

# SUSS Bull 56(2)

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Articles, news and gossip to [Phil Maynard](#)

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Rafid Morshedi

*Front Cover: Phil Maynard in Castle Cave, Chillagoe*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

## SUSS Bulletin 56(2)



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<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-24/endangered-ghost-bats-still-fighting-for-survival/9348744>

### ABC report – Mt Etna and Ghost Bats

Mt Etna, a tropical limestone deposit near Rockhampton, was the site of one of the most bitterly-fought conservation battles in the history of Australian caving. During the 1980s and 1990s, cavers from across Australia launched legal battles, publicity campaigns, and underground resistance against the cement company's efforts to destroy the critical breeding site of the endangered Ghost Bat population. SUSS members such as Patrick Larkin and Keir Vaughan-Taylor were very much a part of this campaign.

Above is the link to a recent ABC story on Ghost Bats and Mt Etna, where cavers and conservationists all played a part.

This has several sequences about court cases, and the blasting of Speaking Tube Cave, followed by a later story and footage about the research work the Karst Conservation Fund contributed to.

It was the Mt Etna campaign which provided the instigation for ASF to apply to have a Registered Environmental Fund. It was Stephen Comino who recommended to Peter Berrill and John Dunkley that this be done.

*Nicholas White*

### SUSS 70th — it's coming

The SUSS 70th details are here!

There will be an event on Friday night in Sydney as well as caving activities planned for the attached weekend.

#### *Friday Night Details:*

Date: Friday 11th May 2018

Time: 1900 – 2300

Location: Harbour View Hotel - Bridge Room

Dress Code: "Smart Evening wear" (Venue Requirement)

Cost: \$40 for Access Members \$45 For Non-Access Members

Food & Drink: Entree style meals + Canapés will be available all night. Drinks are for individual purchase at the bar.



*Bat Cleft, Mt Etna*

Tickets are available to purchase now!

<https://www.suss70th.org/events/suss-70th-anniversary-dinner-dinner-only>

#### *Weekend Details:*

Date Sat 12 – Sun 13th May 2018

Location: Jenolan Caves

Cost: Free for current SUSS members. \$30 Non-member Fee

To RSVP and for more information please contact: [tinawillmore@gmail.com](mailto:tinawillmore@gmail.com)

Kid Friendly Weekend!

*Jordan Fenech*

## Cave Rescue Training Weekends

NSW Cave Rescue is once again running two Vertical Cave Rescue training weekends for the wider caving public:

- May 5-6 (Sydney area)
- May 19-20 (Bungonia)

These are intended as a double feature, i.e. ideally you should attend both. For more details and RSVP, contact Al Warild.

[alwarild@gmail.com](mailto:alwarild@gmail.com)

## 31st ASF conference

30<sup>th</sup> of December 2018 – 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2019. The next biennial caving conference is to be held in Devonport, Tasmania with caving expeditions in Mt Cripps, Mole Creek, Ida Bay and Junee-Florentine areas.

Important Dates:

- 28 – 29 December: Pre-conference caving & MT Bike trips.
- 30 December: Welcome BBQ/campsite open.
- 31 December – 4 January: Conference week.
- 5 – 10 January: Post-conference caving in Mole Creek, Mt Cripps, Ida Bay and JuneeFlorentine areas.

Our conference website will be live in March/April for more information regarding pre- and post-conference activities, getting to Tasmania, events throughout the conference week and much, much more! Registrations will open following launch of website. Book Now! Devonport is the home of two luxury passenger ferries, Spirit of Tasmania I & II, which offer daily and overnight sailings to and from Melbourne. Qantas fly direct into Devonport and Launceston airport is only one hour's drive away. Car hire is also relatively cheap but book early or risk missing out!!

What's on offer? With a variety of caving adventures pre- and post-conference as well as weekly activities aimed at all age groups, this conference is shaping up to be the best yet. Kayaking, mountain bike riding, historical tours, bushwalking and canyoning are just some of the activities on offer during the conference week, as well as a comprehensive caving program for pre- and post-conference. The conference week will be filled with guest speakers, caving veterans and subject-specific experts sharing their knowledge for the wider caving community. For any pressing questions please email:

[asftasmania2019@gmail.com](mailto:asftasmania2019@gmail.com)

*Jessica Bayles*



*Jordan runs the Presidential BBQ at Jenolan, December 2017*

*Photo Don Matthews*



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## New discovery in Hennings Cave, Jenolan

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Dates: Winter 2017 – Nov 2017

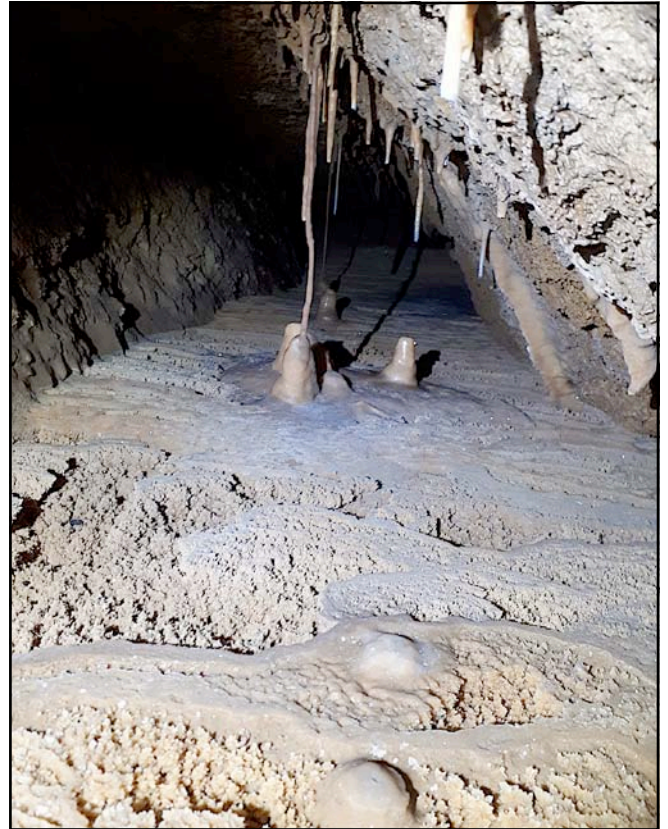
Rowena Larkins

Attendees: many over several trips – key people mentioned in story

A few years ago Thomas Cunningham took an interest in Hennings cave and ventured beyond the infamously horrible Champagne Squeeze in search of a legendary room supposedly decorated. He returned with stories of wonder, but he also caught the eye of an exotic beauty who stole his heart away from muddy grottos to the promises of family life. The romance blossomed and now Mr and Mrs Cunningham are setting up a love nest.

In Winter 2017, Rowena took a group into Hennings and inadvertently ended up at the Champagne Squeeze (mental note: crawling backwards down a passage is not advised). To her surprise the squeeze was not as bad as she recalled, and she got into the room beyond. The eager young cavers followed her in and they spent time admiring the rarely-seen decoration. On inspection Rowena found her entry some years earlier had been via another squeeze which looked really nasty. Rafid attempted to enter by the earlier squeeze and Rowena heard him say words she didn't realise he knew. It was decided to refer to the nasty squeeze as Champagne Squeeze and the other as Spumante Fizzer.

Rowena recalled Thomas' directions to the lost room and followed the memory through a squeeze to find herself in a large room heading east, flow-



*New flowstone stream*

*Photo Stephanie Murphy*

stone on the left and a wide aven heading up many metres at 45 degrees to the right.

Heading directly forward, she came upon a vast room of near pristine flowstone, a large boss was 4 metres to the left, a down-slope ahead terminated in a crystal streamway and to the right a low passage led over the flowstone. Rowena and Rafid stripped off their cave suits and boots and, while trying to avoid leaving red stains on the floor, did a quick inspection.

The group of young cavers waiting outside the detrog area were getting bored, and it was decided to split the party with Rafid taking the first timers to another cave, and the more experienced waiting with Rowena to do a quick survey, starting at the typical muddy area. Rowena was surprised to find a couple of voice connections through which she heard Rafid and his group heading out.



*Tina Willmore and Zi Hui Li laying mats out*

*Photo Rowena Larkins*



Next trip saw Rafid and Rowena back at Hennings with detrog gear and a flagging tape. First task was to mark off the clean flowstone, named Golden Grove (unless former name claims can be found). Rafid headed right and found the passage curled left then right with passage that looked too low to get into, and a hole that required a re-trog. He came back and climbed the 10 m aven where he discovered a bolt at the top; we were not the first visitors.

Rowena scrambled over the flowstone to the left and found a muddy floor and passage heading on. She called out for Rafid to bring her trog suit so she could explore the mud areas. The passage dropped down past a large block, and continued up a passage, past an Altar stone of well decorated rock, which terminated in a low room heading left through a squeeze. They surveyed what they could, noting a hole with air blowing out, a climb up a muddy passage, and a couple of other tight leads. Checking watches showed the time as about 6pm, so rather than explore leads, they headed back to the cottage arriving a few minutes past the stated return time of 7pm. Tina's group, which had been cataloguing

bones in Mammoth entrance, had headed to the tourist precinct, and Tina had justifiably written a stern note on the whiteboard before she had headed off. Before they got cleaned up Rowena and Rafid drove down to Caves House area to confirm safety, and describe the rediscovered area.

Trip 3, saw Glenn, Alex and Stephanie head back to Hennings to check the leads. They took gear to leave in the cave to keep the detrog area clean; mats, bottles of Jenolan river water and brushes. Alex arrived late to the cottage 10 mins after the group had left. Not wanting to be left behind he ran up the valley to meet them as they were about to head into Hennings. Unfortunately in his rush he forgot to bring his headlamp, so he returned to his car to retrieve it. While there he noticed his helmet was also still in his car so he grabbed that too. He spotted his trog suit was there and grabbed that. On a whim he decided to take his boots, his water, and any other things usually taken into a cave. The group entered the cave while Alex was sorting his gear.

Stephanie, the micro bod, climbed up a high tight lead in the Altar room and found a rift pas-



*Golden Grove*

*Photo Rowena Larkins*



sage where a huge boulder dropped out of. She then squeezed through the end passage and checked out the round flat room, declaring no leads there. She then checked out a couple of pristine solution tubes declaring them “tempting” but too tight. We then decided to check out the blowing hole, taking a long time to squeeze Stephanie in (the gravel could be heard the rolling down a slope inside). Once in she was passed a camera, but the focus mechanism had failed. Stephanie needed assistance getting out and took several minutes of twist/pull/twist/pull to get out.

The final trip, in November, included Max as well as Stephanie and Simon. Max was adept at tight squeezes and knew how to get in. Once in, he identified the main blocker and moved it aside, allowing the rest of the group to get down the 3 m twisty squeeze, though getting out was still non-trivial. This room was a rough 2 m cube with a dirt floor covered in damp mud. It is likely this room is a sump for storm water as it seemed damper than the rest

