

# *SUSS BULL 51 (1)*

*APRIL – JUNE 2012*



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**Cover Photo: Calcite rafts on a lake, Colong.  
Thomas Cunningham**

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## VALE JAK KELLY

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BY BRUCE WELCH

Jak Kelly, who passed away in February, was a founding member of SUSS and its first president. He grew up near Borenore Caves and his first caving trip with SUSS was a vertical hole near home. He told me that initially SUSS ranged far and wide visiting caving areas, but transport was always the major problem in the early days. Equipment was almost non-existent - none of your fancy SRT stuff or even the Bonwick-style aluminium ladders.

Before SUSS started (the first mainland caving club) there had been very little speleo activity in NSW since the retirement of Oliver Trickett on 22 March 1920. Glanville did some mapping at Colong Caves and keen bushwalkers like Miles Dunphy new of them as he told my father who did some mapping in the late 1930s and early 1940s, adding onto Glanville's map. My father also did quite a bit of caving at Jenolan, including surveying part of mammoth Cave, where the attitude of the guides was "there are some caves up the valley somewhere just go up and see if you can find them". My father said that there was very little sign of any other cavers at that time. Jak said that he and a few others were looking for something a bit different and caving seemed to fit the bill.

Like all cavers, Jak Kelly and early SUSS cavers used Carne & Jones "Limestone Deposits of NSW" 1919 and Trickett's many mines reports and maps as their bibles in finding and exploring the caves in the early days. Many had not been visited since the hay days of Trickett!

Jak, like many of the university students of the time, found that once they entered full-time post-degree employment there was little time for caving but he remembered very fondly the caving expeditions, explorations and the friends that he made during that time.

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## NEWS AND GOSSIP

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### Editorial

This Bull contains more maps and trip report details from SUSS members who are exploring New Zealand, a shadow map of Wiburds cave, which I am sure will be used by many members and also provides details of a trip attempting to reconcile how Imperial, Jubilee and Rho Hole are connected.

There is a trip described in verse to complement the usual prose versions.

(The editor is keen for variety and anyone who desires to send in a poem, play, or other style of trip report is most welcome.)

Please note that the triplist shows all planned trips for the coming months. Some trips are planned but have no-one co-ordinating them yet; if you want to co-ordinate or run a trip please let a committee member know.

Keep those stories and photos coming.

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### In the News

#### **Interdisciplinary Research Produces Results in the Understanding of Planetary Caves**

With the advent of high- resolution spatial imaging, the idea of caves on other planets has moved from the pages of science fiction into the realm of hard-core science <http://www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/2012/2012EO200006.shtml>

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### Errata

In the last Bull, 50(4) it was indicated that the story on Dwyers was authored by Thomas Cunningham. This was incorrect; the article was authored by Jack Wachsmann. The editor apologises to both these people for the error and the authorship has been corrected in the online version.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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BY KATRINA BADIOLA AND JACK WACHSMANN

Once again, the limestone bluffs closest to home have gained the most attention, with regular trips to Jenolan and Wombeyan continuing throughout the year. After the very rainy summer that we have had, both these areas are as wet as some of the older members have ever seen them, which makes for great caving! Mud and swimming: what more could a happy caver want? Areas that are slightly further away have also received more attention from SUSS over the last year than they have in previous years. Trips to Wellington and Cliefden have gone ahead, and, with the divers somewhat distracted, multiple trips to Yarangobilly took place (we even got permits to Janus and Restoration on the same weekend), which provides a bit more variety for the dry caver than nearby Cooleman.

Finally we arrive at the mile high category, that is, caves that require a plane to get to. Alan Pryke has once again kept himself busy organising a trip to New Zealand one to Chillagoe in far north Queensland. New Zealand 2012 again went to the Pukiheti region on the North Island, playing in streamways and making the rest of us extremely jealous. A new cave was also located with the help of advanced US satellite imagery, also known as Google Earth. Chillagoe, on the other hand, has some great towers for those new to the area to explore, while the old hands went off and found a new cave of significant size (now named Blindsight) on the Ryan Imperial tower. However, the best thing about Chillagoe was the famous Carol dinners, served on the dot at 7pm, consisting of three courses in 30 minutes. Deborah Johnson must also be thanked for organising a Christmas/New Year trip to Mole Creek in Tasmania, which by all accounts was not to be missed. We have also sent several members on the ASF-endorsed expedition to the Bullita cave system in the Northern Territory which has so much new cave to explore and survey that, by the end of the week, it can only be described as "oh no, it goes".

Equipment purchases this year have been relatively limited; however, we did successfully transition to our new lights, the Princeton Tec Apexes. Although this has not been without its problems (people need to be reminded to bring batteries for their lights) our new members will certainly thank us when they compare the lights with the old FX2s.

We have also received more union funding this year than the previous and our goal is to increase that again next year. Accessing this money for on-campus events has the added benefit of helping our new members to become involved and talk to more experienced members, hopefully inspiring them to come on more trips. While it is difficult to be certain at this juncture, it appears that returning student members are on the rise, providing some relief to the long-term members who have shouldered much of the responsibility for the clubs running in recent years.

Along with the new members, new trends have also been on the rise. Rhonda and Alison, our secretary and minutes secretary for 2011-12, found a website selling cheap, surplus racing overalls. Following in their bargain-hunting footsteps more and more cavers and have buying Ford and Holden overalls for caving. We dread to think what may happen in the future; perhaps some sort of Ford vs Holden turf war greater than the original SUSS vs SSS schism.

Finally we would like to thank all the trip supervisors, coordinators, drivers, cavers and my fellow committee members. Without all your hard work we would not be able to go caving and that would just be undesirable. In particular we would like to single out our treasurer Chris Norton who has served more years on the committee than we think he cares to recall, and this year won the best audit award from the C&S.

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## NEW ZEALAND 2012

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BY ALAN PRYKE

**Participants:** Alan Pryke, Phil Maynard, Tina Willmore, Michael Casteleyn, Scott Miller: SUSS, Geoff Mc Donnell: NHVSS, Peter Bauer: SSS, Dave Stuckey: MSS, Dave Bunnell, Jim Patera: NSS, FotoPhill: ASG, Joel and Andrew Stanley

### Day 1, Sat 4th Feb

*On which Geoff's Volleys are "sandalized"*

A bit of usual frenetic activity at the airport in which Scott had offloaded his excess tonne or so of steel krabs, etc, to those underweight. Tina thus ended up wearing her gumboots (very chic). Alan took extra as he had a 32k baggage allowance, thanks to Virgin Australia's CEO who had given him a Gold card. Grunts of disapproval from Geoff were heard as Phil and Alan headed off to the exclusive Koru lounge for breakfast of fruits, cereal, eggy things, sausages and fresh pancakes with lashings of maple syrup, downed with freshly squeezed juices and fragrant teas.

News of this provided more grunts from Geoff. Most of our group sat coincidentally together, and a passenger in an adjacent seat was found to be a US canyoneer who has bought a house right next to Zion National Park, so an interesting chat ensued. More grunts from Geoff were heard as Alan was personally offered newspapers, noise cancelling headphones, etc.

After progressing quickly through customs, the van to the hire car company was boarded and we were whisked away to to our waiting vehicles, Scott noting as we left Phil's mistakenly abandoned backpack. Oops. Here FotoPhill was waiting for us with plenty of room on his home-made roofrack.

The usual assortment of vehicles were sorted out and soon we were underway. A short stop in Ngaruawahia (I'm sure that's how it's spelt... you try pronouncing it!) for piles of Kumara (sweet potato) chips and large chunks of fsh (as it is known in NZ) which was followed by the seamless purchase of pre-ordered groceries in banana boxes with big holes. Peter's friends Andrew and son Joel were met here and were with us for the long weekend.

A copious supply of alcohol was then sought, and we were off to Puketiti.

After the obligatory "THE DICE! THE DICE!" from Geoff, a huge catering tent was passed, a bit out of place in this area. This was revealed by Puketiti Staion manager Eden to be for filming of Peter Jackson's "The Hobbit", culminating in the closure of some properties which saw plans disrupted just a little.

Eden had spruced up the Shearers Quarters with a good spring clean, and some new kitchen gear. Soon we were at home settling in to a nice meal cooked by Tina, who prepared great meals nightly. Thanks, Tina! Newbies were taken up to the airstrip to view the area, as usual.

Michael and Scott soon discovered the most comfortable chairs and appropriated them relentlessly, despite SUSS rules. (ie: get up, lose your seat!)

Alan's laptop decided to throw up a blue screen of death, refusing to do anything else, even in the hands of balancing expert FotoPhill. The problem was eventually rectified by brute force by Alan, a most unlikely solution. ("Windows has recovered from a serious registry error") The laptop housed much GPS data for the trip, so was forthwith left on permanently lest it fail on the next boot.

### Day 2, Sun 5th Feb

*On which Geoff finally has his turkey and runs his chicken*

The caving machine creaked and groaned into action. Pompeii and Long John were on the cards for all except Phil, Alan, Tina and Geoff, who had done them more than once.

This group began a trek to the "Southern Bush" to locate the legendary Turkey and Tucker Tunnels, two fantastically short and uninteresting looking surveys made by FotoPhill many moons ago.

We made our way to the Thunderer "carpark", and walked south. Soon the bush was reached, and we entered the north eastern end. A cold hole was found by Alan which required digging out a bit, so Phil obliged. Alan entered into a tight tunnel which dropped a little before becoming a blocked narrow rift. Only about 15m of passage. Meh.

Meanwhile, Geoff had located a much better prospect, a walk in stream passage. Geoff reckoned it went for about 50m before becoming too tight. Alan and Tina investigated, noting a possible high level bypass before retreating.

Phil dissappeared into the cave and did not return, so we followed and realised he had taken the bypass, and found the cave continued on a higher level for 150m or so, through occasional scary rockpile, and eventually dropping back into the



**Turkey Tunnel. Photo by Alan Pryke**



stream, which did become too tight with no bypass. Certainly worthy of a survey. Geoff followed the poultry theme naming it "Chicken Run".

Further to the west, Turkey tunnel was found, a tall impressive entrance. The cave soon ended in a formation blockage, though a tiny hole gave a view of the continuing passage that can be entered from the other end. A small waterfall was photographed.

Climbing over the bluff and descending into the gorge between Turkey and Tucker tunnels proved very awkward as vines and drops were everywhere, prompting the usual complaints from Geoff. Soon Tucker Tunnel was found and was as large as Turkey Tunnel, except it ended in a 3m waterfall that despite the survey saying you could climb alongside it, it turned out to be way too slippery looking.

The rest of the exploration found us in flowing creeks, and farm tracks circumnavigating the bush block in an anti-clockwise direction. The bush now contains two brand new gloves, unwittingly left behind by Alan. They're yours if you can find them.

On the way home a few more holes were looked at without success before passing above "The Zoo" and Thunderer. We arrived back late, but before the other team, who thankfully, arrived shortly after.

### **Day 3, Mon 6th Feb**

*On which Geoff goes "Hnngh!"*

Whilst most of the group enjoyed the delights of Thunderer, Geoff, Alan and Phil drove north to the Tawarau forest to look for "new" caves. A visit to Were farm was made first - and the manager was quite happy for us to have a look around, mentioning a couple of large caverns.

Off up the Mangaohae river the intrepid three tramped - along a DOC trail, which Geoff muttered disagreement with the mud, which attacked his half dead volleys, rendering them practically useless by day's end.



**Mangaohae gorge. Photo by Alan Pryke**

The Mangaohae gorge was entered and a few side streams were noted. A major stream was then followed to the west, heading up into thick undergrowth and kiki vines. Eventually we bashed our way to the top of the plateau, and dropped into the first and only doline of the day, divided into several smaller dents. Nothing terribly interesting was found apart from two vertical shafts we were unprepared for. Time was getting away from us and we returned to the river, descending steeply from the rim of the doline, back to the creek which was mostly followable to the DOC track. The return took one and a quarter hours. Here we crossed the Mangaohae (only knee deep), noting the fantastic view into the gorge we had walked that morning.

Up we climbed on Were farm to the ridgeline, crossing several large dolines, and briefly investigating various holes without much luck, till Alan found a hole with 100m or so of narrow but walkthrough stream which continued after a duck under some

decoration, and not being trogged up decided to continue another day. A good farm road was reached and we tramped back to the car parked at the road head. A property full of potential!

However we had had enough of that bush for one trip!

### **Day 4, Tues 7th Feb**

*On which we spend far too much time above ground*

The group today headed back to Were farm to find caverns measureless to sheep. Basically, the group sort of split up here and there searching many dolines, finding a few small caves before arriving at a large rumbling sink that was unfortunately blocked by rockfall soon after entry.

A number outside the cave on the wall was found - "121"

Peter had squashed himself into a few holes, one of which popped out nearby on the other side of a small ridge.

We all felt quite tired in the heat of the day, which turned out to be over 30 degrees! Hang on, isn't this NZ? Meanwhile, Michael made the crazy suggestion that we could find a cave by following a remnant roof channel found in some large isolated boulders.

