

SUSS BULL 50 (4)

JANUARY – MARCH 2012



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**Cover Photo: Abseiling into Macropodidaes Waterhole.
Alan Pryke**

Editorial

What an exciting time to edit the Suss Bull. This quarter I have received a plethora of photos and articles, so much so that some of the articles are being held over to the next bull. It was a joy to hunt through the offered photos to choose one for the cover. If your picture has not been included here don't dismay. Some photos preceded their articles and have been held over to next time when the article will be published.

Also I have received several maps. Thanks to Phil Maynard, Ian Cooper and Alan Pryke for providing these. The bull includes a historical article and I would encourage our long term members to submit such stories for recording for posterity.

There are also a couple of articles from our members' overseas trips. It is great to learn about some of the overseas caving areas.

In the News (from our reporter *Guy McKanna*)

How to train your bat.

Watch as Lil' Drac the short-tailed fruit bat is rescued and nursed back to health.

<http://video.news.com.au/2176051308/How-to-train-your-bat>

Nanjing, China

Exploration of a mysterious 'fairy maiden' Karst area.

<http://baihaifeng.blogspot.com/2008/04/spring-outside-chongqing-part-2.html>

Forget the wall, check out the great caves of China

It may be best known for its Great Wall, but China is also home to some of the most impressive limestone caves in the world. <http://www.news.com.au/travel/world/great-caves-of-china/story-e6frfqai-1226352935342>

Using stalactites to study past climate in Australia

From installing a radon detector in the Northern Territory, to caving in the Snowy Mountains for climate research, Monika Markowska is surprised at where environmental science can take her.

<http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/profile/5532/hanging-with-stalactites>

Researchers use stalagmites to study past climate change in Borneo

Stalagmites might fill a hole in our understanding of Earth's climate system and how that system is likely to respond to the rapid increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide since preindustrial times.

<http://phys.org/news/2012-05-stalagmites-climate.html>

Researcher finds key to ancient weather patterns in Florida's caves

Darrel Tremaine has been known to go to extremes for his research, such as crawling on his hands and knees through a dark, muddy limestone cave in Northwest Florida to learn more about the weather thousands of years ago. <http://www.physorg.com/news/2011-12-key-ancient-weather-patterns-florida.html>

Advantages of living in the dark: The multiple evolution events of 'blind' cavefish

The blind Mexican cavefish (*Astyanax mexicanus*) have not only lost their sight but have adapted to perpetual darkness by also losing their pigment (albinism) and having altered sleep patterns.

<http://phys.org/news/2012-01-advantages-dark-multiple-evolution-events.html>

Ivory sculpture found in a cave in Germany could be world's oldest

The 2008 excavations at Hohle Fels Cave in the Swabian Jura of southwestern Germany recovered a female figurine carved from mammoth ivory from the basal Aurignacian deposit.

<http://phys.org/news161442381.html>

Rock analysis suggests France cave art is 'oldest'

Experts have long debated whether the sophisticated animal drawings in a famous French cave are indeed the oldest of their kind in the world, and a study out in May suggests that yes, they are. <http://phys.org/news/2012-05-analysis-france-cave-art-oldest.html>

Entire genome of extinct human decoded from fossil

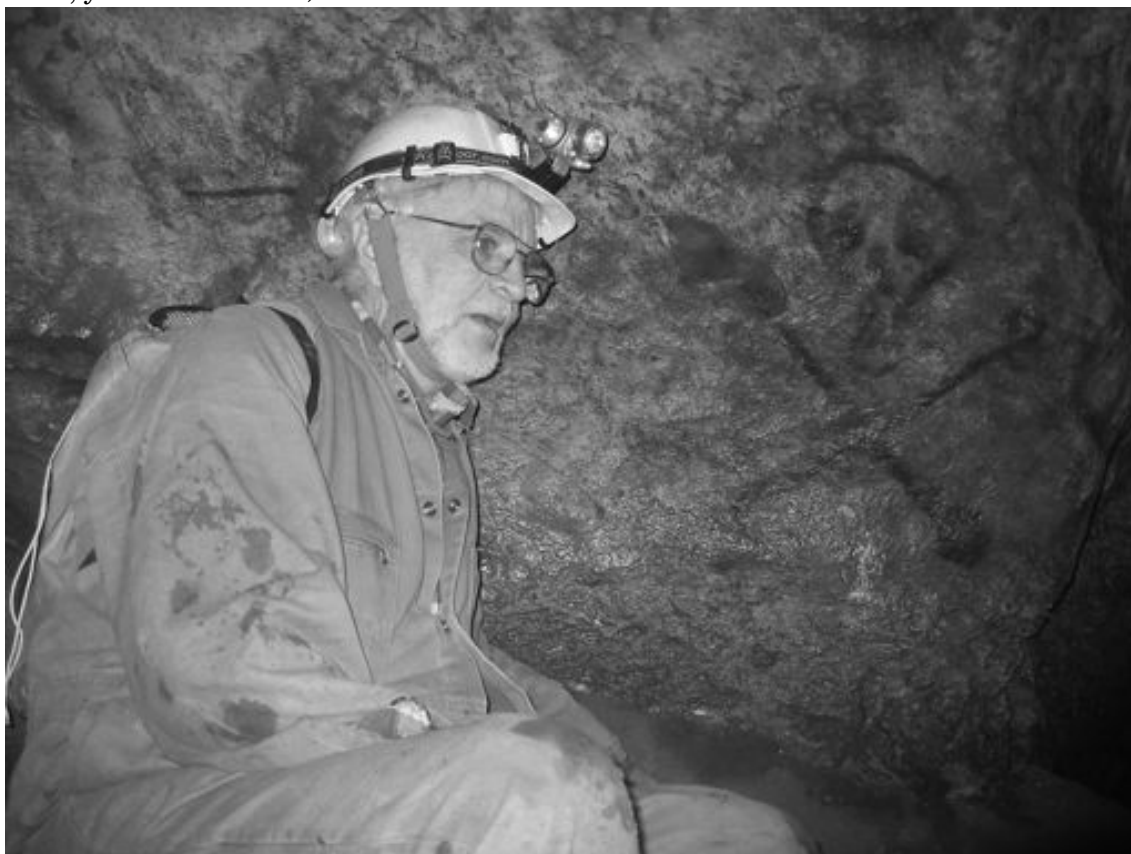
In 2010, Svante Pabo and his colleagues presented a draft version of the genome from a small fragment of a human finger bone discovered in Denisova Cave in southern Siberia. The DNA sequences showed that this individual came from a previously unknown group of extinct humans that have become known as Denisovans.

<http://www.physorg.com/news/2012-02-entire-genome-extinct-human-decoded.html>

MY FIRST TRIPS TO JENOLAN: 50 YEARS IN MAMMOTH CAVE

BY JOHN DUNKLEY, AGED 17

In 1960 I enrolled as a part-time student at Sydney University while filling a full-time job handling car insurance claims. For this the NSW Government paid me £496 a year (\$992) (which wasn't the same as actually "working" for them, you'll understand!).



Starry-eyed from reading Norbert Casteret books, I joined SUSS as a 'fresher'. My first trip was the infamous SUSS Freshers Trip. With less than £50 in the bank, like many others I couldn't afford a tent or camera, and li-los had yet to be invented. I shopped at Paddy's for a sleeping bag and rucksack and rolled up to the PNR quadrangle outside the Engineering Building, then a traditional rendezvous for shared transport to caving areas. A motley crew fussed around a large, battered war-time vintage Chev truck which turned out to be the weekend's transport to Cliefden. The SUSS elite sat in the front cabin, the rest (a dozen or more!) scattered inside the back on packs and sacks. I recall sitting for a couple of hours on a large kerosene tin (which probably contained petrol - no silly OH&S rules in those days!). After radiator trouble near Bathurst at midnight, it took nearly 7 hours to reach Cliefden at 3.45am. We dossed in a tractor shed, 'did' Island, Main, Murder and Trapdoor Caves, and I remember being kept awake on Saturday night by revellers singing a song about elephants and kangaroos, the tune of which still haunts me. The return trip was even longer: with mechanical problems it took 9 hours to a drop-off at Strathfield and I hitched a ride home.

Mammoth Cave, 1960

Participants: John Dunkley, Henry Shannon, Jenny Tomlinson, Bill Gibb, Margaret Innes, Ted and Dave Anderson

In March 1960 SUSS discovered the extensions now known as the North Tunnel in Mammoth Cave, reigniting interest in the further reaches of the cave, which continued to give up new passages for the next 50 years and further. Throughout 1960 and 1961 exploratory trips continued in the northern end of the cave, eventually producing about a kilometre of passage.

In mid-year I borrowed £485 (\$970) to buy my first car, a black 1955 Vauxhall Wyvern. 3 quid a week to repay! Very few SUSS members owned cars in those days (a few would borrow the family car if there was one), so for several years I enjoyed probably unwarranted popularity as a source of transport to caves. Limited availability of cars was only part of the problem. Poor roads, mechanical breakdowns, flat tyres and broken windscreens ensured that just getting to your favourite caving area could be a major adventure. On one trip in 1962 the Vauxhall lost all of its

brake fluid when it snagged a rock at Jenolan. I got home to Sydney in 5 of the early hours of the morning using only the hand-brake and gears.

On Friday 2nd September 1960 I had a camping body built into the car, a relatively simple job because the Vauxhall had bench seats - bucket seats were then an affectation restricted to MG drivers. I had received my licence just two weeks beforehand - no P-plates in those days. At 7pm I picked up the other trip members at Central Station - Henry Shannon, Jenny Tomlinson, Bill Gibb and Margaret Innes. With the usual difficulty due to their protruding curved steel frames, bulky Paddy Pallin bushwalking packs were stuffed into the boot and we took off along Parramatta Road. The trip didn't get off to a great start when we were rammed twice in the rear within half an hour, once outside the University, then again in Burwood. Fortunately the Vauxhall's bumper bar was pretty solid & only a few scratches appeared on the chrome (but see below!).

We went via Ryde, Castle Hill, and Windsor, struggled up Kurrajong Hill with an underpowered engine and no synchromesh on first gear, then on to Bell and Mt Victoria for a quick dinner at 9.30 at the now sadly defunct Mountain Top Cafe. The Jenolan road today is slow with few passing lanes, but in 1960 it was unsealed from Lett River Bridge to the top of Five Mile Hill, and wound circuitously through Hampton village. On the other side it was dirt from No. 2 car park all the way to Oberon. Not a soul was in sight as we drove through the Grand Arch and past a shuttered Caves House at 10.45, meeting Ted and Dave Anderson and camping on the Playing Fields which was then somewhat more open than now with the cricket pitch still in evidence.

The usual time-wasting occurred on Saturday morning, so that after a visit to present the permit we didn't reach Mammoth Cave until 11.10. Nothing much has changed in 50 years, it seems, because we were even later on Deborah's 2010 trip! The destination was Sand Passage, not the most pleasant introduction to Jenolan caving (I never went in it again!) The aim was to push a connection to Bow Cave, and Henry talked at length about cusecs and water connections. Even after climbing up a 20ft ladder in the shaft, coming out was very cold - the name Cold Hole was well earned. In the full moon that night, and this being my first Jenolan trip, I walked down the gorge to Caves House, the Coach House, Grand Arch and Carlotta Arch.

Next morning came an even slower start. Just after midday we squeezed through the entrance of Glass Cave, crossed the main chamber and climbed a ladder to Chevalier Cave (which I helped remove on a later trip to protect the decoration). Somewhere in there I lost a torch - has anyone found it yet? On the return to Sydney it snowed lightly on Five Mile Hill I think maybe the first time Henry had seen snow.