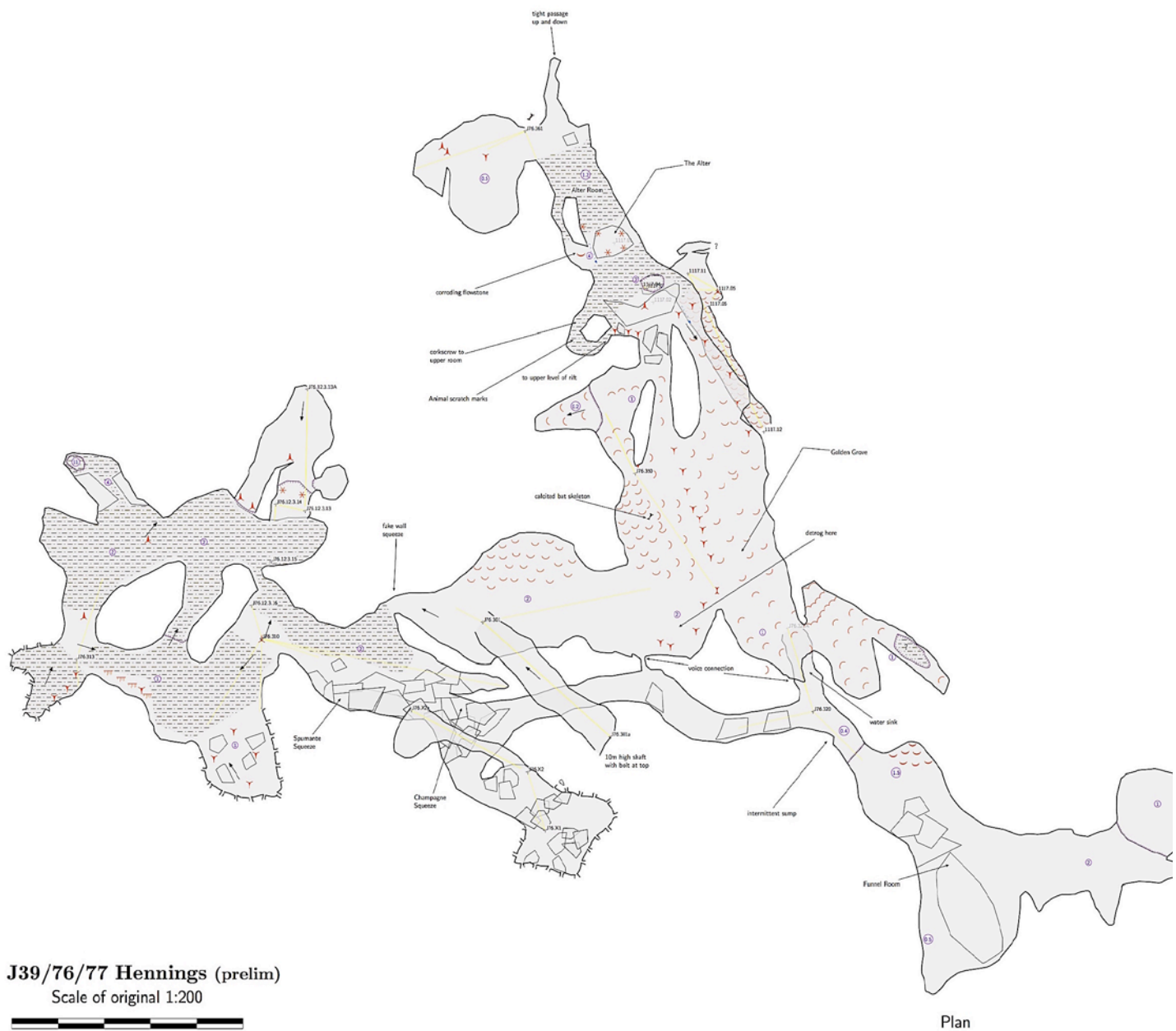
of the cave which was quite dry after two months of minimal rain. There is a nice 7 m long pristine crystal streamway heading back to Golden Grove; the streamway terminates by running down a flowstone wall to the muddy floor, where small passages carry any water on. The room was duly surveyed and photographed, both for posterity and to feed facebook.

The group headed back to the cottage for hummus, crackers, Orange Apple cider, and discussion regarding other caves which are frequently visited and dreams that they may have vast rooms overlooked by visitors heading straight down the well-known path. Survey analysis shows we added 112 metres to the Hennings map which is a significant length extension beyond the 445 m shown in the Blue Book map. Note, the attached map is not finalised; minor work needs to be done to add rocks/decoration/etc in the area labelled “The Maze” in the Blue Book. Moral of the story: When visiting well visited caves stop, check out overlooked cracks, and see what other new cave segments have been hidden in plain sight.



*The Altar, looking North*

*Photo Rowena Larkins*









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## Tuglow Caves – Dryer inside than out

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18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Text and photos Rafid Morshedi

Participants: Rod OBrien, Keir Vaughn-Taylor, Phil Maynard, Rafid Morshedi, Cyril Lagger, Joshua Parker

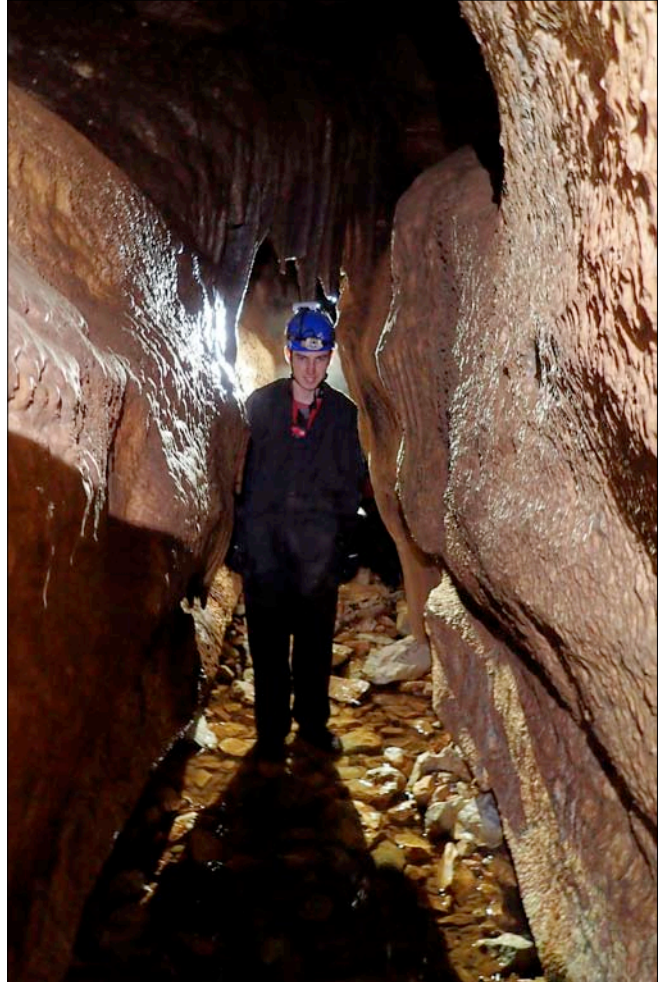
### Friday 2017-11-17

It had been raining for the last few days so we were expecting the roads to be a little soggy. Phil picked up Cyril and myself from North Sydney station. We loaded our gear onto his trusty steed – the Subaru Forester and were off.

We stopped at the Pizza place at Katoomba along the way. Pizza Place Pro tips:

Call the place when you are at Hazelbrook and it should be ready by the time you get there. You should finish the pizza by Mt Vic and there is a stopping bay with a bin there where you may dispose of the rubbish.

Given the rain we drove in via the Oberon route to avoid sliding off the hill. I've always found pine forests a little creepy, but the thick fog and rain made it worse. We reached the campsite without incident and found Rod and Keir waiting for us. Josh, who



*Josh in the stream above the waterfalls*



*Rod preparing to dive downstream Tuglow*

was driving in from near Bathurst got caught up in the rain and arrived the next day.

### Saturday 2017-11-18

The rain had not waned since the previous day. Strangely everyone was awake by 6.30 am, given that this was a SUSS trip the early wake up was highly unusual. Josh having camped at the top of the hill for the night arrived at around 7 am and we were at the cave entrance by 8 am – again highly unusual, the rain had really got to us.

Rod had prepared his 'red bundles of joy' in preparation for a dive at the downstream sump. We had a fairly efficient crew, with Rod rigging the pitches up



ahead and everyone else bringing packs through. There was very little sitting around, and we got the tanks down the pitches in no time.

While Rod prepared for his dive at the downstream sump, I took some photos, Josh, Phil and Cyril watched and Keir splashed around in the streamway. Rod started his dive, Phil and Cyril started surveying parts of the downstream streamway and Keir, Josh and I ventured upstream.

Keir showed us the scenic route towards the main waterfall and we climbed down towards it avoiding the swim. Keir's shoes had already proven themselves to be about as grippy as melted butter on a teflon pan, but he still managed to do most of the climbs so far without any trouble. However, the final chimney down to the main waterfall chamber proved to be more slippery than the last few climbs and a large splash was heard as we entered the waterfall room. No injuries were sustained and we continued as normal. The main waterfall was spectacular, or at least I thought so, but Keir informed me that the water was very low compared to its normal level.

We turned back to rendezvous with the others and found that they had already started to pack up the gear. There was some great teamwork on the exit and we bombed it out of the cave in no time and were out of the cave by 12 noon.

Having finished our caving for the day so soon, we went on down to the resurgence and looked at some of the other resurgences nearby. However, it was still raining and we were starting to get a little miserable so we made our way back to the cars.

Rod told us about the dive. He had continued with the underwater survey, getting it to the end of the current dive line at a depth of 26 m. After checking his gas supply and decompression obligations (Rod was using Nitrox to reduce his decompression time), he tied his reel off to the end of the line and pushed another 20 m along the continuing horizontal passage. We were back at the cars by 3 pm and had plenty of time for tea and biscuits as the rain continued on and off until the evening.



*Cyril near the downstream sump*

### **Sunday 2017-11-19**

Finally the rain seemed to have stopped overnight. The sun occasionally made an appearance so the usual SUSS morning routine resumed and we consumed 20 cups of tea.

Eventually the rain returned so we started caving, Keir was diving today and Rod would be assisting. Phil, Josh, Cyril and myself went upstream.

We made the climb into Knights Knobbly Knob where we had lunch. It truly is a spectacular cave. We continued upstream and turned left onto a nice passage (Overhead Loop) with cave coral on both sides of the passage until we reached the muddy rock pile. I noticed the signature of the '158 Rosebury Rover crew' scribbled in the mud from 88.

We continued to the upstream end of the cave which was practically a trickle (< 10 cm of water depth). Time to turn around. We returned to the ladders, to find that Keir and Rod had already started hauling packs up. We joined the effort and were out of the cave fairly soon.

The Kowmung River had risen since Friday so we all exited via the western roads. Another great weekend away.



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## Spider tales and Barraleads

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Rafid Morshedi, Stephanie Whitaker and Rowena Larkins

9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Participants: Rafid Morshedi, Simon Murphy, Stephanie Whitaker, Alan Pryke, Ciara Smart, Megan Pryke, Rod Obrien, Max Midden, Chris Norton, Rowena Larkins, Pat Larkin, Pat Jr Larkin, Alyssa Larkin, Tina Willmore, Jordan Fenech, Don Matthews, Finn Matthews, Philippe Fouquet

### Saturday 2017-12-09

*Rafid:* I arrived a little late only to find that the group doing Spider cave had already left, and that the trip was full. After some careful reading of the permit conditions it was discovered that there was indeed some room left on the trip. I changed into my trog suit as quickly as possible and then raced down the hill to catch up with the rest of the Spider group.

I managed to enter Spider and could hear the rest of the group at Dingo Dig. The Spider group consisted of me, Max Midden, Rod O'Brien, Tina Willmore, Stephanie Murphy and Ciara Smart. What a crack team; we continued through the cave fairly quickly and were through the rockpile and into the Glop hole Gallery in no time.

Pirates Delight was dry and we all managed to get through okay. Even Rod was getting through the

squeezes with relative ease. He later recounted that the key to getting through tight spaces is to “be the cave”. Crystal Crawl was a bit of a challenge but we came through it okay.

We crossed the stream at the Wishing Well and knew that we were going to have wet feet for the rest of the trip. Jordan explained that he was really looking forward to putting on the pair of dry socks which he had stowed in his pack. A plan that was foiled, but more on that later.

We continued on our way to Endzone, stopping at X-Window to take some photos and have lunch. We pfaffed around a bit trying to find our way through the rockpile between X-Window and Endzone, but found the Gnome Room soon enough and knew we were on the right path.



*Tina at the X-Window sump*

*Photo Rafid Morshedi*





*Rod and Ciara at Endzone sump*

*Photo Rafid Morshedi*

Some more photos and food at Endzone then we started to make our way back. Rod was not keen to suffer through Crystal Crawl again and decided to take the water route and did the duck under through to Pike Lake. I thought I'd give it a crack too, but as soon as I got in the water my gumboots filled completely with water and started to come off. Trying to recover one, by treading water was an exercise in futility and soon my other one fell off as well. The splashing about had silted up the pool and now I was bootless.

Dejected I made my way back to the bank of the Wishing Well, Max's laughter echoed through the chamber as I climbed the now very slippery bank. Wet neoprene socks do not provide the best grip and we still had to get out of the cave. I slowly made my way up the first climb.

Jordan witnessing my struggle, selflessly offered to volunteer his dry cotton socks, the same dry socks he had planned to wear on exiting the cave. The fluffy 'Vietnamese specials' definitely provided much more grip than neoprene. So much so that, I believe there is definitely a market for "Jordan's cave socks" as an alternative to wellies. I could really feel the cave, it was painful.

Anyway I slowly learnt how to cave in socks. Luckily Spider isn't a cave that requires a lot of walking, so my knees, elbows and hand did most of the work. Anyway we got back to Glophole Gallery and went down to the river to see if Rod was okay – he was. Rod by this point had long given up on wearing his

cave suit and had settled for thermals and the new SUSS T-shirt instead. The new SUSS t-shirts have now been cave certified.

United, we made our way back to the surface *sans* my boots and managed to exit the cave and return to the car without incident. We piled into the car while Max and Rod walked up the hill. Tough old bastards they are.