Strangely enough, he returned with news of a fossil cave level! Again, only a short cave was found.

Another possibility revealed 50m or so of decorated passage of the sort that looks good backlit, but a bit gloomy frontlit. Peter therefore posed in a backlit photo.



**Cave in Mangaohae gorge. Photo by Alan Pryke**

Eventually Alan made it back to his 100m cave. Not more than 5m past the duck under formation was a formation choke. Michael managed to climb over this, and Peter and Alan followed, finding a short section of stream, and a really tight vertical squeeze which managed to trap Peter briefly. He retreated, disappointed, as the way on had a good echo.

Those who remained for the afternoon looked at one last rising, a boggy swamp concealing a rockfall cavern with a too tight stream.

A quick chat to the farmer and we headed home.

### **Day 5, Wed 8th Feb**

*On which we believe cave cycling is possible*

Having had enough of tramping around in the glorious but rather hot weather, a trip to Briars Cave ensued with Alan, Geoff, Peter and Tina.

After bumping in to the necessary farmer, and with his guidance, we climbed the bluffs to a hidden doline concealing the entrance.

A choice of up or downstream was available. Down had waterfalls marked on the survey, so to keep dry, we splashed upstream, soon discovering a deep pool. Peter decided to sally forth, wet to the chest. Others “walked on the water” finding various awkward footholds. The way on was easy and in fabulous “Thunderer-like” striped rock, in easy passage. Anything slightly difficult had traversing wires to help you around the deep bits. Soon a rocky chamber was entered, leading up to a decorated passage. The pretty area had suffered quite a lot of muddying and damage, but most stuff overhead was intact and very nice, bringing forth much “ah”-ing from Geoff.

After necessary photos, we returned to the stream and followed it with ease up and out, then into the upstream caves, Dollar and Boomerang. We discovered it is much easier access from the upstream end roadhead.

Lots of backlit photos and fun later, we had a late lunch (as usual!) then did the downstream bit we missed earlier. Wow... just like the best bits of Thunderer! pillars, waterfalls, climbs... all the way to the sump. A great day out... er... in.



*Tina in Briars. Photo by Alan Pryke*

### **Day 6, Thurs 9th Feb**

*On which we find new levels of unpleasantness*

Some unlucky fools crossed the Puketiti paddocks today to the much avoided Cathys Cave to complete the survey. Only Alan knew just how hellish the exit was... Tina, Geoff, Peter, Phil, who were oblivious to the horrors ahead, and Alan lured them in.

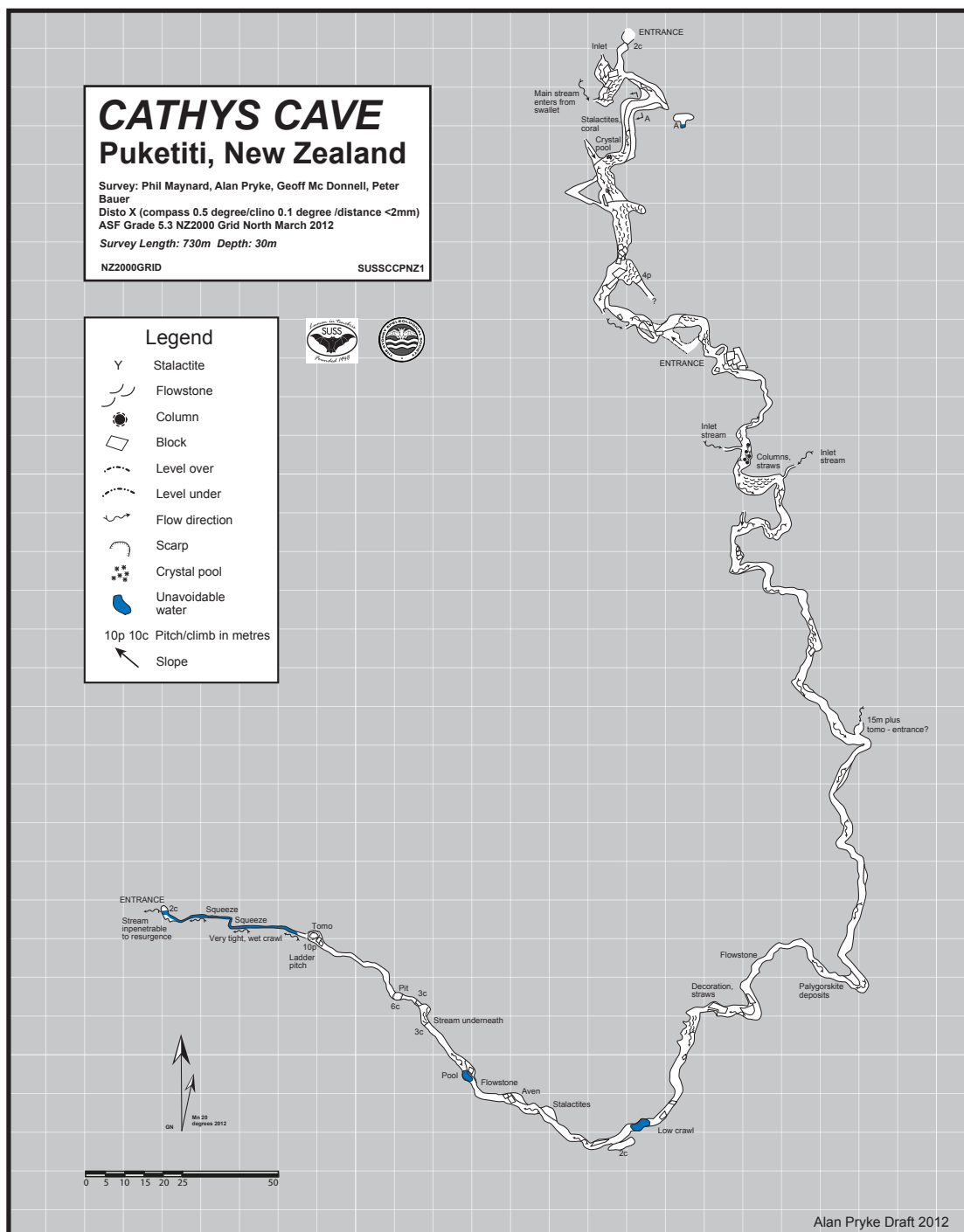
We thought we could knock over the survey in a couple of hours tops. Five hours later we were still caught in the tendrils of the cave. A pitch was eventually reached that could not be safely downclimbed, so we retreated to the B team charged with finding and entering the resurgence. They had not found it in the intervening time, but did manage to descend an unidentified tomo with a bit of passage.

Alan scratched around the grass and found the unlikely entrance and the survey was connected to the horrible shaft through one on the worst stretches of tight wet stream we'd ever surveyed - or entered for that matter! And that includes Jenolan!



*Southern Bush. Photo by Phil Maynard*





Thank goodness that job was over with. We retreated to the now seemingly luxurious Shearers Quarters for our last night at Puketiti.

### Day 7, Fri 10th Feb

#### *On which we retreat south*

We wound up our Puketiti stay with clockwork packing which saw us off to Rauroa Station by 10.30am. (THE DICE! THE DICE!) We made a quick stop in Pio Pio for icecream, then zoomed down to Mahoenui. Dave, hoping to get the best pick of rooms was denied the opportunity by the unfortunate placement of Geoff in his car, who needed to find a pair of gumboots as both of his pairs of volleys were scraps of linen and rubber. Geoff was lured into buying a 100 percent quality pair of boots. Phil and Alan grabbed the twin room, Tina got the double (lucky Tina!) and the rest occupied the bunk rooms. After lunch, a leisurely afternoon trip by some to Phallopian cave proceeded without problems, except the disappearance of Michael, who missed the "Troglobite Trail" crawl to the bigger stream passage. A great splashy through trip with a dodgy 5m waterfall climb whilst having your face washed. Michael retraced his steps and missed the big stuff.



## Day 8, Sat 11th feb

### *On which we vanquish the blackberries*

We had been dragooned into helping FotoPhill survey the little visited “Blackberry Cave” up Troopers Rd. The official meet time was 10am, but we slackers rocked up around 11. . . just as well, as most cavers were sitting in the hot sunshine waiting for the farmer’s son to bash and hack a tunnel through the sea of blackberries. Here we met the two Americans joining our trip Dave Bunnell and Jim Patera, as well as three Polish cavers, who were keen on diving the sump.

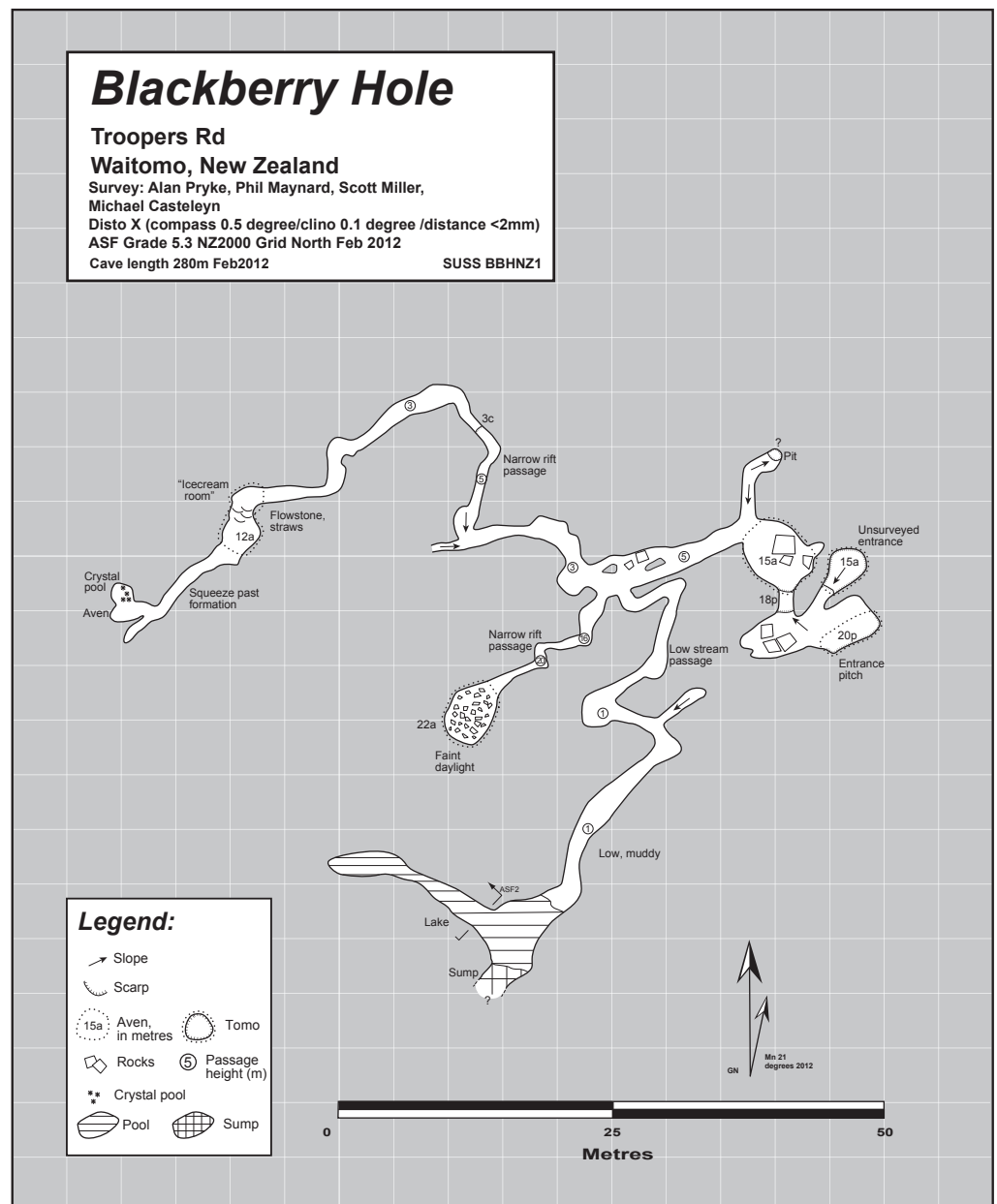
Eventually, FotoPhill declared the pitch entrance located, and we descended the first of two 20m pitches. Both ropes were too short, requiring a third rope to be added to the lower rebelay. Alan descended the first pitch, and, as he had moved to the right slightly, came off the end of the rope in mid air, dropping a metre or so down an embankment, which he soon discovered, was right above the second pitch! No one seemed too concerned by this for some reason. Phil spent some time making a nice job of the second pitch, with an easy rebelay on a chockstone. We found it easier to survey up the pitches rather than down (it’s harder to fall off the floor. . . ) A side passage to an impressive aven was surveyed next, noting slight daylight from above.

The two Americans descended, Dave B. being unluckily hit by a rock on his helmet, which bounced off his hand. His hand still sort of worked, so they continued on.

