

# *SUSS BULL 51 (2)*

*JULY – SEPTEMBER 2012*



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**Cover Photo: Dogtooth Spar, Frenchmans, Jenolan.  
Renee Mapstone**

### Editorial

At Wombeyan recently SUSS found the connection between two of the tourist caves, Wollondilly and Kooringa. The story of this discovery is included in this Bull.

Also in a blast from the past, a story recorded many years ago by Don Matthews in the visitors book of the Jenolan Hut has been transcribed for posterity.

SUSS has an ongoing project to relocate the caves in the Southern Limestone of Jenolan and survey these. This project commenced over a year ago now and survey details of these caves will be made available in coming months.

Keep those stories, trip reports, articles and photos coming.

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### In the News

#### Spotted Horses in Cave Art Weren't Just a Figment, DNA Shows

By comparing the DNA of modern horses and those that lived during the Stone Age, scientists have determined that these drawings are a realistic depiction of an animal that coexisted with the artists.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/08/science/spotted-horses-in-cave-art-werent-just-a-figment-dna-shows.html>

#### New Portrait of the Cave Artist

Were Neanderthals cave artists?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/science/new-dating-puts-cave-art-in-the-age-of-neanderthals.html>

#### Building a Bat Cave to Battle a Killer

Scientists look to cure white nose syndrome in bats.

[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563\\_162-57540739/scientists-build-cave-to-help-save-bats/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563_162-57540739/scientists-build-cave-to-help-save-bats/)

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### Symposium on Jenolan Caves, 2013

In May 2013 there will be a Symposium on Jenolan Caves to review the current state of scientific knowledge about Jenolan Caves and its Karst. This will be held in Caves House. This event is co-hosted by the ASF. SUSS has been invited to nominate a few full time students who would be interested in and benefit from attendance at the symposium.

If you are interested please express your interest to [suss-enquiry@caves.org.au](mailto:suss-enquiry@caves.org.au)

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## HISTO DAN

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BY DON MATTHEWS (TRANSCRIBED BY THOMAS WILSON)

This gem was unearthed in the logbook of the Jenolan Cottage. It appears here for the first time in print for your perusal.

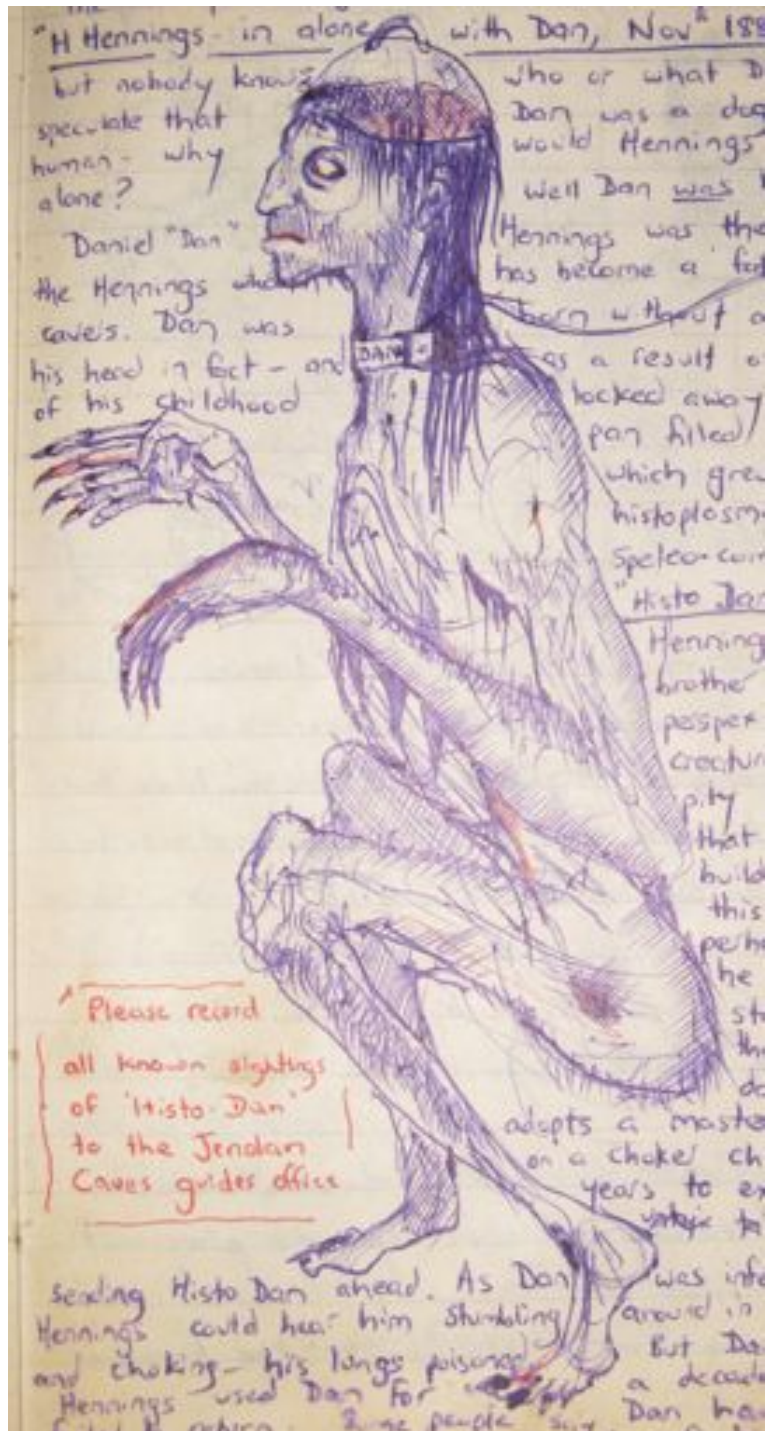
**Participants:** (In order of arrival) Ian Cooper, David Jackson, Phil Maynard, James Reid, Rondi Davies, Matt Calahan, Tom Begic, Mike lake, Jill Rowling, Michael Whyte, Tim Matthews, Don Matthews, Andrew Matthews, Eric Tse, Patti Fu, Justine Lions, Kevin Leong, Chris Fegan, Ed Gerstner

### The Story of Dan

For years...decades...since 1888 in fact...the curious inscription of the entrance to Hennings Cave™ has fired the imaginations of visitors to this cave: this cave that Prince Haakon of Norway once described as “the semi precious jewel of the north”. The inscription – “H Hennings – in alone with Dan, Nov 1888” – makes mention of Dan, but nobody knows who or what Dan was. Some visitors speculate that Dan was a dog – after all, if Dan was human, why would Hennings record that he was in alone? Well, Dan was human – and this is his story.

Daniel “Dan” Hennings was the half-brother of Hennings – the Hennings who has become a father figure to so many cavers. Dan was born without a brain – without the top of his head in fact – and as a result of his spending a large part of his childhood locked away underground the brain pan filled with guano, on top of which grew a thin layer of histoplasmosis fungus. Hence his speleo-community sobriquet “Histo-Dan – the half brother man”. Hennings became Dan’s “half brother” when he fashioned a perspex dome for the unfortunate creature’s head – whether it was pity or a cruel sense of irony that motivated Hennings to build the helmet. Dan saw this as an act of kindness – perhaps the only act of kindness he had ever received – and started following Hennings in the same way that a stray dog finds and adopts as master. Hennings kept Dan on a choker chain and used him for years to explore dangerous leads – taking off the chain and sending Histo-Dan ahead. As Dan was infected with chronic histoplasmosis Hennings could hear him stumbling around in the darkness, coughing and choking, his lungs poisoned. But Dan always returned to Hennings. Hennings used Dan for a decade – until the day Dan failed to return. Some people say Dan haunts the caves of Jenolan – a coughing, clawing wretched ghost – looking for his master.

*Some say Dan is still alive.*



**Histo Dan. Drawing by Don Mathews**



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# MUAHAHAHAHA AND OTHER DELIGHTFUL DITTIES FROM THE JULY JENOLAN WEEKLONG

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BY RENEE MAPSTONE, ALISON CHAU AND THOMAS WILSON

**Participants:** (in order of appearance): Renee Mapstone, Rowena Larkins, Thomas Wilson, Alison Chau, Ian Cooper, Blake McCarthy, Tony Le, Denis Stojanovic, Thomas Cunningham (aka TJ), Jess Swart

## *From the mouth of Renee:*

The much-anticipated holidays had arrived, and what better way to celebrate than crawling into dark, damp holes for a week? It was my third time caving, and I was ready to show off my self-perceived caving aptitude by battling through five consecutive days of it.

