, Mr Whyte said.

Tired of battling the painful plants to show the cave, guides eventually abandoned it in favour of its more spectacular neighbours.

When visitors return from next week they will see the cave as it was left all that time ago – even with some original light fittings in place.

With \$1.2 million spent on walkways, lighting and audio guides, touring is an easier prospect today.

“It’s so good to be able to show this to people after it’s been hidden for so long,” Mr Matthews said.

It’s not just Bungonia.....

Stuck woman traps SA cave group

An overweight woman who got stuck in a South African cave trapped 22 fellow tourists for more than 10 hours and had to be prised free with liquid paraffin. The woman became trapped in the Tunnel of Love obstacle in the Congo Caves in Western Cape on New Year’s Day. The caves’ manager said the woman had been warned she might not be suitable but she insisted on trying.

One of those trapped was a diabetic who had to be brought insulin. The woman and the other tourists were unhurt. The rescue operation involved several ambulance teams and a helicopter. *BBC, 2/1/2007*

Downstream Barralong

The September diving trip to Jenolan was another Barralong effort. This time, four divers were put into the downstream end of Barralong – Michael Collins, Jason Cockayne, Paul Boler and Phil Maynard. Retracing their way to Captain Cook’s Cavern, previously found by Michael, the divers spent a very long time exploring every lead, digging in the creek at the rockpile blockage, photographing and surveying through the fourth sump down to the end. The downstream survey is now within 36 metres – and 7 metres vertically! – of the base of the ladder pitch which is the next known piece of the creek. With that seven metre drop in between, the missing piece of creek can’t all be horizontal flattener sump. Stay tuned! *Phil Maynard*



Barralong formation

photo Paul Lewis

MALAITA WALLS AND BOAR'S HEAD

SATURDAY 22 JULY 2006

BY MICHAEL FRASER

Participants: Michael Fraser, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Tina Wilmore, Matt Fischer, Andy Herries, Kate Russell

The week leading up to our abseiling trip was rainy and the weather man confirmed the weekend would not be much clearer. Despite Saturday morning greeting us with miserable clouds, we pushed on with hope. The day turned out to be beautiful.

We started down the track to the cliff edge at Malaita Walls, Katoomba. Having spotted an ideal photo op, Alan raced on ahead leaving me to give chase, camera in hand. Jamison Valley made for a dramatic backdrop while I clicked away at the figure on the cliff edge, surrounded by mist.

All seven of us gathered at the cliff top, donning harnesses and helmets. Cakes and pies purchased from Katoomba Bakery kept the enthusiastic group busy, whilst I rigged the 40 metre abseil and proceeded down our first pitch of the day.



*Tina with the weakest link
photo Alan Pryke*



*Alan on edge
photo Michael Fraser*

The anchor of the second abseil consists of two bolts pinning chains to the cliff. Having been here two months prior with Matt, it was evident that one of the 6 mm chain links had been rubbing against the wall. This had caused it to wear down to a frightening 2.5 mm. The rust didn't appear to be helping either.

Tina stayed put and belayed the others. Meanwhile, I worked on replacing the damaged chain, using an 8 mm substitute. This was held off the wall with a bolthanger and shackle to prevent further rubbing. All seven descended this pitch off our new anchor – unharmed.

Pitches three, four and five were classic, fun abseils. The sun had all but diffused the morning's mist by now, and we made our way back along the track towards Scenic World. Furber Steps provided the way out for all but one, who chose to ride the Scenic Railway.

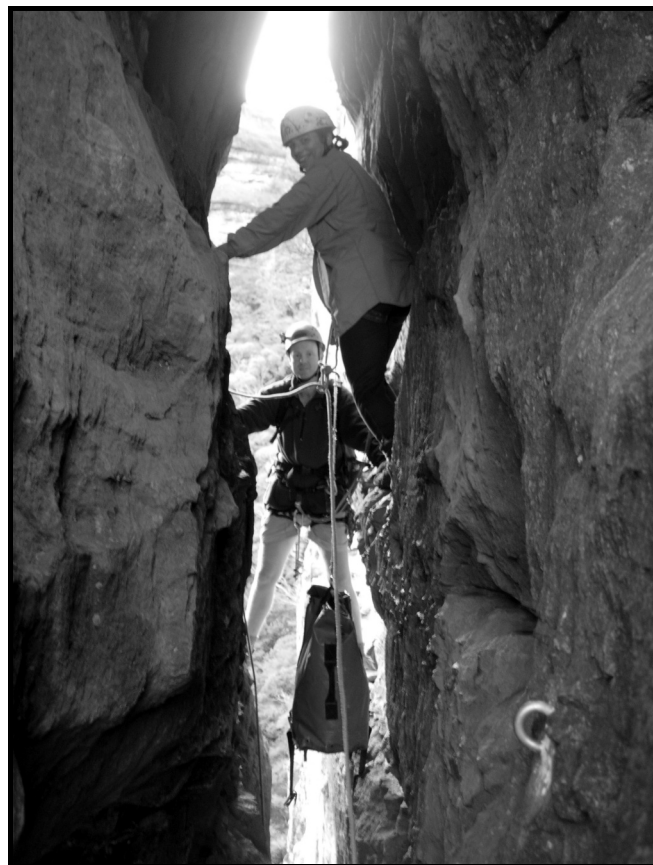
It was now nearly lunch time and we found ourselves perched on the cliff edge overlooking Boar's Head. This is a large chunk of rock that resembles a pig's head. Situated on the western side of Narrow Neck overlooking the Megalong Valley, it was the perfect location for lunch. The group basked in the sun, enjoying our ham and salad rolls purchased from Katoomba bakery.

The trip down Boar's Head is usually a little bit scary for some. High winds threaten to blow you off some of the small ledges. Today was a different story. Today, there was no wind. No wind means you don't have to contend with squinting eyes whilst walking through the scary rift to the second abseil. With multiple ropes on hand, we were able to keep the trip running at a pace conducive to the shorter winter daylight hours. The final drop (42 metres) is exposed and fantastic, with a great overhang greeting the abseiler half way down the pitch. No wind means an easy pull down to wrap up the trip.

On to our next trip: Devil's Hole. Courtesy of Alan, pistachio nuts were consumed before continuing with a walk under the cliff line for a few hundred metres to our exit up Devil's Hole. Half way up Devil's Hole is a chock stone, suspended about 40 metres above the ground. Up we went and set up a 50 metre rope. We all had a turn abseiling and posing for photos on the way down.

An exciting trip that should be on all SUSSlings' to-do list. A great day was had by all, topped off with a drink at the Grandview, Wentworth Falls.

Malaita Walls approximate pitch lengths: 1) 40 m 2) 26 m 3) 31 m 4) 30 m 5) 40 m. Boar's Head approximate pitch lengths: 1) 25 m 2) 15 m 3) 25 m 4) 28 m 5) 42 m



***Megan and Michael on Boar's Head
photo Alan Pryke***



***Matt on the third pitch of Malaita walls
photo Alan Pryke***

OUT CAVIN' WITH THE HILL PHILLIES

WAITOMO AND SURROUNDS, NEW ZEALAND, APRIL 2006

BY MEGAN PRYKE, PHOTOS ALAN PRYKE

Led by "Kill Phil", as Norton dubbed that Maynard character, many SUSSlings crossed the Tasman sea to frolic in underground realms and tramp over mountain tops (but for the snow and ice) of the North Island of NZ, mostly around Waitomo.

Phil's SUSS entourage included Simon Goddard, Michael Fraser, Kevin Moore, Chris Norton and for some parts of the trip Simon Cruden, Brett Davis and Imogen Furlong from the UK. Alan and I were also amongst the SUSSlings group, joining the Kill Phil group just after Easter and leaving on Anzac day.

Over Easter, Alan and I were not with the KillPhil, but with PhotoPhil and a group of Kiwi cavers at Puketiti Station.

Easter at Puketiti Station with NZ Cavers

Alan and I joined up with a group from Auckland Speleological Group (ASG) including Phill Round (PhotoPhil), Brendon Nevin, Pip Furness, Ken Aaron, Dave Bland, Florian Renz and others. Also at Puketiti was a group from Hamilton Tomo Group (HTG).