Soon we made our way to the “Icecream Room” a rift to a small chamber with some pretties, and a constricted slot to a crystal pool. Dave began shooting frames here, so the survey team escaped, only to find themselves surveying down though low passage to the sump pool. The Poles were going to have gangs of fun here. . .

Back on the surface, The farmer awaited news of our discoveries. He was impressed that the map was completed, and invited us all back to his home for beers. What a great bloke.

Fotophill brought the yanks down to Rauroa, to spend the next week with our group.



# Blackberry Hole

Cross-section 348degrees.

Troopers Rd

Waitomo, New Zealand

Survey: Alan Pryke, Phil Maynard, Scott Miller,  
Michael Casteleyn

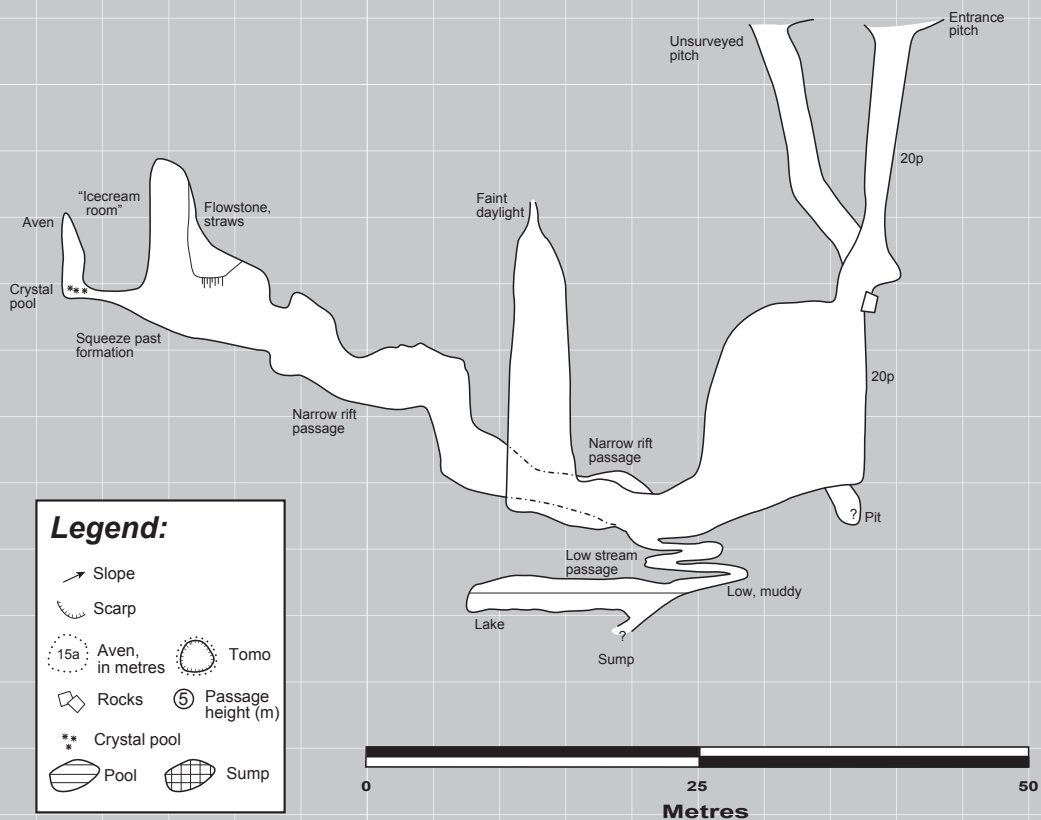
Disto X (compass 0.5 degree/clino 0.1 degree /distance <2mm)

ASF Grade 5.3 NZ2000 Grid North Feb 2012

Cave length 280m Feb2012

SUSS BBHNZ1x

Sheet 2



## Day 9, Sun 12th Feb

*On which Dave finds himself punished by a Kiwi*

On advise from Alan, Dave and Jim braved the wet crawls of Kiwi Cave with most of the group. Meanwhile, Alan and Peter roamed the karst north of Taumatamair Rd, searching for the lost "Old Orchard Cave". A hint on an old map had us looking in all holes north of Blacks Cave. Lots of potential sinks were just too small, and the most obvious cave entrance only got us 50m or so before the bedding plane ceiling met the floor. We ended up dropping into bush, and finding what we assumed to be Swiss Cheese Cave. This was more interesting than the old description of the cave, which seemed to mention mud a lot. The through trip had us climbing out to a magnificent view of the gorge. From here we walked back to the car via a quad bike track that would make a good easy way out for Rimu. Speaking of which, Dave Bunnell was not impressed by the long wet crawls of Kiwi, despite the masses of lovely formation. He was worn out for the trip through Rimu, thus not many photos taken there. We were sure he was impressed by the waterfall window though!

## Day 10, Mon 13th Feb

*On which Alan freeclimbs a Tarzan pitch*

Greystoke. A survey of the cave showed it to be a descending rockpile. Phil, Tina and Alan all got lifts up the hill from the trusty farmers on their quad bikes. Soon an entrance had been shown to Phil, which he descended on rope. Dead end. Over the hill the bush doline of Greystoke was entered, and pitch entrance rigged by Tina. She was soon thrashing around lobbing branches and logs overhanging the pitch into the abyss. Once cleared, the pitch was straight forward, straight down. The cave was much better than expected, with many large passage vistas and clumps of straws. Further down the broken passage, was a batch of almost red formation. Towards the end of the cave, the stream was entered for a short while, till it got desparate and low.

Alan tried to save a bit of prussiking by looking for the squeezey climb exit. The map didn't make much sense here and Alan ended up climbing out the 10m pitch entrance on small ledges.

On the way back to the quarters we looked into a few holes, Alan finding a short decorated dead end. We all had a good wash in the Rauroa stream on the way back.

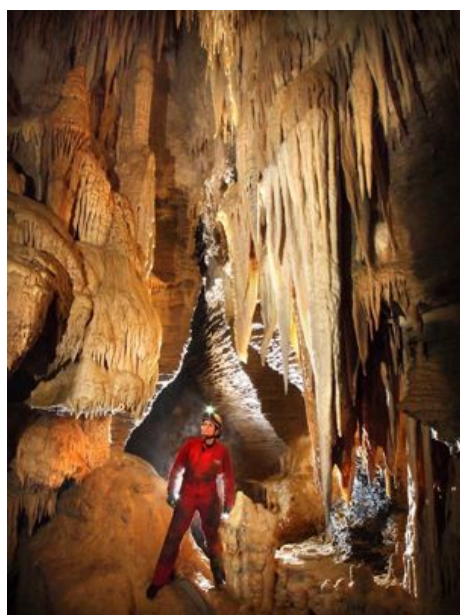


**Tina in Greystroke cave. Photo by Alan Pryke**

## Day 11, Tuesday 14th Feb

*On which Dave B. experiences all the fun of a cheese grater*

Today the whole group headed up the road to Ardrossan farm, to locate the farmer to get permission to do Murder Canyon Cave. No one was to be found. . . but we did hear a sheep dog somewhere in the distance. . . So we moved on to Handsdown Station, where we found Stephen Knight zooming around with a bike covered in dogs.



**Decorated room, 67 cave. Photo by Alan Pryke**

Alan tried to convince the group to do Marmonts cave, but after tales of tight bits, only had Phil and Michael as takers. They later regaled the cave as one of the trip's best.

The others however followed Alan to 67 cave. In the spitting rain we trudged over the hill and threw ourselves into the twisty stream passage that eventually opens up into a broad canyony stream. Dave B. delighted in photos in a decorated section above the entrance passage.

Geoff vanished ahead, downstream. We eventually caught up with him further down the "Black Track", a reasonably fast walk in shallow water.

A large flowstone canopy marked the turn around point, due to time, for last year's trip, and with plenty of time available we continued. A short climb placed us in a very beautiful upper level, and Dave B's camera came out, with Alan wanting the same obvious frame, shot one with Dave's camera. . . Then it got a bit messy. Peter had found the "Red Tape" squeeze, and boy it was quite knarly, and big enough for all but Dave B. Half an hour of squeeze widening was enough to convince Dave to come through without overalls. He looked like "having been drawn though a hedge backwards" . . . only worse. Lots of scrapes and scratches. . .

At least the sun was out on exiting the lower entrance. Alan, Geoff and Peter went to figure out where the water goes downstream. . . and sure enough, it heads into a cave of some sort. . . We guessed this to be "Dark Thoughts" but we did not enter it due to time constraints.



## Day 12, Wednesday 15th Feb

*On which boredom does not feature*

Alan had been poring over Google Earth for some time, musing on the possibility of sinks in the Handsdown Station/Totoro Rd area. Today saw Geoff, Tina, Alan, Peter and Michael head over to Totoro Rd - firstly to locate a landowner. Fortunately, the farmhouse was inhabited by the mum, who happily allowed us access to the property. So off we frolicked, finding a good farm track right to the paddock containing the supposed sink.



**Strictly Boring walkthrough. Photo by Alan Pryke**

Now, Google maps is great at showing you the horizontal bits of land, but when it comes to vertical surfaces...well they usually are not represented at all. Hence in this case, a confluence of two small streams apparently sinking into a grassy hole turned out to be a huge rent in a rocky cliff face...about as obvious an entrance as you could get, really.

Alan had guessed this to be an ominously titled cave "Strictly Boring", and it soon became apparent that this was correct. Don't get me wrong, it was great for photos in the tall rift passage, but, apart from a crawly wet section in the middle, was hands-in-pockets caving, ending in a too tight rift. Even the promising "Crystal Chanderlier" (sic) turned out to be a few crappy stals.

Despite this, we all had fun avoiding eels, etc, (THE EEL! THE EEL! - Geoff) and were back at the car for lunch. The weather was a bit showery.

Tina wanted to get back to Rauroa to bake a cake, so we dropped her off obligingly, then drove north to another sink spotted on Google Earth, just off the highway. (Streetview also shows the sink!) We were a bit soggy from our "Boring" trip, and, avoiding the B-double trucks on the highway travelling at 100kph in the roadworks 30k zone (yikes!), tramped down the suspect stream to the obvious sink. Some crawling in dry passage, and removal of logs was performed (by Peter), and after an easy squeeze, promising thunderous water was heard. A 2m climb down to a perpendicular passage led right to a horribly muddy passage upstream, although not from our sink. Downstream led directly to two 2m parallel waterfalls about 5m apart - a fantastic sight with lots of noise and spray.

Alan and Peter followed the large passage downstream, which wound around in a (guessed) north east direction. The passage gradually got muddier, suggesting a sump, but continued for approx. 300 metres before ending in a tight clean rockfall, which Peter said could be possibly be pushed further.

Alan and Peter returned to the waterfalls to take photos, and found Geoff and Michael returning from an upstream mudfest. It was unusual to find a major inflow falling directly in to perpendicular passage. After exiting, the group decided to look over the top of the cave, following a row of dolines, until they dropped into a valley carrying the resurgence to the cave (this is only an assumption!). There was no access into the resurgence, being a pile of rock. The weather improved and became sunny.

Alan thought it would be nice to follow the stream down to the Mokau river. Soon we realised we were in a deep elongated doline, and after being unable to follow the water, which sank in mud, climbed up the steep hill in dense bush. The group decided to abandon descending to the Mokau, and continued up to a ridgeline, then contoured around to a grassy hillside with good views across to dolines on the opposite side of the Mokau. One more stream was checked, no limestone found, as we were in the overlying ash layer.

More steep walking led to a forestry track that led the group back to the car across the fields in a more or less direct line. A distance of four kilometres had been covered - and when viewed on Google earth in profile, it was noted that



**Twin Falls . Photo by Alan Pryke**



we had walked the rim of a huge doline for most of the afternoon!

Former SUSS caver Megan Philip from Tauranga had arrived on return. And yes, the cake was delicious.

### **Day 13, Thurs 16th Feb**

#### *On which Murder is committed*

With permission secured the previous evening, the group all prepared for the fun Murder Canyon. After all squeezing into the cave, we all tramped up the ascending streamway. Dave B's camera gear refused to cooperate here, so the first photo opportunity was partially abandoned. . . a nice decorated upper level that was missed on the previous trip. Dave B. loved the various shower experiences, getting nice frames. The rockpile/waterfall zone near the end of the cave was easily done by all, except for Dave B. who had a sizeable rock land on him, dislodged by a clumsy caver whose name rhymes with clot. Uninjured, Dave hauled himself up and out.

The bush and cliffs around the blind valley inflow delighted Dave B. who took a pano photo, without concern for nodal points. Alan and Peter stayed behind to have a look at some dolines around the farm, concentrating on a section of pine forest. Many deep holes were found here, but none seemed to go. The last one to be looked at, out on open farmland, seemed more likely, but had a 6?m pitch entrance. Alan then noticed a small gap off to the side of the pitch, when opened up a bit contained an awkward climb down which Alan managed to convince Peter to look at. Just as well, as it did not appear to join with the obvious hole, and descended at a reasonable size down a series of ledges that Peter renegged on without gear. Looks like we'll be looking at this one next year. Luckily, we'd managed to find a good road up the hill, rather than traipse all the gear up.