Photographers in Chevalier Cave in the early 1960s. L to R: uncertain (Jeff Hinwood or Hugh Minter), Denis Ward, Henry Shannon (standing), Marilyn Hinwood, John Lotz. Photo by John Dunkley

Stopping only for petrol at Windsor, I dropped the passengers at Strathfield station.

Mathematically inclined bushwalkers and cavers had over the years devised complex formulas for charging passengers, based on distance. The simple formula we used was for the cost of petrol to be spread equally among all passengers except the driver, so that his contribution was for tyres, oil and general depreciation. Petrol for this whole trip cost 44/- (shillings) (\$4-40), so each passenger paid \$1-10.

Henry is a Life Member of SUSS and still very active, while Margaret Innes was the SUSS Secretary who later married another SUSS identity. Jenny Tomlinson was a nurse and later journalist in Egypt & the USA, where she wrote a book on caving. She and Dave Anderson must have got along well on this trip because they later married.

December 1960

Participants: John Dunkley, Henry Shannon, Alan Green, Brian Hawley

I had two more Jenolan trips in 1960 that hooked me for life - blame Henry for that! Exactly three months later, in December the Vauxhall was in demand again with Henry, Alan Green and Brian Hawley. Once again, there was car trouble this time a carburettor malfunctioned at Windsor and had to be cleaned out, a blowout at Mt Tomah, failure of the windscreen wipers near Hampton, and then the bumper bar fell off (possibly weakened after the ramming incident on the September trip!). The rain started at Windsor, got heavier all weekend, and continued until we returned on Sunday. Tents on the Playing Fields were flooding, and at 1am Henry conned his way into the Vauxhall, so we both had a fitful night.

Glass and Chevalier were on the agenda, and Mammoth Lower River. The rockpile route to Lower River was then poorly known, while the 40 Foot was traditionally believed to require a ladder, so nearly all trips went via Conglomerate Cavern and the celebrated Mammoth Squeeze. I also tried the squeeze in Ian Carpenter Cave, unsuccessfully, and have never tried again. On this trip, in between bursts of talk about cusecs and chert (yes, I remember that!), Henry cooked up my first acquaintance with the wonders of fluorescein. We tested a small sample below the Blue Lake, and on Sunday walked up McKeown's Valley to the stream sink of the Jenolan River, with Henry expatiating on sinkholes, gravel fill and more about cusecs. Near Serpentine Cave the word doline entered my vocabulary for the first time. All this time there was steady soaking rain, leading Henry to boast later that he had never had a Jenolan trip without rain. He says:

'One reason it was so cold was that the passage had recently had a flow in it and the flood was from snow meltwater. Soon after this we started to use woollen long johns, and Hungarian-made lilos started to appear in people's tents. I remember having to climb a shaft near the end that was easy going down on the way in, but cramp-inducing on the way out. It was scary at the time. The passage splits here and there were twigs coming through between boulders at the end.'

Henry was supposed to stay two weeks to follow through on the dye testing, and I was to return on 17th December and bring him back to Sydney. He retreated to a dry cave for several days as the rain continued, and unbeknown to me, eventually either someone else gave him a ride back to Sydney, or he caught the bus and train. Whatever, I reappeared two weeks later and, not finding him, went on my first trip in the tourist caves, through Imperial. And I had another flat tyre on the Shooters Hill Road, and was towed to Oberon for repairs. A typical finale to a typical 1960s caving trip when cars were somewhat less reliable than these days.

Henry has added the following reminiscences of the trip:

'I never wrote up the December Hydrology trip properly, After John left I was able to move to the spacious Wallaby Cave and I did map it to good detail though I think the map got lost later on. It was something to do while the rain kept on. I have probably still got some slides of the fluorescein placement which was outside Wiburds Lake Cave (although at the time that had yet to be discovered), which is where the water had got to on account of the rain, well past the normal sinking point. Here there is a big limestone boulder on the flat which features in the account given by Diggins of the cave he was taken to by Wiburd. On this trip I had boots on with no socks and ended up with burst blisters which crippled me the rest of the trip but I did note two entrances at the edge of the flat one of which gets to the Lake Chamber of Wiburds Lake Cave, though the usual entrance was found later up the hill from it.

The question the fluorescein test was meant to resolve concerned the rivers in Mammoth Cave. I had come to think Central Level River, as it was then called, was a different stream to Lower Level River with most likely a different source. Most thought the rivers were the same. The idea was to colour the main river, Lower Level River without colouring Central Level River, and using activated charcoal bags to do the watching. As it happened a very weak positive was picked up from Lower Level River and negative from Central River but this constituted failure since you couldn't really say that the negative was true if the positive was not good enough. Blue Lake did not change colour'

1960 to 2010

Many other trips followed, but it was another ten years before SUSS completed the mapping project and Ted Anderson and I conspired to produce the notorious “Yellow Book” on Mammoth Cave. Much more has since been found in Mammoth and SUSS deserves commendation (and commiseration!) for undertaking a resurvey of the cave to modern standards. And judging from the exciting remaining exploration list prepared by the late Mark Staraj a few years ago, its clear SUSS will still be very active at Jenolan for another 50 years.



In October 2010 I had a nostalgic trip into Mammoth 50 years down the road, with Bruce Welch, he of “Blue Book” fame! It was great to see Railway Tunnel again, and Skull & Crossbones area.

My thanks to Bruce for the company, and to Deborah Johnston for her fine leadership of this trip, particularly her patience with one who remembers the way but can’t handle it as well. My only complaint is, hey, it’s not as easy as it used to be. Everything is darker, slipperier and muddier than in 1960! But still good fun.

NEW ZEALAND 2011

BY MELANIE STAMELL

Participants: Joel Stanley, Andrew Stanley, John Oxley (Jox), Peter Bauer, David Stuckey, Mel Stamell, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Phil Round (PhotoPhil), Geoff McDonnell, Ian Cooper (Coops), Erica Davey, Phil Maynard, Jost Pries

Oz to NZ - Getting There

We got there by plane. Our in flight entertainment included a new style safety briefing called Fit to Fly, set to the rhythms of the “Only way is up”. It featured a male to male kiss which Megan reckoned was intended to create controversy rather than an interest in safety. It can’t have been too controversial though because I don’t remember it and I don’t recall Geoff blacklisting the airline carrier either. The flight itself was uneventful. Alan tested Megan’s knowledge of meteorological events by exclaiming “A wall of weather is approaching NZ!”. Fortunately, Megan had her study notes handy and was able to confirm that a “wall of weather” wasn’t anything to be worried about.

Like all planes that don’t crash, we successfully landed. Barely out of the condensation level the planes tires hit the tarmac and we were safely in New Zealand! The A2B car pickup went smoothly, as did the group food order pick up which saw most of the caving company eating fried chicken and bread rolls out of the back of the wagon. Finally, laden with food, gear and high expectations, we headed to Rauroa Farm.

We were joined by a kiwi father and son combo: Joel and Andrew Stanley. Andrew had previously been a member of SUSS. His son had inherited the caving gene and turned out to be extremely handy in a cave. i.e. his youth and enthusiasm provided Melanie, the second youngest member of the party, with a cave buddy (a.k.a minion).

We knew it was a late Easter, overall the weather was kind to us, much less rain was experienced in King Country compared to other parts of NZ and also Sydney for the same time of year.



Climbing over Phloughte cave. Photo by Erica Davey

City living meets farm life: Rauroa Farm

We arrived at the farm around 5:00 PM where we sorted out equipment, stocked every fridge available to us and proceeded to discuss topics ranging from mass murderers to sky divers over a delicious meal prepared by Megan. It became apparent that when cavers aren’t caving, a large proportion of them turn to throwing themselves out of airplanes.

Day 1

Despite the obscenely early start to the day, with most people (everyone over 50) having breakfast around 7:00 AM, we didn't actually get caving until around 11:00 AM. We split into groups. Joel, Andrew, Josh, Peter Bauer, David Stuckey and Melanie did Aussie cave. Geoff, Megan and PhotoPhill did War Mare cave and Phil and Alan took advantage of the day of "liquid sunshine" to go cave hunting.

Aussie Cave

Melanie was the only person in the group to have caved Aussie cave before. Unfortunately, she wasn't much help navigating the cave. We got stuck in the rock pile for a while because we couldn't find the way on. Note: climb on top of rock pile, the way on is to the left. Don't follow the stream.

The map only had a few of the side passages marked and although Melanie wanted to explore Bird Passage and Razor Blade Alley, we didn't do either as we weren't sure of the location of the passages and we were worried about time (Razor Blade Alley has potentially 2km return of crawling). In the end, Peter, Joel and Mel did the through trip; everybody else was put off by Grand Squeeze and exited the cave through the entrance. The way out, which is usually a bit of a squeezey climb at the end of a fantastic and pristine water passage, appeared to be blocked by rock and debris and had a fair amount of rushing water pouring through it into the cave. We ended up chimneying up a high, approx. 10 m, but narrow rift to an alternate exit. Peter led the way, displaying some impressive climbing skills, which he got to display again later when he went to retrieve Mel's Apex which had fallen mid-climb into the river below us. Joel was a bit nervous at first, but loved it once he'd climbed to the top unscathed. Once outside, we went to inspect the original exit, and found the usually empty grotto filled with water and debris.

Lessons learned: Polyester is not suitable cave suit material. Secondary light sources are essential.

War Mare Cave

Megan, Geoff and PhotoPhill initially went to the upper left entrance of the cave then went across to a false entrance on the right. However, after consulting the map they decided they needed to go into the lower right entrance. PhotoPhill got stuck in the vertical squeeze and decided not to follow Geoff and Megan who went into the first and second big chambers which had some decoration. They followed the streamway but made the error of following the streamway at the bottom, which was very muddy, and came to a terminal squeeze. When they went back to the farm for lunch they realised that they should have stayed at a higher level to go further in the cave.

Cave Hunting

(Alan takes up the story!) Phil and Alan walked from the hut to the Aussie streamway, and noted it sank into a cave downstream of Aussie. Phil made a valiant attempt to enter the squeezey hole after stomping over blackberries. We gave up and headed onto the ridge, which carried Taumatamair Rd, and found Geoff and Megan, who told tales of a waterfall cave they could not get in to just down the other side of the hill.

This was likely the resurgence of the cave found earlier, and soon, Phil had done a dodgy climb and went stomping off into the cave. Alan reluctantly followed, clinging to loose plants on the sloping climb in. The cave did not head directly to the sink, but was a zig-zag affair, which made the cave longer than expected. Phil found the squeezey inflow but was impenetrable.

We then wandered downstream from the cave, and noted that it made it's way in and out of very short cave sections, and areas of blackberry. We entered the short caves, and the final one ended in rockfall after 20m or so.

We exited and climbed over the cave, finding the resurgence nearby. Phil wasn't too bothered, but Alan squashed in and followed it upstream to the rockfall. Phil followed.

After crawling/stooping for 50m or so, we began to wonder how the cave was so long, when we'd only crossed 50m or so from the upstream inflow. Things got weirder when the cave got larger, and was soon stomping passage. On we went for what seemed like 500m or so, through two rockfalls!

Realising this was a separate cave, we knew we had found the lost Moa Cave. We also found that the resurgence was only 120m from the shearers quarters!

Alan solved the puzzle later, when he found the stream reentered another short cave downstream, and this had a T-junction, with water entering from the 20m cave found earlier. Alan thinks that Moa is underneath War Mare Cave.

(Mel again) Lunch at the farm turned out to be a major enthusiasm sump, and only Alan, Geoff, Peter, Mel and Ian went caving in the afternoon. They went to survey the first 1/3 of the newly rediscovered Moa cave, which turned out to be a good example of New Zealand caves, i.e mainly river passage with the usual glow worms and decoration.