KillPhil originally planned to travel to Puketiti for part of Easter, but changed his mind on the basis that there was too much fun to be had up at Waitomo, which may have been a good thing given that so many cavers were down at Puketiti there was little space to fill in.

It is often said that hire cars are of an amphibious nature, a statement made in jest. On our prior Puketiti trip much ground was covered by foot, our 2WD sedans with their retread tyres not up to traversing a dry grass track. This time, two NZ cavers who were also 4WD owners were eager to test their 4WDs by getting them as close as possible to cave entrances.

Pesky Climbs in Pet Cemetery

The first day (Good Friday) was exploratory. Using Brendon's and Dave's 4WDs we headed up to the Verry's Farm to examine various tomos. Mark Verry was in bed with the flu but was full of suggestions. Sue Verry kindly showed us the way on her quad bike accompanied by the enthusiastic dogs, who were annoyed at being bumped off the quad bike for the Aussie visitors.

We poked about in a small tomo, which had a promising breeze and stream, but was too tight, especially on day one of our trip! Mark Verry had said something about needing to be a weta.

Alan, missing for a while from the rest, appeared and announced he had located a cave and to convince us that it was worthwhile visiting had taken photos using self-timer mechanism to prove he had been there. The entrance was impressive; beams of light filtered through the trees reaching in towards cave darkness.

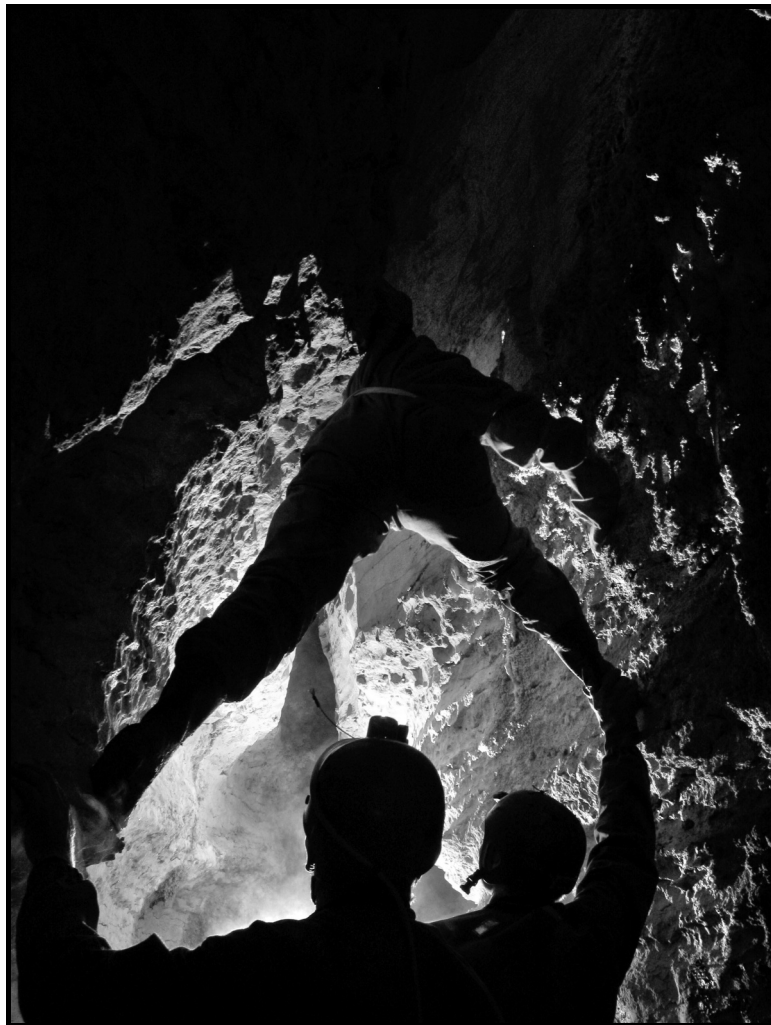


Megan in Aussie Cave

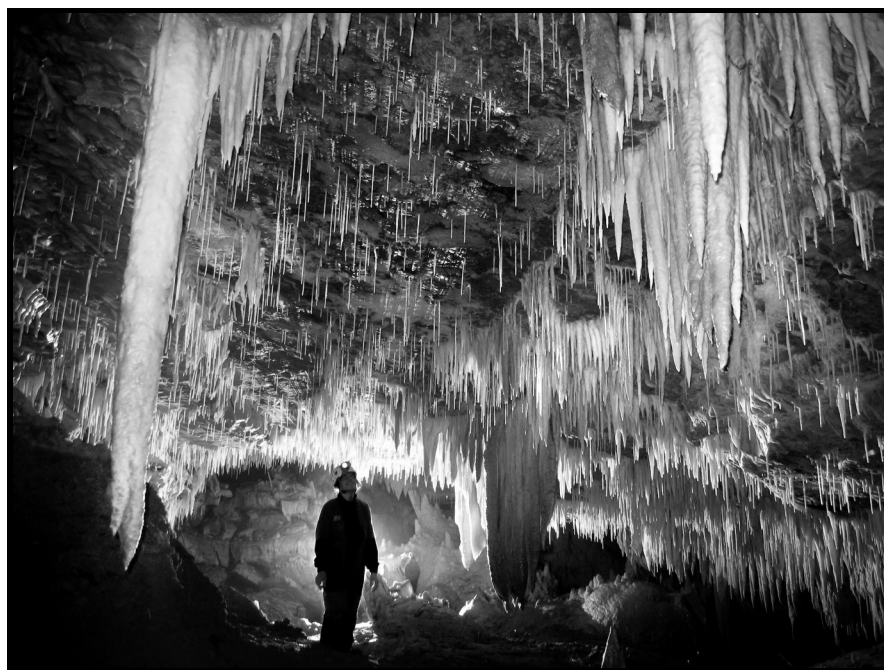
In the cave, I scampered up a small climb which bypassed a stream sump. Further along there was a drop back to the stream, this looked too daunting for me. The passage below widened below to a width that could not be bridged. I could see the route which involved shuffling directly along a horizontal chimney route for about 20 metres in high, narrow passage as the passage below bellowed out up to 4 metres wide and the floor up to 7 metres below, and then climbed down. I waited for longer-limbed Brendon to arrive, reported the possible route then waited for him to test it out by traversing along, climbing down, up, down and then back before attempting it myself.

A little further in was a climb up towards what we ascertained to be another possible tomo entrance, as judged from the lofty height and the signs of vegetation. Brendon and Pip decided to get thoroughly wet and muddy by following the low stream. I was less adventurous and modelled for the photo crew. Another small side stream brought with it small live frogs into the cave.

Although I successfully negotiated the broad bridging to get to down to the stream level, getting up was another matter. Eventually, the mere mortals, including squat me, sent Brendon out to fetch a ladder and climb out with some style. Back at the shearer's quarters, Alan declared that the cave we found was Pet Cemetery as it matched the survey perfectly.



Traversing in Pet Cemetery



Megan in Aussie Cave

The bite of Black and White Nadger

Today was another exploratory day, searching out the mysterious Black and White Nadger route which joins in with Mein Hohle. PhotoPhil and other ASG members went for the long drive to Waitoru Station to find the more conventional entrance to Mein Hohle. Alan, Brendon, Peter from HTG and myself went to search around swampy grounds for the alternate Black and White Nadger entrance.

We found a pitch tomo not far from the swamp. We secured a rope and tossed it down the pitch. Brendon descended, the inflowing stream spluttering on his suit. After a good look below he failed to find a negotiable route onwards so he prusiked back up, coming out cleaner than he went in. I was glad that I did not have to do the pitch. However, due to the rope getting stuck someone had to go down to detangle it, I drew the short straw. The rope had grappled itself around various rocks at the base of,



Megan plays the queen's gambit in Aussie Cave

The Black and White Nadger stream does have a combination of white and black rock along the walls. Small people have an advantage in negotiating it, and reasonable caving strength is needed for the long tight section, especially if one is to carry a pack with tackle and other supplies.

Ois in Aussie Cave

PhotoPhil was to take some ASG beginner cavers abseiling at a place nearby to Aussie Cave, and being Aussies, well, Alan and I just had to have a look.