Tina and Megan had already left upon our return, and FotoPhill arrived late on the Americans' last night. Unfortunately we were all dropping like flies from Jim's airplane lurgy.

### **Day 14, Fri 17th Feb**

#### *On which we get tired at the outset*

Phil was keen to go to Moa cave, but was happy for some of us to escape to try to find Debruiser Cave. Firstly, we managed to find Bob Tribe, now 89, who had recently put on a farm manager as he reckons he's getting a bit old! After a bit of confusion as to whether or not Debruiser was on his property, we followed his "laneway" to the south, only to find it rather slippery and muddy. We abandoned that and decided to walk from the Mangaorongo Rd. Soon we found a mittal (kiwi for gravel) driveway heading in the right direction of the cave. After passing some sheepdog boxes, we realised this was not Bob's property, and soon we came to a small house, the owner of which was only too happy for us to have a look around. He said his father had put tires down a lot of the holes on the property, so entry, if we found the cave, was not certain. Alan followed the GPS reference from the old cave map, and found a crack right at the coordinates. Unfortunately, although jammed with tyres it proved too tight anyway, so Alan crossed off that doline. The farmer, who had given us a lift over on his bike, suggested looking at a dent next to a rock only a few metres away. After pulling back the grass, a hole proved to be Debruiser after Alan found the other hole to be the Daylight Hole on the map, in the right direction. The farmer had been amused by Geoff's verbal displeasure of looking into tight, wet rifts here and there, and Geoff was called over.

We managed to pull out one large tractor tyre which made entry easier. Soon the three of us found ourselves at the edge of the first "Down" marked on the map. It was freeclimbable. . . just. . . but only safely up. . . A tape was set up and Alan went to have a look, preferring a ladder to be set up as the climb down was over a chockstone. On reaching the bottom of the climb, Alan managed to haul himself up on the tape, which meant that the ladder could be used on one of the other "Down"s if necessary. Thankfully this was not the case, as even the "7Down" was freeclimbable.

After a nasty squeeze that Scott got a bit stuck in and a crawly bit, we entered a large collapse chamber with a large cairn. Geoff enjoyed viewing some formation on the other side whilst we found the way on. Once in the streamway, we all noted that the map shows the stream being a whole lot wider than the half metre slideathon. Soon however, the stream opened up a little and we made our way past some deep bits and ended up in a nicely decorated final chamber.

On the way back upstream, Alan found the gypsum dry side passage and found it too tight after a crawly 50m or so, so retreated. The way out was uneventful, and we were wet but managed to keep warm with all the climbing, arriving on the surface ahead of a noisy thunderstorm.

Apparently, this made the others Groove trip a little exciting!



**Group Photo. Photo by Alan Pryke**

## Day 15, Sat 18th Feb

*On which Scotty gets the bends*

Most of the group headed off early to tackle Mt Taranaki, or Mt Harikari as Scotty named it.



**Groove Cave. Photo by Alan Pryke**

The remaining three, Geoff, Alan and Scott proceeded to a well earned wash in Groove cave, splashing around in all the waterfalls and cascades.

Much of the next few hours was spent pressure washing the caving gear and cleaning the hire cars, after which the three of us went for a drive to Mokau...walking briefly on the red hot black sand.

We then followed the road north to an isolated beach with a "Beach Tunnel" through a headland, that had a speed limit sign, prompting Scotty to drive through. It was soon found out this was for quad bikes only and he retreated. The beach had the obligatory quad bike fishermen, and also steep cliffs of a soft rock that had scalloping.

Northwards we drove with Alan's promise of fossils. On a beach not far from Marokopa, Alan cracked a rock in two whilst Geoff and Scott marvelled at the contents...shell fossils by the dozen. Lots of rocks were tried, but only a few revealed shells.

The Pomerangai Rd was tackled next, heading up in a tortuous route through the Herangi Ranges, then down to Waitanguru. A quick drive via THE DICE! THE DICE! had us back at Rauroa by dark. We were surprised to find the others having returned from their successful Takanaki ascent, Peter looking rather glowing and burnt!

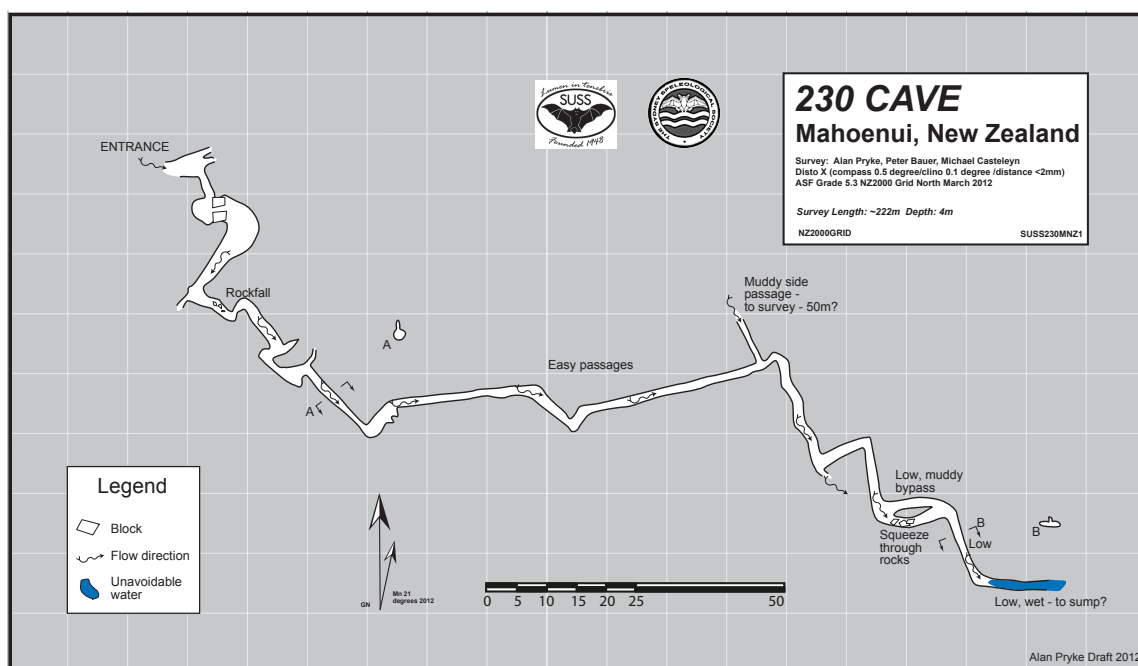
## Day 16, Sun 19th Feb

*On which we are inevitably drawn to the chip shop*

Cleaned up and left by 9.30, with stops at the Berry farm for blueberry icecream (again!) and Woolies - now "Countdown" for returns, happily accepted, and Ngaruawahia for kumera chips.

After some shenanigans dropping off FotoPhills gear, Alan let Peter join him in the Koru Lounge, to Geoff's disappointment, for feasting on stews, soups, scones, desserts, and of course a full selection of wine before our flight. Scotty managed to be overweight at every turn, and needed to be rescued at immigration where they weighed his 20k of hand baggage.

Another NZ trip was over, and many goals achieved, with more to do next year!



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## MOLE CREEK 2011-12: A POEM IN THREE PARTS<sup>1</sup>

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BY ALISON CHAU

**The cast (in order of appearance):** Louise Johnston, Deborah Johnston, Alison Chau, David Stuckey (Metropolitan Speleological Society), Rob Jones

**Synopsis:** Things happened. Then more things.<sup>2</sup>

### *I. Five cavers*

To Launceston five cavers went:  
Louise and Deborah, Alison,  
Stuckey D. from MSS,  
and one more SUSS-ling southward sped —  
the ever-merry Robert Jones.<sup>3</sup>

So, late arrived near Cradle Mount,  
they filled with food their temp'ry haunt:  
and when at dawn communal fast was broke anew  
they crossed the slopes by ancient glaciers etched,  
beside the lake ablaze with brooding blue,  
and reached Mount Cradle's barren crest.<sup>4</sup>

From here the glorious end of year was seen:  
the heights they'd climbed, the caves they'd loved!  
But as their hearts rejoiced in what had been  
their feet were bound to tread that path again, mean  
with departed voices and the growing dark above.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> or Why Alison probably shouldn't write Bull articles.

For further descriptions and photos of some of these famous caves, see SUSS BULL 48(4). Many thanks to Deb for organising the trip and the foray into Dove Canyon.

<sup>2</sup>Rhinoceros Rex!

Deloraine, the town in which we stayed during the caving leg of this trip, was a 40 minute drive from Mole Creek. On one of many car trips, Deb initiated the animal naming game (everyone takes it in turns to name an animal beginning with the last letter of the previous contributor's animal). This was one of Rob's contributions.

<sup>3</sup>Merry despite the fact that he'd missed his flight and had to catch a later one. Confound mobile phones that don't know to deactivate silent-mode when a taxi driver taking you to the airport tries desperately to call you in the wee hours of the morning.

Re. 'Stuckey D.': special permission was sought and granted to use this variant of his name. The same can not be said for 'Robert' Jones.

<sup>4</sup>This is a little inaccurate: we actually went to Tasmazia ('the world's largest maze complex') in the morning before the ascent. 'Twas a funtastic AND super-productive day — a Dave-Stuckey-approved itinerary if you're in the area.

<sup>5</sup>And that was the last mountain any of us climbed in 2011.  
Much to Louise's disappointment, we weren't back in time for the local end-of-year wood-chopping competition.

## *II. A new year*

And just another day. The canyon lay  
in quiet restlessness. Two years of dry  
and even the mighty River Dove was pressed  
to speed its way. Often through its lofty walls  
of quartzite were led the adventurous itinerant.<sup>6</sup>  
But today by measured muddlement they came  
upon the wooden stage on which those others,  
and now they too, might change from plain attire  
to that entirely suited to the cold and wet.<sup>7</sup>

The prospect of uncertain death urged their steps:  
first, a cruel mouth bellowed in aqueous rage  
of its depleted state into a cavern churning  
with unknown depths;<sup>8</sup> next slimy walls of froth  
became their vertical floors;<sup>9</sup> and now a decrepit trunk  
turned leeringly into a bridge, perverting a sudden fall.<sup>10</sup>  
And shadows lay congealed across their course,  
spread thick and cold to spite the sun-white walls.

## *III. Enter the caves*

Deloraine! O Derro-laine!<sup>11</sup>  
you now became their home.  
From you they traipsed to caves  
oft-explored: first Honeycomb,  
a circling maze both wet and bare,  
which opened out to daylight everywhere.  
In King Solomons were mined delights  
paved by man with stones that wind  
their way past columns bright,  
a wooden ladder rot by time,<sup>12</sup>  
and spindly tree roots crystalline.

Croesus was the most elusive,  
for between their faint-held memories  
and the half-marked tracks they found  
the path was not conclusive.  
So they wandered and they strayed  
through the bush by the stream,  
up a bluff, across to Lynds —  
thus half the day was worn away.  
At long last the GPS  
(left abandoned in the car)  
was retrieved, and the entrance found  
in five minutes, no less.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Because of Deb's local contacts and her well-researched track notes, this trip was able to go ahead on a day when there were no tourists going in. Thanks to the guides for allowing us to use their bolts and fixed lines.

<sup>7</sup>Our directions were quite good, but there is no obvious point at which to diverge from the tourist track. The wooden platform was most spacious and well-constructed.

<sup>8</sup>AKA a 'Fall of Death'. With ordinary water levels one might jump into this roaring cavern and safely shoot out the other end. On this occasion, the drop looked supremely perilous, so we climbed around it instead.

<sup>9</sup>There were 13 abseils in total. Again, with higher water levels some of these would have been dive-bombed.

<sup>10</sup>AKA a 'Log of Death'. For the uninitiated, this is a log which must be straddled (your back facing the direction of travel) and slid down to negotiate short drops.

<sup>11</sup>The inhabitants of the town call it thusly, in an endearing fashion it seems.

<sup>12</sup>An artefact of former tourist days, in a modern tourist cave (hence the man-made path).

<sup>13</sup>Or maybe seven minutes. Either way, the moral of this anecdote is to take your GPS device with you.



The cave mouth was a howling hole.  
Their boots churned water thick with silt  
and oolites; shelves of parched stone,  
pallid with age, lined the endless tunnel.  
With pointed illumination  
their darkened eyes enlarged  
to memorise the white-brown spectrum  
in its infinite permutation.

Then to Marakoopa, the Handsome Caves.  
There, skeletal stals stab cold grey,  
and calcified life has made its grave  
where black-white rock with orange plays.  
In Lynds, mysterious forces flock  
to whisk away dear keys safe-hidden.  
Crystal — like teeth — splits weakened rock,  
spills over its own swollen abdomen,  
or sculpts impossibly thin monuments.  
In Tailender, too, craftsmen labour long  
to fashion the frosted images of cavers' song:  
white fireworks and confectionery swirls,  
and fragile beads from aquatic worlds.