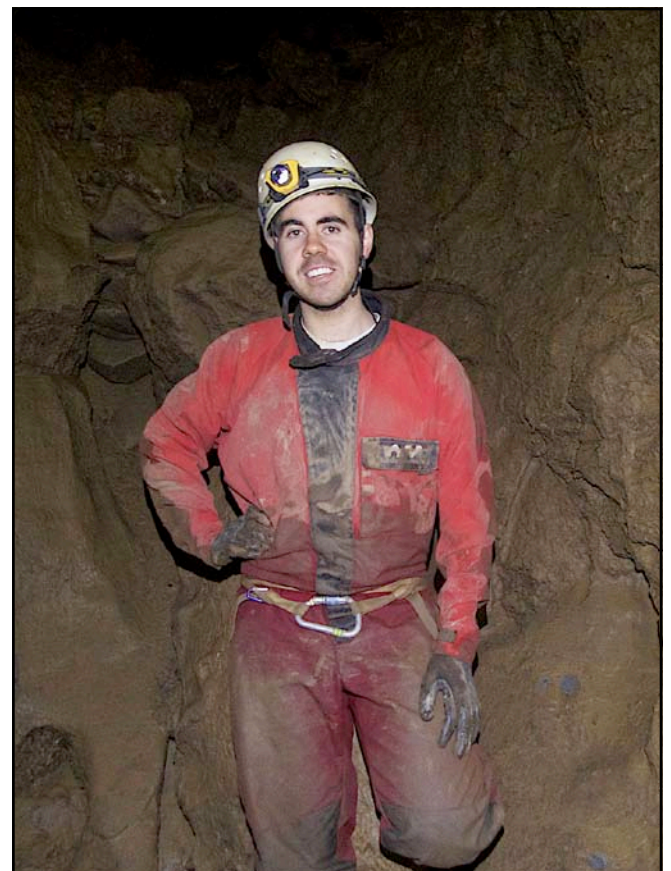
In line with my absent-mindedness for that day, I had left my helmet and gloves at the bottom of the hill and later ran down to pick them back up.

It was a great day in Spider and to top it off we had the Christmas party to look forward to in the evening. The Christmas party went off without a hitch with no 'incidents' to speak of. [*I think Rafid means he isn't allowed to speak of them? ed.*]

Big credits to Jordan and Ciara for organising a great Christmas party.

## **Sunday 2017-12-10**

*Rafid:* There was a variety of trips running on the Sunday. Jordan was happy to rest and prepare for another tough week at work. Pat, Pat Jr and Alyssa



*Jordan – sockless in Spider*

*Photo Rafid Morshedi*





*Stephanie Whittaker in Barralong*

*Photo Don Matthews*

did some tourist caves and Rowena led a group into Barralong.

Ciara and I did a quick run through J75 and Hennings and then went for a wander around the hillside near Aladdin cave.

*Stephanie and Rowena:*

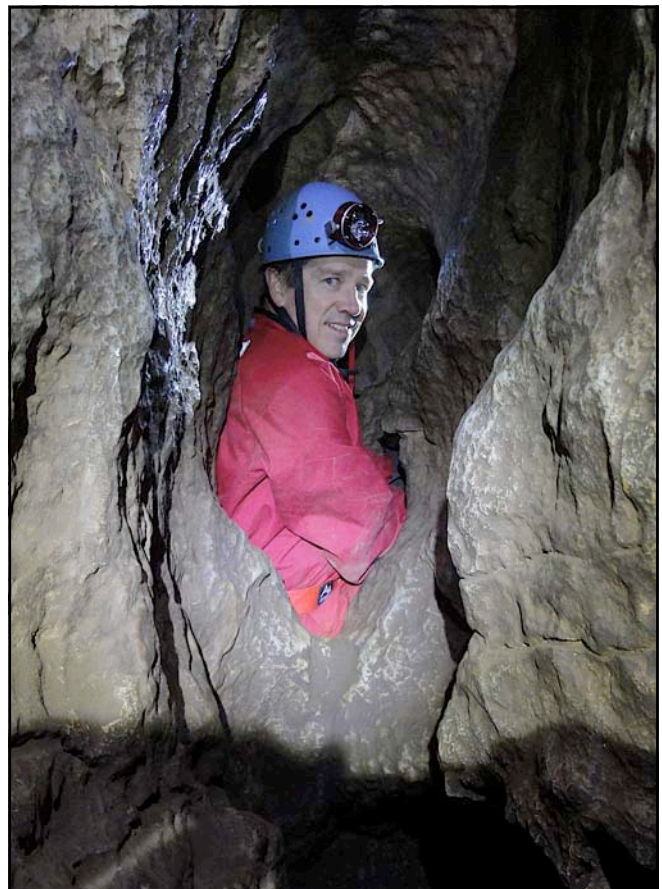
On the second weekend of the Jenolan summer weeklong trip Rowena led a group to Barralong cave to investigate potential leads – a combination of unsurveyed passages and inconsistencies in previous surveys.

The group set off through the show caves, helping to carry dive gear for Rod who was taking photographs for his soon-to-be-published book. After dropping off the dive gear we came across a tourist group who seemed interested to see us and ask questions about caving. We then hid from another cave tour and eventually made it to the entrance to Barralong cave. I am not sure what I expected from the Barralong entrance but it wasn't a small hole in the wall beside the handrail at the top of a flight of stairs. We geared up, taking care not to muddy said handrail and entered the cave. We moved through the cave admiring the clean and beautiful formations, Don taking a few photos along the way with Finn manning the "bat light".

Everyone made it through the rockpile just fine (we did not want a repeat of the Michael Collins episode!) and the extremely long straw was adequately protected by throwing down a handline where it

wouldn't otherwise have been needed. Before lunch we explored a short way downstream(?) of the river, mostly just to look around. We stopped for lunch by the river a short distance from Lake Barralong, where Stephanie provided our entertainment when she somehow managed to dislodge her temporary crown. After being reassured by the older, wiser members of the group that it wasn't a big deal, we tackled the younger generation's question of whether she had "lost a tooth" – a surprisingly complicated question when applied to temporary crowns! After lunch, those who had wetsuits (Stephanie and Rowena) plus those who didn't care that they had no wetsuit (Simon) got ready for a swim across Lake Barralong. Despite the wetsuits I can confirm Lake Barralong is very cold! We took it in turns to swim across the lake and climb up the ladder on the other side, ready to investigate the leads Rowena had identified.

*[See Rowena's article describing the leads in southernmost Barralong. ed]*



*Patrick Larkin in Mammoth*

*Photo Don Matthews*



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## Barralong Southern Leads

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Rowena Larkins

The southern extremity of Barralong Cave is enigmatic. Barralong starts at the southern end of the tourist caves and meanders, at a low level, south following the underground path of Camp Creek. At the known current southern end of the cave there is a large chamber, 13 metres high, 5 metres wide at the base, and 20 metres wide at the top. There is a deep lake at the base; “Lake Barralong” for want of a better name. The Camp Creek level here is about 60 meters below surface level. The lake here is accessed from the north streamway, beach area, by stooping under a low roof which provides an air space of about 30 cm. The west side of the lake is knee deep. This is the area dug out by Basil Ralston and John Culley in 1964.

*“the river runs out of a tiny arch. This proved difficult [to access] until we took in a shovel, and dug gravel out of the river bed, thus lowering the water level. Through the arch there is a little mud bank, then the water drops to twelve feet deep. Fifteen feet across the pool and twenty feet up the wall is a hole.”*

Using 2017 technology, DistoX measurements show that to the west of Lake Barralong is a 13 m mud bank sloping up at 60 degrees.



*Descent from the 6 m level of Barralong to the current stream*

*Photo Rowena Larkins*

To the east there is a permanently rigged ladder leading to a vadose passage perched 7 metres above the river level. The ladder is accessed by swimming the 5 metre lake. Due south is the dive passage. The dive passage has seen several dive expeditions over the years. These dive trips have surveyed south and come to an inaccessible end.

On the December 2017 trip it was noticed that the dive line was stuck to the wall about 4 m above the lake surface. A theory about how the dive line got there being the lake backed up to the low 30 cm arch dug out in 1964. Water then filled the chamber from the bottom, gaining several meters in height. The question being where did all the water enter the chamber from?

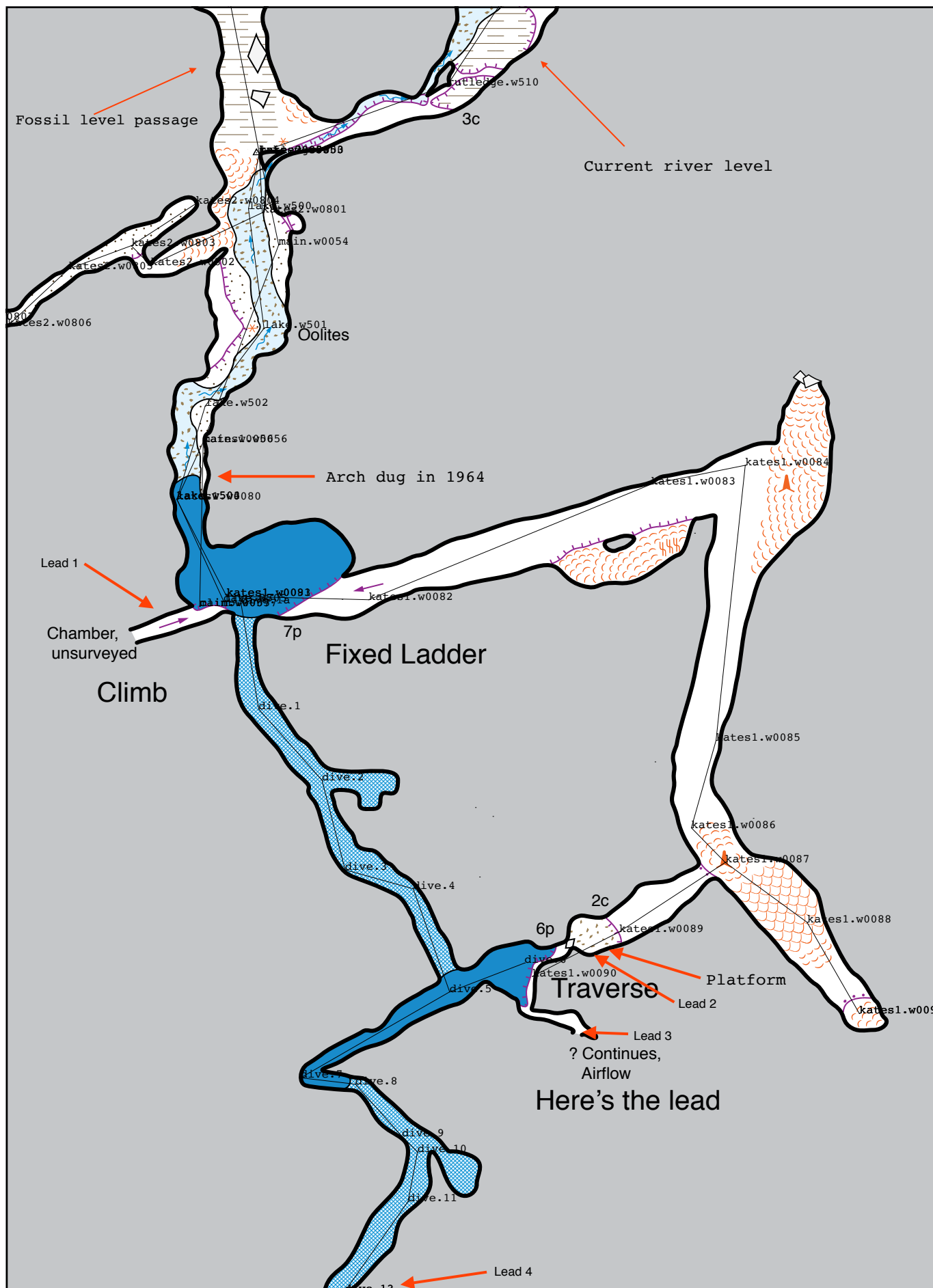
Camp creek sinks about one km upstream of this chamber, fed by a creek which flows for about 80% of the year. When excessive rain falls the creek has significant flow, with 50 L/second sinking upstream of the Barralong terminus[\*]. The gradient of underground Camp Creek is greater than 14 degrees, and the drop in height from the sink about 145 metres. It would be expected that there be no sumps in the underground Camp Creek, and one could even entertain possibilities of waterfalls.

One factor in speleogenesis (the origin and development of caves) describes, in simple terms, water permeating cracks in rock, dissolving areas of limestone forming what is known as phreatic zones, areas constantly submerged below the water table. When the water table drops the phreatic zone is drained, the result being water flows along the base of the passage, named a vadose passage. The water flow cuts into the floor of the vadose passage forming vadose rifts shaped like keyholes. The water flows down to the next phreatic zone, which saturates. Draining the water table repeats the cycle. The result is a series of vadose rift passages interconnected by vertical shafts joining the levels.