Lessons learned: Geoff's price for washing someone naked in a cave stream is three beers. PhotoPhill really likes



Agamemnon gypsum flowers. Photo by John Oxley

Angry Birds. Caving in the afternoon means you don't need to help prepare dinner.

Day 2

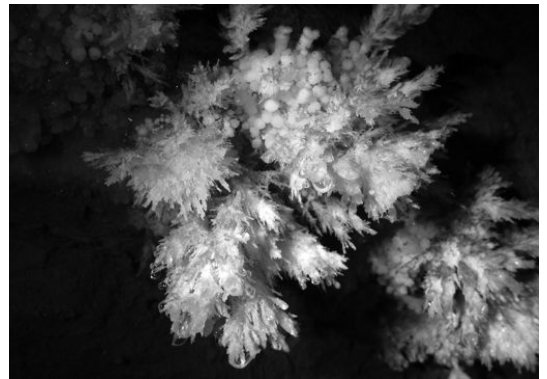
The second day of the trip presented with cold and very windy weather. We experienced thunderstorms and continuous heavy rain which gave rise to concerns of cave flooding. At around midday the rain eased up we finally left the cabin to go caving.

Josh, David, Mel and Peter went and did Rauroa cave while Phil, Alan, Megan, Ian and Geoff went to push and survey the rest of Moa cave.

Rauroa Cave

It took us a while to find the cave, but when we did the entrance was pretty obvious. The main entrance is massive with a lot of collapsed rock marking the base of the entrance. At first glance, getting into the cave looks daunting, but it is actually pretty easy. Some of us used a tree root to get into the cave; the rest used a 10m tape.

Mel chased the river a fair way upstream before hitting a section of collapsed rock that she deemed too unstable to push. The party then went for a very easy cave stroll downstream, through some stream passage, approx. 200m, with a fair amount of decoration before getting to a section that could be deemed marginally strenuous and deciding to head back. Mel was unable to convince anyone to push further downstream, though managed to bargain 20 minutes to explore the rockpile at the end of the map. Following the stream through the rockpile, she eventually came across a daylight entrance which was too high to exit without rope or ladder. The cave continued and it is likely that she had entered into Greystoke which is known to connect with Rauroa cave. The Tomo that she found may be the one marked on the map of Greystoke.



Kuratahi formation. Photo by Erica Davey

Moa Cave

The cave was much wetter than it had been the previous day and had a lot of water flowing in through the roof. The team surveyed about 700 m of cave up until the point a roof sniff was required. They kept exploring, though Megan and Ian turned back at the vertical dodgy rock pile squeeze because Ian couldn't get through. That night was a full moon, which was fitting as Alan had mooned Geoff earlier that day (possibly as retribution for Geoff having added Raro into Alan's ginger beer). Dinner consisted of spaghetti bolognese followed by French vanilla ice cream for dessert, which we all enjoyed - though possibly not as much as Geoff appeared to enjoy Chapter 7 of "The Love Pirate".

Lessons learned: Raro doesn't belong in Ginger Beer.

Day 3

Finally, a day of sunshine! Megan, Mel and Phil did Kiwi cave in the morning, followed by Rimu cave in the afternoon. Alan, Ian, Geoff and Peter went to get permission to do the cave on Totoro Rd.

Kiwi Cave

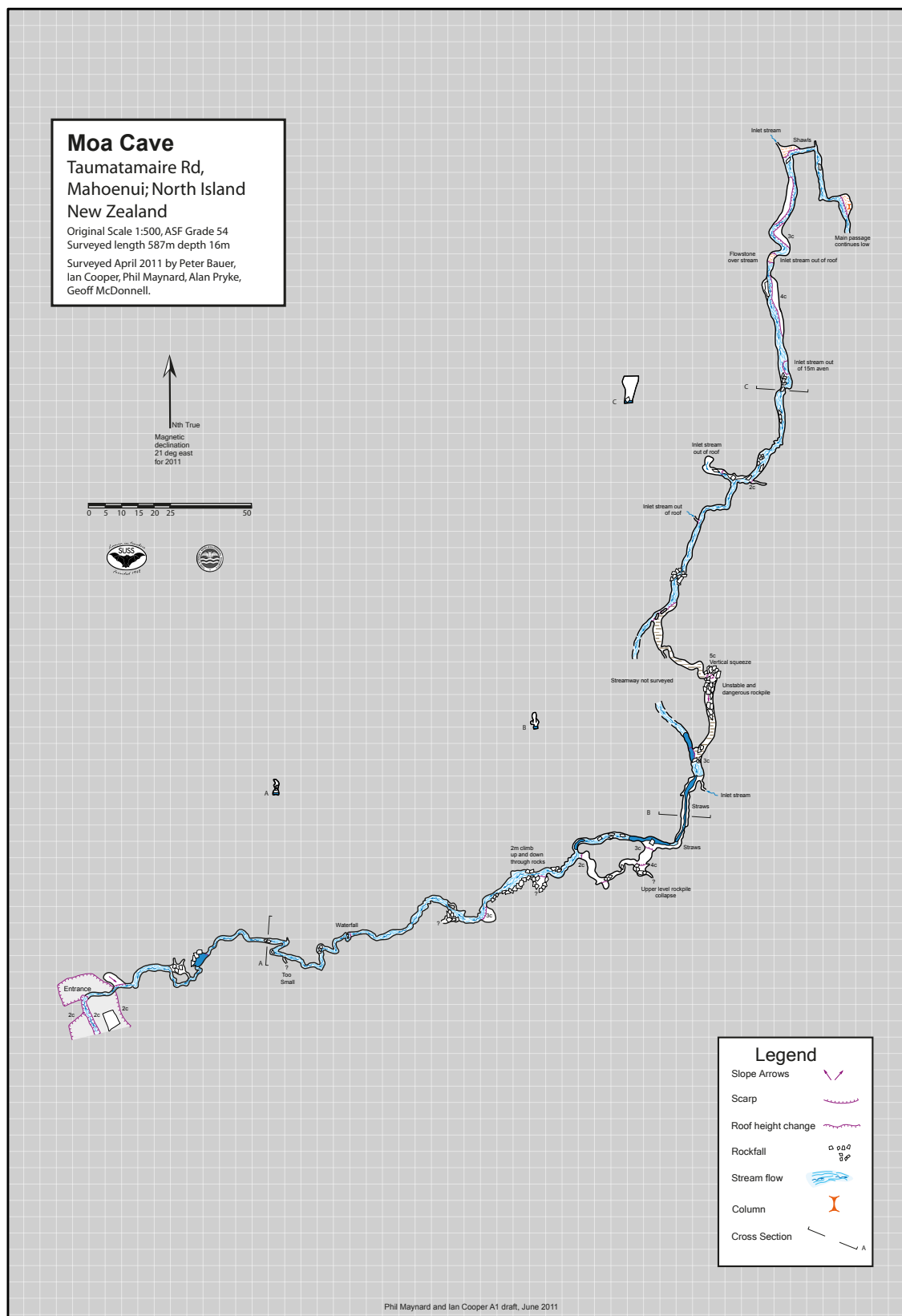
We drove to Mr Bolt's place (12.4 Km from the cabin, past a tower) to get permission to cave on Black's property, which we duly got. John Oxley wimped out of Kiwi cave and decided to spend the morning hanging out in a really cute, and romantic, clearing in the bush which marked both the Kiwi and Rimu cave entrances.

Kiwi cave turned out to be a great cave. The first section involved lots of crawling on pebbles as we wound our way around stalagmites and flowstone and through stream passage. We crawled through a couple of light waterfalls flowing over flowstone from the false roof. Eventually, we got to the fork at the end of the cave which was large enough for people to walk around. Mel pushed the south passage which got progressively tighter before forking again, one tunnel continuing to the south and the other to the west. The majority of water was coming in from the west branch which was really a rift while there was a strong breeze coming in from the south branch. Mel turned back at this point because both tunnels were too small for others to follow her. Phil took the time to push the other tunnel at the first fork, though it ended pretty quickly.

Rimu Cave

Megan was unable to join us on this cave due to her headlamp having died in Kiwi cave. Rimu was an awesome cave. It consisted of some really sporty stream passage with clean, white stone lining the walls and floor of the passage. There were lots of pools to jump in along the passage; with one so large that Mel had to swim through it. We eventually made it to a large cave exit in the side of a cliff which overlooked a large gorge below us. The stream

that we had been following poured passed us, out of the cave, and dropped 60m into this gorge. In order to reach a safer exit to the cave, we were required to back track upstream and take a passage that branched off to the left (when facing upstream). The actual exit was quite intimidating, requiring a difficult climb into a rock pile room and followed by a harrowing traverse across a sandy floor which sloped into a hole to our left, resembling the sand in the top chamber of an hour glass.



Totoro Rd Cave

Initially, Ian, Geoff, Alan and Peter went down to Mr Dark's property to get permission to visit a cave on Totoro road. It turns out that the cave they wanted to visit was, in fact, on another property, owned by Mr Balm. As luck would have it they met Mr Balm on a quad bike at his gate. Mr Balm was very helpful and pointed out the exit and entry points to the cave. They had a kilometre or so walk across paddocks following a fence line before finding the cave entrance at exactly the location pointed out to us on our aerial photographs. Inside the entrance of the cave was an aluminium extension forestry ladder which they descended and entered the stream cave. They then spent 4 hours trundling various branches of the cave. Stream passages and side passages leading to waterfalls and tomos. Jess got attacked by a zombie eel - It was a dead eel that was being pushed downstream. A couple of 2m waterfalls were descended. Further downstream the passage got larger, through rockfall and ended in a series of tomos - very canyon like. Climbed out of the resurgence and found the car to be less than 50m away. They then drove to Mangaorongo road to visit some farmers to get permission to visit their land. They were successful and spoke to Bob Tribe and got permission to do Debruiser cave.

That night we had Burritos for dinner. Mel spent the evening patching up her overalls.

Lessons Learned: A quad bike should have 8 wheels (John Oxley).

Day 4

Cloudy, a bit of rain, but nothing to really complain about.

The whole gang left for the Blacks Cave in the morning and followed it up with some wet and wild fun in Groove - possibly the greatest cave ever. Ian and Phil missed out on Groove and had a less awesome time checking out an "unknown" cave.

Blacks Cave

This cave has a really nice hanging lake near the entrance which is followed up with a lot of straws and other decoration. It's a pretty muddy cave with a lot of conglomerate walls. There is one section called something about a graveyard?

Phil, Alan, Mel and Ian went followed a pretty horrible dig through to 'Not Blacks' which was a pretty short cave. Upon exiting 'Not Blacks' Mel and Alan walked upstream to find new caves. On the way they braved two bulls that guarded a promising looking doline, which proved to yield nothing.

Groove Cave

THE GREATEST CAVE of the trip - Nothing will beat this one. The plan was to go traipsing around the Blacks property and find some caves, either new ones or already discovered ones. Mel was expecting an afternoon of sticking heads into shitty little dirt holes and wading through the occasional resting place of sheep, but she was mistaken. We went east from Blacks and came across Breakwater Hole - a very impressive hole in the hill that is 40m deep, rimmed with the usual NZ ferns and shrubs. Then we went a little further east and found 'Groove'. It took us a while to find a way in to the cave. In the end we used a tape and climbed in using a very conveniently placed tree root that guided us into the river that ran the base of the valley.



Coops on the ladder to Totoro Cave. Photo by Alan Pryke

Nobody but Alan knew what to expect and he wasn't exactly forthcoming. He and Jost ran off downstream while Geoff, Mel and Peter stayed to check out upstream. Upstream, a series of 5 scalable waterfalls rushed down from the base of a big waterfall that poured out of a cave that we were unable to ascend in to. It was a beautiful sight. Downstream, we passed underneath a land bridge into a deeper part of the valley and eventually came to the real Groove cave entrance.