## **Saturday – Frenchmans Fever**

On Saturday morning we who had made it up on Friday evening (Renee, Alison, Thomas and Rowena) threw on our clean<sup>1</sup> gear, and made our way down the hill to Frenchmans. The entrance marked my first ever abseil in a cave, thereby earning itself the much sought-after title of “coolest cave entrance undertaken by Renee thus far”. The cave itself offered some interesting pretties for a Renee in full-fledged photo-mode, inspection sites for a Rowena in potential-extension-detective mode, and some great holes for the inquisitive Alison and Thomas.

The exit from the cave also marked a fresh experience: my first time climbing a free-hanging ladder. Having watched the way Thomas had sidled up with ease, I approached it with confidence. It was short-lived however, as my lack of upper body strength became more apparent with every step. Nevertheless I wasn’t the only one who struggled with the ladder: rolling it up afterwards was a veritable battle. Between the two trip supervisors Rowena and Thomas, the ladder was turned into a mess of wire and metal tubing, with exclamations of “Im sure youre meant to roll it this way” and “was it hold and twist or tie up with tape or roll or?” Eventually we managed to shove it into a cave pack. When Coops arrived on Monday morning, the sheepish confessions of our deficiencies in ladder management were met with a brisk lesson in How to Store a Ladder, and all was well again.

It was on that evening that we were also treated to the first of many results of Alison’s developing fire-making skills, a delightful prospect considering the chill of the evenings.

## **Sunday – Mammoth**

On Sunday morning, our party gained an additional member, Tony Le. After replacing Tony’s gargantuan homemade headlamp with a trusty Apex, we made our way to Mammoth Cave. Thomas, in his quest to introduce me to as many new cave-things as possible, made me unlock it. ‘Twas a feat more difficult than anticipated.

The trip was largely punctuated by Thomas and Alison’s valiant attempts to capture a committee photo of me, a venture that only proved that my career in modelling did not have a blossoming future. Nevertheless, any caving that took place between photo shoots was fabulous, and I thoroughly enjoyed the trip to the beautiful Ice Pick Lake.

The most exciting part of the trip for me was the squeeze through the aptly named Hellhole. Tony and I, having never done it, were given strict instructions to go through head first on our backs. We obliged. It was a fun (and simultaneously terrifying) experience, though my muddy hair admittedly rendered me a little envious of Rowena’s tactical head-scarf afterwards.

## **Monday – Serpentine**

The following day we set out for Serpentine, a cave which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Thomas had joined Rowena and Coops in the Southern Limestone<sup>2</sup>, whilst Denis and Blake, who had arrived that morning, joined Team Underground. We snaked through the passages, and had lots of fun chimneying up the phreatic walls, until we reached the “180° Squeeze”. Much disdain had been expressed for the squeeze that morning, and I was excited to try it for myself. Blake, after a heroic attempt to bend his body in an unfeasible way, decided that he would wait for us at the mouth of Mammoth instead.

Shaken from having lost a man, we pressed on, and were soon confronted by a perilous climb. Denis climbed up it



*Renee’s Feet, Hell Hole.*

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<sup>1</sup>for the first and last time that week

<sup>2</sup>Thomas’ absence was not a factor in making the trip any more enjoyable, though his rendition of Carly Rae Jepsens “Call Me Maybe”, the soundtrack of the previous days, was certainly not missed.

and secured a tape first, but it was only after I had attempted the climb that I realised that he had done so with the assistance of some kind of black magic. It was a prolonged process, but eventually everyone reached the top, and there was much rejoicing.

We arrived at Mammoth an hour or two after we had expected, and somewhat to our surprise, Blake sat diligently at the entrance. After a quick muesli bar refill, we went into the cave. I was feeling a bit too exhausted to bother inflating my cave-ego by this point. Whilst Denis and Blake pressed on to Lower River, Alison agreed to take Tony and me back to the hut, where she again showed off her fire-making skills.

### **Tuesday – Wandering through Wiburds**

Getting out of bed on Tuesday morning was a collective challenge, and our trip through Wiburds was conducted at a glacial pace. We rolled through what Bill Lamb refers to as the “Mission Impossible Roll Squeeze” (with appropriate musical accompaniment), and after some geographical embarrassment, eventually arrived at our destination: Neddy’s Knock, and a beautiful trail of aragonite crystal poking from the wall. I was completely awestruck. Cameras materialised, and Alison quickly volunteered to model alongside it. We carefully climbed up through a little hole into an ostentatiously decorated chamber. We lay around for a while, basking in the beauty of the aragonite, before eventually deciding it was time to haul ourselves back to the hut.

### **Wednesday – Kanangra Walls and a Tyrolean attempt**

Waking up the following morning was also accompanied by much grumbling, and it quickly became apparent that no caving would be taking place. It was instead decided that Thomas, Alison and I would visit Kanangra Walls. Thomas decided to show us the start of Kalang Canyon, so we climbed down alongside the waterfall. At the top of the first abseil, we stopped for a quick mandarin-eating break, before heading back to the car.

Upon returning to the hut, Thomas decided that rigging up a Tyrolean traverse between two trees was an excellent idea, and immediately proceeded to do so. Alison and Thomas assured me that such a device was usually used in precarious situations. Apparently the nefarious colony of stinging nettles occupying the hill didn’t count.

It was at this point that I abandoned the trip and returned to civilisation, leaving the others behind to continue in their adventures.

***Here Alison and Thomas pick up the narrative, and add a few more details to the previous days accounts to further enliven the tale:***

Firstly, though “Call me Maybe” was certainly one track in the trip’s album, the other, more insidious and infectious was an evil laugh (muahahahaha) sung to the tune of “La Cucaracha”. An illustration of the competing reactions of jubilation and bemused tolerance following the introduction of this tune to the trip is to be seen in the accompanying photographs.

Secondly, one of the features of the evening’s entertainment, apart from a display of Alison’s incendiary propensities, was “Soups with Coops”, a delightful segment of dinner during which Coops would produce the most delectable of soups from nothing more than a packet mix and Jenolan’s bounteous supply of water. The resulting soups would then be most generously distributed to those inclined to sample the gourmet offerings of Coops’s Kitchen.

Thirdly, throughout the trip Rowena and Coops had been making regular trips through the Southern Limestone in order to complete a surface survey of the area. On Thomas’s one venture into the area, he was privileged to have witnessed the unveiling of the Survey Super Highway ...<sup>3</sup>

### **Rowena and Coops, living the dream of the Southern Limestone**

While the younger members were swanning around the soft northern valley, Rowena and Coops spent the week putting in the hard yards. They slogged through the dense undergrowth of the Southern Limestone up the middle of the valley, surveying to a high accuracy with the club’s forestry compass. The result is a complete survey stretching from the car park at the maintenance sheds up the valley as far as Goat’s Head Cave, a total



<sup>3</sup>Editor – I am not sure if clearing the existing track of a few nettles counts as making a Super Highway, but we can allow some poetic license

distance of over 2.2Km. A number of cave entrances along the valley were also tied into the survey. This means that the caves will be reliably relocatable in the future – and finding an entrance in a valley as thickly vegetated as the Southern Limestone can be harder than some of our new members might realise, particularly with 333 tagged entrances at Jenolan (and counting).

Only a little work remains to be done to complete the survey, including connecting the current end of the survey in the car park to the State Survey Marker at the Binoomea Cut. The presence of large numbers of cars makes the use of a compass to complete the job challenging. With the survey in place, there has never been a better time for exploration work in the Southern Limestone – there's still plenty to discover, and that underground river in Barralong Cave has to be coming from somewhere. For those without cave-diving training, there's only one way to find it.

During the week's surveying Rowena and Coops also took some time to pass along some of their experience and knowledge to the younger members, which is crucial for the club's ongoing existence. As Coops has been in the club longer than some current members have been alive, there was plenty to share. On the Monday, Thomas joined the crew for surveying, and was rewarded with a thorough grounding in the use of the forestry compass (for the uninitiated, this is a highly accurate compass on a tripod which measures horizontal angles to a twelfth of a degree, and vertically to a third of a degree).