The tourist caves south of the Grand Arch are developed on several levels, indicating Camp Creek which formed the horizontal passages, has developed a cave level, then dropped to a lower level, maybe multiple times. The current level of Camp Creek in Barralong seems more juvenile than the

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\* Ian Cooper, SUSS Bull 50(1), page 16



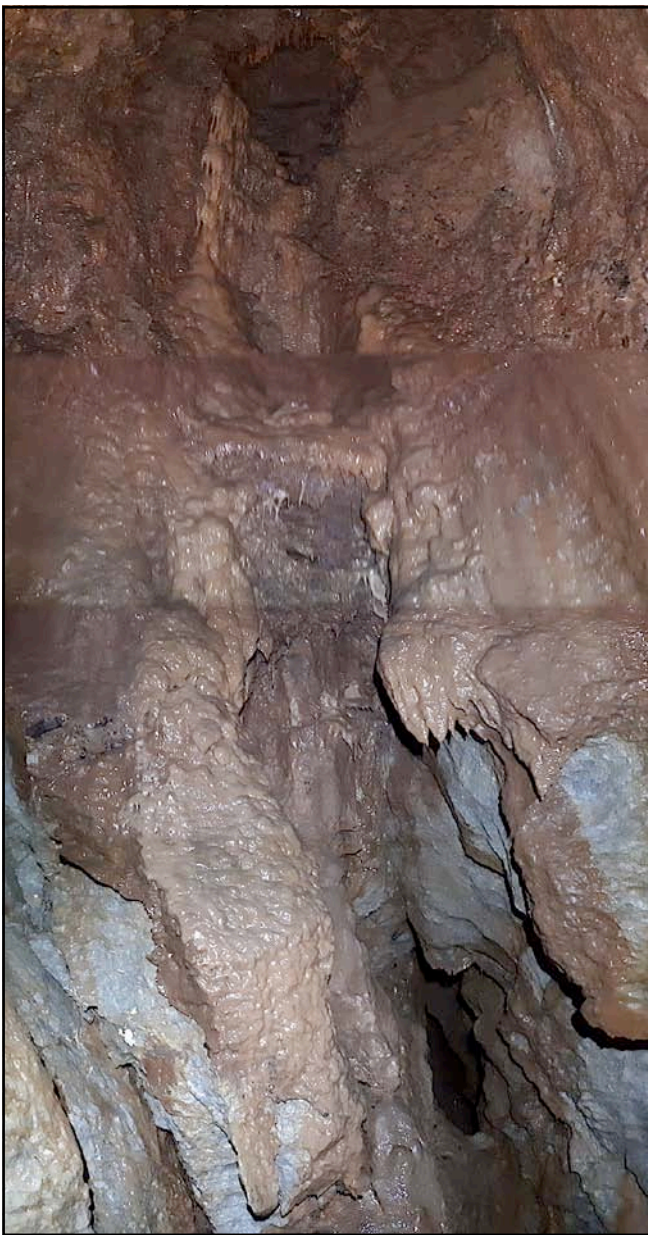
Southern end of Barralong. Adapted from [\*]

\* Phil Maynard, SUSS Bull 47(3), pages 13-17



tourist caves and hence is indicative there is previous, fossil level, cave above. (The complex chemicals dissolved in Camp Creek upstream (analysed by Ian Cooper) result in the elaborate decoration seen in the tourist caves; Upper fossil levels are likely to be similarly decorated.) In fact the dry route currently used by cavers to reach the end of Barralong is a fossil passage with the flowing Camp Creek 6 m below and several metres east.

At Lake Barralong, one could imagine the cave being formed in a layer initially 13 meters above its current level, roughly in the same horizontal plane as Orient Cave. The 13 meter high passage west of Lake Barralong could be considered a shaft joining levels. Ascending this shaft could eventually lead to



*Hole in the roof, and pitch to the creek*

*Photo Rowena Larkins*

significant passage heading north towards the tourist caves or south up the valley.

One consideration could be the water poured down the west passage when Camp Creek was in flood, filling the lower levels of the Barralong stream-way, blocking the 30 cm stoop and snapping the dive line. The line then floated to the surface and stuck to the wall as the water subsided.

Another could be that the water flowed down the 7 m ladder pitch, however this is unlikely. On a visit in 2015, muddy footprints from years ago when the divers were active could be spotted along the vadose passages south of the ladder. (With restricted access to this cave, the footprints are likely to have been there for years.)

A third possibility could be that the water increased its flow along the dive passage. With the restricted cross sectional area it would require significant flow pressure to raise the water level in this scenario. This seems unlikely.

A group of cavers climbed the west bank many years ago and found a large chamber “Unsurveyed Chamber” on the map, about 13 meters above the riverbed. This chamber was not surveyed. It is possible this chamber contains leads which are the source of the flood flow to Lake Barralong. Ideally an adventurous type should take mud wall climbing gear and a long tape or rope to be left anchored, to provide ease of access for future explorers. The adventurer should also take survey gear to document this chamber (and maybe acquire naming rights to it).

Climbing the ladder on the east, one follows the 7 m high passage eastward, then south then west. Here one comes to a simple 2 m climb down to a platform. Below this platform is a narrow balcony 6 m above the water level. The divers used to carry their gear along the passage and lower it the 6 m to the river. From the platform can be spied a hole in the ceiling 6.8 metres above the floor level. A promising lead! The floor here is covered in sand and river gravel which conceivably washed down the hole. The wall is flowstone and slippery; hand holds look dubious. Aid climbing is recommended.

The height above the river is estimated to be about 13 m, coincidentally similar to the “Unsurveyed Chamber”. If water were to flow through this hole it would pour down over the balcony and fill the vadose passage 6 m below. Given the size of the rift to the west it is inconceivable that



the water would back up and overflow the 2 m climb resulting in flow down the fixed ladder. It may be there is flow via both this hole and down the 13 m high mud bank (possibility four).

At the south end of the balcony is a passage with a blowing hole, a third lead.

Looking at the speleogenesis of the area a theory may be:

1. Original flow of Camp Creek was on same level as Orient Cave.
2. Camp Creek dropped and receded to form Barralong in stages. These are avens in Barralong now choked with debris and formation, or filled with rockpile collapse,

3. Camp Creek dropped down a shaft in the area "Chamber Unsurveyed" Lead 1 (L1),

4. Camp Creek receded to drop down Lead 2 (L2). This may be same drop as air hole Lead 3 (L3),

5. Camp Creek receded to current dive terminus Lead 4 (L4) inaccessible by non-divers in the phreatic zone.

If the above lead hypothesis is confirmed, that would leave 133 m of height remaining to be catered for to reach the height of the main sink.



*Oolites in the stream at Lake Barralong*

*Photo Tina Willmore*



# Alternate Borenore

Ian Cooper

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2017

Present: Ian Cooper, Rowena Larkins, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke

Through a friend Ian was able to gain access to the central private property at Borenore Caves, ("Triple B"). The owner was friendly and helpful, pointing us to 3 previously tagged caves.

The 4 of us spent a day prospecting the area and finding 6 tagged caves and a couple of untagged features. The first thing we noticed was that most of the property is limestone with Oaky Creek cutting a 50 m deep valley through the limestone with several resurgences (or springs) that have never dried up and were flowing at a cumulative 10 l/s.

First cave was BN113. This is a vertical pitch from surface that can be down climbed for the first 5 m. We then rigged a 10 m ladder and Megan was belayed down through a vertical squeeze to find that the ladder was too short. The bottom was not clearly seen but the pitch is reputed to be 15 m deep.

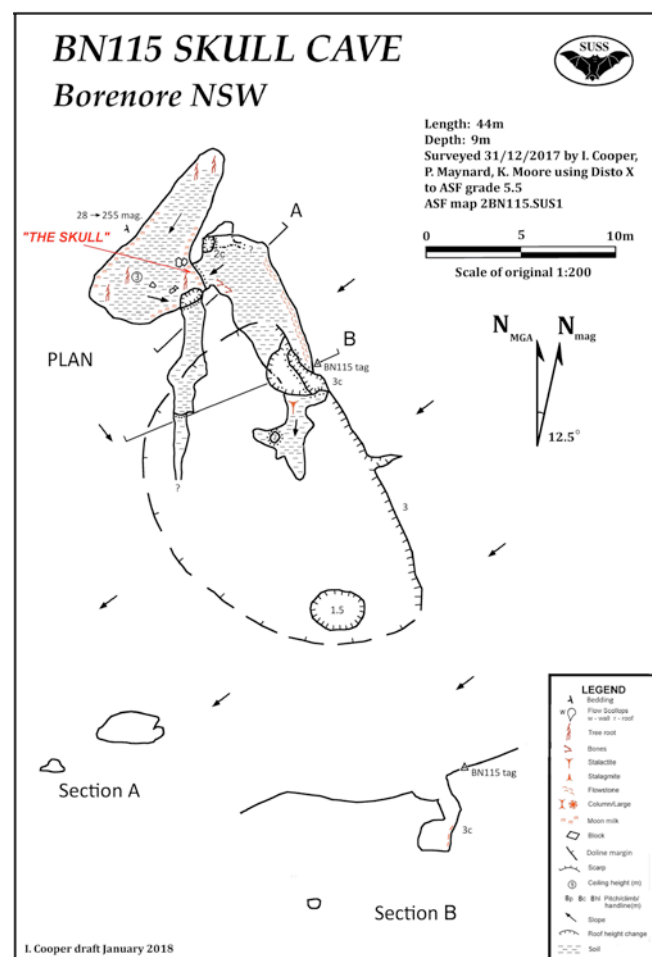
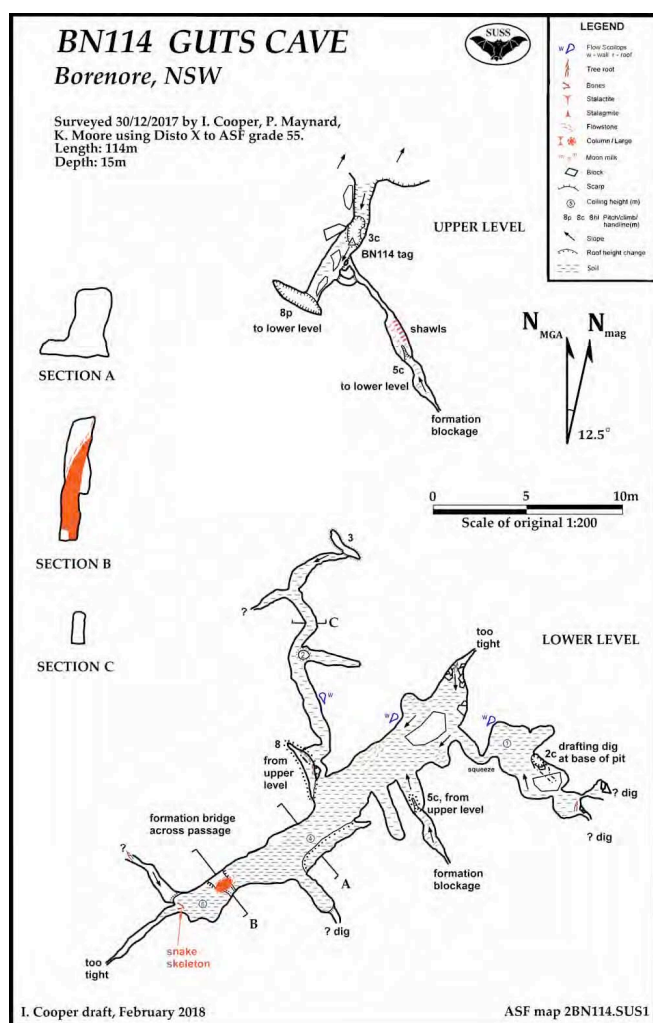
Next was BN114. This is a 4 m down climb to the top of a 7 m pitch. At the base of this pitch is a 20 m x 2 m x 3 m room with a couple of passages leading off and a couple of potential dig sites.

We then split up and spent a couple of hours prospecting the bluffs with Alan finding 2 small untagged caves. On top of the bluff to the north east of the resurgences we found 3 caves, BN16, BN19, and BN115.

BN16 is a vadose solutional rift that drops 6 m into a small room.

BN19 is another solutional rift with the BN20 tag on one of the other entrances, (according to the karst index). Another climb in cave a few metres deep with several small rooms.