Straight away we were met with a waterfall that thundered over smooth black rock, sloped at just the right angle to allow us to jump in and slide down in the next pool. At this pool, we were met with yet another waterfall, which was also perfect for sliding down. The whole cave turned out to be 200m of consecutive waterslides, with each new waterslide presenting slightly new challenges as we made our way deeper into the cave. Water World engineers could not have designed a better water slide adventure than this one. The perfect ending to this cave would have been a nice exit into sunny fields. In reality, we hit a sump and had to climb back the way we'd so easily come down. We were eventually met with Alan and Jost who had finished before us and were on the way up.



Peter traversing a pool in Totoro cave. Photo by Alan Pryke

Unknown Cave

Ian and Phil went and looked at the resurgence across the valley from the hut (west). The cave sumped 20m in. They then climbed over the hill to the west but found no karst on top of that hill. On the other side of the hill was a blind valley. They followed the valley's creek down into a hole where they found two streams, one of which was a very large stream flowing in from the north from across the road. They followed this stream upstream for about 60m

before they ran into collapsed cave. The cave continued downstream for about 50m before ending in a sump.

Lessons learned: Unknown Cave stands for 'nobody bothered to name'.

Day 5

Cloudy, heavy mist clearing in the afternoon - "just right for finding a hole and putting a rope down it" - Geoff. Peter, Alan, Ian, Phil, Dave went out and investigated a hole in the ground that Phil and Ian had found the previous day. Megan, Mel, Jox and Phil went and did Robbers Hole.

Phil and Ian's discovery

The team dug out the outlet to the cave that Phil and Ian found the previous day in order to lower the dam level and allow access further into the cave. They managed to lower the sump by around 30cm which turned the sump into a roof sniff. Their efforts were rewarded with another the sump 10m past the first. Ian provided some comedic relief by falling into the water.

Alan and Peter continued their cave hunting by looking for a sink that they had identified on google photographs. The sink revealed a cave that opened up into stomping passage for 230m with a 50m side passage. Spirits lifted, they then checked out a series of sinks on the northside of the road, with most failing to go anywhere. Alan suspects that they found Phallopian cave which had many small waterfalls leading to a 5m waterfall, which proved to be a scary climb - though no challenge for Peter.

While Peter and Alan were proving hardcore, Ian, Dave and Phil went back to the hut for lunch. They went for a pleasant road trip to Taumatamare Rd and then to the coast to Mokau where they ate icecream and looked at a beach. They tried to go to the three sisters but the tide was stopping them from walking there. Then they headed south and inland to Mt Damper falls which is the site of a 74m waterfall and "bery" impressive Canyon. They came back to the hut via the 'forgotten world highway', the ghost town of Ohura and Totoro Rd which had "lots of spectacular countryside" - Ian



Megan in Matawhero Cave. Photo by Alan Pryke

Robbers Hole

Megan climbed down a '3m' hole that we believed to be the entry to Robbers hole. However, the only way on appeared to be impassable to humans. About 20m downstream we found a big pitch into the same cave which we suspected was the 14m pitch described on the map. Megan climbed down an 8m ladder in order to check it out and found that the ladder didn't reach the bottom. We didn't have the equipment necessary to enter the cave so we went back to the hut for lunch and to collect ropes and our SRT gear.

We went back to the cave entrance, abseiled into the cave and landed in some pretty foul smelling stream passage. Further downstream we discovered the cause of the smell: multiple cow carcasses, each in different stages of decomposition. Adding to the bleakness was the presence of clay which gave a grey tinge to the stream.

Robbers Hole turned out to be a pretty small cave. We pushed downstream to the sump and then went back towards the exit, checking out the 'Robber's Roost' side tunnel. The side tunnel is actually a big climb up a large rockpile that you can work around and get to the back of. The map ends here, though the cave doesn't. There is a small stream flowing from the north and entering the cave from behind this rockpile. The tunnel continues through some super dodgy rockpile, which has a breeze! Mel pushed through some of the rockpile to find a false dead-end and a breeze. She wanted to push further but thought it may prove fatal. Following the small stream south actually connected back up with the main stream, so the whole 'side passage' was in fact an oxbow.

Megan pushed the main passage upstream in order to find the other side of the 'impenetrable squeeze'. However, the upstream passage was more complicated than she had anticipated and she never made it to the end.

We prusiked out and then heading a bit upstream to check out another hole that Jox was interested in. Megan went in first and said "It goes". Jox geared up and then went down, only for Megan to decide that the cave did not in fact, go. Geoff named the hole 'Disappointment Pit', though it did lead to a 5m cave.

Day 6

Cloudy with no rain! Moving Day! Rauroa adventures were over for the year, as was Mel's chance to see the whole of Moa cave. We got an early start and arrived at Puketiti Station by around 10:30 am.

After we'd finished visiting the necessary farmers, Mel, Jox, David and Phil went and did Pompeii Cave while Alan, Geoff and Peter tried to find Closet Cave.

Pompeii Cave

"Over 50s caving at its best" - David. Pompeii is a through-cave consisting primarily of huge passage with a pebbly and sandy floor. It's so big and basic that you could drive a car through it.

Closet Cave

The team rediscovered a 20m cave that Geoff had found back in 2005. The cave is apparently horrible. Peter found a 200m cave, which they think is Closet cave. It consists of mainly walkthrough streamway and brief, low crawly passages. It has a little decoration and a lot of dead animal bones. The cave provided the perfect opportunity for the team to joke that "Geoff came out of the closet".

Lessons Learned: You can apparently tell a person's race from the look of their ass, a skill that Geoff refused to demonstrate when asked.

Day 7

A beautiful day. Erica arrives! PhotoPhill, Erica and Jox celebrate Erica's arrival by photographing Kuratahi Cave. Alan, Megan, Ian, Phil, Geoff and Peter went to get permission to cave on peoples' properties and do a bit of caving while Melanie worked on a university assignment.

Kuratahi Cave

"3 cameras, 4 lenses, 2 flash units and lots of batteries" - Erica.

The cave is pretty, though boring and cold - due mainly to the level of inactivity that the cave promotes. It consists of streamway passage and lots of side passages choked with gypsum. Erica was creeped out by all the wetas that guarded the entrance to the cave.

Permission Getting

Alan and co went to visit the Haywood property to get permission to cave on their land. They then went to the Paine property for the same purpose but the Paines claimed not to have any caves on their property... The last stop was at Mr John Petre's place, where they thought Selenite/Battleys Cave was.

The cave entrance was obvious. Downstream is the way to go. The cave has a solid white rock floor, small stream and easy passage for nearly 1 km before sumping. They found a dry bypass passed the sump and found a blackberry filled doline exit. Alan pushed on through this exit while Ian climbed out over the blackberries. Peter thrashed through the blackberries and ran into a goat which he tried to coerce into eating the blackberries to make the exit easier. They then successfully guessed the location of the cars. After lunch they reentered the cave and scoured every side passage in the cave for the so-called 'barbed selenite spheres',¹ but couldn't find any. Despite the lack of selenite spheres, the cave was apparently "good enough to eat an ice cream in" - Geoff.

Back on the Paine property they got a flat tire which provided the perfect excuse to go to Pio Pio and enjoy some NZ icecream before hitting Selenite Cave.

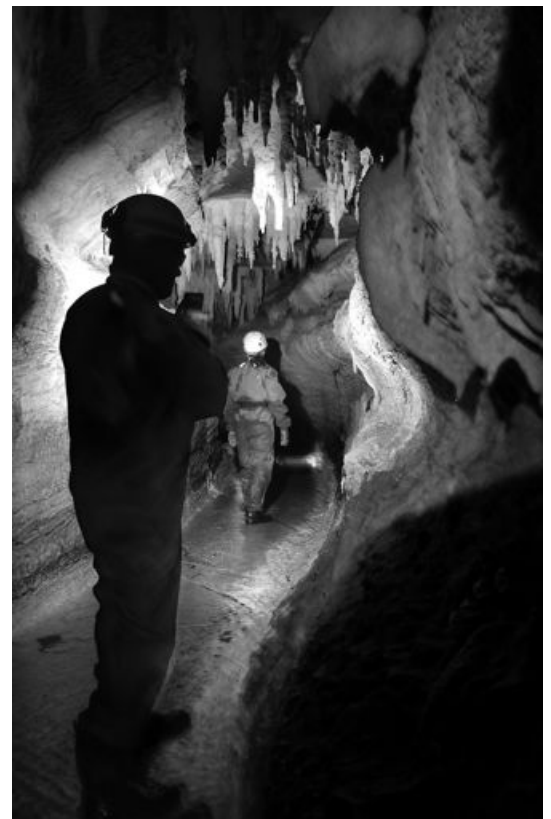
When heading back home they went to look for the resurgence of the Takapau streamway. Ian found the rising (resurgence) close to the Mangaotaki River. The entrance to the cave is 50m up the hill from the resurgence. Logging had recently been performed in the area leaving the area covered with fresh blackberry growth. They didn't go in.

Back home, we had Chicken Curry for dinner, cooked by David on behalf of Melanie, who had hitherto shirked her cooking responsibilities.

Lessons Learned: Caves can be good enough to eat an ice cream in.

Day 8

Jox, Phil, David, Erica, Mel went and did Thunderer, the longest cave in the area while Geoff, Megan, Alan, Peter and Ian went and surveyed what they believed to be Cascade Cave. The night before Mel had taken her Apex apart in a bid to get it to dry out. Her efforts were rewarded with a working Apex!



Coops and Megan in Battleys Cave. Photo by Peter Bauer

¹spears! - Alan

Thunderer Cave

Thunderer Cave is an awesome cave with long and sporty river passages. It was a great trip. After the cave Erica, Jox and Phil went for a drive up to the waterfall and back via Pio Pio. Jox and Phil got excited by potential caves while Erica had a nap.

Cascade Cave

The team didn't finish the survey as Coops ran out of paper. The cave has lot of black manganese covered mud and rock. The stream passage occasionally got as deep as crotch height. There is one side branch which has clean formation in the form of a series of 2m wide crystal pools that continue for about 15m.

Lessons learned: 2nd waterfalls are often downstream of the 1st - Mel

Day 9

Day 9 proved to be rainy and grey, contributing the large number of people who decided to bum around the hut all day.

Erica, having just arrived was keen to get in some caving. She and Jox went and did Long John cave while Alan and Geoff went to survey Cathys Cave. The remaining people hung around the hut.

Long John

Long John proved to be an abseil in, walk out cave with easy stream passage in between. Erica and Jox checked out side branches which contained some "pretties" and also some crawly muddy bits.

Cathys Cave

Alan and Geoff drove out and walked north to get to Cathy's Cave. They surveyed 420m of the cave, whereas the old survey has only 200 m. The new map is also very different from the old map which made Alan feel pretty smug. Geoff didn't like the cave and regrets not having worn a wetsuit.

The hut

Megan studied weather stuff for TAFE. Ian washed and ironed the cave surveys. Dave watched a movie and Mel finished her group assignment. Ian and Dave audited food list and rearranged fridge, kitchen and food.

Day 10

It rained hard all night and morning, finally clearing up in the afternoon.

Dave, Megan, Phil, Erica and Peter went for a drive while Alan, Mel and Geoff went and did 67 Cave on Handsdown Station.

The Drive

The car travelers drove over the windy road to Marakopa heading for Marakopa falls. They then went to Waitomo for lunch and stopped for ice cream at Pio Pio.

67 Cave

At the farm we met Steven Knight who told us two wonderful things. The first was that his property had heaps of holes and the second was that we were welcome to check them out!