But Kubla Khan — the opiate Elysium!  
There, a fool may stumble into her own folly  
rapt in immaculate silken shawls —  
or become lost in dense forest, rocky  
with the guards of the emperor's army.  
And, entranced by the sight of imperial pleasure  
in a hallowed dome devouring light,<sup>14</sup>  
hear music of caverns beyond man's measure  
and be forever haunted by their silent melody.  
The songs are cold. The glint of stone feeds desire,  
but no body is warmed when Alph, the sacred river,  
steals from any soul that wanders in its living fire.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Though the two Daves (Stuckey and Woolscobb, our local guide) vied to light up the chamber with their Scurions.

<sup>15</sup>This stanza alludes to the names of several features in the cave. Appearing in the poem not in their actual cave order are: 1. Sally's Folly, a pool of deep-ish water into which Alison slipped. 2. The Silk Shop, a veritable drapery of beautiful shawls. 3. The aptly-named Forest. 4. The Khan's Army, a militaristic file of stalagmites more than two metres tall. 5. The Pleasure Dome, a massive chamber with a floor entirely of rim pools. 6. The River Alph, through which one must wade to exit the cave.

How many literary references can a cave (or poem about caves) have? This abrupt ending is another.

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## THE DREAMING WHITE HORSE

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BY KEIR VAUGHAN-TAYLOR

**Participants:** Philip Maynard, Mel Stammell, Katrina Badiola, Deborah Johnston, Rod Obrien, Tom Short, Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Jack Wachsmann

**Date:** Saturday 8th October 2011

**Divers:** Keir Vaughan-Taylor and Phil Maynard and a support climbing team.

**Support divers:** Katrina Badiola, Rod Obrien.

**Trip start:** 11:00am



**Start of Imperial Dive. Photo by Keir Vaughan-Taylor**

We all then returned to the climb site.

With the scaling poles bolted together and erected into the lead in the roof Tom carefully ascended. The scaling poles were also supported from each side with rigging tapes to avoid slipping away from the desired position in the roof. We spent a long time getting this right so as to ensure the safety of our valued climber, Tom Short. The upper passage continued but presented a second scaling pole lead.

After making safe belay points in the upper chamber, scaling poles were hauled to the upper ledge and repositioned for the next section of climb reaching into a higher level. Exploration and further climbs connected to a short technical climb at the top. Above it looks to be a canyon passage? It is clearly delineated in the roof by a serpentine pressure tube and we are fairly sure, a large walk along stream canyon. Of course as with the Loch Ness Monster, just out of clear view. The usual element of doubt!

We curtailed the climbs because we were already late with our designated return time. A rope was fixed in at the furthest point of exploration and rigged for descent and as a means to prussic back in future. No need for scaling poles in future.

The aim was that a cave diving team act to support a climbing team to explore a pair of avens above the stream way just beyond Imperial river Sump 1. Diving with scaling pole equipment through sump one avoids the need to carry poles and equipment a longer way through the caves thereby reducing the time to transport gear and also protect the cave.

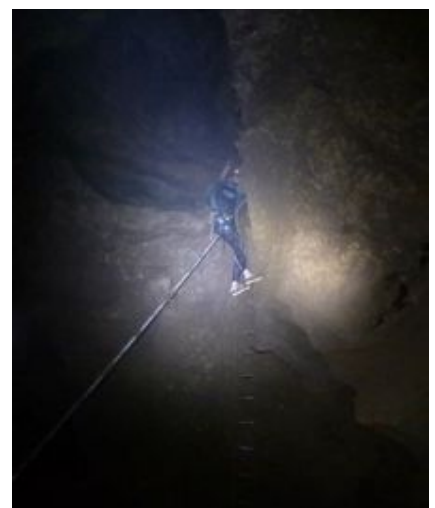
On a previous trip using the same dive plan, a lower aven was entered and followed some distance to termination of the passage. Passage above could be seen through a thin slot in the roof.

The first dive through the sump was uneventful delivering half the poles and a heavy bag of scaling pole bolts and brackets to the bottom of the lead.

The two passages in the roof are in an area of the caves where there is no other known caves. The closest tourist cave is Chifley but the map shows the position of the avens to be far west and north of known start of the climb.

The second set of poles were left on a ledge to be picked up on the second trip through the sump. They slipped off the ledge into the water and were for a short while lost. A search in a hole in the floor of the sump relocated the poles and were then also delivered to the climb site.

I waded upstream with diving gear to make sure the climbing team free dived Sump Two without any problems. After the usual trepidation about the cold and how far through and how far down and along the aqua group made it to the other side.



**Tom Ascending Scaling Pole. Photo by Keir Vaughan-Taylor**

After derigging we reversed the transport through the sump and the climb team returned upstream and out the cave.

At least we won't need the scaling poles again however... I have a copy of the original map of the Imperial Streamway by Ron Allum, Ian Lewis, Alan Grundy, Phil Prust and Robyn Allum 1979. Marked in the roof next to Sump 5 and Bell chamber is a note flowstone wall requires 5 meters of scaling poles.

*Saturday, Sunday 14-15th April 2012*

**Present:** Phil Maynard, Greg Ryan, Keir Vaughan-Taylor Bill Lamb, Tom Short, Lauren Harmsworth, Ashton East

**Trip Report:** Keir Vaughan-Taylor

Remembering our early years of cave diving at Jenolan, Far Country was explored by myself Patrick Larkin and Greg Wilkins. See Bull 29(3). Our transport techniques were awful but nevertheless Pat and Simon surveyed and mapped the passages on the other side. I suspected the surveys were not very good but a reasonable representation seemed fine for that time and I was most suspicious of the hook in the passage at the end that I didn't perceive in real life. Not surprising since we were focussed on other caving aspects.

The then Head Guide at Jenolan, Ernie Holland had always wanted a cave diving presence at Jenolan. All those blue pools and a group of people to who those secrets might be told.

One day Ernie gently suggested that times were changing and that SUSS cave divers needed in the fullness of time get formal qualifications. In those days qualifications were not so necessary but that was changing. Ernie was most diplomatic, and was, I imagine, having conversations with those in government; Sir Humphreys wanting a more formal set of procedures and training schedules. I was tempted to resist the beaurocrat growth of rules and restrictions but even I, in my cowboy past, could see the nature of our future. Cave diving is one of those life experiences that is awesome and it wasn't something to let pass. Beside we might learn something.

SUSS secured a training grant from the University of Sydney Sports Union to bring a cave diving trainer out from England. At first I tried the author of "the Darkness Beckons", Martyn Farr, but he was unable at that time to run the course. He suggested one of his associates, Rob Palmer.

Rob promptly flew out to Australia running a cave diving course at Jenolan Caves. Rob was to run this course twice. He sadly died later in a diving accident in the Red Sea bending rules that he had just spent a number of lectures emphasising these were rules that keep you fit and well.

Rob had seen the picture of Simon McCartney apparently quite comfortable sitting waist deep in Sump 6. I spoke to Rob of the prospects of this lead perhaps with a sparkle in my eye. The walls of the sump deeply scalloped and alluvial gravels both indicated occasional strong water flows. Clearly a major water inflow to the main Jenolan River. Rob was entranced by this photograph. There were the flood and flow indicators and Rob, clearly imbued with with summit fever, wanted to go and find the great cave that lay undiscovered on the other side. Ha! Hooked!

So off we went. Sump 6 at this time was considerably filled with gravel and to progress along the passage meant underwater digging, systematically pushing the gravels to one side in order to move forward. There is some relief dropping into the more spacious chamber at the bottom and even more surfacing in the passage on the other side. No wonder they called it Far Country. (Actually we called it that!)

As I surface on the other side Rob said "Fuck that is a tight bastard". To my dismay he then said "Oh by the way I have forgotten my second dive reel can you go back and get it for me".

Rob, used to the grandeur of Bahama's caving was uninspired by the tight passage of Far Country, nor the technique of sidling a hundred and fifty meters of passage holding the big heavy tanks we had with us at the time. Rob was actually unhappy with me about having mislead him about the cave size but for those of us not diving Bahama it seemed the cave size seemed fine. Rob made no discovery in the end sump. Bored with sump number we now called the "Dream of White Horses" a famous four pitch climb in the UK and slight reference to Rob Palmer's visit.

Years later Far Country was once dived by Dave Apperly and although he and his buddy pushed the sandy passages, and some digging undertaken, no dramatic progress was made. No-one else had been there since. Alan Pryke's discoveries in Rho Hole subsequently made Far Country very interesting once more. Alan's maps of the new extension in Rho Hole show the newly discovered extension being close to the regions of Far Country with likely hydrological connections implying water transport from the areas around Rho Hole, Alladin and Glass into the Imperial River. There is clearly more to find in this region and the hydrological behaviour is something unknown.

The journey to Far Country is difficult involving dive gear portage along to Water Cavern, down through the barrel along a crawl passage, a ten meter pitch, down a hole and more passage with a possible sump.

The cave passage beyond sump 6 is a twisting vadose structure often with a trickle stream flowing in its floor. The whole length of passage becomes more beautiful, water cleansed and decorated along its path, ending in a small electric blue lake. There is a visible passage a meter down leading off underwater on the left. So far there is no water body found at the the far reaches of the Rho Hole extension. The lake has been dived several times but the

way on is blocked, they say, by river gravels.

There were two previous surveys of Far Country one by Ron Allum and later Simon McCartney and Pat Larkin in 1987. We believe they used knotted guide lines for distance and cave diving compasses to take bearings in difficult circumstance. While our confidence in the Alan Pryke survey is very good, there may be problems with the Far Country survey done in extremely difficult conditions.

The current survey information renders maps that show a close connection to the Rho Hole extension but also an unlikely hook in the Far Country Survey, trending in an unlikely direction. For these reasons we wanted to re-survey Far Country and more correctly locate the the relationship of the two caves.



**Simon McCartney, Sump 6, 1988. Photo by Keir Vaughan-Taylor**

Sump 6 is tight but short. Greg stuck his head and shoulders into the opening and sank into the water. He would be the only person that would see anything. I followed with my bulky surveying package. As with our previous experience the dive space is tight however opens into a larger chamber about six meters down the tube.



**Phil Maynard, Archibald Entrant 2012, Sump 6. Photo by Keir Vaughan-Taylor**

Over three hours we surveyed our way back to the sump, taking care with the accuracy of our survey recordings. The last few legs were more difficult as the lens of the Suunto Compass persistently fogged up. Eventually I descended

Phil, Greg and myself finally organised our kit on Saturday morning entering the cave at 11:00. Previous surveys show the passages we wanted to survey to be about 150m and we expected to be out by about 8:00pm that night. Bill and Lauren helped transport the gear through the tourist caves into the barrel and to the dive site and thence were no longer able to help us. Bill would return to the passage from the outside if we were not out by eight o'clock.

Since the sump is very short Phil and I used smaller 3 litre cylinder pairs but Greg chose to stay with his standard 7 litre configuration. I had a somewhat bulky PVC screw top container to hold the survey instruments and that would be fun to push down the gravel floor. A nice Disto X would have been great but the only person with one of those is Alan who has no faith in the PVC screw top.

There is a chance there is something to find on the left but would mean getting out the reel clipping on and feeling around although there is maybe 15cm of visibility. So far the small diversion hasn't been investigated.

The exit on the other side rises across a flowstone with a vadose passage above also characterised with loose river gravel floor. The sound of dripping water can be heard in nearby passages but there are no holes or possible connections to water.

We proceeded to the furthest point in the passage to survey back towards Imperial.

Along the full length of the passage are small cat sized grykes and holes in the roof but no explorable passages. The only way on is through the Dream of White Horses Sump.



to unpalatably licking of the lens and blowing on it to convince enough visibility to see those bearings.

Eventually with the last survey legs connected to the salient reference points at Sump 6 we finished sketching the cave passage outline and returned back through the sump to the Imperial Streamway passages.

It had been a long day. We returned through the sump at 6:00pm and were still faced with the transport of three sets of gear back up the pitch to the long crawl to the Barrel room. This was a problem in that Greg had to be back in Sydney. We were tired and cold. In compromise we removed only Greg's packs to the Grand Arch finishing up at 7:00pm with a plan to return the next day for the remaining gear.

A few more helpers conveniently turned up Saturday night. Tom and Ashton thought we were going to revisit the rope hanging in the Imperial and did not want to be left out. We were extremely appreciative for the help getting the equipment back to where it needed to be. Some of the best caving company a person could have but. . .

All that enthusiasm meant I had to steel my weary body to venture in the Streamway and venture with the team with another bold push up the rope hanging forlornly in the Imperial River.

After removing the packs we returned to Bell chamber. The sump into Imperial was full and it was a breath hold. Along the Streamway to the rope there is a five meter breath hold and it was going to be cold. Nevertheless I plunged into the water but after walking some distance along the swirling waters of the Imperial Streamway I realised I was pretty cold.

I piked! Being trip leader, I declared, I was not in a fit state to run the trip safely and we were going back. To my surprise no-one argued and we returned to the Cavers Hut with our somewhat muddied equipment and the Imperial Rope project awaiting our brave hearts on another day.