BN115 is known as Skull Cave due to a wall that looks remarkably like the Skull Cave in Phantom

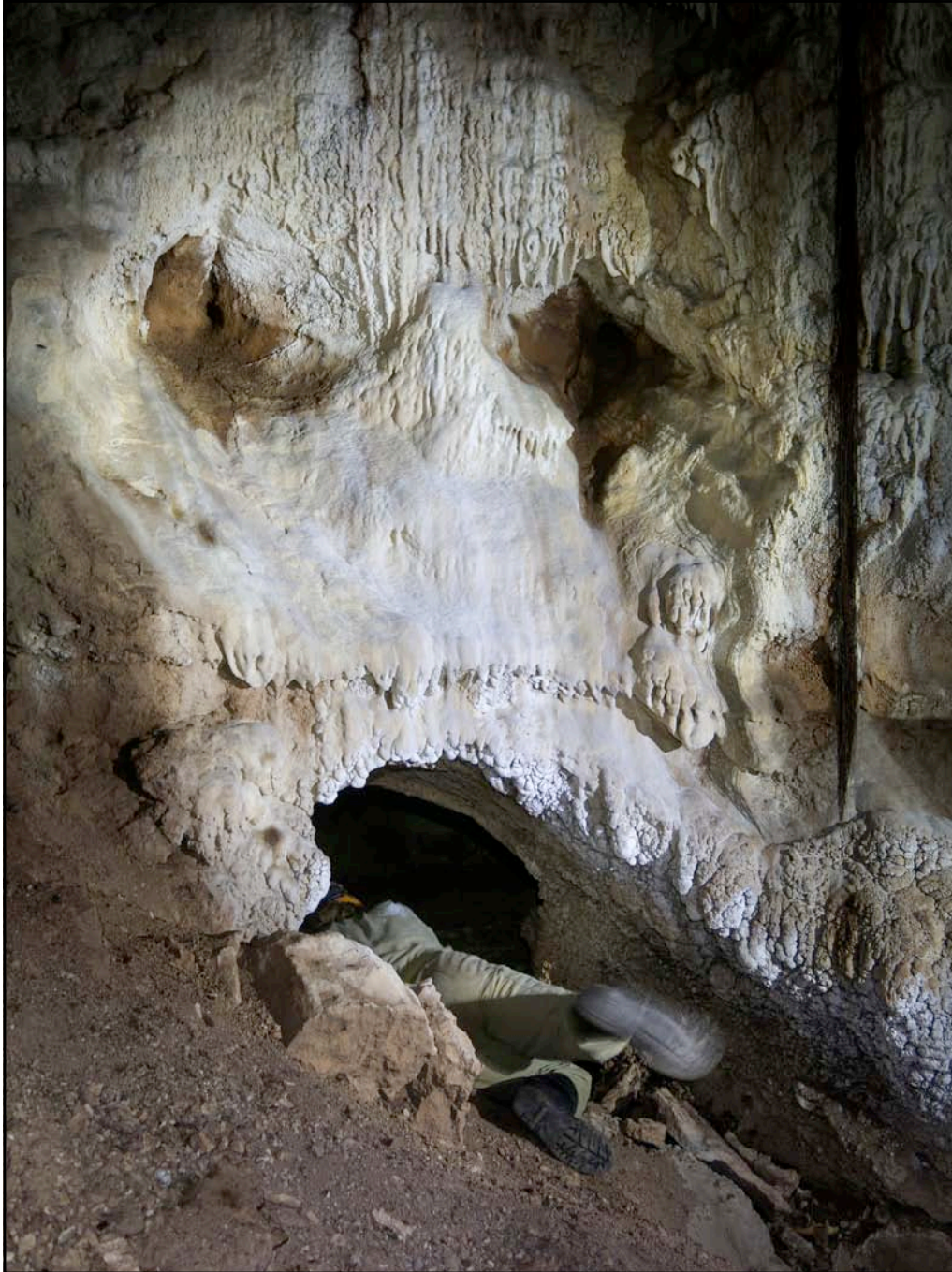


comics. There are several rooms with moonmilk, dried formation and abundant tree roots.

BN15 is not far above the flats of Boree Creek. This cave is a couple of 5 m down climbs into a several

pheatic rooms with evidence of digging. The karst index has this cave also tagged as BN14.

A follow-up trip in December gave us the opportunity to map BN114 and BN115, as well as carrying out more surface exploration across the property.



*Skull Cave, BN115*

*Photo Alan Pryke*



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## Hot Chillagoe

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2<sup>nd</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Sept 2017

Simon Murphy and Alan Pryke

Participants: (SUSS/CCC) Simon Murphy, Alan Pryke, Phil Maynard, (CCC) Peter Bannink, Lars, and a weekend gang.

*Simon...*

### Memories of Chillagoe

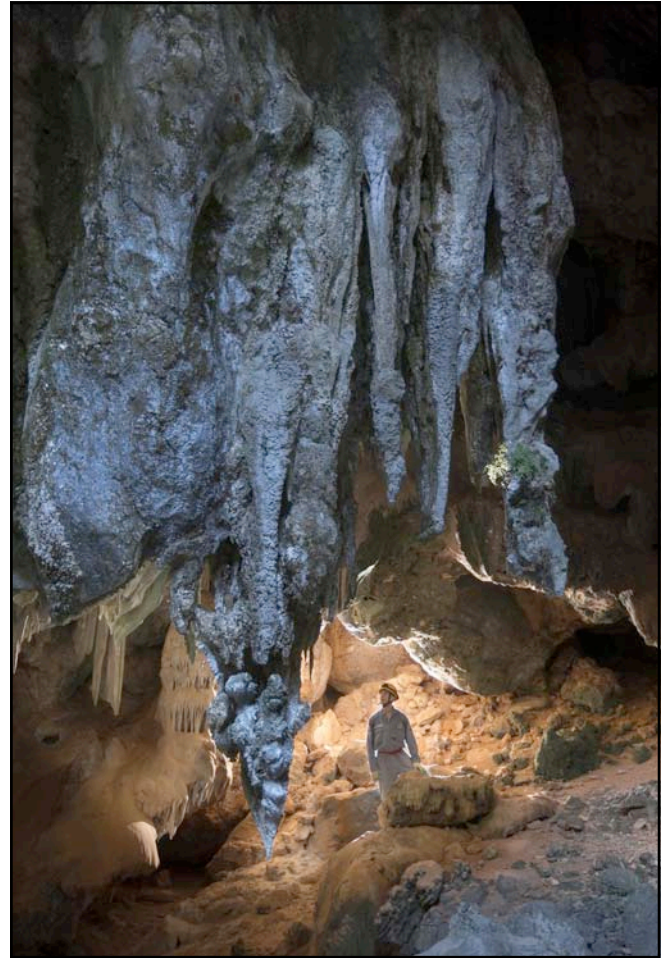
It has been a few months at the time of writing since Alan Pryke and I graced Chillagoe with our presence, but with youth and impressionability on my side, this recollection will surely be 100% accurate. We decided on the trip at less than a month's notice, leaving little time for planning and recruiting. Phil Maynard was keen, but our dates did not overlap. In the end, Alan went for two weeks, with me accompanying him for the first and Phil for the second. We were to be further accompanied by two others who would meet us at the hut at Chillagoe Caving Club (CCC), and a few more would drop in and out for a day's caving here and there.

### Day 1 On which we accreted knowledge

When I met Alan at the airport on departure day he had a characteristic grump on. Due to a series of unfortunate events, the participants who would be meeting us there with a good camera and a serious off-road vehicle had dropped out at the last minute. To further add to Alan's misery, his own camera was on the blink and the arrangements he had made to acquire one from Phil did not come to fruition. The master photographer would have to tolerate that unpleasant grating sound made by dust trapped within the zoom mechanism. Without other company, Alan and I would have to tolerate each other.

Scarcely had I sat down on the plane before Alan offered me some hand disinfectant. He provided a short lecture on the hygiene standards of aircraft which would forever change the way I look at the tray tables, and in return I regaled Alan with all things accretion discs (I had brought some light reading for the plane journey in the form of a journal article from *Astronomy & Astrophysics*). In retrospect, I suspect Alan couldn't give a \*\$#1+\* about accretion discs.

Car-wise, we had hired a good 4WD vehicle, but one look at its perfect paint job and slick-looking road tyres confirmed that we would be confined to



*Simon in the entrance of CH481 Notre Dame*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

the more accessible limestone towers. As this was my first trip to Chillagoe I have to say I didn't mind. First though, we would have to stock up on food and alcohol supplies at a major supermarket chain just outside Cairns.

En-route to Chillagoe we called in at a dollar store in Mareeba so that I could get an appropriate hat for the Queensland sun. Although we were unsuccessful in the hat department, Alan did pick up a couple of boxes of Cheerios that were dangerously close to their sell-by date (or dangerously far past it?). They were marketed with BB8 from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, and that movie had come out almost two years ago by then. He polished off almost the entire box, dry, before we'd made it even half an

hour further down the road. Later, upon arrival at CCC, Alan realised one of his shopping bags didn't make it. We surmise that it got left at the supermarket checkout and he glumly bemoaned the loss of his yoghurt for a quite some time. Just as well he bought the cereal then!

After quickly unpacking, we drove out to photograph Balancing Rock at sunset. Alas, we arrived ten minutes too late and the romance was lost.

### **Day 2 On which we got diverted.**

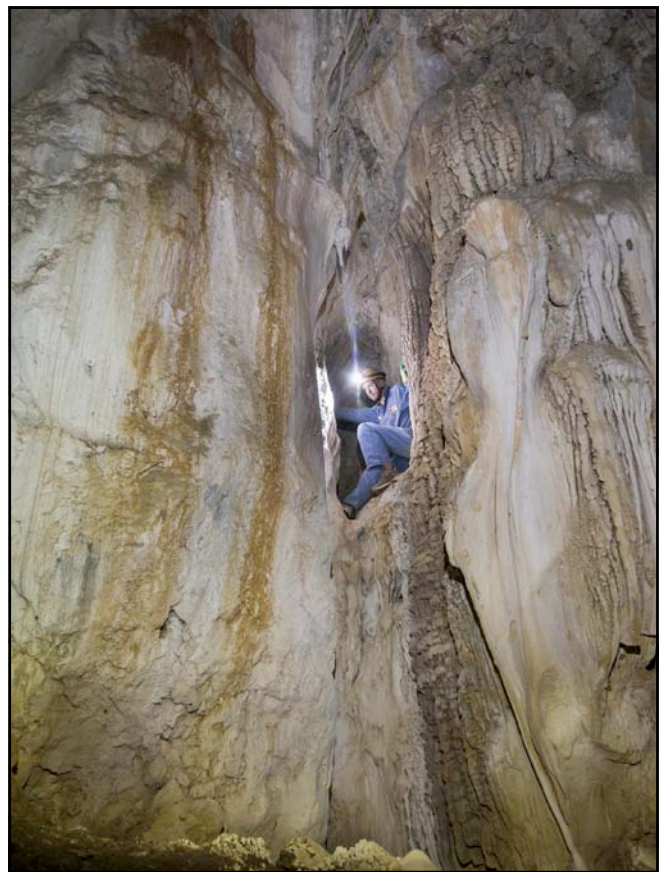
We got off to a late start. I foolishly failed to realise Alan was serious about leaving well before 09:00. My experience at Jenolan and Wombeyan had suggested we'd be sitting around drinking tea until at least 10:00. It seems you cannot get away with it this far north, even in early September. It must have been getting on for 10:00 when we finally got out of the car amidst the towers of limestone. We had decided upon CH206/CH350 Castle Cave as our destination. Alan had surveyed a lot of it last year, but there were some sections in need of someone 'young and fit' to do a bit of climbing and rig a ladder. So we set off into the bush with heavy packs and already the heat was stifling.

We soon encountered a problem. Alan had forgotten the way to the cave and I didn't have a clue either. We wandered across the difficult terrain for the best part of an hour and eventually found a large opening, CH202, which became my first Chillagoe cave! Later that evening we learned that this was known as Restful Cave, and it was clear why. It offered some much welcome refuge from the harsh sun. A brief jaunt further in to the well-lit entrance chamber revealed that we would need bravery, stupidity, or climbing gear to continue. Despite possessing at least two of these, we departed to renew our search for Castle Cave.

We explored around for a while, often being redirected to the same places by the steep, jagged limestone. Eventually we encountered another large entrance, CH481 Notre Dame cave. By now, we felt like we needed to be in a cave for a longer duration to escape the heat. After a quick play around the entrance that revealed a few potential directions for the cave to continue going, we decided this one warranted a survey. This was my first time using a DistoX to truly participate in a survey, as opposed to being handed one to make a single measurement. Within sight of the CH481 tag is a long and thick

stalactite in the centre of the entrance chamber that makes a perfect survey station. Off we went!

I was much appreciating learning to survey and I felt like we made a good team. Alan sketching away diligently and me having fun with a laser. It's a different experience of caving in that it's generally slower paced, so you don't get exhausted quickly. In addition, for completeness you are sticking your head into every hole and documenting as precisely as possible. At one point, this saw me climbing onto a 2 m ledge, wedged between two much taller walls about 0.5 m apart. It looked as though it was a calcite constriction blocking a passage between two chambers so it made sense to climb it and see what was on the other side, but there wasn't much in the way of hand/foot holds. Alan, watching my attempt, thought this made for a great photo so he asked me to pause. "Oh, where's my camera?" he asked. "Urgh, it's in my bag at the entrance" he groaned in reply to himself. "Wait there a minute." And so I waited. According to the survey the bag was 20 m away at this point, but on the way back he found a false floor to investigate, and then decided that while he was at the entrance he may as well relieve himself too. He's lucky that in the five or more minutes it took him to return I hadn't given



*Simon wedged into CH 481 Notre Dame*

*Photo Alan Pryke*



up. I'm lucky to have a photographic memento of the experience.