Phil pointed up a valley saying Aussie Cave is up there, to the right. Well, this was almost right

Inside, the cave ceiling soon became low, almost necessitating an Australia Crawl through water, but with no room to for the upstroke. I wondered if the name Aussie Cave was indicative of the amount of crawling required rather than it being first discovered by Aussies. It certainly was more typically a Kiwi cave in terms of wetness!

We came to large and well decorated passage where one could easily walk about. Further upstream, the route onwards involved climbing over formation coated boulders, before narrowing into canyon-like serpentine passage. We went up to as far as the "Chess Men" before turning back. It was in fact very impressive cave, by far the best cave I had done on this particular trip in terms of formation and good variety of passage.

Recce of Mangarongo Gorge

This was just a speculative recce morning jaunt with Dave's 4WD. The Mangarongo Gorge winds through the South West corner of Puketiti Station through to Waitoru. With a large car shuffle, it could make quite an adventurous summer-time lilo gorge trip, with probably wetsuits and the appropriate gear. The gorge



Mangarongo gorge

and in the middle of the small water-fall. Water down the neck was unavoidable.

We headed back to another possibility Alan found earlier. Brendon reported that it was too small for him and so I gave it a go. I got in and started off downstream, hoping that the stream way would get larger as much of the route had to done lying sideways. I came back and reported that if anyone was to try this, do not think about taking a pack. Alan and I then went in and further, after over 200 metres we came to a larger passage and stream with adequate walking width and height. We did not know if it went through without needing a lot of tackle, the survey indicated a drop that could prevent the Mein Hole group from travelling upstream. After rambling quite a long way downstream we turned back due to time.

is spectacular with other possible exit points to bail out of. On the day we did Black and White Nadger, Brendon had been to the river and back.

Quick Pics in Quipic Cave

Quipic was meant to be a small diversion before heading to Trespassers W, however finding that the cave went further than the survey, and also “quick pics” utilising the time, it became the only cave of the day.

The route past the extent of the survey involved squeezing through a boulder choke. The passage continues for what I think was a few hundred metres. At the end the passage ascends up over rock breakdown where we climbed quite high, the stream cascading through the rocks. The cave ended in a high aven that seemed to be near the surface.



Quipic

Post-Easter from the Waitomo Base

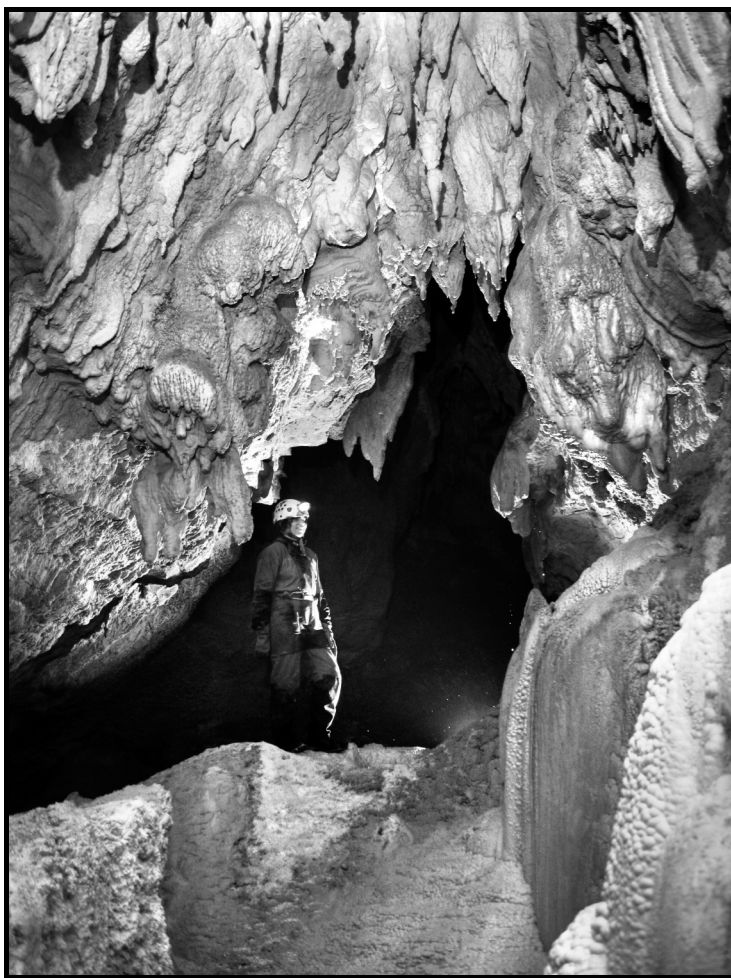
Meandering through Matthews Cave

Alan and I had now joined the Waitomo SUSS group at the HTG hut. We decided to go to a mystery cave, Matthews, others declining on the basis that they were too tired, did not want to try something they had not heard about before or some other sheepish excuses. It was a pm trip, late SUSS start yet again!

All was going well, the property owners had been contacted and met, the rain was holding off and the GPS reference seemed to be correct. There are two upstream entrances, one is a pitch, the other is described as steep, topographically they were not that far apart and although we hoped that we were at the steep entrance. We used a long tape to assist in getting down a muddy slope. After ascertaining that there was not a pitch round a corner we continued on with the entrance series. A waft of unpleasant odour reached us soon after. Fortunately the passage just ahead was narrow enough to bridge over the remnants of some unlucky farm beast.

We reached the main stream, in this part the passage walls had a lot of silt and were dark with manganese. Downstream seemed to have more interesting features so we only went upstream a short way. We passed by the mouth of the stream which would come from the pitch entrance. Smells of decaying flesh prevented us from inspecting this further than a few metres.

The trip downstream was not all splash-through stream-way. At some points, there were small cascades. There is also a sump, necessitating leaving the main stream and going through a series of dry passages, including a narrow dug out passage negotiated horizontally on one's side. Downstream the



Megan in Matthews



Megan shares the Kairimu stream with the glowworms

At a bend to the left, we headed up a side branch coming in from the right, passing through a gap in two boulders to a long section of both dry and wet passage. When the passage got to kneeling height with the floor lumpy from loose rocks, we headed back. Looking back and comparing this to the survey, we probably should have pushed on to see if we could get outside, perhaps we were becoming complacent and expecting there to always be a walk through option in NZ caves.

Further upstream the passage passed through some large rooms and eventually became very silty before reaching a sump. We returned the way we came in. I wanted to get to see the base of the large waterfall, especially with the setting sun shining towards it. We got to see wonderful views across the valley but we were too late for the last sun and needed to return.

walls became cleaner with shelves above the stream supporting calcite decoration. At a serpentine bend a three metre ladder allows you to get out of the stream. This ladder is not necessarily a fixed feature of the cave but has obviously been there for some-time. Future visitors should be aware that they may have to do a bounce trip in the event of this ladder not being there. A short way downstream of the ladder there is a sump. We cleaned our boots before climbing up as the way on above the ladder passes through a heavily calcited area.

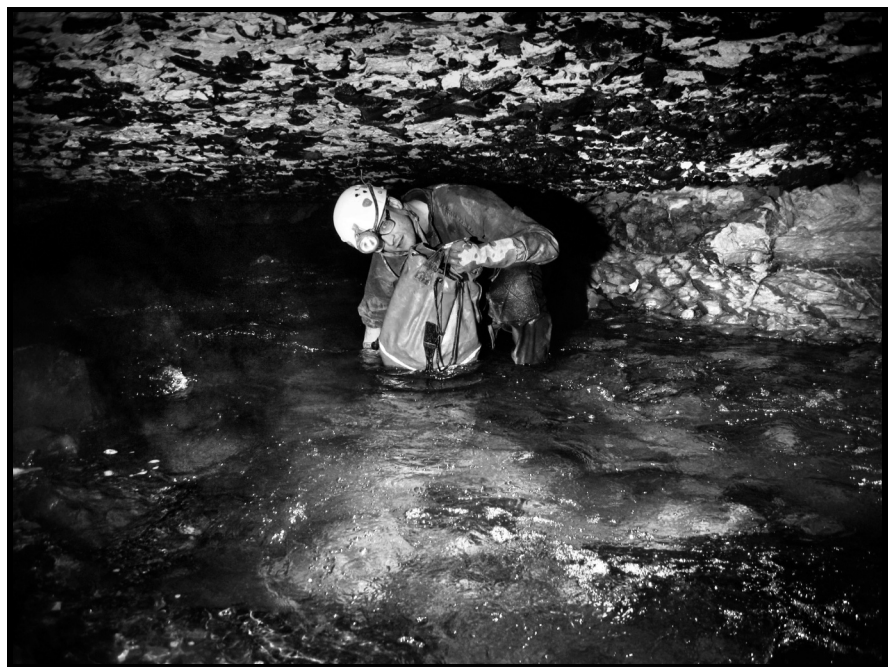
Outside the cave we headed to the Mangawhitikau River to wash our suits and gear to save having to do so later. The slightly submerged grass confirmed that we had made the right decision in not going to Mangawhitikau cave that day.