#### **Thursday – On a tour of the Southern Limestone**

On the Thursday, Rowena and Coops took this knowledge-sharing a bit further, leading Blake, Alison and Thomas on an extended walk up the valley (in the rain). The first order of the day was relocating the long-lost Vic's Pot, J276. After some detective work, Rowena had found a photo apparently taken from the entrance <sup>4</sup>, which allowed us to estimate how far above the valley floor it was. This proved an effective technique, but didn't solve the mystery conclusively. Eventually we fanned out over the hillside high above the maintenance sheds and spotted the entrance and tag. It's obvious when you know where to look! The hole appeared quite deep, and we made a note to request a permit for the next trip. (The cave has since been surveyed by Rowena and Alison.)

Our day wasn't over yet, though, and we headed up the valley to shine our lights down Bottomless Pit. (Pro tip: there is actually a bottom, it's just a long way down. When gear for the weeklong was being arranged, the list had the slightly enigmatic entry "Bottomless Pit - long ropes". In the end, though, they weren't used as we ran out of time.) We admired SSS's persistence at Heffalump trap, an ongoing exploration project of theirs which has been active at least since the 1970s.

Further up the valley, there was a substantial flow exiting Staraj Spring – and water was definitely a feature of the day. Those with gumboots were often glad of them as splashing up the stream frequently proved the most efficient way of proceeding. The rain was never very heavy, but it was unrelenting, and the Apex headlamps, which are supposed to be waterproof to 1 metre, proved that they weren't, at least not reliably so. They did recover after a few days of drying out, though. The problem seems to be most pronounced with the orange headlamps, and this should be considered when using club lights in particularly wet caves. We made it all the way up the valley to the entrance of Paradox Cave, looking at a number of caves along the way. Caves such as Bloodsucker, Goat's Head and Staraj Spring are a reminder of all the work that SUSS has put into exploring the valley. The river can't be that far away, right?

–Editor: to date in the Southern Limestone about 50 cave tags have been relocated and GPS coordinates recorded prior to tying these in to the accurate forestry compass survey. SUSS is working towards producing individual surveys of these caves.

#### **Friday – The mistaken Mistake and the discovery of Scrothole**

TJ had finally joined the trip after having been at some physics conference for the first half of the weeklong. Alison, fired up about developing her survey skills to the same degree as her ability to, well, fire things up, volunteered the group for a survey in the northern limestone. Coops suggested that they continue with the survey of Ward's Mistake, which is in Wiburds bluff. After collecting the survey gear and existing data from Coops, and committing his directions to the cave to memory, the merry band of three (Alison, TJ and Thomas) set off, enjoying the pleasant sunshine after the miserable wet of Thursday.

As they scaled the bluff, however, it became clear that their memories, the directions, or their interpretation of both, had



*Surveying a possible new cave? Photo by Thomas Cunningham*

<sup>4</sup>editor – the photo was care of John Bonwick who maintains the SSS cave entrance photo-survey book



become a muddled mess, exacerbated by their repeated insistence that Coops had definitely said to turn right, no – left. After a half hour of fruitless bush bashing and tag-searching, TJ exclaimed that he had found a cave! Well, a hole which might turn into a cave! Um, well, it probably doesn't go, but it's the first time I've discovered a new hole! With resignation mixed with amusement, Alison and Thomas had a look. It did not take long. The hole, lovingly referred to by TJ as 'a scrothole' was a little short of a 2m probe into the bluff. Still, they had the survey gear, time to kill, and diminishing prospects of finding Ward's Mistake. This survey may or may not make it into a future Bull.

And that, for all intents and purposes, was Friday.

### **Saturday – The Mistake, take 2**

Saturday saw a return to Wiburds Bluff, this time with a Rowena in tow, who was able to point out to the three young'uns the very obvious cave entrance which they would have found if they had even vaguely followed Coops's directions. Jess Swart also joined them for the trip, and was introduced to the dubious delights of first waiting for over an hour outside a cave entrance while TJ fuffed with setting up a ladder, and then descending and ascending a 50ft ladder. The cave was worth it, however, with some very pretty flowstone floors, a spectacular 'wedding cake' formation, and some cunningly hidden aragonite.

Once everyone had seen the pretties in this modestly-sized cave, Thomas betook himself and Jess to Wiburds while Rowena stayed back with the other two to finish off the survey and poke at some old leads, all of which required detrog. The cave, once the ladder pitch has been negotiated, consists basically of three long rooms set parallel to one another and accessed by holes in the thin walls separating them. The original map drawn up in the Blue Book showed question marks leading off to the east from the two rooms further from the entrance pitch and unknown cave beyond a 5m down-climb. Alison was keen to push these leads: the 5m down-climb turned out to be a 2m drop into a smallish room with a few impressively long straws, one lead up flowstone and through straws was choked with decoration, and the last quickly became an earthy upwards squeeze to a dead end. This being the first time either Alison or TJ had done a proper survey in a cave, everything took rather longer than usual, but Rowena was most patient with explaining how things needed to be done. After a quick snack, they emerged later than they had expected from the cave. Night, actual night, had fallen, and a chill wind was blowing. They hurried back along the valley and up the hill to find a concerned Thomas and Jess preparing to set off to discover if a rescue was required. Qualms eased, they all returned to the hut, though once the survey group had returned, Jess soon departed. And so began the Night of Four Trolls, during which TJ and Rowena got to know each other rather better ... by sharing a dance together. <sup>5</sup>

### **Sunday – Still closer encounters in Crackpot**

The last day, and despite their best (mediocre) efforts, Alison and Thomas were not feeling up to leaving the hut. Because of all that hardcore caving during the week, y'know? Instead, they revisited their respective S.B. Caves, before setting about the task of cleaning the gear. More than an hour later, with hands numbed from the water, Alison built up another fire, just in time for the return of Rowena and TJ, who had gone off to Crackpot together. It seemed that their cave-time had not been wasted, Rowena wryly mentioning that on his entry, TJ had caused her car windows to steam up <sup>6</sup>. But there was no time left for another dance. Another Jenolan weeklong had ended.



***Aragonite, Wards Mistake. Photo by Thomas Cunningham***



***TJ near the entrance to J279, Crackpot***

<sup>5</sup>Yes. We all came out from under our bridges that night.

<sup>6</sup>the maximum temp for that day was 4° C – editor



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## WOMBEGAN IN JULY: WHEN CAVES CONNECT

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BY ALISON CHAU

**Participants:** Alison Chau, Thomas Cunningham (TJ), Rowena Larkins, Philip Maynard, Alan Pryke, Jazmond Richardson, Jack Wachsmann, Tina Willmore

### **Saturday 28 July: Far from the parade of nations – Bacon-bent –Koorindilly – Sitting waaaaay back**

Pre-trip mental state: Forecasts for pleasant wintry weather? Good. Avoidance of the Olympic Opening Ceremony? Better. But with only three caves on the permit, the expectations for an exciting couple of days away were not high for some. One Thomas Wilson abandoned the trip at the eleventh hour for a weekend working as a dive minion at Jenolan. But Jack was intent on making the most of the trip, this being his last to Wombegon before a self-imposed exile to the other side of the world.

Ms Chau, Mr Cunningham and the newly-elevated Lt. Wachsmann arrived at the campsite first on Friday evening, having stopped by the Mittagong RSL, nominally for dinner, but actually for dessert: apple crumble, to be exact. With their tents having been set up and entered, sleep was attempted, and strange noises in the night suggested that the others had made it up in one piece. A breezy night's sleep later, and the strident sounds of Mr Pryke and Dr Maynard woke the bleary-eyed youngsters. Ms Larkins, Ms Willmore and Mr Richardson joined the mob, the last evoking and then satiating bacon cravings with a generous offering of tidbits to the plebs. While these three busied about dealing with the ritual of breakfast, the others amused themselves by chasing the sun in their chairs.