We spent the rest of the day surveying CH481 Notre Dame, and after a few hours realised it linked up to CH202 Restful Cave that we had found ourselves in earlier. The passage between the two entrances is difficult because of a very steep slope and it's easier to walk around the towers than to walk between the entrances within the cave. Mid-way between them, a narrow tube leads down to a lower level of the cave where the roof is generally low and you begin to wonder why you're messing about down there at all. After a bit of poking around we found a breeze, and through more narrow tube we found another section of the cave. The pretty section! "Bloody hell" Alan exclaimed, "bet you didn't expect to find this down here!" It's true, I didn't. We had to crawl past delicate 'cacti', being careful not to damage the calcite, and then came across large columns and a giant shield. Now we were talking! Deep pitches of several metres led off in different directions, but we didn't get to survey them. The aven heights were ~14 m. We made great progress throughout this well decorated area but ran out of time. The rest would have to wait until tomorrow.

Back at the CCC hut, it was wine time. Dinner was an easy job of boiling some Latina filled pasta (other pasta products are available), and we set about transcribing our survey onto Alan's computer. We had split the bill on two different classes of red wine. Alan insisted on spending big on red wine (relatively speaking... nothing under \$20), while I insisted that cleanskins were good value. In an effort to prove myself right, I insisted we start with a cleanskin red, and Alan seemed quite content with it. It was only after the trip ended that I realised this meant we never opened the more expensive stuff! In retrospect, having been a bit dehydrated from the caving and with it still being rather warm in the evening, two glasses of wine may have been a bit much – getting to sleep was difficult.

#### **Day 3 On which the diversion continued.**

We were both quite keen to finish the CH202 Restful Cave / CH481 Notre-Dame survey, and then we planned to find our way to Castle Cave. In finishing the survey from the previous day, we came across some more deep holes, the deepest of which went down ~20 m but we didn't explore them. There remains good exploration potential for a deeper level of this cave. There is also a hole to a level under the pretty decoration in the far western end

of the cave, but it's a detrog and it seemed like a lot of effort when we had Castle Cave to survey. In the end, completing the CH202/CH481 survey (minus the holes) took all of Day 3, so Castle would have to wait until Day 4.

On Day 2 I had managed to rip my cotton overalls pretty badly on the sharp Chillagoe limestone. Bad enough that wearing some shorts over the top from Day 3 onwards was the only way to retain some dignity and prevent the tears from worsening. Alan dubbed these my "superman pants," and they would be worn for the rest of the trip, except for photos because they looked silly apparently. Photos from the front only please!

Having walked from CH202 to the car at the end of Day 1 and having made a bit of a pig's ear of it, we thought we knew how to get there more directly this time. Alan did have his GPS unit after all. It actually took us even longer on Day 2 (I was of zero use again), and Alan had some fun walking into green ants' nests and various prickly trees. CH202 survey length ~530m, depth 29m.

#### **Day 4 On which Simon began to melt.**

Did we really put Castle Cave on the board again? Yeah, okay but we had better actually find it today! Folks, we did not find Castle Cave on Day 4. I don't recall whether we got lost looking for it, or whether we were distracted in checking out a hole of interest half way to CH202 that we came across the previous day, but certainly we did not get to Castle Cave. We did, however, find somewhere cool to escape from the great heat lamp in the sky.

We had stumbled across CH479 Fraggie Rock. It didn't look like much at first, but I didn't want to go back out in the Sun yet and I was of the opinion that any decent sized hole should be surveyed, so survey it we did. There are quite a few entrances to Fraggie Rock, but we only had the tag number from one. The NE and SW sections of the cave are separated by a squeeze which opens out about a metre off the floor. Alan wanted to play silly buggers so had me come through the wrong way up to make life hard. Actually, he wasn't quite satisfied the first time, so I had to go back and do it again, this time for the benefit of photos and a video recording. It's all fun and games.

I was feeling a little bit lazy (tired? Maybe I was a misfit for this 'young and fit' character?), so I generally let Alan scamper around first. This, of course, is what led to me being upside down in the squeeze, but



*Simon squeezing in CH 479 Fraggie Rock*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

it also led to a different incident. I waited patiently behind Alan as he climbed up a little embankment to see if the cave continued behind a rockpile. A rock of approx. 40 kg came loose and tumbled down behind him. I whipped my hand away just in time. Rather than being crushed, I escaped with the lightest of contact. It might even have been just the air whooshing past. Alan rushed to my aid. "Let me see your hand! Quick let me see." I wonder if he thought I was trying to put a brave face on when I said it didn't get me. Either way, I appreciated his concern. Another bonding moment.

Other than these minor moments among eccentric cavers, Fraggie Rock as a cave is a bit boring, to be honest. The formation isn't that pretty, the cave is more awkward than it is sporty, and there is a bit of cave coral to try to protect (figure). There is a good example of phytokarst near the largest entrance, though. Survey length ~160m, depth 8m.

In the evening, we decided to see what the pub in Chillagoe was about. Between 5 and 6pm the place is rather lively with miners/tradies knocking off and having a few beers. They seem to have had some sort of bet on, in that one of the blokes bought a dress that was for sale in the pub for a fiver, and

proceeded to wear it, all to a chorus of hilarity. I assure you the dress was not fetching. We had our dinner in the beer garden where it was less rowdy and you can have a conversation. The problem was you could also hear the conversation of others. On the next table, "an individual of limited insight" was educating his acquaintances with reasons why coal was the future of Australian energy production and how green energy will never work. That was the last evening Simon went to the pub.

#### **Day 5 On which Simon said "Oh look, a castle!"**

We're actually going to Castle Cave today, right? I was beginning to wonder what all the fuss was about and had rather lost interest in trying to find Castle Cave. We got out of the car and Alan allayed my fears. "Don't worry, we will get to Castle, right, but there's an interesting depression over there to look at. Let's look for caves over there." And so we did. We came across a couple of caves of varying size but didn't see the corresponding tags and didn't really bother to look them up afterwards. They had clearly been entered before, and made for a nice spot for lunch.

Shortly after lunch we decided to cease our scratching around of Markham Tower and to head in the direction of Castle. I took my eyes off Alan for a few minutes to stick my head in a hole and then I lost him. I spent a good half hour atop the spiky limestone working out where he'd gone, and thought climbing higher might give me a good vantage point, but all it really achieved was the creation of a difficult down-climb that saw me a little stuck. Since I was in shade, I decided it would be best to wait until Alan came back. Turns out he was enjoy-



*Simon in Fraggie Rock*

*Photo Alan Pryke*



ing some shade of his own, hence the half an hour we lost.

Speaking of taking your eyes off something... be very careful around fig trees in Queensland, because green ants like to make nests in them. Alan brushed past a nest without realising and the ants were on him in no time. They're ferocious little buggers, really. They don't sting but they do bite, and they readily form little ant chains to create bridges from the trees to your shoulders. It was a little humorous to see Alan dancing around the spot. "Fack, get off, fack, they're all over, bloody ants, fack"... I guess not so humorous for Alan.

Did we get to Castle Cave today? Yes! We did actually, and it was brilliant. Why didn't we come here before?! Alan had surveyed most of Castle a year or so before with Megan, but he had identified a few up-climbs in need of my skills where I'd throw a ladder down. The very first one proved to be well worth the effort. Atop a 3 m climb is a rock arch under which one walks to continue onward. "It's massive up here!" I recall saying, as I gleefully pointed the DistoX across the chamber and registered a good 30 m.

We only had a couple of hours in Castle in the end, to my deep regret. It was really spectacular in this 'new' SE section, and we made some survey progress. At one point there is an awkward 2 m climb that is exposed above a 9 m pit (The Toilet Bowl), and the dusty bank above the climb is sufficiently steep that one is in danger of sliding right back down it then all 9 m of The Toilet Bowl too. The reward was certainly worth the risk. At the top of the slope the passage reaches a T-junction, with a 13 m pitch to the left (north) and a 6 m pitch to the right (south). We don't know what is down the 13 m pitch (exploration lead!) but in my late-day fading head lamp the southward passage looked incredible. "This is some Indiana Jones \*#!@ up here!" I proclaimed, and hence the easternmost section was named.

Here the cave spans at least two levels with a bridge over one of them and tree roots dangling from the roof. I could faintly discern about 15 m of passage, and a further 20 m lies beyond that in more-or-less a single sight-line. Alan was an excellent spotter at the bottom of the dusty slope for both the up and down climb, and barely flinched as I showered his face in dust. What he restrained in movement he more than made up for in volume.

I was very keen to return to survey this area on the morning of Day 6 – my final morning for the trip – but Alan insisted that we "leave something for Phil. He'll get the @#!&s, else."

### **Day 6 On which Simon escapes**

I wanted to be back at the hut by 12:00, as my flight out of Cairns was at 6pm and I still had to get showered, packed, drive three hours to Cairns (anyone know the way?) and return a hire car. Alan would have a half-day caving with me and await Phil's arrival late that night.

Alan selected Carpentaria as our destination for the morning. There's a heap of signs throughout this maze-like cave, with creative and well-suited names. Somewhere, whether actually at the end of the cave or just down a little side branch, there's a daylight hole large enough that trees grow there, one of which is on a rock arch. It's a very photogenic spot and Alan was sad not to be able to get the picture he wanted. He resolved to come back another time. We spent a couple of hours in this cave, and I was keeping a watchful eye on the time that was slipping away. At 11:50, when I thought we were nearly out, Alan asks me if I know the way. It wasn't until the third time we reached the same point in the cave that I began to suspect Alan wasn't just playing silly buggers. I had taken his navigation for granted and not been paying attention myself, now having no idea which way the exit was. That'll teach me!

It was no earlier than 12:30 when we returned to the CCC hut, so I was half an hour behind schedule. I got to see Barron Falls on my way to Cairns. It's impressive enough at the end of the dry season, so I look forward to seeing it again at the end of wet season. Anyone for a May trip to Chillagoe?

*Alan picks up the banter...*

### **Day 6 again.**

After a quiet afternoon sitting in the cool of the clubhouse, CCC's mapman Peter Bannink arrived and much banter ensued as to what caving we would get up to.

### **Day 7 On which we blunder around a bit.**

Alan and Peter headed down to Royal Arch Tower to investigate a cave CCC president Paul Osborne had found whilst looking around the Rift Pothole area. We wandered around for a while, finding this and that... small caves and pitchy things, before



*Peter Bannink in CH384, in Royal Arch Tower*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

eventually finding CH384 – not slightly misplaced, but in the wrong tower altogether... oops.

We climbed through to the far side of the cave, to a large entrance with a panel of old signatures. Peter wandered off, discovering a large dried pool covered with what appeared to be calcite-coated algal mats. No going entrances were found in this area, which included a high wall, some of which looked like recalcified rock pile.

We set to work surveying the smallish cave, finishing in time for snacks back at the clubhouse. Peter was amazed that his sedan had managed to make it to the tower and back on the bumpy track.

That evening we were descended on by the CCC weekenders, a lively lot, all keen to cave. Phil arrived from Cairns amidst this busyness.

### **Day 8 On which we “Mooon Crator”.**

A gang of CCCers agreed to come along on a trip through the Queenslander system, one of Chilla-goe’s caving highlights. Short work was done of the QB entry, triple climb, etc, and the gang soon found themselves piling through the dig into Cathedral Cave for the 11am-ish light show. All were impressed with the inevitable sunbeams, enhanced by a sprinkling of fine dust in the beam, cough, cough... Thence on to the Ice Palace, the wall of doom (Pages Pass), and MOOON CRATOR. All were suitably unimpressed by the crator (sic), but suitably impressed with the whole extension. Lots of Photo opportunities there. Onwards through Little Italy to the pre-rigged ladder exit, all out with enough time for a quick through trip of the News-

outhlander Cave. Finding a couple of sneaky ways on was a bit tricky, and the old SSS map seemed no help whatsoever. However, Phil remembered one tricky bit due to being attacked down the collar by green ants during an awkward climb on a memorable previous trip. Soon the group all passed through Broadway, and on to the easy exit. A great day’s caving, and good experience for trip leader Lars. Don’t really have to mention all the fun and games at the clubhouse.

### **Day 9 On which we even things up.**

Phil and Alan escaped the clubhouse early to continue the surveying of Castle Cave, starting where Simon and Alan finished up the previous week. Phil was suitably impressed by the large extension up the short climb. We completed that area to the best of our ability, with a few high leads requiring scaling poles, and a 13 m deep, dirt-rimmed pit with no usable rigging points for the ladder. A tentative look over the edge could not confirm a dead end.

Another ladder pitch was rigged and survey continued into a series of smaller chambers, all dead ends – sort of. Another pitch found by Alan the previous trip in rock pile was descended by Phil to some spectacular shawls, and tight rifts about 13 m down. Only a couple of do-able leads remain.

The CCCers had left by the time we returned to the Clubhouse, so we had dinner at the pub for free.



*Peter Bannink in the entrance of CH384*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

Wait, what? Well they have a modicum of free pizza on Sunday night, and an even roll of the dice equals a free drink, thus two even gin and tonics were won.