In summary, Matthews Cave is worthwhile visiting. It has a variety of passage ways and good decoration, an all round Waitomo Cave with a bit of everything.

Brimming to the Rim – Kairimu Cave

After doing Fred the previous day, Alan and I went off to do something quite different – taking off in the morning to the Marakopa limestone. After some looking amongst the boulders in the stream above a waterfall, we found a way into the cave.

The farmer advised that a few days before the water had been coming out brown. The stream was quite large, and in sections very deep. Alan and I had to tip toe, we never quite encountered a section over our heads but were very glad to have good under-suits on. Any colder and a wetsuit would have been really appreciated.



Simon in Broken Hill

Chaos meets Broken Hill Cave

Before the crack of dawn Phil, Chris, Michael and Kevin headed off to tackle Mt Taranaki. Simon, Imogen, Dave Hume (who had recently been caving with Imogen on the south Island and joined up with us for a few days), Alan and I were initially hoping to do Mangawhitikau. We could not get in contact with the right people so we decided to go to Broken Hill Cave.

It was Dave's first experience with organised chaos. We had started the drive off only to have to do a lap past the hut where we started. I suggested to Alan to take the laptop which had a picture of the map, but "No, she'll be right. You can line up the direction of the cave with this airstrip". This did not convince me knowing that airstrips were just a flatter green part, often on the top of a hill and not visible from below. So I took note of the approximate distance from the main road referring to the map on the ASG hut wall.



Alan leads the way to Broken Hill



*On rope in Broken Hill
photo David Hume*

Tearing down the highway, was it the first, second, or third turn past that town? Up the valley road, I travelled the estimated distance required, noting a few possible homesteads but going beyond due to Alan's chatter, and then doing a U turn. Dave mused that dropping in on the first house was what he would have done first rather than the Pryke tactic of survey the lie of the land first. We pulled into a homestead and the thankfully the person who I called in the morning had passed on the message as they had offered to. A kind lady offered for her young son to show us the entrance; however we wanted to try for the upstream entrance which was on the neighbouring property.

As we adorned ourselves in caving gear back at the roadside, the neighbouring property owner came by on his quad bike. He introduced himself as Mr Anselmi and then offered to cart our gear and show us the location of the entrance we wanted. Alan quickly capitalised on getting a lift, taking off chatting to Mr Anselmi who spoke of days gone by when the original speleological survey group stayed in a barn on his property and his family history.

Due to a lumpy swede field, the quad bike reached the extent of its journey. We bid adieu to Mr Anselmi after confirming that we could sample a few swedes (being grown for winter cattle feed) and completed the last bit on foot. Alan went into a hole at the base of a small doline to see if it had a pitch. Well, the pitch almost seemed almost a climb to me. Imogen climbed down it and after sometime, came back very muddy reporting that there was no other pitch to be found and no way

on. Alan had mentioned that we were too far south, so I headed out to the next doline to the north, which had a stream flowing into it and something that Imogen would definitely not negotiate without rope. This was far more likely to be the Ivory Tower.

Dave completed the rigging; starting with a 10 metre long tape to get around the first tight bend. The 60 m rope did suffice for all three pitches with spare at the bottom. The first pitch was particularly wet so a redirection was put in. The second pitch went around to the right, like the first it was narrow near the pitch top. These pitches reminded Imogen of UK caves – they were clean washed and the first was definitely splashy.

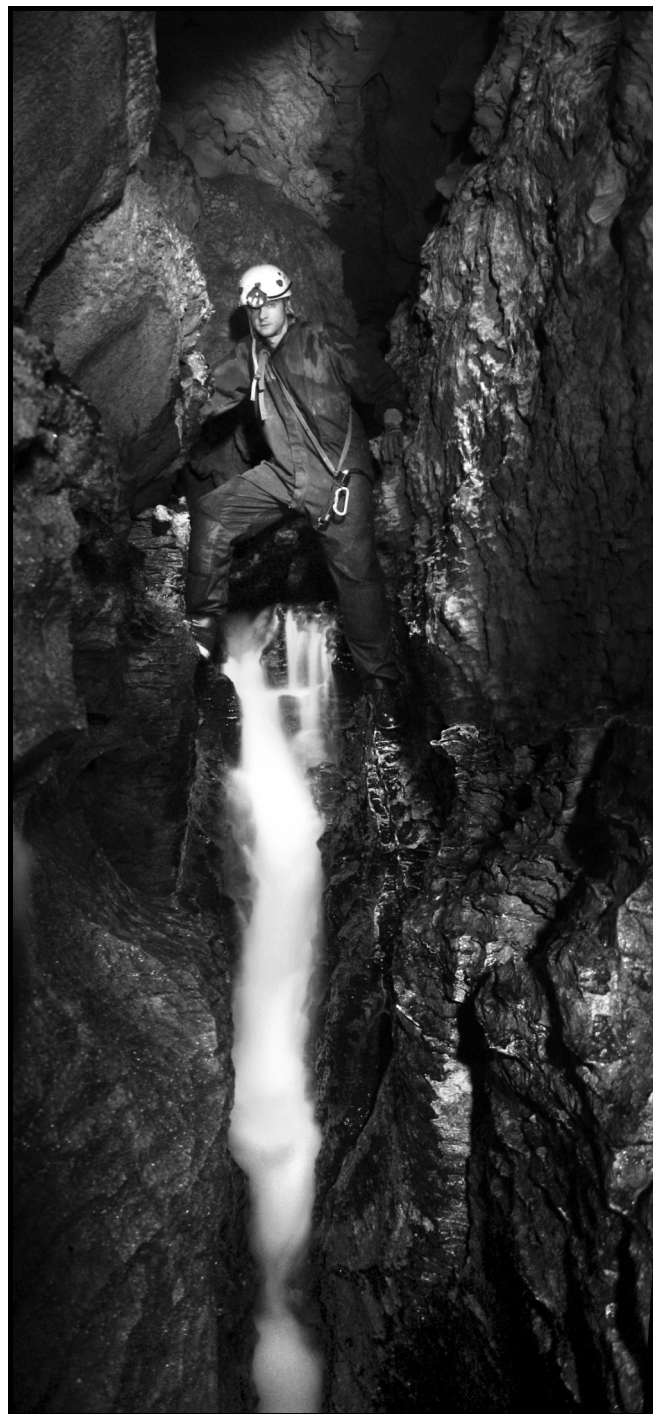
Alan and Simon decided to go through to the downstream entrance and we planned to meet somewhere in between. The passage was not straight forward and as the negotiable route is not a matter of following the stream-way, alternate routes took us through mazes in between boulders. After some rummaging for a route, Imogen and I were temporarily separated from Dave, so we back tracked to hear the distinct sound of Alan's voice. Alan and Simon were just squeezing through the "Iron Curtain" with Dave spotting their feet as they popped out.

Back at the original chamber where we arrived at the main stream is a large room with a talus pile; over this rock pile is the upstream section. We went upstream a short way, but deep silt made this quite arduous. We did not get to see the entire cave due to time. The survey shows an even larger room with even more talus. I would definitely be interested in going back to this cave and seeing more next time.

All exited out via the pitches. At the top of the second and first pitch there is quite a narrow section, making it difficult with packs, even if hung below.

Imogen and I collected some swedes on the way. Later the appearance of the Swedes proved to cause Chris some disdain, despite reassurance that they were worth something as the cost per kilo was more than potatoes in the supermarket.

Alan and Simon, as mentioned earlier, came through via the downstream entrance. This is known as Grumbling Rut and is quite a spectacular entrance, almost a tomo but not quite.