Phil has since processed the survey data. To my surprise the Larkin/McCartney survey is good but with two small mistakes. Considering how hard the dive was in those days it was a splendid effort on their part. Their survey accidentally reversed two of their compass bearings and there will be a significant change in the final connection point.

The accompanying map is the result of Julia James surveys in the tourist caves, Alan Prykes amazing map of the Rho Hole extension and our contributory efforts in Far Country. It reveals significant relationships of the caves on the West Gorge Dreamtime Bluff, the tourist caves and Imperial.

The puzzle gradually assembles and there is more yet to be explored. The difference in height between the Dream of White Horses and the Rho Hole is negligible but separated by about 30 meters. The sump floor is sandy and doesn't silt easily and so has good conditions for surveying. I don't know how far it goes but a survey of even modest extent would give good indication of where to look in Rho Hole. Maybe there is a connection and may reveal the enigmatic roles of the caves of the Dreamtime Area.

Sydney Smith although likely to be the same hydrological entity, is 35 metres higher and so we need to explore for ways down in the Sydney Smith area.

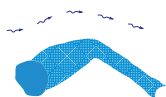
# Far Country

Jenolan, NSW



## Legend

Stream



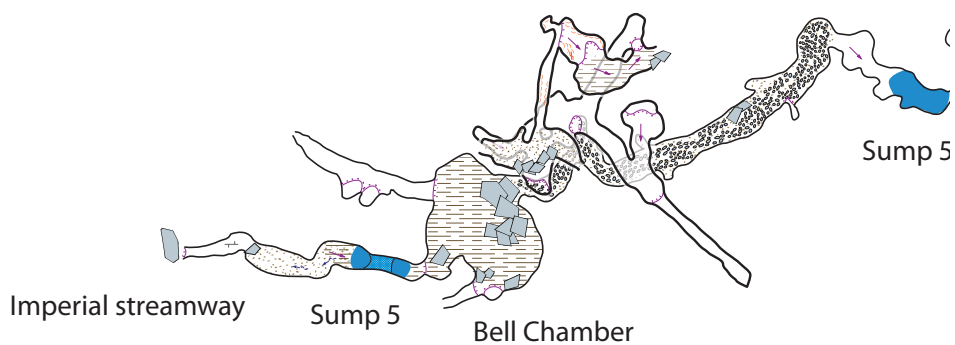
Lake, sump

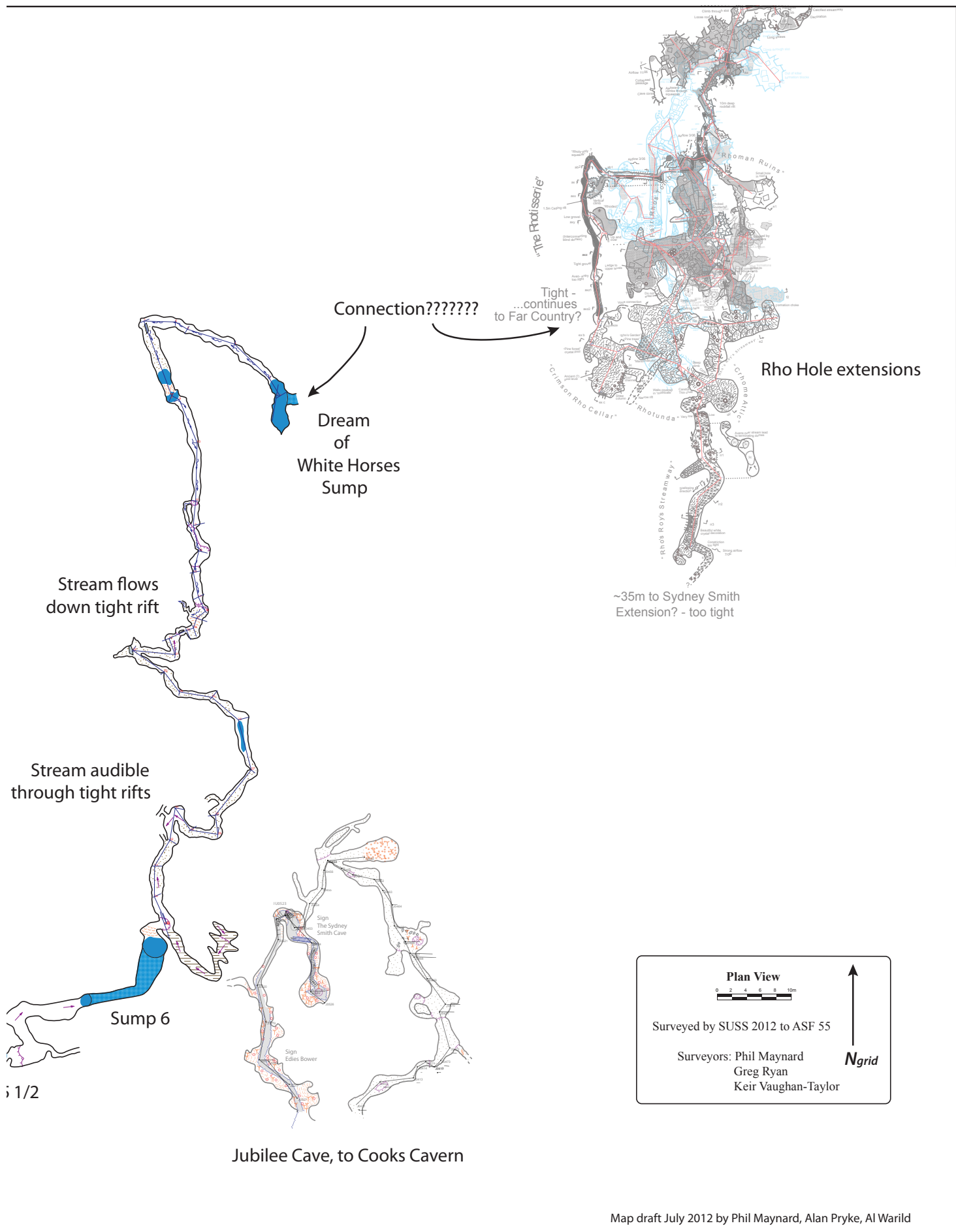
Gravel

Flowstone

Downslope

Connection to Jubilee cave  
up 15p, through barrel





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## A CO-LONG WEEKEND, JUNE 2012

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BY THOMAS CUNNINGHAM

**Participants:** Natalie Brennan, Michael Casteleyn, Thomas Cunningham, Alan Pryke and Jack Wachsmann

The long weekend in June, what better way than to spend it caving? That's where the difficulties began. I'd originally signed up for a Mole Creek trip but that was cancelled when the number of participants dwindled to two. My backup trip, a visit to Wombeyan, was canned due to booking issues. Jack started to plan a trip to Yagby, which I was up for despite the cold, having never been there. This too was cancelled. With the weekend potentially my only chance to go caving that month things looked grim. Enter Colong...

### Friday

After four hours driving through what included some fairly heavy fog, Michael, Alan and I arrived at our Friday night camping ground. Jack and Nat were already there, huddled around a fire kindly left behind by the site's previous occupants. The thermometer in the car claimed that the temperature outside was  $-1^{\circ}\text{C}$ . As I exited the vehicle I wasn't about to argue — my body's own thermometer read 'bloody cold'. It was only midnight and already there was frost covering the ground and tents. Thank goodness we weren't at Yagby!

### Saturday

After the usual morning faff, to which it's possible I was the largest contributor, we set off. Only metres along the track we came across our first obstacle; the creek was flowing and too deep even for those of us with gumboots, thankfully a nearby fallen tree provided a dry, albeit slippery, crossing.

We proceeded without incident until we came to The Descent.<sup>1</sup> Alan had warned us about the horrible hill, although he added that a 4WD had once been winched down the slope just to prove it could be done. When I finally got down the bottom a noticeable lack of abandoned vehicle indicated they'd managed to get it back up — shame they didn't leave the winch behind to pull up tired cavers but as Jack would say, "Future self's problem!"



*Rainforest camping. Photo by T. Cunningham*

Our camping spot for the remainder of the trip was in the middle of lush rainforest, with drinkable water within a minute's walk, even better was our proximity to the main cave itself. Theoretically we could crawl out of our sleeping bags and into the cave — theoretically. The one drawback was the lack of dry firewood so we all went in search of this, each picking a different direction up a hill.

I crossed the Nettle Zone,<sup>2</sup> reaching sunshine and the hope of finding dry wood. I walked higher up the hill, passing sticks and other branches until I eventually found two large branches that each looked as though they might last a night. Getting them down the hill however was not as easy as I'd thought it might be, and involved throwing them and any other nearby dead wood as far as I could, walking down to where they'd landed, and repeating. Each time this happened I'd lose a branch or two and by the time I returned to the Nettle Zone only

had my original two branches. I dragged them through the stinging nettles, reaching the bottom only to find Jack pulling half a tree along the creek bed.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately Alan, who was the one who'd originally found Jack's tree, decided that it was actually a rainforest tree and wouldn't be very good as fuel. It did however make a great seat.

Firewood sorted, and with much protest from Alan about how late it was, we finally started caving. We stopped by The Arch for photo faffage before heading to the upper entrance. Alan led the way to King's Cross and once there laid the various sheets of the cave's map on the ground.<sup>4</sup> A quick check of his DistoX revealed it was in need of calibration and so the trip's surveying finished before it even started.

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<sup>1</sup>Not the 2005 horror movie — that's nothing compared to this treacherous slope.

<sup>2</sup>A band of particularly evil stinging nettles forming the boundary between the rainforest below and the eucalyptus forest above.

<sup>3</sup>I'm not kidding either. He'd attached tape around one end and was literally dragging the thing towards our camp!

<sup>4</sup>This particular version of the map had all levels of the cave overlaid, one on top of the other, resulting in a map that was nearly as confusing as the twisting passages of the cave itself.



As a test, Alan had me lead us to the lake to prove that I could read cave maps. After initially pointing in completely the opposite direction I proceeded to the lake without further incident. The water was a lovely blue with small calcite rafts floating on its surface. This, when combined with the small size of the room, produced stunning reflections and a scene that was very pretty to behold. After some rather successful photo faffage I led back to King's Cross via a different route.

Next on the tour were the Mud Tunnels. The lower sections were either all sumped or at least partly full of water, and even Jack, who normally loves an underground swim, didn't feel like getting wet on day one. The upper sections were made up of twisting, dry passages which were fairly narrow compared to what the cave had delivered until this point, it also contained what Alan described as a particularly evil stalagmite. Many caves have them but I had to admit that the size and shape of this phallactite was particularly unfortunate. Michael whipped out his camera. Despite several attempts to take the perfect shot he gave up, unable to get the lighting quite right.

We made our way in to Ghost Train, with Alan quickly disappearing ahead. As I progressed through the dark, winding passages I could hear the tick, tick, tick of the train. A quick check behind me revealed a lack of fellow cavers. I was about to round the next corner when Jack sprung from the shadows shouting "RAH!"

The morning's bushwalk was beginning to take its toll on me so I attempted a nap while everyone else headed to Fall from Grace (or was it Leap of Faith?). Getting comfortable was easy<sup>5</sup> and soon I was close to sleep, only to be disturbed by the scraping of my gloves against each other as I shifted slightly. Minor reshuffling corrected this issue but it would seem I was not meant to fall asleep. A bat or two decided to flitter about the small room, probably trying to decide if this new rock, which was warm too, would make a nice spot to land for a rest. The bats never had a chance to find out as one by one the group returned.

By this stage it was getting late so we decided to head out. As we made our way towards the exit I noticed two things: Firstly, it was getting much cooler, which didn't bode well for the temperature above-ground. Secondly, I didn't recognise anything from the way in. It became apparent that Alan had pulled a fast one on us when we emerged outside, only metres from our soon-to-be-lit fire. No one seemed to mind. We all changed into warmer gear at speeds that would have made Superman jealous and Alan wasted no time in getting the fire lit.

## Sunday

Our plan for the second day of caving was to reach Woof's Cavern, at the back of the cave. Before doing so we made a stop by the Pulsating River, so named because the flow stops and starts at regular intervals. The river was flowing when we reached it but we didn't hang around for very long due to the busy day ahead. From the river we made our way towards Woof's Cavern, which involved working our way along the top of an impressive rift. Alan strongly recommended not falling down.

Climbing up, we emerged into a huge cavern full of amazing formations ranging in scale from the very small to the very large. Woof's Cavern was definitely in a much better condition than the well-worn passages and rooms we'd visited so far. At one end of the room was a small pool with large calcite rafts. Nearby, one of the walls sported a massive slope of sparkling, golden flowstone. Opposite this, what would have otherwise been your standard collection of white straws featured one that seemed to have assimilated several neighbouring straws as it slanted its way towards the floor, drips hanging from a hook at the bottom. There really was something interesting to look at no matter what direction you turned and we quickly put Michael and his Scurion to work painting shots.