### Days 10, 11, 12 On which we find new stuff.

The next three days saw Phil and Alan locating and surveying Session Cave, a medium-sized cave close to the High Cavern system. An arduous climb over high spiky Chillagoe stuff saw them at the “doline” (actually rock pile) entrance. After a quick look around, surveying commenced, and over the next three days the survey was “completed”, leaving various awkward leads.

On the second day, it was decided to find a way to the second entrance to the cave, as it was less spiky. An untagged pit was found on the way, which we assumed would connect with Session. It didn't. So that's one for next time!

On the third day a third way was found to the second entrance that proved to be rather easier..

Whilst surveying, two unentered areas were found in the cave, one up a loose rocky rift, and the other through a blowing slot that needed clearing of debris from flooding. The first area consisted of a large chamber with a large “fossilised” guano pile, above which was a small but beautifully decorated chamber, packed full of columns, shawls, stals, crystal pools, the lot. We spent some time there taking photos.

Above this the main room spiralled up to a blocked daylight hole, which I assume from the surface would look unappealing, or just another jagged pile of karst.

Phil slid through the slot into the other area which was a large, smooth-walled chamber with a delicate floor of guano deposits and strange crystallisations.



*Rimstone deposits, CH181 Sessions Cave*

*Photo Alan Pryke*



*Phil in new discovery in CH181 Sessions Cave*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

We managed to map the chamber keeping the deposits pristine. A large, deep rift behind the room went nowhere, above which was a too tight lead. It was the antithesis of the decorated other area, so the two new chambers were christened Antithesis Chambers One and Two. The survey of Sessions Cave came to ~870 m, 36 m of depth.

### Days 13, 14, 15 On which we survey furiously.

It was decided to make a start on the systematic resurvey of Spring Cave, one of the old “tourist” caves out towards Mungana. The SSS maps from the 1970's had various versions, none of which seemed complete.

We began at the northern end of the cave, moving south. By the end of the third day we had satisfyingly covered over half of the cave (guessing there



a bit..). A southern entrance was linked in which overlooked the ruin of the railway line, thence the survey ended up in the large chambers to the east, which have multiple levels. Alan looked on in horror at the complexity of the levels to map, all connecting in odd ways, and abandoned the jumble till next time, as thankfully, time was up!

Some amazingly large chambers were found in this cave, with giant suckerpods (or is it pads?...Not sure who came up with that one), that is, huge stalactites with giant “shower roses” at the base.

#### **Day 16 On which we packed in the fun.**

Only half a day of caving left, and a trip to Markham Tower for a quick rumble through Surprise Packet

Cave... yes, Phil was surprised... and over to Ryan Imperial Tower to show Phil the “new” cave (previously unknown to CCC), Blindsight, named as such by Alan because there is a huge entrance not far from the tourist carpark. Phil was also suitably impressed with the scale of this cave, eyeing the various leads...

So ended another fabulous tropical karst extravaganza, whizzing back to Cairns airport, and having fun listening to the unsurprisingly screechy “supermarket price check” style departure tannoy announcing the late departure of yet another Jetstar flight that we made sure we were not on.

And Simon, yes, the “more expensive” reds went down really well.



*Phil in the Grey chamber, CH12 Spring Cave*

*Photo Alan Pryke*



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## JF-223 Tassy Pot

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12-13 August 2017

David Rueda-Roca

Party: David Bardi, Sandy Varin, David Rueda-Roca.

Only the fooliest could consider organising a caving trip to South Tasmania in the middle of Winter. After checking that the three amigos fitted into that classification, we decided to continue organising our monthly vertical trips to Tasmania during the whole year. This time, as we were a little bit fed up with Ida Bay, we moved on to another prospecting area and we picked up Junee Florentine (JF) as our next caving zone.

As we always do, I arrived in Hobart on Friday evening and after picking up the checked in bag, I went to the hotel, checked in, have a dinner at the local Subway and go to bed. Sando and David arrived at midnight on a delayed flight and picked up the rental car at the airport.

This time, we decided to visit on our own two very easy caves, JF-223 Tassie Port and JF-221 Owl Pot.

As usual, we had collected the “intelligence” about the caves, rigging descriptions and trip reports the week before. We had also collected information related to how to go to these caves by car. Yes, it is true. These caves do not fit into the standard of the JF caves. You just need one minute to walk from the dirt road to the entrance of the caves, as they are extremely close to the road. They are very easy to be rigged and you do not need much time to visit them, despite the depth of both of them.

Next day, we picked up the food at the usual supermarket, picked up the ropes at Geoff Wise place and move to Maydena, stopping for a breakfast.

So, with a lot of optimism and ignoring the weather forecast and the present snow in the hills around Junee Florentine, the three Amigos (lamelanders) drove to the main dirt road in JF. One piece of advise to mainlanders... not raining in Hobart does not mean anything at all in Maydena!.

We wanted to check how far our tiny and basic rental car would be able to progress through the JF dirt roads. I was driving through the main dirt road, when we saw the deviation to the right of the Nine Road. We crossed a bump and continue driving. The car slipped to the sides of the road, but we were confident. I trusted on the South Korean



*Sandy waiting to get into the warm cave*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

technology. When we arrived 200 meters further, we discovered that the road was not suitable for the car anymore. So, we decided to get changed and to walk uphill through the next dirt roads till the cave entrance. It took us two kilometers of walk. Anyway, walking through a dirt road is more pleasant than bush bashing.

Once we arrived to the entrance of Tassie Pot, we started reading the rigging instructions. First pitch a 42 meter one with a redirection and an anchor point at the top on a Sassafras. Great! Who can tell me what a Sassafras is? I asked Sando and David and, despite being English speakers, they did not know what that bloody thing was. We thought that it was a good idea to rig our rope to a fern tree, but when immediately the rope ripped of the tree, we discovered that it was not a good idea. Then we saw an sturdy tree a little bit higher and we rigged our rope there. One day later, Alan Jackson, who works for the Forest Department of the Government of Tasmania, informed us that that tree was the “Sassafras” tree. Awesome! Anyway, our instinct preserved our lives.

David B started rigging the rope and the deviation. Meanwhile, Sando and I were waiting at the top of the pitch, when it started snowing. I do not know if the reader has realised that when it starts snowing, silence takes control of the situation. No birds, no



*Sandy waiting to get into the warm cave*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

insects, nothing makes any noise. Sando and I were freezing and started shivering harder and harder. Everything around us became completely white. Thoughts about the heat in the Gold Coast beaches could not even reduce our suffering and cold. Perhaps because I have never been there (I do think that I do not lose much), I do not know. Meanwhile, David B was improving and improving his rigging, and we were wishing that he finishes as soon as possible. He bottomed the first pitch landing on a ledge covered of soil and debris. He shouted “rope free” and I abseiled down the first pitch. When I bottomed it, I discovered what was happening. The bottom of the first pitch continued in a slope below the anchor point of the second pitch. So, actually, what the first person had to do is to continue being attached to the rope and to try to walk down chimneying his legs at both sides of the walls till the next anchor point, where he should tie the rope, allowing the next people to perform a guided descent to the second anchor point. So, I de-attached myself of the rope in order that David B could safely progress to the second anchor point, when I discovered that he and the rope were leaving me behind, not been able to grab it anymore. David B tied the rope to the second anchor point and I waited till Sando abseiled down reaching my place. Then I pass the rope through one of my carabiners and let Sando continue abseiling to the second anchor point, where David B had already rigged the second rope for the second pitch of 24 meter deep. When Sando reached the second anchor point, I transferred the rope to my stop and continue abseiling to where she was.

We continued abseiling the second pitch, till we reached a very muddy chamber. We walked down

as we could (mud was really sticky) till we reached the glory hole. The glory hole is a squeeze that continues down till the top of a narrow hole, where David B had already rigged the third rope. It is a 18 meter pitch that a good climber could possibly climb down. We were completely wet and frozen. Then we reached a big chamber called “Goodbye Chamber”. We could see that this chamber had a small window that provided access to the next pitch, a fabulous 71 meter pitch (aerial). It was pleasant to discover that the temperature in this chamber was warm. We tried to enjoy the feeling and as we saw that it was late and we were still shivering, we decided to prussic up and to leave the rest of the cave for the next day. By the way, this is the first time that I experience in Tasmania that a cave is warmer than the outside...

When we arrived to the top of the cave, it was dark. We walked back the two kilometers to the car, got changed and drove in the middle of the night to Maydena, where we got a shower and a warm dinner, before going to bed. Before, we decided that next morning we would come back to Tassie Pot and continue rigging it and visit its interesting horizontal bottom. Owl Pot, that is very, very easy, could wait for another time. As it had been so cold during the day, I started having nightmares and waking up in the middle of the night.

Next morning I felt me like Bruce Willis in “Die Hard”, completely busted. However, we were mainlanders on a mission and we had to be hardcore... So, we left the Giant’s Table (I recommend people to use this accommodation place in Maydena) and drove again through the same dirt road to Tassie Pot.



*David B and Sandy in Tassy Pot*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*



After leaving the car at the same spot, we walked up the two kilometers and reached the entrance pitch of the cave. Rapidly, we abseiled down the different pitches to the spot, where we abandoned the rigging the day before.

David B started rigging the 71 meter pitch, with an initial rebelay. From this rebelay to the next one, the abseil is completely aerial. The last rebelay is wet, caused by the splashing of the close waterfall. Once we bottomed this pitch, we left our SRT gear and started scrambling down through the holes and squeezes of the existing rockpile, becoming wetter and wetter from the previous mentioned splashing. We continued crawling through a narrower and narrower passage till we passed a miserable squeeze with plenty of water and we reached the “Morocl Passage”. Someone has left some stones in that place writing that name. We continued through the horizontal section of the cave, where we could admire the pretties and becoming warmer than when we went into the cave. We continue learning and practising techniques like having the gloves tagged inside the PVC suit in the way down to the bottom of the cave and having the PVC suit tagged into the gloves in the way up to avoid that the falling water gets into your internal thermal layers. Some other tricks I learnt were sitting down on the gloves, while resting, to keep them as warm as possible.

Then we decided to come back to the main chamber and to prussic up. I took the rope of the 71 meter deep pitch and accelerated my pace, reaching the top of the cave in time. As it was Sunday, I was looking to my watch very often, trying to control the time available before we get our planes. Sydney has a terrible scheduling with Tassie in relationship to Melbourne and the last flight leaves Hobart a couple of hours in advance to the one to Melbourne.

I reached the car, got changed and as Sando and David B did not arrived yet, I decided to walk the two kilometers back to the cave. Then it started raining. I got completely soaked when I met both



*“You went WHERE in August?”*

*Photo Sandy Varin*

of them. I got changed again and Sando drove back to Hobart.

As soon as we arrived in Hobart, we had to clean the ropes, so we visited Geoff Wise and using his rope cleaner we washed them. Then we moved to the closest fish and chips shop and like homeless, we ate our delicate dinner in the middle of a dark park sat down on a bench and using a shopping trolley as a table. Then we went to the airport and flew back home. One more time, as soon as I got into the plane, I closed my eyes and when I opened them again, I experienced a tele-transportation to Sydney. To resume, it was a great trip and we had a lot of fun on the ropes!

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## JF-341 Threefortyone

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30 September & 1 October 2017

David Rueda-Roca

Party: David Bardi, Alan Jackson, Sandy Varin, David Rueda-Roca.

Our Victorian cave diver friend Stephen Fordyce has always indicated us that there was a very interesting sump in a cave called Threefortyone. When you go caving with two excellent cave divers like Sando and David B, you cannot avoid having curiosity to have a look to that sump. How can a cave be called like that? The answer is very simple. As the initial surveyors could not agree a name for the cave and the cave tag was JF-341 they decided not to think much about the name and use the number of the cave to refer it.

Following the normal procedure, I arrived in Hobart by plane on Friday evening. Next day, we discovered with glee that the skies were sunny in Hobart and we erroneously supposed that the micro-climate in Maydena would be the same... We performed the shopping of the prepaid groceries for the weekend. Then we met Alan Jackson, who was going to show us the cave and to allow us to rig it (we had to tell himself not to do anything and let us learning by doing).

We arrived to the turn to the Junee Florentine dirt road and we drove till the Junee Quarry road, where we got changed and we started walking to the right side of the road. The road was covered by vegetation and obviously has not been used for a long time. Following the Chairman track, we passed by the



*Sandy likes the rigging on the climb to the sump*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

deviation to Rift Cave, where Alan indicated us that it is a quite interesting cave. Going on and following the usual pink tapes (there is so much pink tape in Tasmania that their manufacturers can afford living in the Eastern suburbs of Sydney) we reached the crossing point where going on you reach JF-99 The Chairman and if you turn right and descend a little bit, you reach the entrance of JF-341 Threefortyone. It took us a little bit more than an hour.