Simon in Mangapahoe

Mangapahoe and Max's Cave and a quick Rumbling Gut p.m. trip

Perhaps there is something in the human psyche that says that if it is too easy to get there, it is not as good. But KillPhil, Alan and I possibly knew better than to assume such faulty logic and took off to search out caves nearby.

We sought out Max's Cave; at the end was a decorated chamber. We then went to Mangapahoe, firstly heading into the Cwmru Passage, a smaller low part of the cave. After this, we headed to the larger passage. Of course, there was a stream and in parts, decorative calcite shawls, straws and stalactites adorned the walls and ceiling of the passage, creating arch ways. Some incredibly long glow worm threads were also noted in the cave, possibly in sections with less breeze or perhaps less insects to entrap and damage the snares. *[Also, lots of fossilised oysters. Definitely not fresh. ed.]*

Outside a track-marked route took us through native NZ bush along karst ridges, the ground to the right and left dropping into huge dolines. It seemed very remote, no fields to be seen. I was glad we were walking back while it was still day time not just for the great views but for spotting the track onwards. The Stubbs had made part of their farm an area for conservation.



Simon considers Oysters Naturale in Mangapahoe

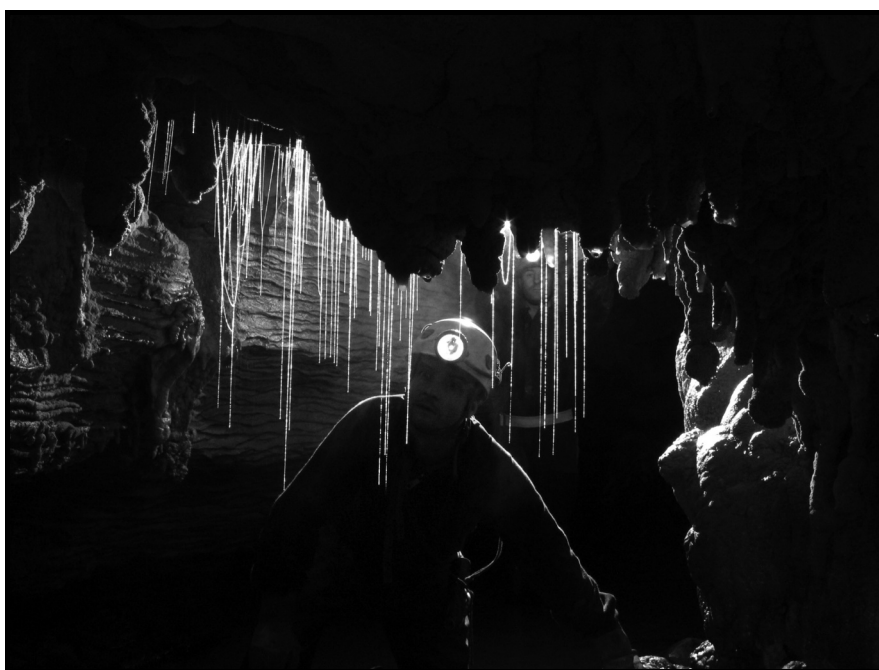
The day was not yet over so Alan, Chris and myself headed off for a quick, photoless trip through Rumbling Gut. It remains a Waitomo classic cave with very good decoration and all round sportiness.

Glowworms

Glow Worms are a feature of caves around Waitomo. On PhotoPhils recommendation we went to visit the Natural Arch (west of Waitomo towards Marakopa) at night for a spectacular display of glow worms. Dressed in civilian clothes, with torches in hand and cameras with slow shutter speeds and tripods we headed off one evening to witness this display. The glow worms were certainly bright.

The Kiwi, Rimu and Togyp Trifecta

It was a weekend again. An impromptu ASG trip had been planned. Arriving at the ASG hut was PhotoPhil, Florian and the ASG Ruskies Dennis, Dimitri and Natasha. With the SUSS team, plus Dave Hume, we were a large mob. The plan was Rimu Cave, and due to the closeness pop into Kiwi and Togyp caves.



Glowworm threads in Mangapahoe



Megan and David in Rimu

all of us except Chris who after crossing himself before taking his leap of faith floundered into genuflection. (Alan captured this moment with camera in movie mode).

We came to an exit we could not negotiate, where the water leaves the cave toppling over a cliff edge. Unfortunately, you cannot get a really good view of the fall but it is still worthwhile seeing.

Upon exiting the cave “a who is doing what” situation developed, perhaps inevitable with a large group. As Imogen and Dave sought a safe route through a field of large boulders and holes, Alan, Simon and myself poked about to find Togyp cave. Togyp was an extension of Rimu, PhotoPhil had not done it before. I gave up, leaving Simon and Alan to the task. Alan found a likely looking lead and told Simon he was off. The name Togyp apparently means “to gypsum”, so Alan figuring photos would take a while scampered off, popping into a small hole which dropped to a muddy section and a stream shortly before the end of the cave, assuming others would soon follow. Alan had the only survey copy with him.

Meanwhile Imogen and Dave found a way out and the rest of the group exited the cave before stopping to wait for Alan amongst the greenery. It was over an hour’s waiting, though Dave discussed whether we could multiply the time by the number of people waiting making it at least 15 hours. Florian and the Ruskies needed to get back to return to Auckland. So we left the cave, and Alan, to return to the cars, though the native bush and over ridgelines. Knowing that Alan was not silly enough to get himself in real strife, and that it would teach him a lesson, at the cars we discussed who should return to the cave, and to be on the safe side send a small group in both ends. A

A dirt road wound up into spectacular countryside, the hills here were big, further east they rose into the mountains. Precariously balanced on small terraced levels sheep and cattle could be seen grazing. It seemed that with the smallest step sideways they would tumble downhill.

Rimu was highly recommended by Phill Round. He gave reports of clean washed pools where you could step unexpectedly into deep water. It has an interesting waterfall and is a through trip. There were two other caves near each end of Rimu, Kiwi and Togyp. Alan was determined to complete the trifecta.

We espied a large double doline from the safety of grassy fields. PhotoPhil had told us that unless goats had been munching away, the bush growing over the karst made things incredibly slow. We aimed for a limestone ridge which split the doline into two. A fortunate decision as it got us to the grassy clearing from where the entrances of Kiwi, with a resurging stream, and Rimu with the same stream inflowing, were to be found.

As some had lunch others ventured into Kiwi Cave. It soon showed its bite, a water level squeeze. Beyond was a section of calcite covered walls and sections to climb through, a little reminiscent of parts of Rumbling Gut. Chris clambered around a higher level, it did not go through. I bit the bullet and in a prostrate position started upstream, in the stream, across large water rounded rocks. After a long section of rock swimming, I gave up and I turned back, gave a report to Alan, and then headed out. Alan continued upstream beyond where I had reached. His report came back that there was yet another, more roomy area somewhere upstream with very nice decoration, possibly due to being untouched due to the arduous route.

Eventually Alan clambered out of Kiwi Cave. We all then headed into Rimu, Imogen had already pioneered the way having returned from what she thought was a possible exit.

It started out as meandering stream passage. Further in water levels increased and the sandy soil gave away to pebbles then rocks, later becoming a solid rock with water carved, clear pools. To negotiate a deep looking pool, Photophil recommended leaping out close to the opposite wall. You would then land on solid rock, about thigh to waist deep. This worked for

small “Oi” was eventually heard and a red figure appeared on the high ridge line a kilometre away, it was Alan. The feeling of guilt for possibly leaving him gave way to vent of frustrations. Alan knew he was in one of those situations Michael Fraser so aptly narrates: “If you’re not dead, you’re dead”.

Alan had completed his photos was puzzled as to why no one had turned up. On his return the small muddy drop proved to be problematic. After much trying, Alan resorted to building a large rock cairn to give him the purchase needed, this taking almost an hour. He reached daylight to find we had gone and of course had to find how we got through the boulders. After a few stern words, all was well. We returned, not to ASG but back to Puketiti Station.

Trespassers W and Maui

The name of this cave, “Trespassers W”, for some reason kept on being referred to as Trespassers West. However the assumption of W being an abbreviation of west is just speculation. My own personal supposition is that there was once upon a time a sign saying “Trespassers will be prosecuted”, or perhaps something more friendly like “Trespassers Will be Welcomed”. Over time the sign has deteriorated making the words past the first W indistinct, now it no longer exists. Now the SUSS editor may claim that this journal is not the place for unsubstantiated facts which may later mislead others in their understanding of history. But one of the major advantages of writing for the SUSS Bull is that you create history as you would prefer to remember it, and the editor always welcomes trip reports!