Phil, Tina and Jazmond disappeared off to Basin for the day, while Alan led Rowena, Jack, TJ and Alison to Koorinda for survey and exploration. There was a short reprise of the Jenolan “La Cucaracha”, courtesy of the incorrigible Alison. After a brief eye-widening tour of this modest tourist cave, the team set to work, tying the survey in with a surface point and checking Alan's data using a recalibrated Disto X. All was in order, and despite the large amount of interference with the metal ladders in the entrance, Alan was able to determine that a potential lead in Koorinda was very close to the tourist exit of Wollondilly. Alan and Alison had a poke around the Wollondilly exit, and found a considerable hole off the path which was heading well in the right direction.

Back in Koorinda, the team headed off to the look at Alan's lead. Jack led the way, and made it to a slanting rift, but was stopped by a tight chest-crusher. “The Alison” was deployed, and she was able to make it through and, having passed another squeeze, she found daylight and a vaguely familiar sight – the back stairs of Wollondilly. After relaying the good news, TJ and Jack took it in turns to force their way into becoming the Next One Through – that title eventually went to TJ. And the connection between the caves was duly christened Koorindilly. Thankfully Koorinda is not so large a cave as to make a retreat to its neighbour a frustrating exercise. Thus Alan and Rowena joined Alison in Wollondilly to survey back to a known point in Koorinda. After this had been completed, the team made a good stab at completing the rest of the survey, and finished the day off by closing the loop.

The start that morning had been quite late – around 11am – as Alan, in his usual Ideas Man fashion, had convinced Jazmond, Jack, TJ and Alison to gather a stockpile of timber for the evening's campfire. Everyone was thus able to return to the prospect of a blazing fire. The survey team was the first to arrive back at camp, and before long smoke was getting in everyone's eyes. It was a huge fire, so we all had to sit waaaaay back. Then passed an uneventful evening, broken up by Alan's attempts to recast TJ in a swarthier role, advising him on the cut of his beard, the positioning of his beanie, and the depth of his voice. The seemingly excessive amount of firewood that had been collected that morning proved to be sufficient, with three large logs devoured in two hours, and the rest going up in a blaze. Jazmond was the first to retire, citing exhaustion from long hours at work. Phil was next, and gradually the rest dragged themselves away from the warmth of the fire, to the disappointingly chilly confines of their sleeping bags.

### **Sunday 29 July: Biscuit and the threat of Beak – Thomas ‘the Faff’ Cunningham – A Button Undone – With the Pest in attendance**

Morning once more. The fire was quickly rebuilt by the enterprising Mr Pryke, but smaller than the previous night, so he had to sitrealclose. A couple of hours passed for him and Dr Maynard in the company of a throng of birds, including a lyre bird on the playing fields. With the careful placement of a biscuit near the tents of the youngsters, a flock of currawongs, magpies and minahs swooped these flimsy structures and disturbed their occupants. Groans issued from the tents, heads popped out in puzzlement, but the tactic was less than successful, as some of the targeted sleeping bags were not vacated for another hour.

As breakfast was being consumed, dark clouds started rolling in. TJ, with characteristic forethought, began dismantling his tent, declaiming the tendency of Wombegon to bring down rain on Sundays. And with equally characteristic faff, he finished this project, while Jack and Alison lounged around the fire, having already successfully stuffed the car with their belongings.

Jazmond returned home that morning, and Phil betook himself to Kooringa to look for a connection with Fig Tree and found a breeze blowing near the likely locations. The rest headed off to 128 to show Tina the delights of this cave, and to push some leads near the Button Room.

The group took themselves through the Vortex, past Market Garden, and to the furthest extent of the cave, where a few leads were inspected, but given over to another day. Another lead through a detrog section in the lavishly decorated Button Room was found by Alison not to go anywhere. But everyone was suitably impressed with the quality of the decoration in the cave, not even excluding the grey flowstone. Alison was disappointed to see the noticeably dirty stalagmites and flowstone in the bottom of Helicseythe Chamber flowstone which had been pristine in August 2011 on an Alan photo trip. And all were disappointed when it was time to turn back. But Phil was waiting, and Alan didn't want his lift home leaving without him. Thankfully Dr Maynard was still there, and so Alan was happy, surely the goal of all trips when the Pest is in attendance.

A traditional stop at the Indian place in Mittagong rounded off the trip. When we saw the tea candles lit underneath some of the dishes, we discovered first-hand the truth behind Alan's pronouncement: Indians really do make small fires. While some of the party downed their mango lassis with vim, others were left thinking nostalgically of the RSL's apple crumble. But, as is so often the case, a dessert which has been put aside fails to eventuate after the clearing of the main plates. Or in the plainer word: Life's short. Dessert first.

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## ABERCROMBIE CAVES 4-5 AUGUST 2012 – A DIPLOMATIC MISSION

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BY DENIS STOJANOVIC, GENT.

### Participants:

#### SUSSlings:

Blake Cherton and Rhonda Lum, Thomas Cunningham, Tony Lee, Denis Stojanovic, Flora Lin, Ricky Harjanto

#### MSS:

Jim Crockett, Rod Smith, Others from MSS whose names I have shamefully forgotten (along with their subterranean brood)

Abercrombie Caves lie some 300km west of Sydney just beyond the inconsequential town of Trunkey Creek. The karst is not of great extent and though there are a number of caves and features, the majority are largely undeveloped. With Jenolan and Wombeyan to be found in between it is perhaps understandable why SUSS has not been seen there in some time. A cursory search through the Bulls suggests that the last trip may have been in September 2003 (Bull. 43-1 'Permit pending') and this is certainly the first Abercrombie article in a long while. As a result of this neglect Abercrombie has been for many of the younger SUSSlings a riddle, wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma left unsolved by a lack of enthusiasm to drive for four hours to assess an unknown quantity. Our esteemed secretary, intrigued by this air of obscurity and brimming with initiative, sought a permit at a NSW Speleo meeting and was fortuitously introduced to Jim and Rod of the Metropolitan Speleological Society (MSS). Abercrombie is apparently their patch and a joint trip was proposed. As the date drew ever closer, no SUSS trip supervisor was to be found and it looked as if Abercrombie would remain a mystery. Happily it was arranged that a small but eager detachment of SUSSlings would put themselves in the enlightened hands of MSS.

An advanced SUSS delegation consisting of Cunnning Thomasham, Tony, and Ricky headed for Abercrombie with the MSS cohort on the Friday night. The rest of us spent the evening at the races (Greyhounds) attempting to make enough money to cover the fuel for the next day. Successful, we arrived at Abercrombie Caves Reserve on Saturday morning to find that it was by no means lacking in facilities. There are toilets, showers (hot water!) and the option of camping or cabins. Such were our profits on the dogs that we availed ourselves of the luxury of a cabin for the Saturday night. I have seen the future of social mobility and it rides on the back of high-visibility rabbit mounted on a rail.

### Sat 4 August: Grove Cave, The Archway, Bushranger Cave, King Solomons Temple, The Belfry

With initial introductions and negotiations complete and a SUSS-MSS alliance formed, we sought to affirm our ties with a quick jaunt of Grove Cave (a lights-out tourist cave) which sits in the detached bluff at the southern entrance of the Archway. Its virtues are modest but nonetheless charming with pleasing bits of decoration in places. Once we had inspected the antique wiring and poked around a bit in some suspiciously un-trogged tunnels, we headed out and aimed for Bushranger Cave. To get there we had to make our way through the main attraction.

Abercrombie suffers from a reputation as being somewhat of a speleological backwater. Preliminary comments from some members who had graced Abercrombie with their presence some time ago were along the lines of 'The arch is ok. Its worth seeing but I wouldn't go again'. Arriving with our expectations set to cautious, we were perhaps unprepared for the spectacular Archway. This poor cousin of Jenolan compensates for its small karst area by boasting 'the largest natural bridge in limestone in the Southern Hemisphere'. I contend that the Archway, with its gaping vastness, sparkling river, and almost acrobatic formations, certainly trumps the Jenolan Grand Arch clogged with tourists and its pathetic leaky-tap waterfall (I will conveniently ignore Blue Lake for the sake of hyperbole). With huge, gaping entrances on either side of the bluff, the penetration of light deep into the arch has allowed the development of several quirky types of formation.

Photosynthetic cyanobacteria and algae have not only painted the walls and ceiling pink and green but also influence the growth of speleothems resulting in enormous 'cray backs' and lightning bolt-like stalactites reaching for the light. There is also a swingin 1880s dance floor to cater for those inclined to a spontaneous subterranean cray back quadrille under the gaze of Terpsichore. We had no time for such decadent shenanigans however. We were on the trail of outlaws...