67 Cave turned out to be a great cave! It started off pretty horrible, but markedly improved when we hit the stream. The cave consisted of large stream passage with lots of rushing water and the occasional black water rapids. The rain had resulted in the water level being quite high and Mel had a lot trouble battling against the current. We followed the main stream past the junction and down to some decoration hanging into the stream but turned back because the water current and water level was getting too dangerous and there was no dry alternative; Ian had also forgotten his thermals so we were conscious of being wet too long.

At the junction, we took the side stream in order to take the 'mud in your eye' exit. It turned out to be nice passage, muddy but with more decoration. The exit itself was fantastic. It was a lengthy, small and wet crawl that popped out into the most picturesque little grove you could imagine. The weather had cleared up and we emerged from a tiny hole at the base of a tree with a very impressive root system. The green hills were glowing and the sky was clear with puffy clouds.

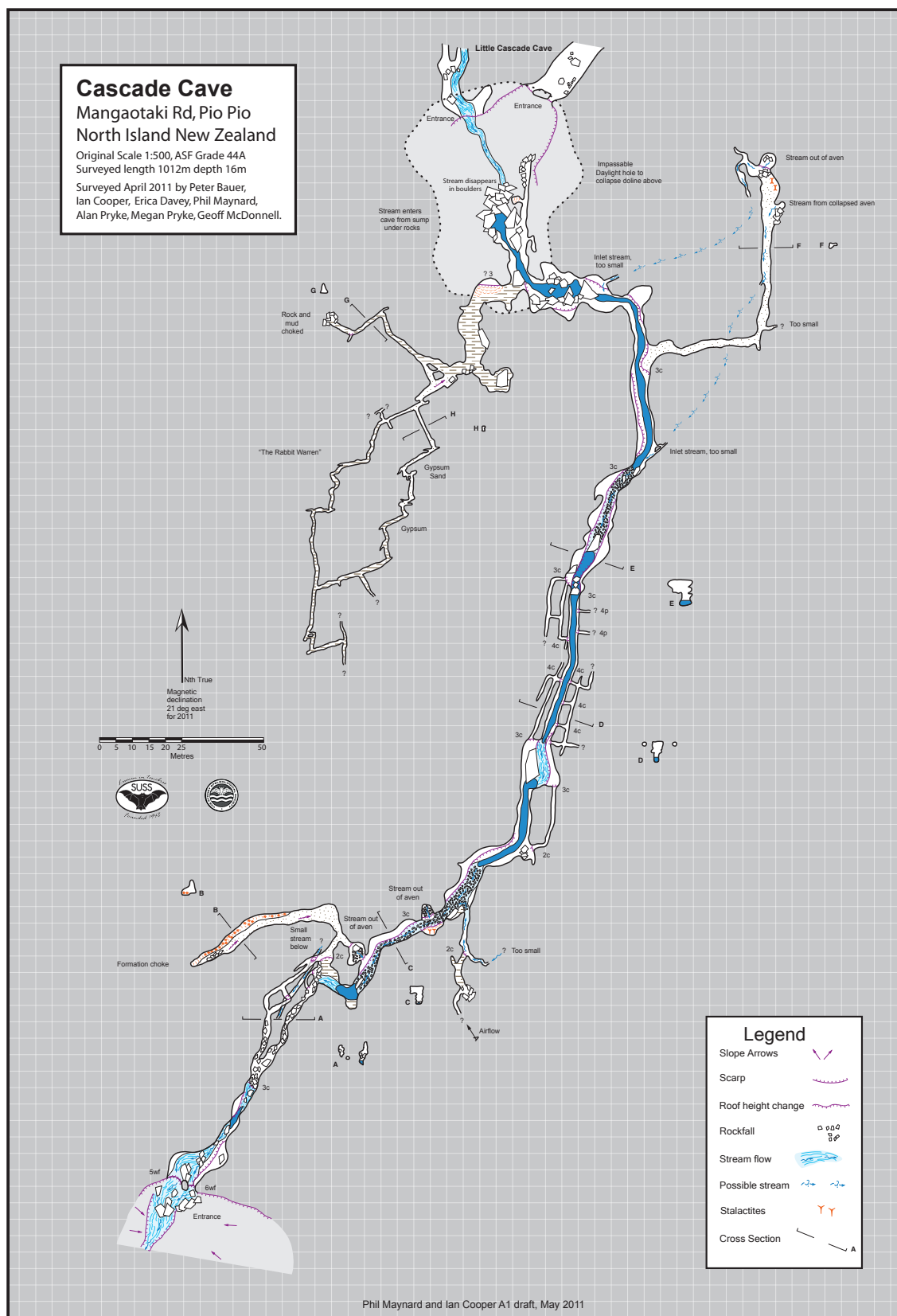
It was Mel's last day caving. She was picked by some friends and drove to Wanaka that night. From here on the trip events were recorded by Megan Pryke.



*the reason to use a disto - Cascade Cave.
Photo by Erica Davey*

Day 11 - 27/4/2011

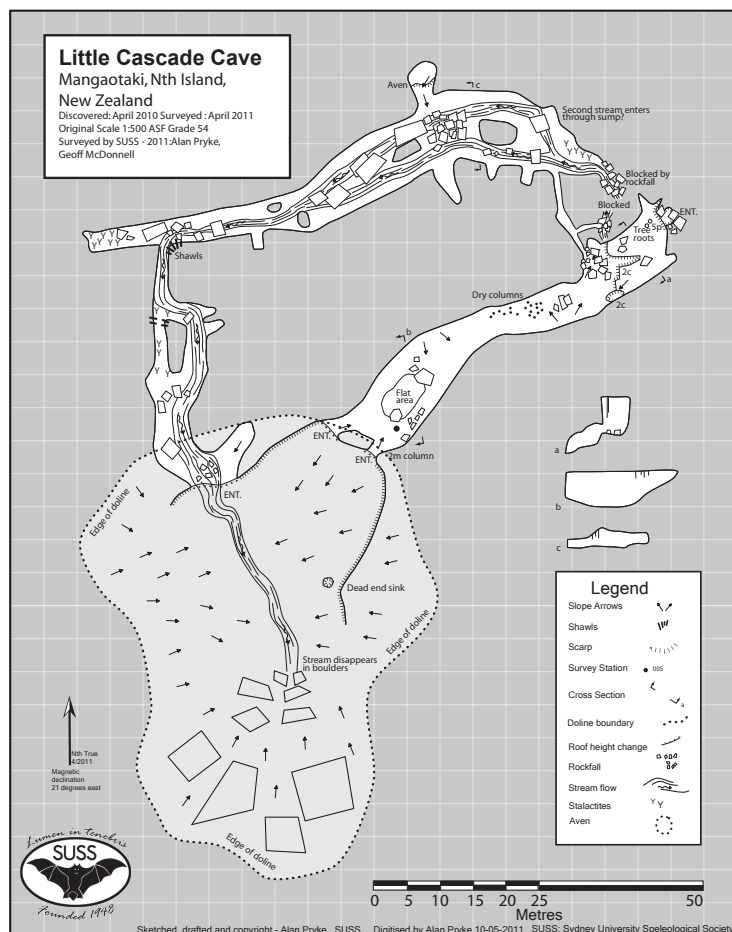
Cascade cave.



Participants: Phil, Ian, Erica and Megan

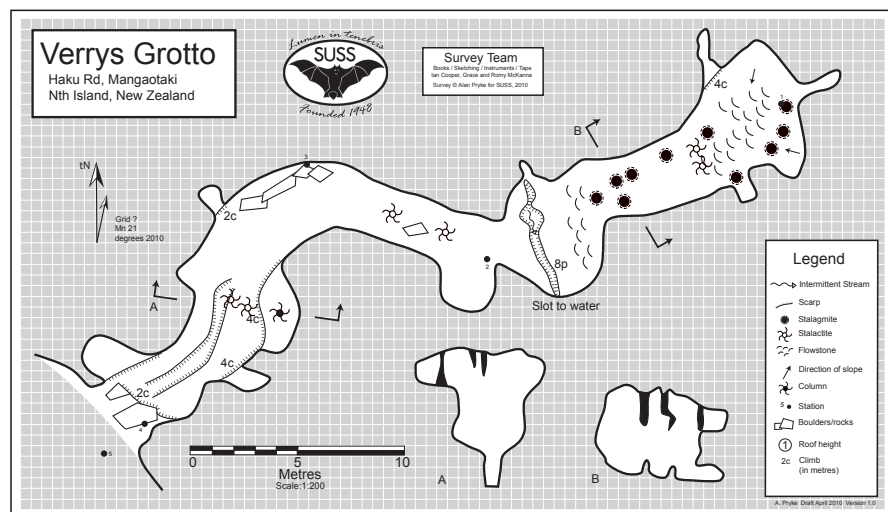
Despite the small amount left to survey, the rabbit warren took some time, resulting in the survey "near enough finished". Phil found a daylight entrance and there was plenty of animal evidence in the caves, probably of possums. Alan and Geoff surveyed "mini-me", or upper Cascade Cave. Somehow Geoff got waylaid while traversing between

entrances 50 metres apart.



Verrys Disappointment

Peter, John and Megan rumbled down Verrys Disappointment, as far as the Chinsnapper Falls. It was a great sporty trip with lots of water powering through the cave and down the 30 metre high Chinsnapper Falls, which come into the cave via a significant side stream - significant enough to wonder if there would be a nice wet abseil drop alongside Chinsnapper Falls. Afterwards the group explored dolines to the north of Verrys Disappointment. They explored a small cave following a stream both upstream and downstream for 50 minutes. It was labelled Crawchie Cave by Megan due to a large dead crayfish, and smaller live ones, seen in the cave. Dinner was a tortellini with cheese filling. It won Geoff's approval.



28/4/2011

Exploration in the Waitoro Bush

Clear skies today, all cars and cavers went to Waitoru. Megan, Erica, Geoff and Peter went to visit one of the large bush blocks, hoping to locate a doline Megan had found years ago. Alas, the exact doline was not relocated, however a small cave was found! Peter entered into a dark zone to find an extremely muddy base. The area seemed to have lots of smaller stream in the upper section but not enough limestone to dissolve into large caves; downstream the stream was flowing on the surface. Further exploration should probably focus on following the stream down to see if it reaches a geological layer where it sinks.

Bush Arch and Mangawhara Cavern

John and Phil in the meantime headed to Bush Arch for an abseil. Alan, Ian and David took a much longer route, via Te Kuiti, to ensure we had the cash to cover the accommodation. They joined up with John and Phil at Mangawhara Cavern. The other group of four (Megan, Erica, Geoff and Peter) also joined up with all at Mangawhara Cavern, just in time to have the last person abseil down the 40m drop as they put on their SRT gear. It was a great way to enter into the cavern, we all admired the beautiful scenes framed by the cavern, the creek gurgling its way through.

Matawhero Cave

Phil, Ian, John and Dave returned to Puketiti. Alan, Erica, Geoff, Peter and Megan continued onto Matawhero Cave. We unsuccessfully tried to locate two upstream entrances. Megan had previously exited out of one of these entrances by literally digging a way out (SUSS Bull 48-1: Hanging Out at Puketiti Station by Tina Willmore). Plan B was to follow the cave upstream. This turned out to be a wise decision as the water levels were definitely up. The team was required to tiptoe with water up to neck height in at least one section. A three meter waterfall proved too challenging for Megan who recalled hand holds that were now under the force of the water. Super climber Peter bridged the climb, the final lip proving even more of a challenge as the velcro holding the front of his cave suit was ripped open and was scooping up water. Peter then kindly divert the flow of the waterfall away from the remaining climbers as they climbed up.