Simon, Alan and I headed off for a long walk across the hilly fields. Alan had attempted to find this cave before and he was close last time, but had not gone as far to see a shallow doline.

It started quite tight through boulders before becoming another splish through walkable passage. Despite a reference to purgatory, we went up a passage coming in from the right. When there was limited width, we chimneyed up and climbed across using small ledges and bridging techniques, then returned to the stream.

We were not sure whether we could do a through trip. After one muddy climb we came to the spot where daylight filtered through a small hole. As I brushed aside various vegetation and large spider webs with occupants, and climbed out. Having proven it could be done as a through trip I returned to reverse out the cave for a bounce trip.

Next it was off to the Maui, a cave I had not done before but Simon and Alan were enthusiastic about due to its sportiness. The sportiness was not due to climbs, though it started with tight gaps in boulders, but due to a series of very deep pools where the ceiling almost makes duck-under necessary. Once past the downstream entrance, Maui has very large passage. We went for a quick look into the “Hook of Maui” area which has several semi-translucent straws.

We returned to the hut quite late. That day the other SUSSlings had gone to Thunderer Cave. I had agreed with KillPhil that he would come along on a Pompeii evening trip with me. However, Phil was showered and clean and not at all hoping for another jaunt. Piker!

We had use of a high pressure water cleaner which was fantastic until the petrol ran out. The more traditional hydraulic stream was used to finish the cleaning.

Wrap-up for the Prykes

On Anzac day Alan and I split from the main SUSS group to head back to Australia, or the West Island as some refer to it in NZ. Reports are that the weather went to pot. Apart from some Black Water Rafting no further caving was done, though a visit to other places of geological interest were made such as the volcanic, alpine Tongariro Crossing and the thermally active Rotorua.

Thanks to all that made yet another great NZ trip, especially to the Phils; Phil Maynard for initiating the trip and Phill Round for his hospitality. It was my fourth trip to the Waitomo area and certainly is still worth going back to.



Chris gets to grips with Rimu

FIGTREE IN THE DROUGHT

WOMBEGAN, NOVEMBER 4TH – 5TH, 2006

BY JILL ROWLING

PHOTOS TINA WILLMORE

Participants: Phil Maynard (TL), Jill Rowling, Mike Lake, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Matt Fischer, Tina Willmore

This was SUSS' first trip back to Wombegan for a while. We found Mike Chalker near the fire shed where there was a large pile of scrap metal, recently removed from the show caves which are being upgraded. We walked to the kiosk with Mike and discussed the proposed project to survey Fig Tree Cave, Creek Cave and Victoria Arch beginning with the lowest levels. Jill had prepared some project management material, outlining the proposed activities and discussed the conditions.

The reason for doing the project is there is no decent map of the cave apart from the tourist areas, and it's impossible to do any scientific work without a map. Additionally, with the drought it's a good opportunity to start with the lowest levels which are known to flood. That way at least the difficult parts will have been done. The upper levels can be done any time regardless of the weather.

Presently we were all in agreement with what could be done, and obtained some tokens for the Fig Tree Cave gate. After leaving Mike Chalker, we continued the walk to try and locate some of the fixed survey points close to Victoria Arch. On the hill, we located the survey mark at the saddle, and surface survey point 8 on top of the Arch which happened to be rather near a smelly dead wallaby. Nearby is a good view into the collapse doline forming the south side of Victoria Arch. From here, it looked as though the access to the doline was either from the inside of the Arch or from the south side; most other sides were cliffs. There is an old fence right across the doline.

We returned to the saddle and walked around the area between the two tracks southwards, looking for W130 (Lots O'numbers Cave). This connects to the Chalkers Retreat area via a pitch and has been surveyed by SSS. Presently Alan found it under a small Kurrajong tree – the only one in the immediate area. Nearby we found a bower bird's bower complete with blue toys and well built bower. The toys comprised blue plastic drink straws, milk bottle caps and parrot feathers.

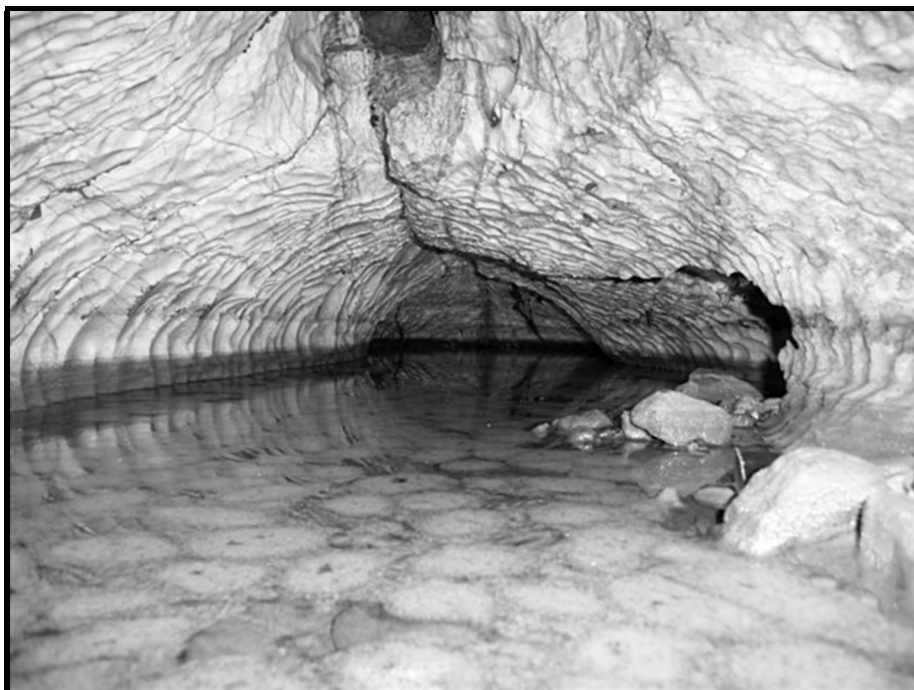
Continuing to the Fig Tree Cave entrance, we found surface survey tag 1, on a rock NW of the cave entrance. We waited for several tour groups to go past, including one led by Laurie Dunn, who pointed out the rather dead-looking fig tree that had been planted nearby. Apparently it'd been doing well until a -10 degree frost had browned off all the stems. We entered the cave using a token, and found the W148 cave tag on the inside wall on the left as you go in.

The 'hole to water' (Trickett) is near the entrance and appears to be readily accessible; a suitable tie-in point would be the cave tag. The other drop to Creek Cave could possibly be done as a single survey shot, with the slot dimensions best done with a Disto. Various other access points and suitable fixed survey points were noted along the way.

In Victoria Arch, we climbed up the steep slope on the left and right side of the doline looking for cave tags. We found nothing here, so will need to ask SSS about it (it should be W151). The rocks are loose in this area so you have to be careful to not drop things onto the path. Possibly the fence is to keep kangaroos and people from dislodging rocks. We looked for a tag at the northern entrance to Victoria Arch, too, but were unable to find one (it should be W150).



Megan in the streamway



Calcite rafts at one of the sumps

part of Creek Cave are spectacularly marbled with crackle breccia, where light coloured angular fragments of marble appear to float in brown and red marble. The origin of this is apparently hydrothermal fluids penetrating already fractured marble and altering a zone around the fractures. Vughs of reddish calcite can be seen in the ceiling.