Bushranger Cave is so named through association with the notorious Ribbon Gang of the 1830s who supposedly used the caves to hide from their pursuers. It is one of the more adventurous tourist caves and though we



*A response to the bushranger problem? Photo by Denis Stojanovic*



made use of some the electrics to conserve our batteries there was much to do off the beaten track. It wasn't long before some of us were enticed to go down the 'dig'. Jim vaguely directed me towards two holes in the floor, one of them being the entrance to the dig. After flinging myself eagerly head first into a dead-end alcove, it became painfully clear which one it was. Proceeding with more caution but with equal enthusiasm we wriggled through a short series of constrictions and chambers ultimately leading to a very tight, very dusty, flattening bedding plane which seemed to go on indefinitely. Though I started with a couple of hardy companions their enthusiasm seemed to wane faster than mine and I was left alone to assess the state of the 'dig'. Passing a long series of abandoned buckets, sleds, and various utensils of diggers that had gone before, I found my own enthusiasm deteriorated rapidly with increasing dustiness and tightness of the passage. It was eventually overcome by a desire to spare my lungs from pneumoconiosis. After my retreat, we continued through several pretty chambers but met with no bushrangers. So with outlaws unapprehended, but our lives and money intact, we exited and headed for the hills.

By now it was the far side of second breakfast and while some started on lunch (or as they phrased it: 'searched for surface features'), others tackled A13/14 'Shaft Cave' (Flora, Jim, Denis, Thomas, Tony). This party dropped down alternately through the twin entrances and through the short entrance series that manipulated our spines in a number of uncomfortable ways.

At the bottom, we made acquaintance with a lonesome bat and began a search for a potential way on through rock pile and formation chokes. While there was some airflow we weren't inclined to dig amongst the grumbling boulders (and by now some grumbling stomachs). There is potential for a way on in a couple of places but whatever the way it will be unpleasant. We headed back to camp and cabin for lunch proper.

With stomachs silenced, Jim guided the SUSSlings through the lofty offshoots of the Archway which included the Belfry and King Solomon's Temple resplendent in decoration and terrifying windows down into the void over the river below. It occurred to some of us that it could be fruitful to explore the passages at river level as it can be seen to undercut in places and continue off into rifts but having no boat it would have been an unpleasant task. In future trips perhaps it will be worth launching a S.S. SUSS.

#### **Sun 5 August: Stable Cave**

On Sunday morning the well-rested, well-fed, and well-warmed cabin contingent re-joined the tired, hungry, and cold camp and headed for Stable Cave through its lower entrance in Stable Arch. This is where the bushrangers are said to have hidden their horses, hence the name 'Arch' The plan was to do a through-trip from this lower entrance to emerge at the high entrance near the path leading out of the Archway, dropping down into the lower chamber of the cave and negotiating a ladder pitch on the way. This plan was executed exactly. Unfortunately, the disadvantage of everything going to plan is that it makes for a less interesting story so after capturing several highwayman, outwitting some goblins and slaying a dragon, we barrelled along the main passage. Someone noticed that the survey showed a '?' in a direction which threatened to connect to the main chamber. Those that thought that the way so far had been too comfortable opted for this more adventurous, flattener route while the more genteel continued along the perfectly serviceable walk through passage. This main party reached the large main chamber to be greeted by the sound of an anguished chorus confirming the connection.

As soon as we re-grouped, we dispersed to gauge the not insignificantly proportioned room. Each in their own way negotiated the muddy slopes that were the way on. Some attempted the 'diretissima' with variable success, some squeezed up through the rock pile, and one of us confusingly managed to have to descend to those above. . . About mid-way, through an unprepossessing hole in the boulder pile, someone found the way to the ladder pitch. Not all were convinced that it was necessary to do this and several opted out. Those who went on were rewarded with muddy overalls and the satisfaction that they had done some proper caving after the warmly lit luxury of the tourist caves. With this cave 'done', we all too soon had to bid farewell to our MSS hosts who had kindly adopted us for the weekend. As an exercise in maintaining friendly inter-club relations we may declare it a success.

There is work to do at Abercrombie and though its modest prospects may be overshadowed by the likes of Wombeyan and Jenolan it certainly does not deserve to be neglected. We thank Jim Crockett and Rod Smith for coordinating the trip and MSS for taking us aboard. I look forward to cooperating with them in future.



**One of the more delicious 'cray back' formations: The 'Roast Chicken'. Photo by Denis Stojanovic**



**The Holden 'Pit' Crew Photo by Denis Stojanovic**

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## J56 AND J202: CAVES IN A STREAM SINK

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BY IAN COOPER AND MARK STARAJ

Before Mark Staraj's sudden passing he was working on the exploration history of Wiburds Lake Cave and associated caves. Much of history was completed including a group of notes and historical abstracts on J56 and J202 which form the core of this article.

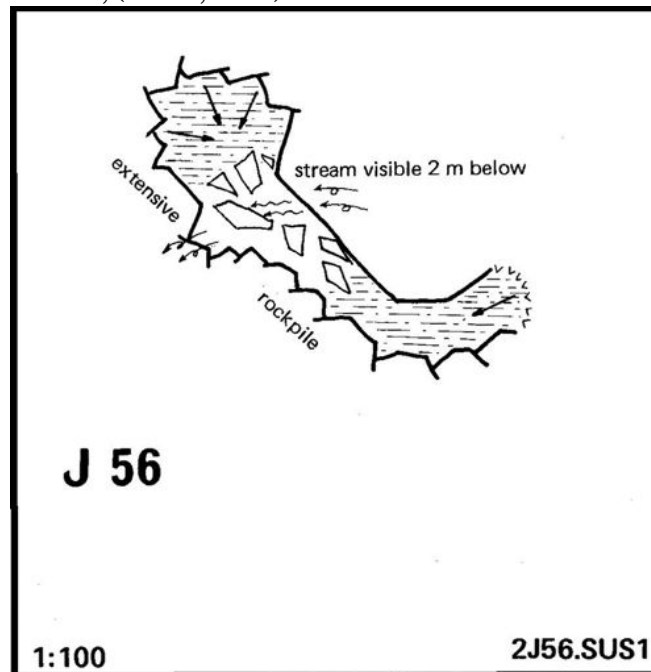
### J56

J56 is a small cave on the river flat at the base of Wiburds Bluff adjacent to a significant intermittent sink in the Jenolan River. A potted history of J56 exploration follows.

J56 is a quite early tag number that would have been placed by either SSS or SUSS shortly after the (re)discovery of Wiburds in 1963. J56 is an obvious hole that would have been found early on.

Welch (1975) *"J56 was then surveyed. . . . A narrow entrance leads to a small chamber which is developed in rockfall. By crawling into this rockpile a stream could be seen 2m below flowing . . . into the hillside . . . subsequent observations suggest that this stream is next seen in J58 and ultimately ends up in WLC."*

This was as far as things had progressed at the time of the Blue Book in 1976 with the survey above used to produce the first J56 map as reproduced below, (Welch, 1976).



Next was an enthusiastic Mike Lake in 1979. *"An earth bank in J56 was dug out to gain entry to a rockfall chamber about 6 across. The stream passage that leads to Wiburd's Lake is at the bottom of the chamber. 1 medium sized rock precludes access."* (Lake 1979). This is as far as the cave has progressed to today.

During a wet Jenolan Christmas trip the opportunity to use fluorescein presented itself and it was thought that the connection to Wiburds would be simply proved by a stream and 500g of fluorescein as explained below.