It was while attempting one particular shot that Alan discovered he really didn't like Nat's camera.<sup>6</sup> It was one of the 'tough' cameras that you see more and more of on trips, likely because they don't fall apart at the mere thought of being kept loose in your pocket while caving. The problem was that no matter what he did it wouldn't focus properly, or if it did it would forget that he wanted it on a two second timer, or it would decide to go back to non-timer mode after taking a single picture, and so on. So much time was spent trying to take a photo of Jack near some stals that Jack got bored and started practising his Super Jack pose, which didn't really help the situation. In the end Nat's camera decided that it was fed up, threatening to turn off due to a lack of battery power. I stayed very quiet and kept my camera hidden.



*The assimilating straw.  
Photo by T. Cunningham*

<sup>5</sup>One of many things I noticed over the weekend was that the cave had no shortage of comfortable spots to sit or lie down — what a great cave!

<sup>6</sup>Or perhaps it really didn't like him...



**Left: Jack posing in Woof's Cavern.**

**Right: The Jellyfish of Woof's Cavern. Photo by T. Cunningham**

After lunch in Woof's Cavern we made our way to the beach and beyond, with Alan wanting to explore a few leads. This usually resulted in one or two people poking themselves down, up, or into one hole or another. Sometimes they'd reappear moments later from a different hole. At other times they'd be gone anywhere from ten minutes to half an hour, with the occasional hoot, honk or whistle being used by Jack and Alan to communicate with each other — at least they were having fun. Those of us waiting started to cool down, so Nat and I found our own 'leads' to explore. While mine quickly revealed that it required a nanobod<sup>7</sup> Nat's kept going. Her fun was to be short lived. Alan, once finished his own exploring, called Nat back, saying that he knew where it was going. Despite much pleading for more time she eventually returned.

Alan wanted to check out the SUSS Waterfall although wasn't so keen on crawling up a flowing river in Volleys and cotton overalls to get there. His solution, the High Dry Bypass. This bypass had yet to be found but that was just minor detail. If it did exist Alan suspected we would find it somewhere in or near the Gunbarrel. We spent a good half-hour poking around holes and though we did find one that looked promising it also looked inherently unstable and was therefore abandoned. As a contingency plan, it was suggested that Jack and I climb down to the river and make our way up it and towards the waterfall. We didn't require much convincing. After all, with the extra water in the cave the waterfall was expected to be spectacular. Jack and I descended a muddy tube to the river below.

Here began the Three Trials of the SUSS Waterfall. The first trial I call Strength of Arms, a ten metre crawl upstream requiring you to support yourself on fingertips and toes alone if you wish to minimise getting wet. Jack, thanks to his Cordura trogsuit and heightened fitness, made short of the challenge, disappearing ahead and leaving me to struggle through. The second trial is Stability of Feet, which sees you leave the river, climbing over it through slippery and unstable rockpile. I couldn't see Jack at this point — he was obviously well ahead of me — but the wet trail he'd left behind made it easy to track him. The final trial is Absence of Skeleton, which involves two squeezes, the second being a particularly difficult 'Z' squeeze that slopes downwards at the end. Care must be taken when exiting the squeeze to ensure that you don't fall down into a pool below. It was at the entrance to these squeezes that I caught up to Jack, who wasn't thrilled about going through by himself. We'd been gone about half an hour but were so close that we had to keep going. Jack inched his way through the squeeze and once clear I followed him through...

The waterfall was nowhere in sight. Jack paused to take in our surroundings. There was the dyke that the waterfall was meant to flow over. The deep pool below was certainly full enough and given that it seemed to be the source of the water we'd previously crawled through we guessed it was actively being filled from somewhere. Then there was the noise — or more accurately lack of. As we climbed up through a hole in the dyke I noticed that everything seemed pretty dry. If there had been a waterfall here it was not recently.

After spending a few more minutes looking for waterfalls we turned around and began the trip downstream. Despite Jack's concern that I wasn't entirely sure where I was going we made it back to the mud slope leading away from the river without a single wrong turn. Alan called out to us, and after confirming that we were still alive I noticed that his voice was coming from further down the river — through another crawl of course. Glimpses of his headlamp confirmed the shortcut. Unfortunately it also proved to be a bit of a wet-cut, my overalls soaking up more water along the way than I would have liked. Regaling the others with our tale, Alan was surprised that the waterfall lacked, well, water — although after some thought he remembered that it was also dry the one time he'd gone to check it out — thanks Alan!

The rest of our time spent in the cave that day is a bit of a blur. We made our way out via Elf Town and the Red

<sup>7</sup>Like a microbod but several orders of magnitude smaller.

Cascades. I didn't have time to stop for photos of either — I was far too busy trying to keep up — but I particularly liked Elf Town, which did look a lot like Rivendell from *The Lord of the Rings*. Next time I'm at Colong I'll be sure to revisit here for photo faffage.

The evening was spent sitting around the campfire with red wine, hommus, olives and Camembert to keep us company. We may have been camping in the middle of nowhere but we definitely weren't roughing it. Nature decided to remind us that we were outdoors and at 9:30 it started to rain. Thanks to the rainforest canopy we heard the rain several minutes before the first drop was felt but it was enough to convince us that our tents were the place to be.

## Monday

I woke on the Monday morning to the soft patter of rain filtering through the canopy above to the tents and surrounding ground. Looking at my watch I decided 7:30 was far too early and rolled over. My sleep was to be short-lived. Alan arose not long afterwards and started making noise in the hope of waking us. The challenge was on. Who would be the last out of bed? Despite valiant efforts from the others, and aided by the jacket I had pulled over my head, I dosed on and when I finally surfaced, was victorious.

Emerging from tent made me aware of a major issue that would make it difficult, or at least unpleasant, to go caving that day. Much of my caving gear was still wet from yesterday's crawl back from the 'waterfall'. Even the gear that I had dried by the fire the night before, then put in the cover of my tent's vestibule, was cold and damp. Then there was the fire. The rain had eased to the occasional drop and the fire was warm and inviting. I moved closer and as I sat on a log nearby the likelihood of my caving fell steadily. Everyone else realised this and, deciding I could always catch up if I wanted to, left to check out a lead not far in from the top entrance. The problem was that it was so relaxing sitting around the fire that my motivation for doing anything else was non-existent. I packed my gear without any sense of urgency — at least until the rain returned.

The rain turned out to be a good defaffalator and after dragging my gear to shelter, placing a large branch on the fire and checking that everyone else's gear wasn't getting wet, I made my way to the warmth and dryness of The Arch. I did go caving that day, if you can call wandering around The Arch taking photos caving, but rather than donning my helmet and overalls I wore a beanie and tracksuit.<sup>8</sup>

The others returned to camp just before 3:00 and without wasting any time we were on our way out. The hill back was steeper than I remembered, the rain not making it any easier. It seemed longer too and the higher we climbed the colder it became. After more than an hour of putting one foot in front, and usually above, the other we made it back to the cars, not to mention dry clothes, and a long drive home.

Can we please have a long weekend every month?

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<sup>8</sup>I did still need my headlamp — although it was more for painting shots than finding my way in the dark.

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## WIBURDS UPDATE

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BY IAN COOPER AND PHIL MAYNARD

The Wiburds Lake Cave survey at Jenolan has become an epic. It is now 17 years since we started surveying Western Passage at Easter 1995! The cave was estimated at 2000m long in the 1975 “Blue Book” with a map put together from known work at the time and a promise of an upcoming Wiburds book.

Now the end is nigh for the Wiburds project. I have been drafting and Phil Maynard computer drafting with the map largely complete. The cave now has a surveyed length of 5070m and a depth of 80m. The deepest point in the cave by a long way is the exploration front at the end of Northwest Passage which is also the westernmost part of the cave. There is a sound connection to Wards Mistake Cave, (surveys indicate that the 2 caves are 4m horizontally apart), which if included makes the system 5180m long and 110m deep. The connection to Warbo Cave, (surveyed length 374m), remains elusive and unlikely. The lowest point in Warbo is 18m horizontally and 7 metres above the nearest point, in the passages above Lake Chamber There are 18 entrances to Wiburds which are

J57/58/92/101/201/203/220/221/223/227/230/243/319/320/321/324/J329/J330

My records show 102 people have helped in the survey, (about 80 from SUSS), which was often also exploration. There are still prospects in the cave with Henrys Dig and the end of Northwest Passage taking large volumes of flood water. These two areas represent the best chance of finding the Jenolan Underground River between Mammoth Cave and the main submergence. The area west of J57 still has potential for upper level extensions. Extensions remain possible in Western Passage and Pitter Patter Passage, especially up the several unclimbed avens. Several inlet streamways have potential for extension. The tight access squeezes to Wretched mean that there has been only 5 trips to this area and leads remain.

Wiburds Bluff remains one of the most cavernous parts of the Jenolan Caves Limestone with over 50 tagged features. Many of the small caves require checking for extension. J56 has a flood inlet streamway that has not been seen in Wiburds. J202 has potential to connect to Lake Chamber.

It will soon be 50 years since the rediscovery of Wiburds, (in 1963), yet much remains to be explored.





### (Or, how we learned to stop hurrying and love the vacuum)

BY THOMAS WILSON

Cliefden, April 6-9 2012

**Participants:** Blake Churton, Thomas Cunningham, Rowena Larkins, Flora Lin, Rhonda Lum, Phil Maynard, Kevin Moore, Chris Norton, Thomas Wilson.

The first hurdle was encountered in the car. Thomas W, passenger, asked Thomas C, driver, if he had the directions to Cliefden. TC replied that he didn't, because he knew TW had been there before. TW experienced a moderately protracted period of 'Um, I think I remember how to get there, well, maybe I don't, ummm, the town's called, umm, well, I expect I'll recognise it when we get there, probably.' 'Are you thinking what I'm thinking, T1?'

'I think I am, T2.'

'It's smartphone time.'

Thankfully, with the car charger securely in place, and the directions to Cliefden downloaded before even leaving the fringes of Sydney, all was not lost. Ultimately, though, TW's hazy recollections came together into a reasonably accurate map, rendering all of the foregoing hemming and hawing unnecessary. Despite this, almost shockingly, our car was the first to reach Cliefden that night. Rhonda and Blake appeared in due course, bringing with them Rhonda's delightfully complete collection of household appliances for the weekend - including a microwave just in case the hut's one had broken down in the year since our last visit. (It hadn't.)



***The Pineapple (left), and Rhonda admiring it (right). Photo by Chris Norton***

The following morning we awoke to the tuneful warbling of Rhonda's vacuum cleaner. Despite some ominous rumblings about Murder (Cave?) from those who had hoped to sleep in rather later, the decision was taken to visit various small caves on the far side of the river. After a rather protracted getting-ready period in order to return the departure time to a more SUSS-like 10:30 AM, accompanied by ominous rumblings from those who had hoped to leave rather earlier, the party set off in the two trusty Subarus for the road down to the ford, where Rhonda pulled out her Holden overalls.



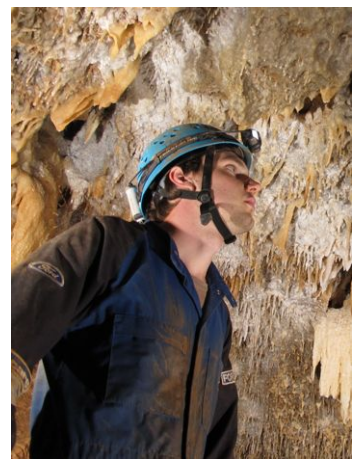
***Thomas W rigging a horizontal abseil. Photo by Kevin Moore***

Thomas W had spent quite some time staking out the front seat for this drive, and was observed to be distinctly unimpressed by the number of gates he was therefore expected to open and close along the way. Our first cave for the day was to be Yarrowiggah. The group sat around the entrance while Chris, being a practical sort of fellow, shifted the pile of stones, having read somewhere that if you want to go caving, better to have an hole to enter through. It was at this point that those who had been at Cliefden the Easter before remembered that Chris had used a squeeze shortly inside the entrance of Yarrowiggah Cave to illustrate the concept of the 'Kevin-stopper'. Thomas W, ever one to offer constructive advice, chipped in with the fact that there was another entrance, which raised Kevin's spirits for about a second until Thomas added 'which is even tighter, and requires a rope.'



Kevin therefore passed his camera to Phil and relaxed in the rather pleasant autumnal weather outside the cave. Undeterred, the group set off into the cave, where a not inconsiderable period of time was spent playing with cameras and flashes trying to get that perfect shot. After this, Rowena disappeared while examining the left-hand side of the lower chamber and emerged back in the main chamber, reporting hob-nailed boot marks along the way. Were this an Enid Blyton story, this would be followed by the arrival of the Germans, thwarting our escape plan, but as it is not, we encountered no difficulties in our departure from the cave.