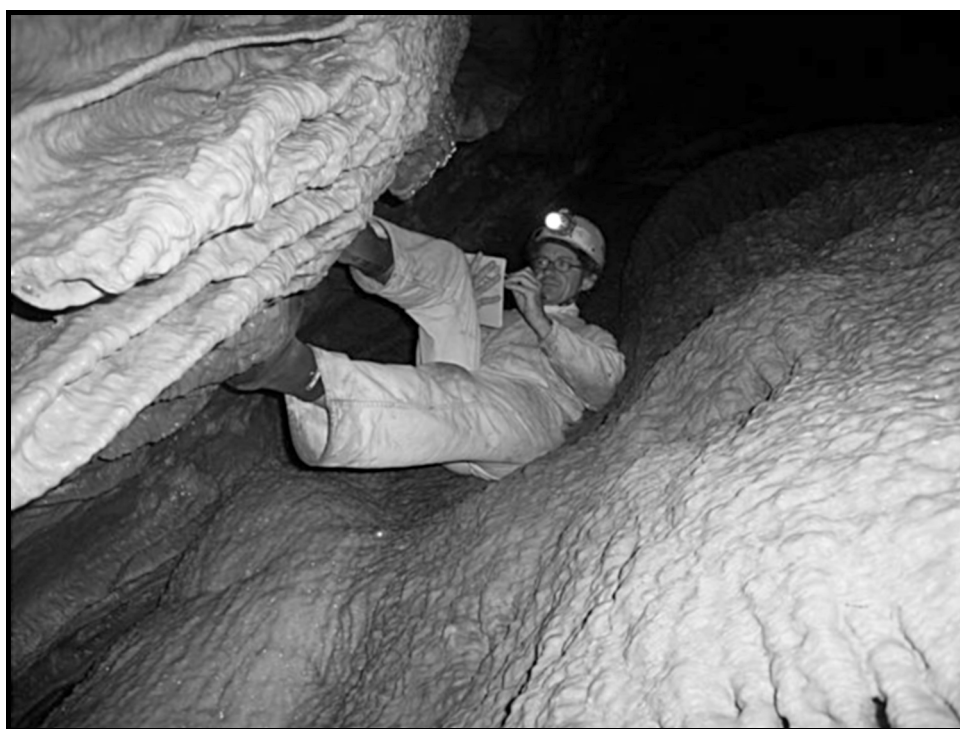
Jill led the party towards the sump. This passage is relatively steep and narrow, a rift following a major joint, partially full of logs and debris. When we got to where Jill remembered the sump was, it was completely dry! So we continued down through. This joined up with the rift again, still heading more or less southwards down a canyon with a series of dry rimstone dams. Timber (both sawn and natural) was cemented in the calcite. Some areas were coated in black manganese, forming a reaction rim. This usually indicates that bat guano may have piled up here in the past.

After about 50 m the passage terminated in a real sump which Phil examined. It appeared to go two ways, and neither looked passable without scuba gear. On the way back, we checked out the side passages. The only one which went anywhere was the one at the top of the sump junction, which Alan found connected to the entrance passage via a simple rock-pile: the 'hole to water' on the Trickett map.

We continued upstream, which soon became very batty. When we got to the upstream area which Jill remembered as also having been sumped, it was completely dry so we continued. The passage zig-zagged and became rather low, with lots of little side passages and inlets. Bats milled about in one corner, possibly from an upper level. Many areas were caked with dry calcite rafts, some

After a snack back at the campsite, we got ready for caving and returned to Victoria Arch in the late afternoon. This time we followed the creek down through Creek Cave. The Bathroom was relatively dry, and a wade was not required. We proceeded through to the lower entrances, again looking for cave tags. We found the lowest entrance tag (W149) and looked at the extent of the rifty area nearby; there is at least a day's work there in surveying it. It was getting dark at this stage, and we did not find the tag for the second lowest entrance. We were unable to find the tag for the overflow entrance, either.

The overflow area includes a long low dusty tunnel resembling a wombat burrow which Alan examined. Barbed wire still covers the creek overflow, and we wondered if it was time to remove it. We'll ask Mike Chalker next time. The walls in this



Alan with the survey book

FROM THE VAULT

The Sydney Morning Herald, February 18, 1927

THE ORIENT CAVE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir,—Correspondence in the “Herald” re the Orient Cave includes the statement that “by far the larger proportion of the time allotted to an inspection is taken up by the negotiation of the track.” This is rarely a fact. In a two-hours’ inspection about 45 minutes are occupied in calmly moving to and fro. Extended time may be due to visitors who have not seen caves halting by the way to notice parts of the Lucas and River Caves. The passage to the Orient leads also to the Temple of Baal and River Caves, and there is no evidence, as readers of Mr. W. F. A. Larcombe’s letter will think there is, that the “track” to these caves is exhausting (!) And even if his direct tunnel (suggested and surveyed years ago) were cut the stairways and ladders in the Orient would still have to be negotiated twice — in and out by way of the tunnel.

The objection to a tunnel does not amount to a prejudice. It is the outcome of a sane desire to preserve unaltered the natural ventilation. There is good reason to believe that if the air conditions are changed deterioration will overcome the crystalline brilliance and dark colouring in and about the Orient Cave. Cave colours bleach where there is too much air; there are no intriguing helictites, nor could they exist, where the air supply is excessive; while cutting releases natural water valves and siphon systems, and causes rapid and untimely flow over large areas. Discolouration instead of colouration is the result.

The tunnelling scheme savours very much of the position of a man who wishes to make an easy entry into a room in a strange house. Instead of seeking entrances (or exits) already provided, albeit partly concealed, the foolish fellow takes his pocketknife and labouriously gouges his way into solid wall. It is unreasonable blindly to tunnel from the Orient Cave. In a descriptive booklet I have drawn attention to the existence of numerous unexplored openings in the cave. They lead into chambers through which hydrogen-filled balloons have been allowed to drift to considerable heights. The thorough exploration of the openings will reveal a new wonder-world and new passages. In support may I bring before your readers the results of some exploration work recently carried out under the stimulating guidance of the caves’ loving guardian, Mr. J. C. Wiburd? From the Temple of Baal, which connects with the Orient, a narrow, low tunnel has been cut, not through rock but over the surface of consolidated river-drift. A cave was found and beyond it the little cut was advanced in the direction along which water sometimes comes from the hills outside. An advance of 60 feet has been made. A natural current of fresh air affords proof of the continuation of the partly-blocked passage. It is less than 150 feet to the outside world, and there is probably a cave in that stretch. The complete solution of the acknowledged difficulties of movement in some of the caves at Jenolan lies wholly in the outcome of an exploration of the old water channels and air vents developed by nature.

I am, etc.,

W. L. HAVARD.

Katoomba, Feb. 16

The Sydney Morning Herald, March 2, 1927

JENOLAN CAVES TUNNEL SUGGESTION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir,—In your issue of February 18 there are remarks by W. L. Havard on a proposed tunnel in the Jenolan Caves, which are either inaccurate or based on opinions which have no sufficient warranty for the views they express with so much confidence.

It may be necessary to give some particulars of my acquaintance with the caves in order to give weight to anything I may write.

I have surveyed, modelled, and photographed the majority of the known caves of New South Wales. This work was carried out originally under the direction of the geological branch of the Department of Mines, and afterwards of the Tourist Bureau, which have published my plans and guide books. I was also closely associated with the construction of the pathways which render the caves accessible to the public.

Firstly, I may state that there would be no steps to retrace if the proposed tunnel was constructed, because it would start from the end of the Orient Cave. There are one or two short stairways to branch caverns which have to be traversed twice, but they can be shown on the way to the end. The immense advantage to the public of a tunnel giving a short and almost level outlet to the Orient and Temple of Baal caverns must be obvious.

When I found from my surveys that such a tunnel was possible the Government sent a party of surveyors to verify my work.

It may be asked why I did not press the construction. First, the cost of construction had to be considered. Secondly, there were the views of Mr J. C. Wiburd, who, since his appointment many years ago, has given his life and energies to the opening up of the Jenolan caverns, and to exhibit the beauties they contain to the best advantage. His opinions naturally command respect.

But I do not know of any instance where air has done any damage. Even in the windswept Grand Arch I have seen vivid tints apparently unchanged by time.

As years roll on fragile beauties which decorate caverns with limited air currents will probably deteriorate from the tramping of the feet of thousands of visitors as they move along the pathways. This may be the greater danger.