*"The presence of streams in Wiburds and J56 prompted thoughts of doing a simple dye tracing experiment to prove a hydrological connection between J56 and Wiburds as had been long speculated. After obtaining permission from the Karst Manager, E. Holland and a member of the Jenolan Scientific advisory committee, Dr. J. James the dye trace was performed on Wednesday, 13/12/95."*

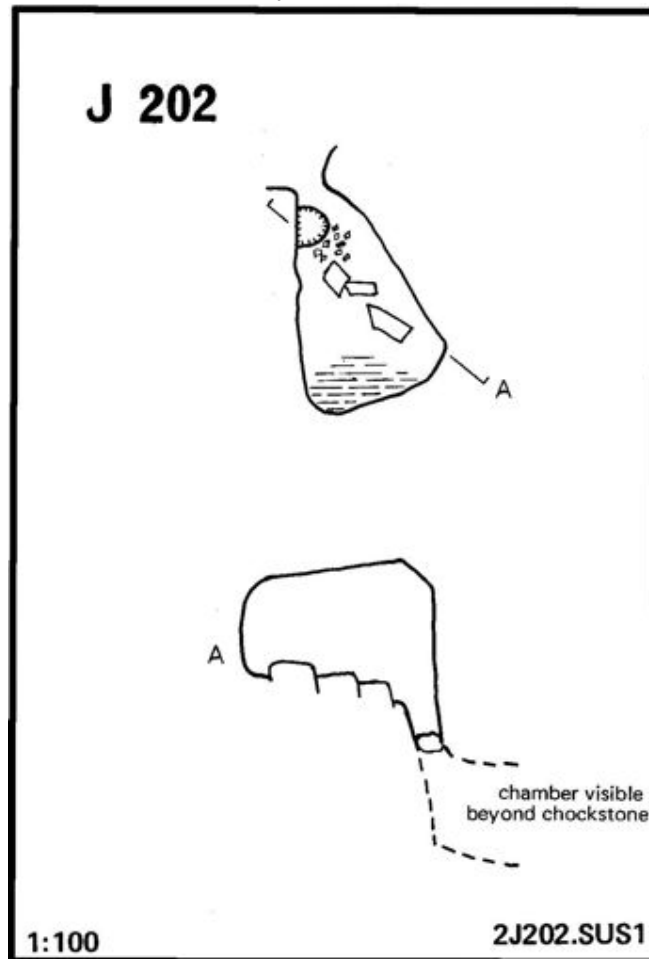
*It was considered that the stream in the base of J56 would be the same as one of the streams entering Yawning Gulches or possibly the stream flowing into Lake Chamber. The physical distance between these areas and J56 is approximately 200m and both sites are 10m lower than the input site in J56. The streams flowing in River Section are considered to be too far north to connect to J56 and for this connection to occur requires the J56 stream to cross the stream flowing from J58 to Lake Chamber.*

*... It is concluded that the J56 stream does not connect to the observed streams in Lake Chamber or Yawning Gulches. Instead it is postulated that the J56 stream flows at a lower level than exposed in Wiburds Lake Cave."* (Cooper and Staraj 1996)

### J202 Tor Hole

J202 is a hole at the base of Wiburds Bluff about 10m west of J56. As part of the Blue Book project the first map of J202 was produced.

(Welch 1975) *"After surveying J56 we commenced the survey of J202 but we decided not to go ahead when we noticed that a hole in the floor seemed to open out into a fairly large chamber below. Some time was spent trying to enlarge the hole, but without success – one rock blocks the way."*



First published map of J202 (Welch 1976)

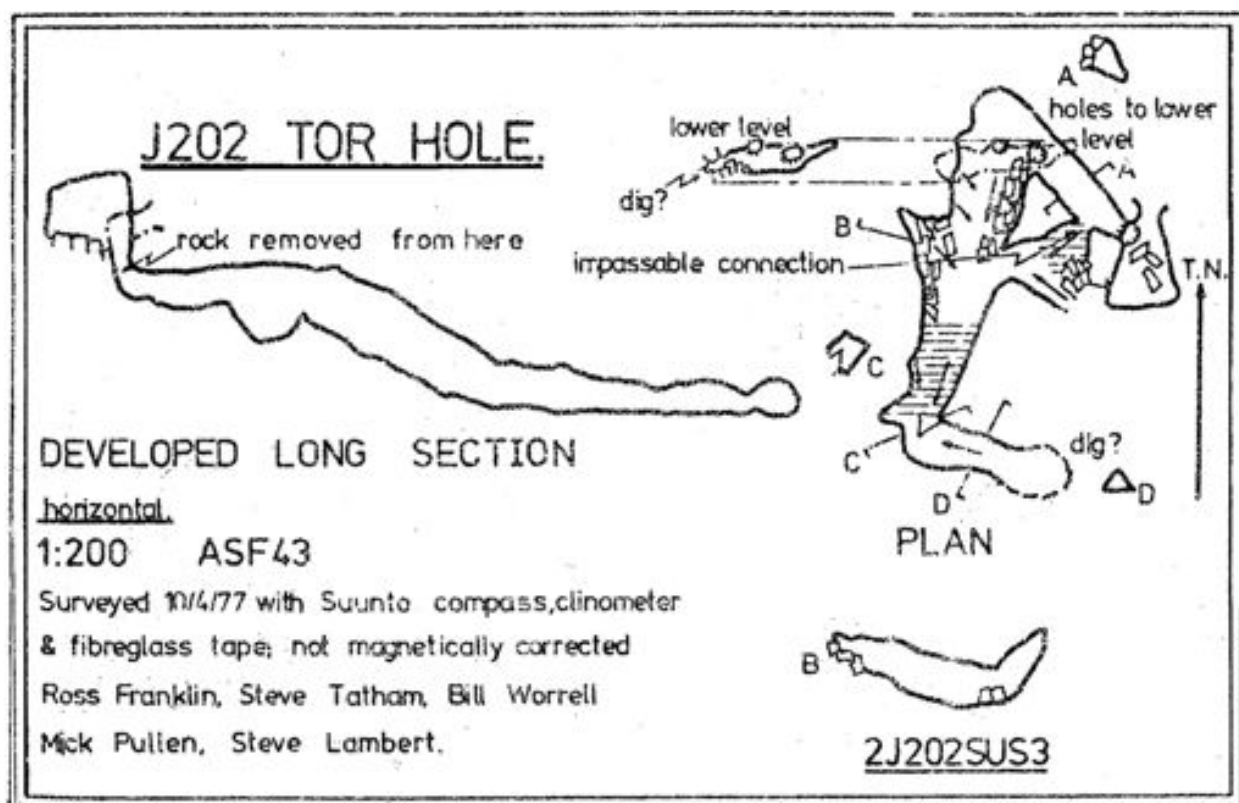
Ross Franklin was the next to report on J202, in particular the breakthrough at the base of the entrance chamber, (Franklin 1977).

*"Sundays mission was twofold; to proceed to Wiburds Bluff area and remove (if possible) a large rock blocking the way on into J202 and survey the cave discovered ..."*

*J202 was located without much difficulty. The known extent of the cave to this time was only 2 metres as a large rock firmly barred the way on. Although the rock would pivot in the channel it was in, it proved to be more difficult than a Chinese puzzle to shift. Finally after throwing Bill (Worrell) at the boulder head first with a G-pick and holding his legs so he didn't have a 'head on', we were able to manoeuvre the now much smaller rock out of the channel with the use of a tape firmly tied around it; success!*

*Then the race was on. All five of us were in like a shot and following every possible lead off the small cavern behind the rock. After 5 minutes we had to agree that things weren't looking promising in our quest for the '[Woolly Rhinoceros]' we thought we must find. We then set about pulling up the very floor beneath our feet (rockpile) but to no avail. A Grade 4 survey was then completed of the new cave ... which we decided to name Tor Hole."*





J202 Tor Hole, 1977. (Franklin 1977)

#### And now in 2012

See the new version of the cave map for J56 and J202. Importantly these maps attempt to emphasise that both caves are in a degraded doline at the base of Wiburds Bluff next to a stream sink in the Jenolan River. Both caves have drafting leads that head further into the bluff. The streamway in J56 flows past a rock jammed in the streamway at up to 1 l/s. Where this stream goes is not clear since the dye trace described above did not show a connection to Wiburds.