After a leisurely lunch on the picturesque banks of the river, we moved upstream to the next cave, Gable. This was an entertaining ramble, although a bit labyrinthine; however, due to the fact that the blackberries had been rather energetically growing, we decided to pass on the nearby Swansong. Perhaps it would have been more attractive after a winter journey. However, some of us did work up the energy for a quick jaunt into Transmission Cave, across the river. Others, including, of course, Phil, took advantage of the warm weather for a quick dip in the river. After Transmission, in which we found some mildly impressive decoration, we returned to the hut, although Chris had some trouble locating the start of the road near the ford. At the hut, Thomases C and W convinced Phil that he really wanted to sign off some boxes on their respective trip supervisor forms, an activity which was sadly cut short by the presence of mosquitoes. The usual hut activities persisted out of range of the mosquitoes, that is to say, wine, cheese, and, in this case, photo editing from the day's copious collection.



**Flora, Blake, Thomas W and Thomas C posing before formations. Photo by Kevin Moore**

The following morning, we awoke to the tuneful warbling of Rhonda's vacuum cleaner. Rather surprised, we stumbled blearily around experiencing a strange sense of déjà vu. However, we wasted no time in attacking our trip supervisor forms, successfully knocking over several laddering-related boxes. We then wasted quite a bit of time setting up a hauling system and then taking it apart and putting it back together more efficiently. There was substantial debate over the best way to rig the ascender to stop it running backward, but Dr Maynard, after consulting with his learned friend Mr Norton, declared that the way it had originally been rigged was, in fact, the best solution. Mr Norton submitted that a hauling system, whatever its design, was not really the best solution to the problem of moving a bag of barbecue wood across the grass in front of the hut. On that note, the session was adjourned, and we went caving.



**Rim Pool, Murder cave. Photo by Kevin Moore**

came down into the entrance and helpfully pointed out the large and obvious gate.

It was only at this point that the Germans arrived, in the form of Chris's music selection for the drive to Murder Cave. The delay can probably be attributed to the fact that a) it's a long way from Germany, and b) Enid Blyton hasn't written anything in a long time, so they weren't expecting the cue. Whatever the reasoning, those in Chris's car were exposed to the aural pleasure of seminal German band Einstürzende Neubauten. Thomas W, who was cleverly crammed into the middle of the back seat, where he couldn't possibly be expected to open gates, seemed a little irritated to discover that they were all open today. To compensate, he was sent to open the gate of Murder Cave, but returned defeated, unable to find it, despite having been there the year before and remembering it clearly. Chris



**Dragon formation, Murder cave. Photo by Kevin Moore**

the colours of a shawl, a process rather less entertaining for the person hiding behind a stalagmite holding a flash and slowly developing various muscle cramps than for the rest of the group. When the photography party moved on to the helictites on the opposite side of the chamber, Thomas W led most of the others back a couple of chambers, once again demonstrating his inimitable ability to miss the most obvious routes by briefly rendering the party geographically embarrassed in a nearby network of passages.

Next on the list, though, was a digging lead which SUSS's erstwhile secretary Denis Stojanovic had noticed the year before. Unfortunately, no-one but Denis knew the exact location of this lead, and, though enthusiastic, he was unable, given that he was in Edinburgh, to help in any practical way with its pursuit. Thomas C and Blake volunteered to visit this location in search of glory, and were pointed in the right direction: 'Denis went in one of those holes, disappeared for some time, and then appeared from another looking confused and claiming there was a lead.' Some might call this unhelpful advice, but we called it 'building initiative'. While our intrepid adventurers were gone, conversation in the chamber turned to other matters, and on their return they were greeted with Rowena's 'Let me introduce you to the concept of adultery, Chris.'<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, everyone on the trip seems to have forgotten the context of this ponderous pronouncement, so it will have to stand alone. Nonetheless, it gives an insight into what we termed the 'quotable quotes' aspect of the trip.

Back at the car, Chris nonchalantly promised more of his scintillating music choices for the drive back to the hut. Thomas W, equally nonchalantly, asked about the most direct walking route to the hut. In the end, of course, he managed to lose the route on the way back to the hut, despite Flora's best efforts. To his complaints of the directions being unclear, Chris responded 'Just follow the creek!' 'But the creek splits.' 'The one that's flowing.' 'None of them was flowing!' was the glib response, which prompted a bit of a stir, as the creek was clearly flowing outside the hut, and therefore was sinking somewhere in the general vicinity of the shearing sheds. More investigation may be warranted.



**Shawl, Murder cave. Photo by Chris Norton**

This obstacle removed, we climbed down into the main chamber, a rather expansive space with an aptly named 'dragon' formation. At this point, several people were enlisted to hold flashes, pose attractively, point headtorches, and the like. When everyone had had their fill of photos, we moved deeper into the cave, desperately trying to prepare those new to Cliefden for the intense disappointment in store for them at the famous blue stalactite of Murder Cave. However, the Letterbox Squeeze, which some of us had conveniently forgotten, proved to be another Kevin-stopper, so he and Phil left to enjoy the weather on the surface. The rest of the group continued on, exploring most of the interesting sections of the cave, and spending quite a bit of time trying to find the perfect flash settings to bring out

<sup>1</sup>Editor: The outcome will remain at Cliefden



Some of my readers may recall that a cave had opened up near the shearing sheds a year earlier, which we had provisionally named 'Gate and Thistle Cave' (or G'n'T Cave for short). OSS had since expanded the entrance and



**Thomas C having a dig, others look on. Photo by Kevin Moore**

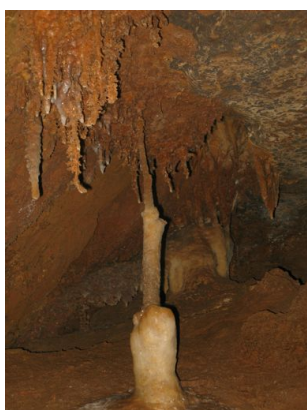
refer to it by the inventive name 'Shearing Shed Cave'. Thomas C, with characteristic enthusiasm, had decided to take advantage of our permit to dig this. The rest of us, therefore, settled down on the surface with nuts, chips, salsa, wine, and beer to assist with the dig. A fella could have a pretty good time in Vegas with all that stuff! Phil, a man of taste and restraint, was not particularly impressed with the quality of the wine, muttering from time to time about 'precious bodily fluids' and 'purity of essence'. This fact notwithstanding, thanks to the persistent digger and back-up team, the cave was entered, mapped to ASF grade 1, and noted to contain rubbish, old chemical bottles and foul air, so perhaps it could also be known as 'Garbage and Toxins Cave'. Post-dig activities were remarkably similar to the previous evening.

The more astute among you will by now have guessed what feature greeted us when we awoke on Sunday. Thomas W, determined to prove wrong Chris's comment that 'Nothing could be more pointless than this hauling system you're rigging', walked up the gentle hill outside the hut to rig up an abseil rope while Phil watched in bemusement. Although with some reservations about signing off someone who'd failed to grasp the fundamentally vertical nature of ropework, Phil decided this was a satisfactory demonstration of a few more of the trip supervisor requirements.

For the third day's caving, we'd planned a jaunt through Main Cave - always an entertaining prospect, if a little sweaty, as it is even hotter than the other caves at Cliefden. To make matters even better, we'd managed to locate the lower entrance of the cave by the novel approach of using the cave map and a compass, so we were able to appreciate the cave as a through trip, although the usual route up to Helictite Wall was blocked except for those partial to roof sniffs in cotton overalls. Needless to say, we spent quite some time taking photos of this particular feature, too. Emerging into daylight once more, we sauntered up the hill to the cars and so to the hut, where we had a little more fun with caving ladders in trees, and a lot more fun with our preferred beverages and food-stuffs.



**Helectites. Photo by Kevin Moore**



**Krazy Kolumn Photo by Rowena Larkins**

The fourth morning was eerily still. Rhonda and Blake had returned home the previous evening, taking the vacuum cleaner with them. Phil and Kevin were also seduced away from the karst by the prospect of visiting the wineries of the Orange region. Five of us only, then, set out to visit our last cave, Malongulli - a fun, sporty cave which starts with a squeeze and ladder climb, and continues in a similar manner. Nautical Norton even managed to drive to quite near the entrance without running aground.

Our passage through the first few chambers was unremarkable, and no-one felt any great desire to do the rather exposed climb up to see the Nazgûl, a formation which Chris described merely by reference to the disappointment one experiences on first seeing the famous blue stal of Murder Cave.

When we reached the next slippery climb, though, Flora gallantly offered to set up the tape. Chris tied a tape knot for her and told her that there was an obvious thread on the right-hand side at the top of the climb. Ably spotted by Thomas C, she scaled the wall and reported that the obvious thread wasn't. Eventually the elusive beast was located, hiding on the left-hand side. With the tape in place, the rest of us had no difficulty in joining her, and the group proceeded without further incident to the Krazy Kolumn. After an entertaining loop through the rather maze-like back half of the cave, we climbed out the entrance pitch and so back to the car.

One challenge remained to be accepted. We had to clean the hut before we left. We cursed our short-sightedness, but to no avail - Rhonda and her Doomsday vacuum cleaner were far beyond our reach. We'll meet again, though.



***More Helectites. Photo by Kevin Moore***

**Notes:**

- Some of the people and events may have been misrepresented, for which I would like to apologise. In particular, it should be noted that Rhonda never began vacuuming before everyone was long since awake, and that she was never the last one ready to go caving.
- Last year's Easter trip, on which the leads in Murder and Gate and Thistle/Shearing Shed Cave were discovered, was reported in SUSS Bull 50 (1).



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## PHOTO GALLERY

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***Blue Stal, W128, Wombeyan. Photo by Thomas Cuningham***



***Dancing Lady W128, Wombeyan. Photo by Thomas Cuningham***





***Paul Maynard staying dry, Figtree Cave, Wombeyan. Photo by Thomas Cunningham***



***Greystoke Cave, New Zealand. Photo by Alan Pryke***



***Yarrowigah Cave, Cleifden. Photo by Phil Maynard***

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## THINGS TO BUY

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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.

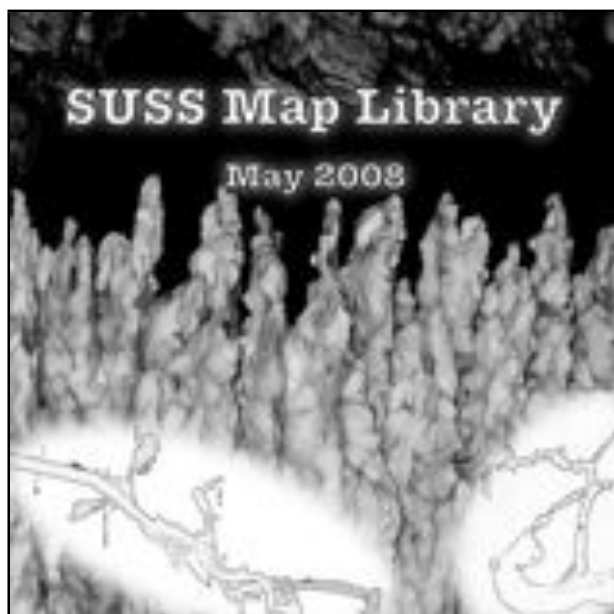
There are field sketches, ink maps produced on drafting film, ink maps produced on linen, as well as some of the latest digitally-produced cave projects. The DVD also contains all SUSS Bulls in HTML format from 35(1), July 1995 to 47(4), March 2008 and SUSS Bulls as PDF format from 42(1), April 2002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

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## TRIP LIST: AUG TO DEC 2012

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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.

### **Aug**

**25 – 26 Wombeyan.** Wrap up for a mid-winter trip to Wombeyan in the southern highlands.

Contact Denis: [dstojanovic91@gmail.com](mailto:dstojanovic91@gmail.com)

### **September**

**1 – 2 Tuglow.** Great sporty cave in a remote part of the Blue Mountains.

Contact Jack: [jack.wachsmann@gmail.com](mailto:jack.wachsmann@gmail.com)

**6 General Meeting.** Holme Building, 7.30pm. Jack will present slides from the recent Chillagoe trip.

**8 – 9 Jenolan.** Stay at the luxurious cavers' cottage.

Contact Thomas: [tcun0287@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:tcun0287@uni.sydney.edu.au)

**15 – 16 Wombeyan.** Beautiful campsite and caves in the southern highlands.

Contact Renee: [m.renee55@yahoo.com](mailto:m.renee55@yahoo.com)

**29 Sept – 1 Oct Cooleman/Yagby.** In the snowy mountains.

Contact Alison: [a.d.chau@gmail.com](mailto:a.d.chau@gmail.com)

### **Oct**

**4 General Meeting.** Holme Building, 7.30pm. Bullita and Spring creek by Rob Jones

**13 – 14 Jenolan.** Contact TBA.

**27 – 28 Wombeyan.** Contact TBA.

### **November**

**1 General Meeting.** Holme Building, 7.30pm. Nullabour Diving by Deborah (to be confirmed)

**3 – 4 Jenolan.** Contact TBA:

**24 – 25 Wombeyan.** Contact TBA:

### **December**

**1 – 9 Jenolan.** Our annual Week Long trip in the sun. Keep the place open in your diary. Contact TBA:

**26 – 26 Jan Ida Bay & June Florentine, Tasmania.** Contact Deborah: [birinxi@gmail.com](mailto:birinxi@gmail.com)

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