Finally, if an air current has objectors, the closure of a tunnel exit by a door would shut out any draught. I am, etc.,

O. TRICKETT.

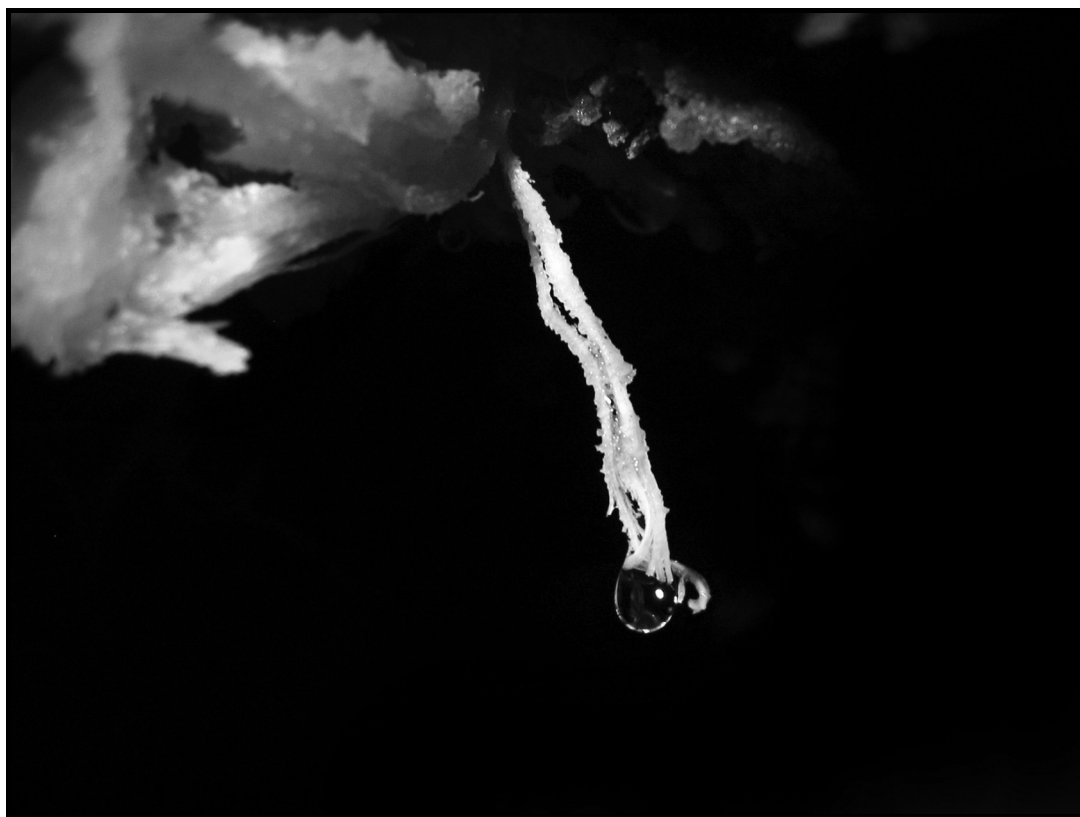
Crows Nest, Mar. 1

[The Binoomea Cut was tunnelled out in 1953 and provided with multiple air-tight doors. The letter from Havard describes the Baal Dig, which was a remarkable piece of work carried out by the Guides. Starting from the base of the final chamber (Nowadays it's under the stairs up to the tunnel!) this is cut up to a metre deep and half a metre wide through loose rock and sediment. It follows an inlet stream passage upstream to a moderate-size chamber with some formation.

The Dig has been surveyed for 200 m from the tourist chamber to the point the Guides reached. From there, a steep slope leads down to a committing squeeze which is normally sumped. SUSS opened out the squeeze slightly in the mid-1990s and passed the water during a drought to reach some tight squeezes. These led to a flat-out crawl in sand which was dug through to large stream passage which led south. This stopped after some distance in terminal-looking rockpile, estimated to be under the car-park. The extensions were never surveyed and the sump has not been found open since 1998. The vertical distance between the furthest point in the passage and the surface is probably 25 metres. It's probably not "the complete solution of the acknowledged difficulties of movement" at Jenolan.

Stop Press: In December 2006 the sump was open, and a SUSS party got in on Saturday night after the tourists had gone and commenced the survey. The rockpile still looks terminal. ed.]

PHOTO GALLERY



Gypsum in Fred Cave, New Zealand

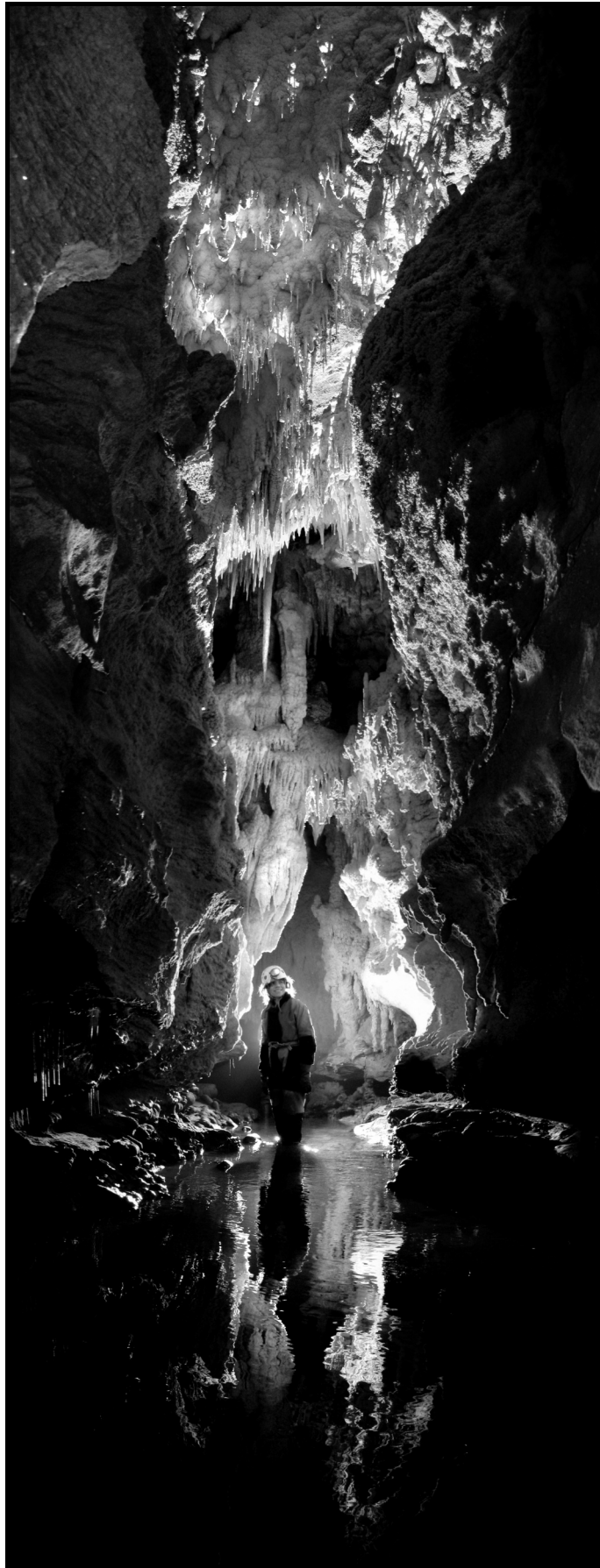
Photo Alan Pryke



Matthews Cave, New Zealand

Photo Alan Pryke

PHOTO GALLERY



Megan Pryke in Mangapahoe, New Zealand. Photo Alan Pryke

TRIP LIST: JANUARY 2007

SUSS General Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00pm (for a 7.30pm start) in the Reading 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 Reading 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.

January

27–28 Surefire Canyon. Out on the Newnes Plateau. Mark Lowson m.troglodyte@gmail.com or 0415 338 601.

26–28 Cooleman. Diving and caving at one of the more scenic campsites around. Keir Vaughan-Taylor 9816 5210 (home) or keirvt@optusnet.com.au.

February

3–4 Jenolan. Contact Mark Lowson m.troglodyte@gmail.com or 0415 338 601.

8 General Meeting. Out of term, Student Union can't cope out of term, venue and speaker to be announced.

17–18 Wombeyan. Contact Phil Maynard Philip.Maynard@uts.edu.au or 9908 2272 (home).

24–25 Bungonia. Contact Michael Fraser michaelfraser172@hotmail.com or 9988 3252 (home) or 0419 236 576.

March

3–4 Jenolan. Please contact Max Midlen mmidlen@aol.com or 0425 244 275.

8 General Meeting. Holme Building 7:30pm.

17–18 Wombeyan. Trip supervisor to be announced.

24–25 Jenolan. Barralong Diving, trip supervisor to be announced.

31–April 1 Jenolan. Trip supervisor to be announced.