#### References

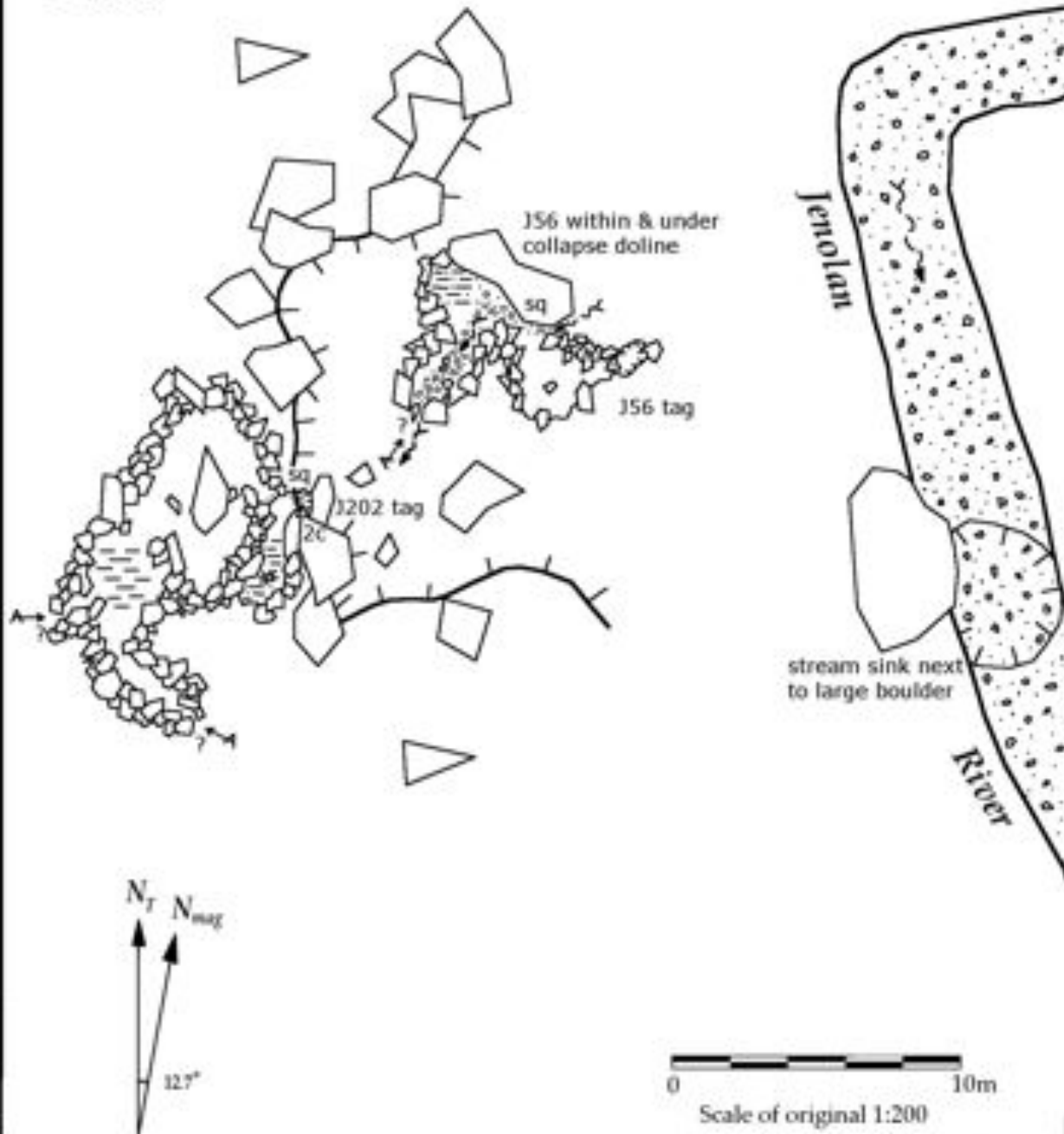
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# J56; J202 Tor Hole

Jenolan Caves, NSW



## PLAN



Surveyed by SUSS using Suunto-Oy compass and clinometer and fibreglass tape to ASF grade 54.  
J56 length 14m J202 length 22m  
I. Cooper draft, July 2012

2J56.SUS2 2J202.SUS3



## J56; J202 Tor Hole

Jenolan Caves, NSW

ELEVATION 240° - 060°

0 10m  
Scale of original 1:200



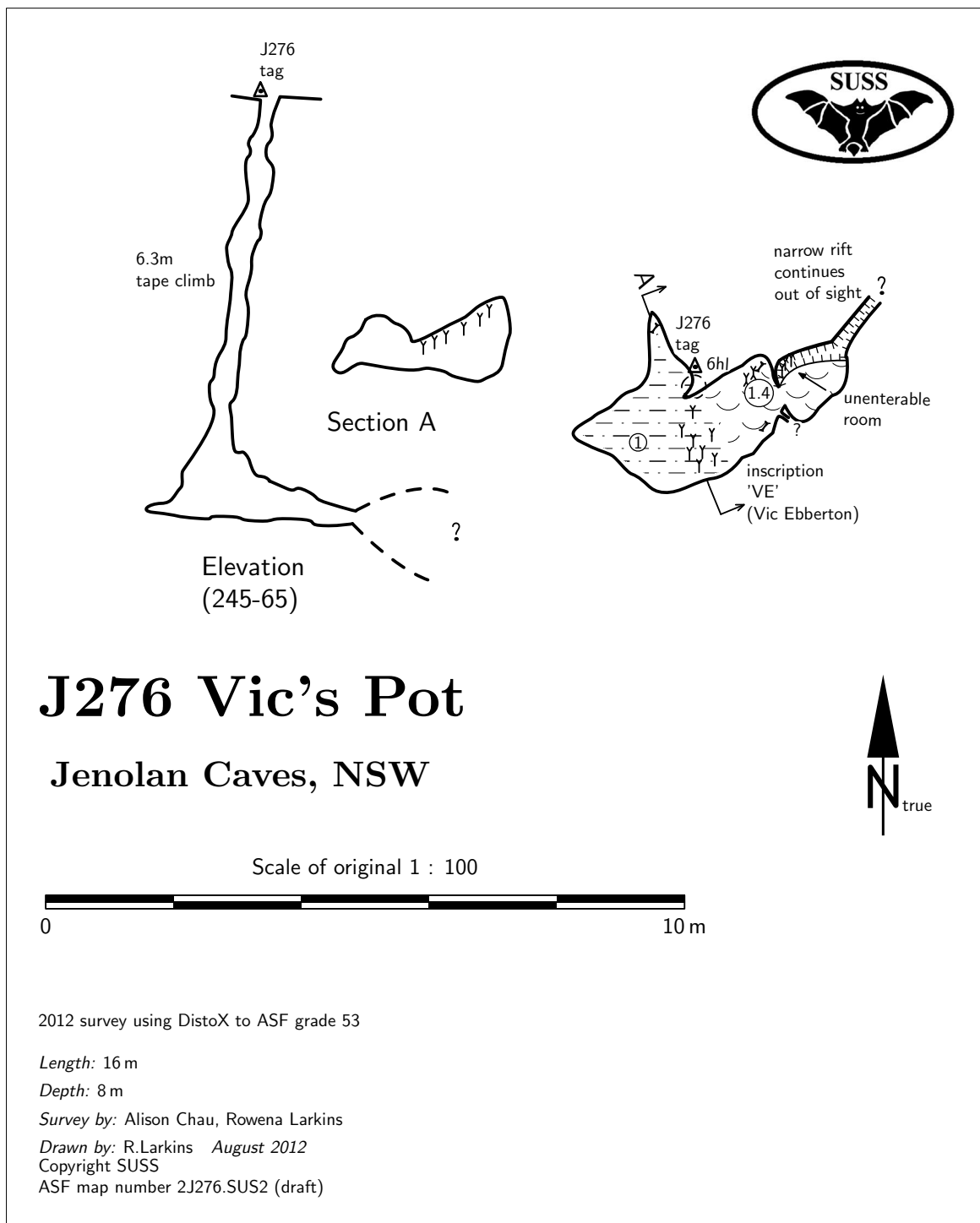
Surveyed by SUSS using Suunto Oy compass and clinometer and fibreglass tape to ASF grade 54. J56 length 14m J202 length 22m I. Cooper draft, July 2012 2/56, 52, 52 2/202, 54, 53



# VIC'S POT

BY ROWENA LARKINS

As part of the re-location of caves in the Southern Limestone of Jenolan, and surveying of these, SUSS has relocated Vic's Pot on the top of the southern breach. It was named after Vic Ebberton, a guide at Jenolan in the 1950's, whose initials **VE** are scratched into the chamber at the bottom of the tape climb. There is a breeze coming from a rift in the chamber, but the rift is only about 15cm wide, way too small for human access. It is, however, indicative of some significant cave under the southern breach ... but how to find this magnificent cavern ...