In addition to a substantial stream, Matawhero has decoration and occasionally tight, manganese lined passage. Megan directed Alan to the part he had not found before, Erica followed. To Alan's horror the passage got even tighter around a 90 degree bend, so he decided to turn back. It was only when Alan was heard cursing that Megan recalled the challenges that he was facing.

We exited in the dark, relatively clean but drenched, keeping warm by briskly walking back to the cars.

The end.



Megan and Peter attempt waterfall climb, Matawhero cave. Photo by Erica Davey



*Jox, David, Megan, Ian, Phil, Peter (standing)
Geoff, Erica, Alan (sitting)*

CORAL, CAVES, CANE TOADS AND COWS (EASTER 2012)

BY JACK WACHSMANN

Participants: Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, John Oxley, Geoff McDonald, Jack Wachsmann, Alison Chau, Tess Brunton, Grant Maley, Van (CCC) with a guest appearance from Paul Osborne (CCC).

Our active adventurer Alan Pryke had arranged for yet another long distance subterranean trip, this time to Chillagoe caves in Far North Queensland. The Chillagoe-Mungana karst area is very large with over 500 known cave entrances! Unlike other areas more common to us southerners, a lot of the limestone sits above the flat plains, in what are known as karst towers, rather than exposed as bluffs in the side of hills. The trip was planned for two weeks but unfortunately only the second week coincided with university/school holidays and so those of us constrained by study/work had to meet our elders halfway through the trip.

Alison and my trip began Thursday afternoon at the joy that is Sydney airport before a long weekend. After dropping our bags off at the Jetstar check-in desk a huge queue for security confronted us. Luckily I had a gold pass to the Virgin Velocity Lounge and so we quickly bypassed the plebs to go through the Virgin VIP security (despite flying Jetstar!). Once through the rigours of modern aviation security we indulged in free food and drink before boarding the sardine can that is a low cost airline.

Good Friday – The Reef and Drive Up

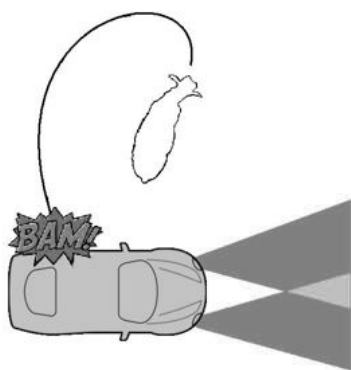
Bright and early the next day we brave adventurers set off to the marina and the underwater wonderland of the Great Barrier Reef. I won't dwell on our nautical exploits but here is a brief summary; 28 °C water temperature, 2 white tipped reef sharks, one giant turtle, clownfish and 15m visibility!

Back on dry land we collected our hire car, and after some obligatory pffaff, departed Cairns slightly later than we had hoped. Unfortunately 200km west of Cairns means something completely different from 200km west of Sydney. Once over the mountains it is not long before you hit the cattle stations, which are characterised by a lack of fences, free range cattle and dirt roads. Mmm, maybe we shouldn't have skimped on the car hire? Oh well we will just have to take it slow.

BANG! A wallaby went under the left wheel. Thankfully it was small and no damage was done. But a short time later ...



AHH! COWS! We slowed to a stop and waited before slowly edging forward. **AHH! BAM! DAMN!**



Those last exclamations roughly describe a cow facing away from us deciding in all its bovine wisdom to turn around and ram the side of the practically stationary hire car. Fortunately only one panel was damaged, but needless to say we were on edge for the next 12 close encounters over the rest of the drive!

Saturday – Carpentaria & Centenary Caves

Over the long weekend the SUSS contingent had agreed to show some rock climbers from Townsville around the caves, so this meant we had a nice beginner cave first up for Alison and me to warm up in. Carpentaria Cave was huge but was definitely a beginners' cave, with flat floors and signs in every chamber. Full of energy and

ready for some proper caving we managed to find the only squeeze in the cave and descended to the lower level sewers via the rather spiky 'drain pipe'. After lunch we relocated to another tower, along with our vehicles. Alan wanted to find Centenary Cave for which we had an approximate GPS location but not the route in. Negotiating our way across the steepest hill of the trip, which Alan had thoughtfully saved especially for us we set off. On the second attempt to penetrate the central breakdown of the tower, fighting green ants, thorns, spear grass, razor-sharp karst and sudden drops, we finally managed to locate the large daylight hole entrance, and soon Megan found a non-vertical way in. Centenary was more of the sort of cave we were expecting, with climbs, uneven floors and some nice decoration thrown in for good measure. Unfortunately time started to run out on us as we searched for the extension, and we cut it very fine with our dinner timing. This is a more serious situation than you may think. We had arranged with the Chillagoe Caving Club Complex caretaker, Carol, to cater for us and we were looking forward to one of the Carol dinners that Alan had hyped up. It lived up to our expectations: 3 courses of great home cooking

in 19min, with the first course always coming out at 7pm sharp - and unless you want a very cranky Carol you make sure you are on time!

Sunday – Macropodidae's Waterhole

Sunday was to be our Townsville friends final day and our expedition numbers had been further bolstered by the arrival of Grant, Tess and the north Queensland local, Van. Hoping to make use of Van's local knowledge to help locate the entrance, we set off for Macropodidae's Waterhole. As one can guess by the name this cave fills with water in the wet season. The central chamber beneath the main daylight hole has watermarks on the walls a good 5m above the ground, and this is a massive chamber 50m x 50m chamber. Thats a lot of water!



Styrofoam roof at the bottom of Macropodidae's Waterhole. Photo by Jack Wachsmann

Normally there is still a metre or two of water in April but unfortunately for us (i.e. Jack) it was bone dry. There are multiple entrances to this cave but we decided to make use of the giant daylight hole over the central chamber (the one that floods) and go in via a 35m abseil. So 2hrs later we are still pfaffing about the entrance trying to get 17 people down a rope quickly and safely (Note to self: limit size of SRT trips in future). Finally we all got down but by then it was time for the rock climbers to begin their return journey to Townsville. We quickly led the climbers to an exit and sent them on their way while we continued to play in the cave. We found some deep drops with a very low water table at the bottom (and rocks promptly dropped so we could hear the splash) as well as some other entrances before we finally decided to call it a day and retire to the hut. Again and something that would prove to be a defining feature of the trip - the hike back to the car was significantly shorter in both time and distance than the trip to, and far less spiky.

Monday – Queenslander

The next cave on the hit list was the famous Queenslander cave. Alan had tactfully saved it for when Alison and I were present and it did not disappoint. Right from the get-go this cave was a blast, starting with the back door entrance named the Queens Bum (or the QB for the more polite). The QB is a horizontal phreatic tube about 50cm in diameter located about 1.5m off the ground in a nice smooth phreatic wall. Starting is somewhat of a challenge and as the typical pfaffing was going on Alan chimed in from the far side that all the pros go feet first. Challenge accepted and passed - well some of us did at least. Geoff and John were feeling a little bit less adventurous and found an alternative entrance with a bit of a crawl. We soon encountered and conquered the triple climb with minimal pfaff and Alan somehow convinced everyone that it would be a good idea to be lowered on a tape bowline down the other side out of a window into the next massive chamber. We quickly moved on to the top of the dig, but not before Geoff tried to climb down an alternative route.

Alan: "Is that the ways on?"

Geoff: "Yeah, but it's a bit rough!"

Alan: "What d'ya mean, rough?"

Geoff: "Aw, yeah. It looks rough! I think I can climb down it though."

Jack: "Geoff, don't go down that way, you idiot!"

Jack had gotten bored at the back of the pack and had started investigating the left hand fork of the passage and discovered Geoff about to climb down a sheer 6m drop.

The aforementioned dig is a connection that leads to an old tourist cave called Cathedral and had not been traversed since the end of the wet season- which meant Alan got to be a mole for a while. Upon emerging on the other side, we found that the entire cave was lit up by sunlight to a brilliant orange, although within the hour as the sun moved this became an uninteresting grey. Moving on, we chimneyed up the 5m climb named Pages Pass and slid down the other side, Geoff doing terminal damage to the seat of his overalls amid a shower of expletives. Soon we came to Confusion Corner, which lived up to its name. On the map there was a large straight passage leading straight to where we wanted to go, but there was a problem: a bloody great pit where there was no climb or hole indicated on the map. After some futile searches for an alternative way which only led to larger drops or dead ends, the impassable pit suddenly looked passable and Alan deployed the climbing unit. I tentatively lowered myself over the edge of the false floor hoping that I would be able to get back up, but found a concealed foothold that made it seem trivial. After running down the passage, however, a new problem soon presented itself.

A slight fault with the maps we had was that they did not list pitch heights (or indicate up or down pitches), and the upcoming Kinnears Pass was not a 5m climb as we had thought but a rather hairy 15m climb. Hmmm . . . maybe save that for another day. Finally the traditional and well-used bypass named the Belfry was found and we bravely followed Megan down the small overhanging hole in the false floor named the letterbox. From here it was a mostly straightforward trip through little Italy (with a side trip to the absolutely must-see Moon Crater) to our exit up a ladder rigged by Van and others who did the reverse trip. Overall, a great cave!

Tuesday – Royal Arch & Frog Castle

National Parks had granted us a permit to visit the Royal Arch tourist cave, and we planned to make full use of it. After picking up the key from the parks office in town we set off early as we had to be out of the cave before the first tour at 1:00pm. Marching up to the gate we were confident of an easy entrance following the tourist path - but we found our path blocked. The key they gave us didn't work! Luckily we had a back up plan and we went to search for the old and less successful tourist cave named Fairy, next door. We found and conquered that cave rather quickly and slumped back to the car park to prepare for a move. As chance would have it two park rangers had come round to empty the bins at that exact moment and we traded the key we had for what they assured us was the correct key. This one didn't work either! That is until Alan's second attempt and somehow he managed to jiggle it right. Many photos later, and having checked out the impressive namesake of the cave, we began to head back to make it out before the tour was due. Surprise, surprise, the key did not work. Trapped in the well-sealed tourist cave, there was nothing to do but continue photo-pfaffing until we were rescued by the tourist group 30min later.

Afterwards, Megan and John felt like a break after what had been over a week of caving for them, so they decided to walk back to town via Balancing Rock while Geoff, Alan, Alison and I made our way to Frog Castle. This cave has a large and impressive entrance on the side of the cliff into a massive chamber which quickly leads to a large daylight hole. From here there are multiple ways on, all eventually reaching the next major chamber. Jack immediately began to climb the wall on the far side but was recalled by Alan as we made our way along the most obvious ground level route. From the next major chamber the way on was not immediately obvious. Alan disappeared behind a flowstone and exclamations of unstable rocks began to flow. Alison found another equally horrible way on eventually meeting up with Alan in a pristine room full of oolites and very large rims. When we tracked down their voices I made my way up my original climb to discover Alan sitting at the top. Geoff soon joined me and we all partially detrogged. The decoration was marvellous and I suspect very few people, if any, have been up to that lookout above the daylight chamber. The dry rimpoles were drolly described by Geoff as "the best rimpoles I've seen! - in Queensland". Cue photo-pfaff.



Alison and fig roots in Royal Arch Cave. Photo by Alan Pryke

Wednesday – September Cave

For Alison's last day before returning early to Sydney for her graduation ceremony we met up with local caver Paul Osborne and made the long drive down to the Walkunder Towers. We made a quick surface bash around one looking for Aboriginal art, caves and views before beginning the hunt for September cave. After turning left at Abo's Head (because the bush looked decidedly unpleasant and thick to the right) we spent several hours looking for the entrance, which was less than 50m away. In the thick scrub and vertical, sharp karst, the going can be slow indeed. However, we did manage to stumble upon two untagged entrances to a cave system completely unconnected to September. Eventually we found the glaringly obvious entrance and headed in, just in time to catch the last of the brilliant orange midday sun.