Once we arrived to the entrance of the cave, we went in. For the first time, the entrance to a JF cave did not need any rope. We progressed through the cave till we reached the first 10 meter deep pitch. Alan left me rigging the rope. I descended the first bit (few meters) of the pitch turning to the right. I waited for the others and then Sando and I rigged a rebelay using a Y-belay. Sando abseiled down the rest of the pitch that is more a mixture between slope and pitch, till the bottom.

The next section was a 30-40 meter slope with 7 meters of rigged pitch. This section has some water on the floor and when you sit down to climb down some of the rocks, you feel happy of using a PVC suit and not getting a wet bum. Then we reached the top of the 38 meter pitch (third one). This pitch is composed by an initial ramp, that needs to be abseiled using a Y-belay anchor point at the top, a deviation to avoid some rubbing and at the end of



*First pitch, Sandy and David B*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*



the slope, a rebelay, where the descent becomes fully vertical and aerial. It is a nice pitch and very, very wet. There is a small waterfall (perhaps because it has been raining) and again, we were lucky that we were using our PVC suits. Alan was the last one to abseil and he prepared an additional redirection to avoid the water dropping of the waterfall.

At the bottom of the cave, we took off our SRT gear and harnesses and followed Alan, who was showing us the cave. The first impressive thing that we found was the Crystal pool. Actually, the Crystal pool was full of water and we spent some minutes drinking and filling our stomachs with this precious element.

Alan showed us the extensive horizontal part of this interesting cave. He started showing us the 'SCS Extension'. Afterwards he guided us to the access point for Enterprise Streamway and beyond, Then we toddled 'Into the Dinosaur' for a squiz at the Milky Way and the Dinosaurs Mouth. I confess that my lack of imagination forced me to use several minutes to see the Dinosaurs mouth that I had in front of my eyes. Then we decided to prussik up, to leave the cave rigged for a return the next day and to walk to the car. We collected the keys of the fences and while Alan drove back to Hobart, we spent the night in our usual Maydena operations base, the Giant's Table.

Next day, Sando, David B and me came back to the cave. It was not difficult to follow the pink tapes and to find the cave entrance by ourselves. At the end, we realised that we were getting some Tas-

manian orientation skills. We came into the cave, again abseiled the pitches and once we were at the bottom, we made it almost all the way to Enterprise Streamway – this is where the sump is located. It is important to indicate that the way to the sump involves some crawling, climbing, walking and negotiating sections of lots of mud.

We did not have any rope or climbing gear and we had to use some rigging tapes that we had in our packs and that we tied together to be able to climb down a couple of pitches. As far as we know nobody has dived this sump and therefore the original explorers have left it alone since discovery. When we thought that we were going to reach the sump, in a very muddy area we suffered of navigational problems and could not find it. Then, my mental clock realised that it was about time coming back, as we need to catch a plane that evening. We started prussiking up and derigging the cave. I was the last one to reach the entrance of the cave and then we started accelerating towards the car. Following the pink tapes and the female instinct of Sando, we reached the car on time. Then we drove back to Hobart, washed the ropes and drove to the airport, where we left the rental car.

Threefortyone is a great cave in Junee Florentine. Thanks to Alan Jackson for showing us this long cave. For more information about this trip, please read Alan Jackson's report in *Speleo-Spiel* number 423 – November-December 2017.



*Photo David Rueda-Roca*



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## Photogallery

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*CH439 Blindside, Chillagoe*

*Photo Alan Pryke*



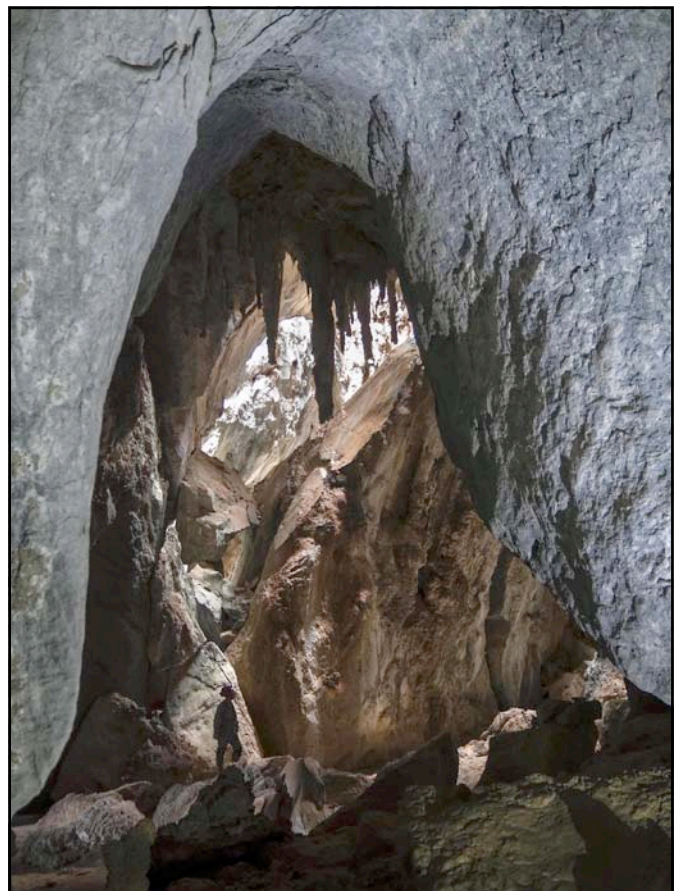
*Muddy rigging in JF341*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*



*Endzone sump, J13 Spider cave Jenolan*

*Photo Rafid Morshedi*



*CH12 Spring cave, Chillagoe*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

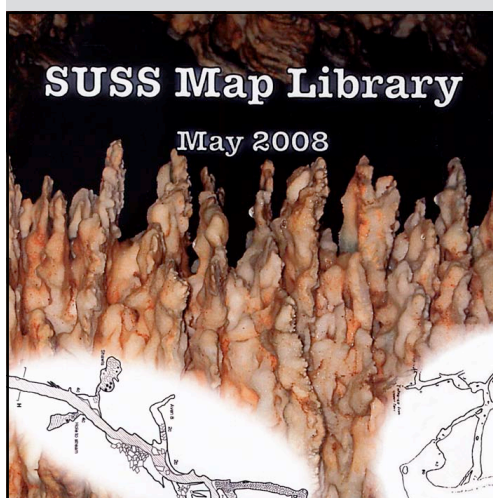


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## Things to buy

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For postage and handling costs and the details of how to order go to <http://suss.caves.org.au/publications>. There you will also find a range of must-have maps and other publications.



### Maps And Bulls On DVD

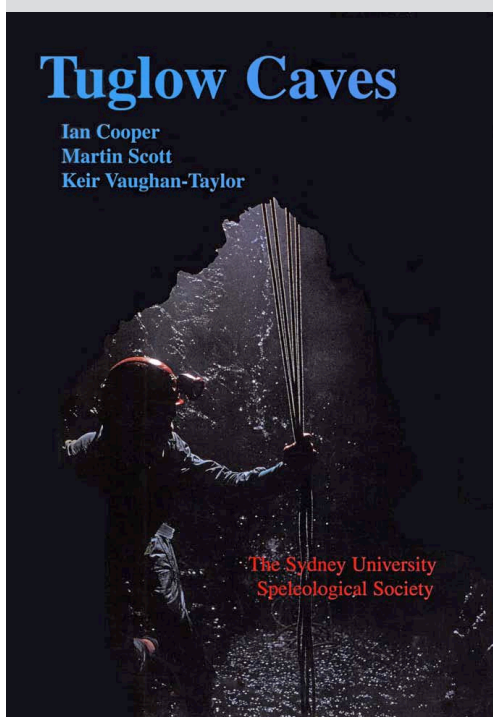
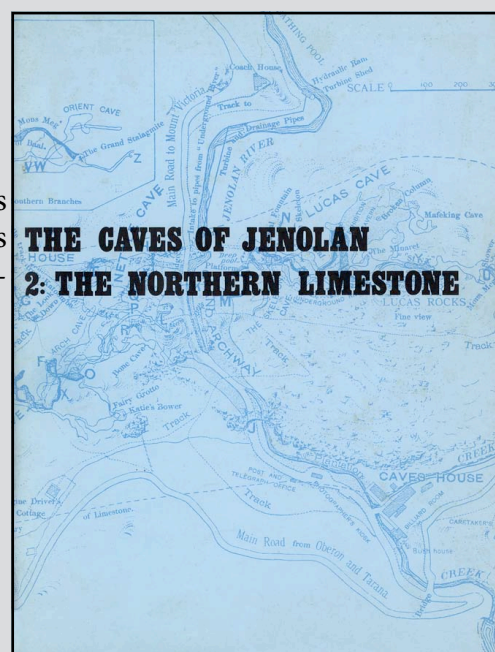
The entire SUSS cave map library of over 300 maps is on DVD and available for purchase. Our map library was scanned to provide wider access to the maps for SUSS and other ASF caving clubs. There are field sketches, ink maps produced on drafting film, ink maps produced on linen, as well as some of the 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 \$10.00 + PH.

### 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.

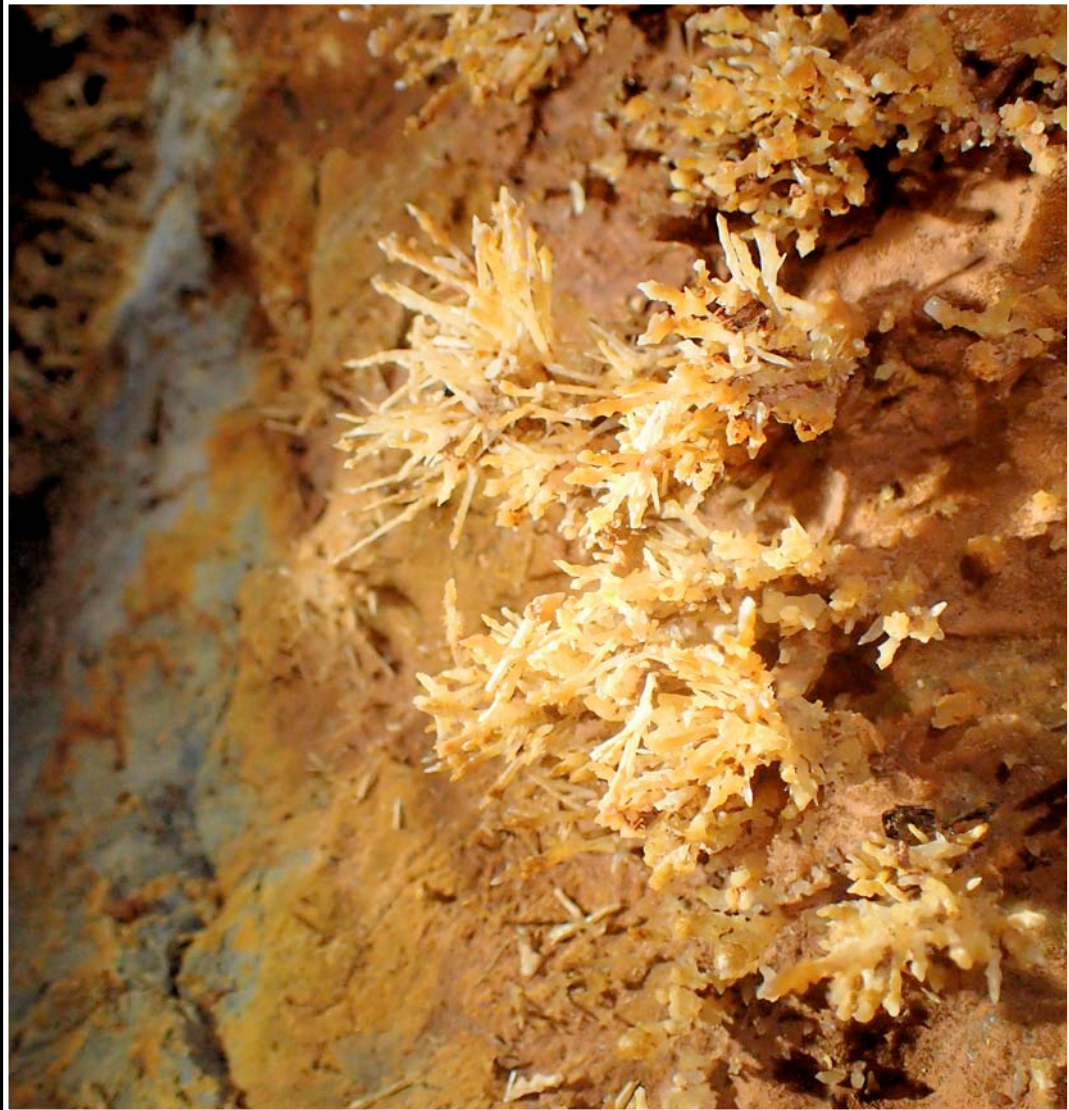


### Tuglow Caves

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.

*Back Cover: In the Overhead Loop, Tuglow*  
*Photo Rafid Morshedi*



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