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## PHOTO GALLERY

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*Decoration, Split Rock Cave, Jenolan. Photo by Deborah Johnston*



*Basins, Junction Creek Cave, Wombeyan. Photo by Thomas Cunningham*

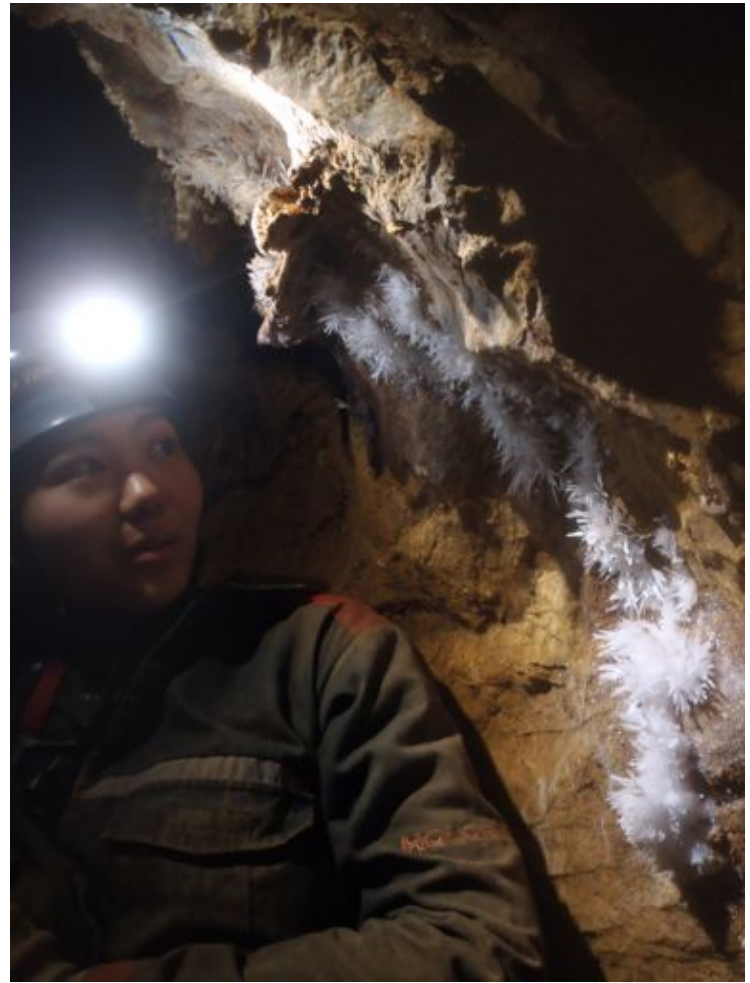




***Floor Decoration, Wards Mistake, Jenolan. Photo by Thomas Cunningham***



***Frog 45m below the surface, Crackpot, Jenolan. Photo by Thomas Cunningham***



***Alison Admiring Aragonite, Photo by Renee Mapstone***



***The swinging bridge, Abercrombie. Photo by Denis Stojanovic***





*The entrance to Vic's Pot, Jenolan*



*Initials in Vic's Pot, Jenolan*



*narrow rift heading on, Vic's Pot, Jenolan*



*The Arch, Abercrombie. Photo by Denis Stojanovic*





*Desoration, Abercrombie. Photo by Denis Stojanovic*



*The Arch looking out, Abercrombie. Photo by Denis Stojanovic*

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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.

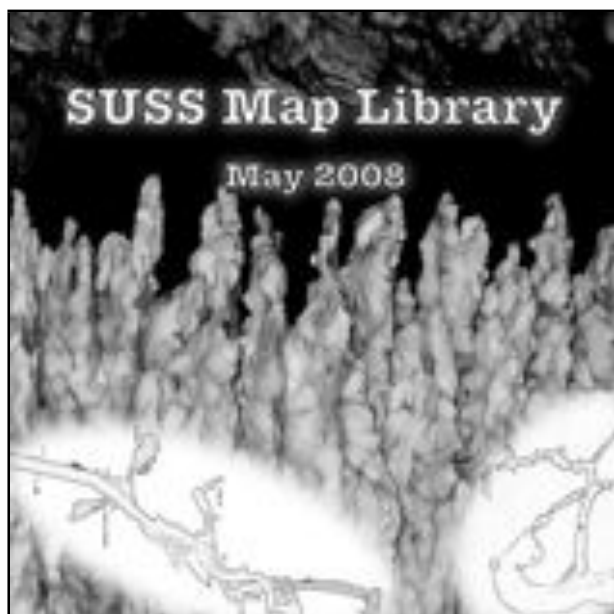
There are field sketches, ink maps produced on drafting film, ink maps produced on linen, as well as some of the latest digitally-produced cave projects. The DVD also contains all SUSS Bulls in HTML format from 35(1), July 1995 to 47(4), March 2008 and SUSS Bulls as PDF format from 42(1), April 2002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

### Oct

**4 General Meeting.** Holme Building, 7.30pm. Rob Jones will thrill us with tales of daring and dastardly deeds on the recent ASF trip to the Gregory Karst (NT).

**6 Training day** Learn how to rig ropes and get up and down them. Some experience needed - bring your own gear. Contact Rowena: rowena1234@hotmail.com

**13 – 14 Jenolan.** Stay in the luxurious Cavers' Cottage (we have to say it). Contact Flora: floraulin@gmail.com

**20 – 21 Borenore.** Cunningly timed to line up with the Orange Wine Week! Expect caving mixed with non-trivial amounts of wine tasting. Contact Kevin: troglokev@gmail.com

**27 – 28 Wombeyan.** Beautiful marble caves in the Southern Highlands. Scenic campsite with a chance of ground-breaking discoveries. Contact Rhonda: rhonda\_lum@hotmail.com

**27 – 28 Jenolan.** Dive trip. SUSS continues exploring and mapping the underground rivers below Jenolan's tourist caves. Dry cavers invited to support divers with gear and exploration. Contact Deborah: birinxi@gmail.com

### November

**1 General Meeting.** Holme Building, 7.30pm. Deborah Johnston will terrify us with tales of diving in caves and disturbing deadly snakes on the Nullarbor.

**3 – 4 Jenolan.** Celebrate the end of semester by escaping to our favourite haunt. Stay in (you guessed it) the luxurious Cavers' Cottage. Contact Tina: tinawillmore@gmail.com

**9 – 11 Wellington.** The caves are really close to the campsite. Contact Keir: keirvt@optusnet.com.au

**18 Abseiling.** Middle of exams - a great chance to get away from it all for a day. Rumours abound of plans to get out the 200m rope. Contact Denis: dstojanovic91@gmail.com

**24 – 25 Weeeeeeeeeee... Jasper!** End of exams! No really, end of exams! Great caves thrown into the bargain. Contact Roweeeeeena: rowena1234@hotmail.com

**24 – 25 Capertee.** CWCG and HCG are looking for a semi-mythical cave of legendary proportions! Not a SUSS trip but SUSS members are welcome. Contact Flora: floraulin@gmail.com

### December

**1 – 9 Jenolan.** Go to Jenolan, they said. For a week, they said. It'll be fun, they said. And they were right! (Or just come for a few days.) Contact Thomas: taw.wilson@gmail.com

**15 – 16 Wyanbene.** Great streamway cave in southern NSW. Wet and wild! Contact Rowena: rowena1234@hotmail.com

**26 Dec – 6 Jan Ida Bay, Tasmania.** Extreme vertical caving in southern Tasmania - the trip's nearly full! Confidence on ropes is a must. Contact Deb: birinxi@gmail.com

### January 2013

**12 – 13 Jenolan.** Celebrate the start of the year in our favourite haunt. Stay in (you guessed it) the luxurious Cavers' Cottage. Contact Alison: a.d.chau@gmail.com

**Australia day weekend Cooleman.** Dates to be confirmed. Contact Keir: keirvt@optusnet.com.au

### February 2013

**2 – 3 Wombeyan.** Beautiful marble caves in the Southern Highlands. Scenic campsite with a chance of ground-breaking discoveries. Contact Rhonda: rhonda\_lum@hotmail.com

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