September Cave (and indeed, a lot of caves at Chillagoe) had excellent examples of a phenomenon known as phytokarst. In the entrance chambers bacteria grow on the rock and slowly eat into the limestone, creating large, sharp spikes on the rock pointing towards the sun. The cave also has some fantastic shower-head formations and large, well-sculpted phreatic passageways. Paul also managed to get 3G in one of the entrances and posted a facebook update (hooray for 2012!). As usual the way back was much quicker, taking only 15min, and we emerged from the very scrub we turned away from at Abo's Head to avoid.

Thursday – New South Lander

The next morning, having said our farewells to Alison, we headed to the New South Lander. This had been touted as one of the better caves in the area, and seeing as it was in the same karst tower as the brilliant Queenslander even connecting up with it via a pitch - my hopes were high. However the New South Lander is a very different sort of cave. The entrance was the easiest to find thus far, about 30m from the car along a track, but that is where the pleasantries end. The cave has a lot of large daylight chambers filled with breakdown in which it is very difficult to locate the way on. Several hours were spent caving in the daylight as a result. We also managed to emerge at the halfway point of the cave via the entrance we wanted to return via, and spent 1 hour (in the only rain of the week) looking for the entrance. Doh! Once this mistake was rectified we were quickly back on track, but we encountered a wide pitch over white flowstone and with clean walls. The map suggested it was the way on, but none of us felt confident in reversing the climb and the clean walls made us suspicious. Being fed up at this point anyway, we returned the way we had come and had a relaxing afternoon back at the complex.

NB: This cave has the potential to be an enjoyable trip if you go with someone familiar with the cave and less daylight caving occurs.

Friday – Con Cave

Con Cave was a great little number that Alan selected from the book especially for my last full day as the description included numerous climbs. The entrance was in a doline with sheer walls neatly placed on the edge of the tower. As you head towards the obvious entrance you gradually fill with disappointment as you realise it is a dead end, until you look up. After climbing up the entrance the way on is pretty straightforward, underneath daylight holes and some collapsed sections until another dead end is reached in a small daylight chamber. Climbing up into the light the rest of the daylight chamber is realised and the way on is again easily located. I then bravely forged a path up a fun little phreatic climb while Alan decided to enlarge a small hole underneath and arrived in the massive phreatic junction chamber in a less dignified manner. By this stage lunch was fast approaching and we had left the packs at the entrance, so we took a shortcut back. Around some very nice oolites and through a very tight flattener, braved first by Megan, we emerged right next to the other entrance. Most of us enjoyed our simple muesli bars while Geoff snacked on pickled onions (straight from the glass jar in his cave pack!) and 1L of milk he did not want to go to waste. We dashed back through the flattener and finished exploring, with Geoff having less fun than the rest of us. He shouldn't have had that milk. A large climb later and an attempt to fit through the impossible squeeze connection to Chinese Cavern saw us depart.

We then walked the long way around the bluff to Chinese Cavern to look at the minimal decoration mentioned in the book and to try and find the connection. The epic-ness of the walk for the small amount of decoration cannot be overemphasised. But to make up for it and to try and trick ourselves that it was better than it was, Geoff rewarded our efforts with some of his loudest WOWs of the trip. In short, Con Cave: good; Chinese Cavern: not so good.



Leunig-like formation with Jack in Royal Arch Cave. Photo by Alan Pryke

Saturday – 1 Mile Tower

Grant, Tess, and I were flying back later today and thus had to leave early. As a consequence we went with Van to look for some interesting caves on 1 Mile Bluff while the others did their full day of caving. We found some short and mostly uninteresting caves, although one cave was particularly unstable inside. Grant also pioneered a Tarzan-style exit by climbing a tree growing out of a daylight hole, fearlessly jumping from branch to branch. Before returning for lunch we climbed to the summit of the tower and were rewarded with a spectacular view of the area and most of the main towers (which, by the way, are huge). We then washed off in the waterhole, which was inhabited by small attack fish, before having a burger for lunch and heading back to Cairns for our flights home.

Lessons Learnt:

- Don't skimp on car hire insurance,
- Don't drive at night when cows are on the prowl,
- Don't take 17 people abseiling down one rope,
- Don't be late for a Carol dinner,
- Triple Check the cave key,
- Always take the route that looks harder to the entrance - it will inevitably be quicker,
- Pack a spare set of cotton overalls for Chillagoe karst towers (and in addition for everyone's benefit wear shorts under your overalls),
- Frozen water bottles are great, especially if they have cordial in them.



'Beam me up' (cavers in Walkunder towers). Photo by Alan Pryke

DWYERS AND OTHER CAVES

BY THOMAS CUNNINGHAM (DWYERS), JACK WACHSMANN (SPIDER)

Participants: Jack Wachsmann, Max Milden, Nat Brennan, Thomas Cunningham, Phil Maynard, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Bill Lamb, Ian Cooper, Rowena Larkins, Sophia Charow, Zahara Keulen, Ricky Harjanto, James Bultitude, Simon Li, Phil Eddey

This trip saw all those prepared to abandon their mothers on Mothers Day as well as those prepared to abandon caving early to return home begging for forgiveness, descend upon Jenolan. A trip to Dwyers was planned for those foolish enough to brave the infamous mud and other slightly less interesting activities were also arranged for the less adventurous. Surveying of middle bit in Mammoth continued with a possible lead found up high and some touristy trips into both Mammoth and Wiburds were also run.

Dwyers!

Participants: Jack Wachsmann, Max Milden, Nat Brennan, Thomas Cunningham

Trips to Dwyers typically do not just happen, but let's call this trip the exception to the rule. After being volunteered to run the May Jenolan trip I thought I would pull a sneaky and chuck Dwyers on the permit, just in case. As luck would have it Max knew of my desire to wallow in the Dwyers mud and suggested a trip when he signed up for Jenolan. Suddenly my dream became a reality. The warnings from national parks about the extremely physically demanding nature of the cave and that it is for experienced cavers, only spurred me on. Thomas was similarly attracted by the reputation Dwyers has acquired and Nat rounded off our group after being convinced to ditch her friends in favour of being our 4th pack mule.



Before and after; note the after state of the overalls Photo by Max Midlen

Expecting a long day we left the hut relatively early and entered the cave at 10:00am, the ability for SUSS to launch such an early start still amazes me. After some surface bashing and the obligatory 'before' photo we slid down the small slot entrance. The upper levels of the cave are surprisingly dry and dusty and these were traversed quite quickly. One begins to reach mud at the top of the 15m Cloud Pitch, which we negotiated with a 10m ladder and a 5m ladder added to the end. The last person down unclipped this ladder and scrabbled around an exposed ledge so it could be reused. It was at the bottom of this pitch that the real mud began and shoes began to stick with force. A short distance on, the 5m ladder was reused with a long anchor to reach the Chocolate Box. We then hauled ourselves up the laundry chute using a very helpful fixed line. We then thrutched through the hole at the top (over a rather large and uninviting puddle of water) and free climbed down the other side. It was then a short wade across the Slop Trough to the cordelette rigged opposite and the 3rd ladder was quickly rigged. It was at the top of this pitch that some unexpected and very nice pretties made an appearance.

Two pitches remaining. One ladder left. Problem? Not at all, the cordelette ladder was promptly packed away for use on the final pitch. Meanwhile Max had rigged the next pitch into the Pit of Babel and Nat was soon on her way down. The formation at the top of the pit can only be described as really really at least 3 more reallys white. It is almost impossible to comprehend how perfectly white the decoration is, especially in such a muddy and sticky cave. We were soon at the bottom and had a leisurely lunch before tackling the dig. Nat got the furthest, sighting some shovels at the end while the rest of us piked at the first 90 degree bend.





Pit of Babel

Now it has been said that the hardest part of Dwyers is getting back out and this was certainly the case. The weight of a clay covered pack cannot be underestimated! An interesting descent awaited Nat at the cordelette pitch. Being the last down, she clipped the ladder to the cordelette and was lowered gracefully atop the ladder into Slop Trough. Interesting new rope/ladder management systems were also pioneered; instead of neatly laying ladders that are too long on the ground simply stick them to the wall!

Making good time on the way out Max and I went for a side trip to see some old signatures, free climbing a short drop on the way. From there it was back outside before dark and in time for the 'after' shots. Amazingly I managed to keep my shoulders mostly free from mud and could still see some patches of cavesuit. Oh well, looks like another trip is needed . . .

Post Script

Getting out of the cave was not the only challenge of Dwyers, cleaning the following day, with a high pressure washer, took over 1 hour and was just group gear!



Dwyers Mud



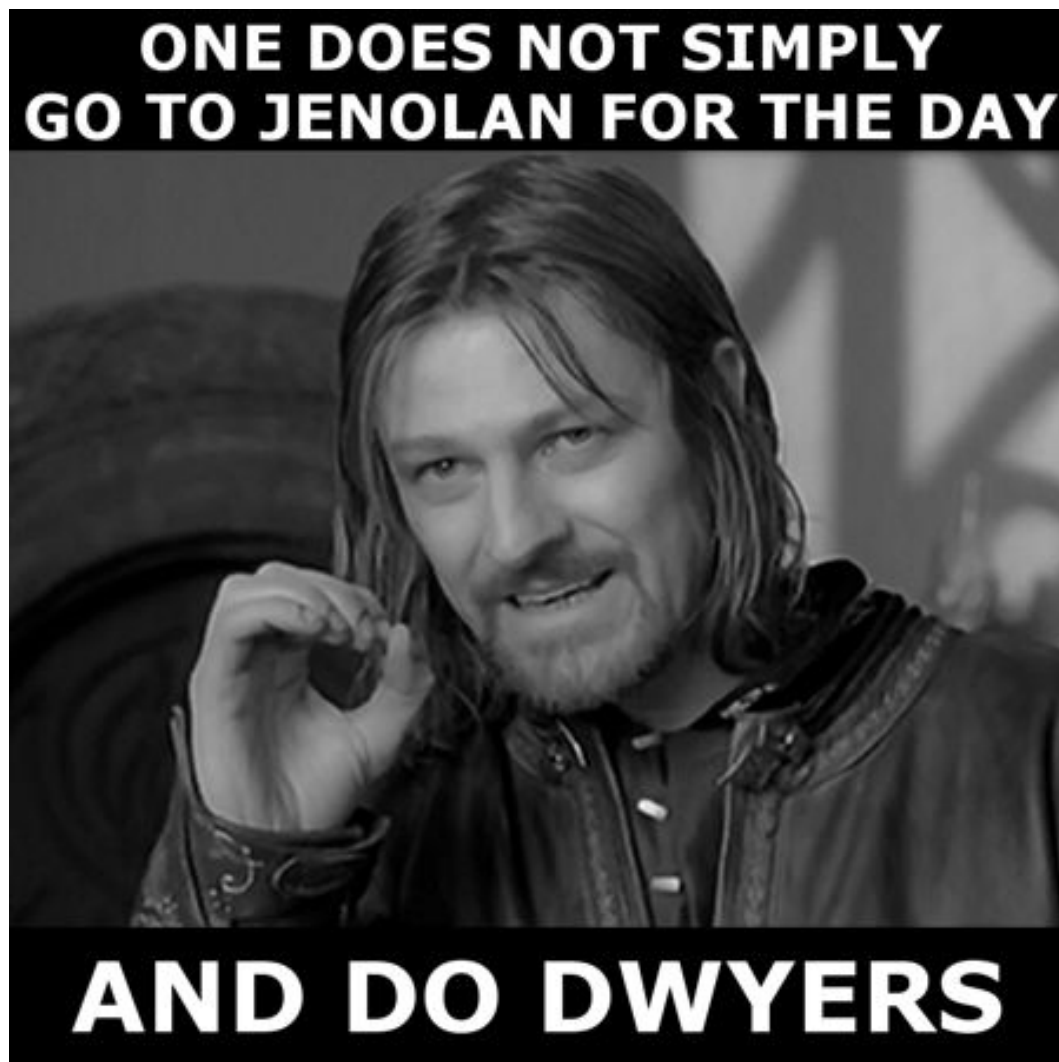
Spider

Participants: Jack Wachsmann, Max Milden, Nat Brennan, James Bultitude, Simon Li, Phil Eddey

After washing the gear on the Sunday morning and picking up some more cavers, our bold troupe went in search of further punishment in Spider. Dingo's Dig was horrible as expected and fresh slit from the recent rains had to be dug out of the Z squeeze. Surprisingly Pirates Delight was not sumped, but comfort bailing still took place. Once wet and muddy after Pirates the real fun began. A short side trip to Khan Passage for some photographs was foiled by low batteries and we set forth towards the X Window sump via Tinkling Tunnel.

Attempts to stay dry were soon nought as we splashed our way back to the Wishing Well. Max did well and stayed mostly dry while Nat's best was not quite good enough. Jack was also surprisingly clean. Once back at the Glophole Gallery a quick trip to inspect the river (and collect more water) was mounted. Clean once more and gumboots full of water we returned.

We returned to the hut on time and only 20mins after the slackers from Wiburds which led to one of the earliest departures from a caving trip I have ever seen. We left Jenolan before dark in the early throws of winter!



CAVING SAFETY

A common concern among new cavers is safety while underground. We include this *very serious* article in the hope it will allay some of your fears.

Every caver is surely aware that no aspect of caving deserves more attention than that of underground safety. This is true for a number of reasons, e.g. if caving accidents are allowed to mount, caving as a sport will decline in public favour, caving societies will dissolve, and then what would all we weirdos do for congenial company? Furthermore, careless caving is bad for the caves themselves – blood spilled in caves is unsightly and makes them slippery for cavers to negotiate. Finally, and perhaps most worthy of note, certain caves are so constructed as to make recovery of accident victims virtually impossible. If sufficient safety precautions are not taken, such caves will become packed solid with bodies and will thus be rendered impassable for explorers. It is therefore to the cavers own interest to pay head to the dictums expounded in this article.

1. Never go into a flooded cave. Water may make its way into your headtorch and you will surely become lost in the dark.
2. Never enter a cave during an earthquake. Blocks of stone may fall from the roof and in doing so may tear your clothing. This may cause you to catch cold when you leave the cave.
3. Always use a rope when you abseil. This point cannot be stressed too strongly.
4. Stay away from caves that are known to be inhabited by cave bears, dragons, sabre-toothed tigers, pterodactyls and bunyips. Some scientists feel these animals may be dangerous.
5. Showing off in a cave is frowned upon. No matter how skilled you may be, walking on your hands on the Hairy Traverse in B4-5 (Bungonia) is extremely unsafe. The rock is rough and you may scrape your palms most painfully.
6. Be choosy about your caving companions. If you have just stolen your mate's girlfriend, or if your flatmate has taken to dropping pellets in your coffee and standing beside your bed at night with a meat cleaver in his hand, it is best not to take these persons in a cave with you. Though they may appear physically weak and puny, they could be possessed of diabolical cleverness. Play safe!
7. Do not go caving if you are suffering from gangrene, a broken neck, bullet wounds, hydrophobia, smallpox, fractured ribs or food poisoning. Many situations arise underground that demand alertness and top physical form. Also, you may not look your best in any photos taken underground – surely a travesty, particularly if they make their way to Facebook.
8. Under no circumstances should you ever try to drive through a cave in a car. If you run out of petrol there is no place to buy more.

EXTRACT from "SPAR" 46, July 1975 (slightly edited)

CERAM

In the 1990's SUSS did several expedition trips to Ceram in Indonesia.



Map of Ceram



Ceram in relation to PNG (right)

Recently Max went back to see how things had changed. Max's photos following give an idea of what to expect there.



Looking towards Sawai at the base of 1000m limestone spur.



Travel to the office, Spice Island Style.



We went to check to see if the locals were still friendly towards cavers after our trips in '95, '96 and '98. Well at least she is smiling.



Look at the view, not the one in the distance but the chunk of limestone and that's just over 3000 meters.



Hatu Saka.

Looking down the start of a gobsmacking 240m pitch, and if that doesn't excite you, the next one is 140 metres, still in daylight.

PHOTO GALLERY



quad biking with eden - Puketiti station, NZ. Photo by Alan Pryke



Mangawhara Cavern, NZ. Photo by John Oxley



Megan in Battleys cave, NZ. Photo by Alan Pryke



Jox in Backs cave, NZ. Photo by Peter Bauer



Jack in Con Cave, Chillagoe. Photo by Alan Pryke



Alison and rim pools in Frog Castle, Chillagoe. Photo by Alan Pryke

THINGS TO BUY

For postage and handling costs and the details of how to order go to the SUSS website <http://ee.usyd.edu.au/suss/> and click on "Publications". There you will also find a range of must-have maps and other publications.

Maps and Bulls on DVD

The entire SUSS cave map library of over 300 maps is on DVD and available for purchase. Our map library was scanned to provide wider access to the maps for SUSS and other ASF Caving Clubs and to ensure that many copies exist in the event of the loss or damage of the originals.

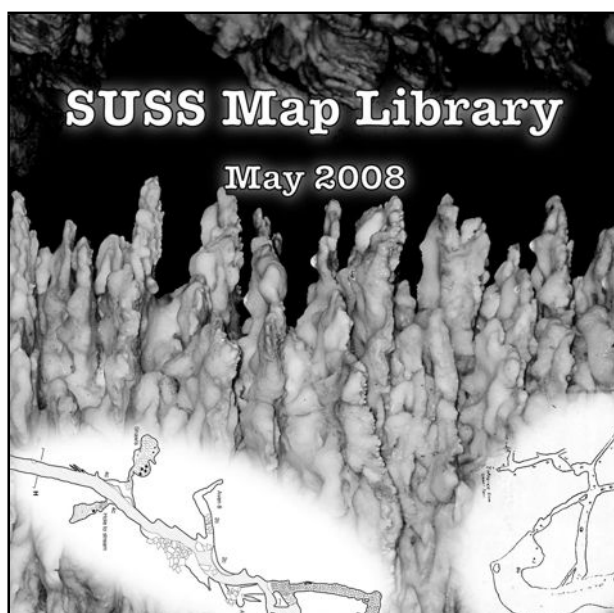
There are field sketches, ink maps produced on drafting film, ink maps produced on linen, as well as some of the latest digitally-produced cave projects. The DVD also contains all SUSS Bulls in HTML format from 35(1), July 1995 to 47(4), March 2008 and SUSS Bulls as PDF format from 42(1), April 2002 to 47(4).

Price is \$25.00 + PH. Pick one up at the next SUSS meeting or if you can't make that then contact the treasurer and they can supply you with the SUSS publications fund bank BSB and account number for a direct deposit.

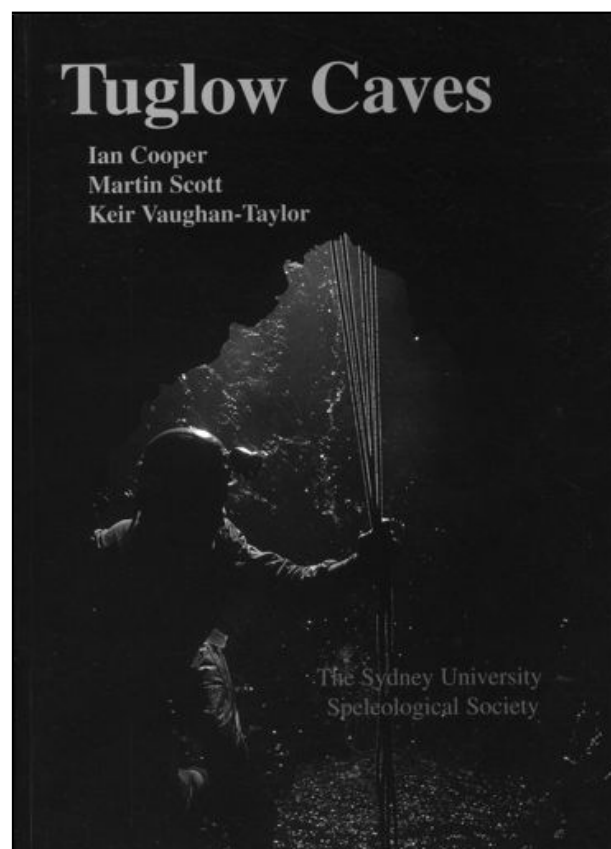
Tuglow Caves

By Ian Cooper, Martin Scott and Keir Vaughan-Taylor. 1998, 70 pages.

Examines caving procedures, site descriptions, history, biology, surveying and maps, geology and hydrology of Tuglow Cave and others. Cost is \$13 for members and \$16 for non-members + PH.



A must-have reference DVD for all cavers



The Caves of Jenolan, 2: The Northern Limestone

Edited by Bruce R. Welch. 1976, 140 pages.

We still have some copies of these books left. Contains maps and descriptions of many caves in the Northern Limestone section of Jenolan plus notes on the history of Jenolan and its geology, geomorphology and hydrology. Cost is \$8 for members and \$10 for non-members + PH.

TRIP LIST: MAY TO JULY 2012

SUSS General Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00pm (for a 7.30pm start) in the Common Room in the Holme Building at the University of Sydney.

For updates to this list, check out the SUSS Website: <http://suss.caves.org.au>. 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.

May

11 – 12 Jenolan. One of our favourite areas. Stay at the luxurious cavers cottage.

Contact Thomas: tcun0287@uni.sydney.edu.au

18 – 19 Tuglow. Terrific summer camping beside the river; great streamway cave.

Contact Alison a.d.chau@gmail.com

25 – 26 Wombeyan. Marble caving in the southern highlands.

Contact Phil: Philip.Maynard@uts.edu.au

June

2 – 3 Jenolan. Stay in the luxurious cavers cottage. Contact Thomas C: tcun0287@uni.sydney.edu.au

7 General Meeting. Holme Building, 7.30pm. Al Warild will show slides from his recent expedition to the Caucasus.

9 – 11 Colong. A remote area with a huge cave to play in. Contact Jack: jack.wachsmann@gmail.com

16 Training Day. Learn the Ropes. Contact Phil: Philip.Maynard@uts.edu.au

30 Jun – 1 July Abseiling trip. Major descents in the Blue Mountains. Contact Thomas W: taw.wilson@gmail.com

July

5 General Meeting. TBA

7 – 15 Jenolan Uni's out time for Mid-winter Madness week-long trip to Jenolan. Contact Alison: a.d.chau@gmail.com

21 – 22 Canyoning. A warm trip for a cold time of year. Contact Deborah: birinxi@gmail.com

28 – 29 Wombeyan. Beautiful spot down in the southern highlands. Contact Phil: Philip.Maynard@uts.edu.au

August

2 General Meeting. TBA

4 – 5 Abercombie. Joint trip with MSS. Places limited, so get in early for this area that SUSS rarely gets to. Contact Rhonda:

11 – 12 Jenolan. Stay in the luxurious Cavers' Cottage. Contact Phil: Philip.Maynard@uts.edu.au

17 – 19 Wellington. A warm winter escape, accommodation closer to the caves than any other caving area. Contact Keir: keirvt@optusnet.com.au
