

# BULLETIN *of the*

## *Sydney*

## *University*

## *Speleological*



## *Society*



## CAVE DIVING AT JENOLAN

THREE (3) TRIPS - Easter 79, October 79 and Easter 80.

### PHASE 1.

During Easter 1979, cave divers from South Australia managed to get permission to dive in the main underground river in the Jenolan Caves, N.S.W. In the middle of a large complex of caves running off the Grand Arch are 8 tourist caves (all actually join up into a single system 6-7 kilometres long), one of which is called Imperial Cave. A feature of the Imperial Cave tour is a 20 metre descent to the bottom level, where an underground river appears out of a wall and sumps again after about 50 metres of passageway. Generations of tourists have thrown money into the stream, although this of course had no affect at all on the dedicated cave divers.

So in that previous year, Phil Prust, Ron Allun, Ian Lewis and Alan Grundy discovered about 1000 metres of passage upstream and downstream, some of which had been explored by early divers 25 years before and led by none other than that caver-organiser with a flair, Dennis Burke. We were highly impressed by the efforts of those early divers, who used fairly primitive gear and pioneered the sport in this country.

Let's now look at the diagram (see back page). As I said, all this wet stuff exists underneath a 7 kilometre network which had been explored for 100 years by local Jenolan Guides. During the course of this, rumours told of another connection down a deep floor hole which got very close to the underground river. No-one knew where it was, or if it was just another old tale invented by an early explorer to boost his standing. We all commenced our diving from point X near the Grand Arch; the supposed roof hole was somewhere around Y, but 20 - 30 metres above us.

During Easter 1979, while we were exploring the branch near Y, we found a tobacco pipe in one of the smaller passages. Clearly it did not come in with a diver, and after mentioning it to the guides the Senior Guide (John Culley) remembered that he had lost it around that area while exploring floorholes 17 years before. This suggested the connection was close by, although nobody could find it.

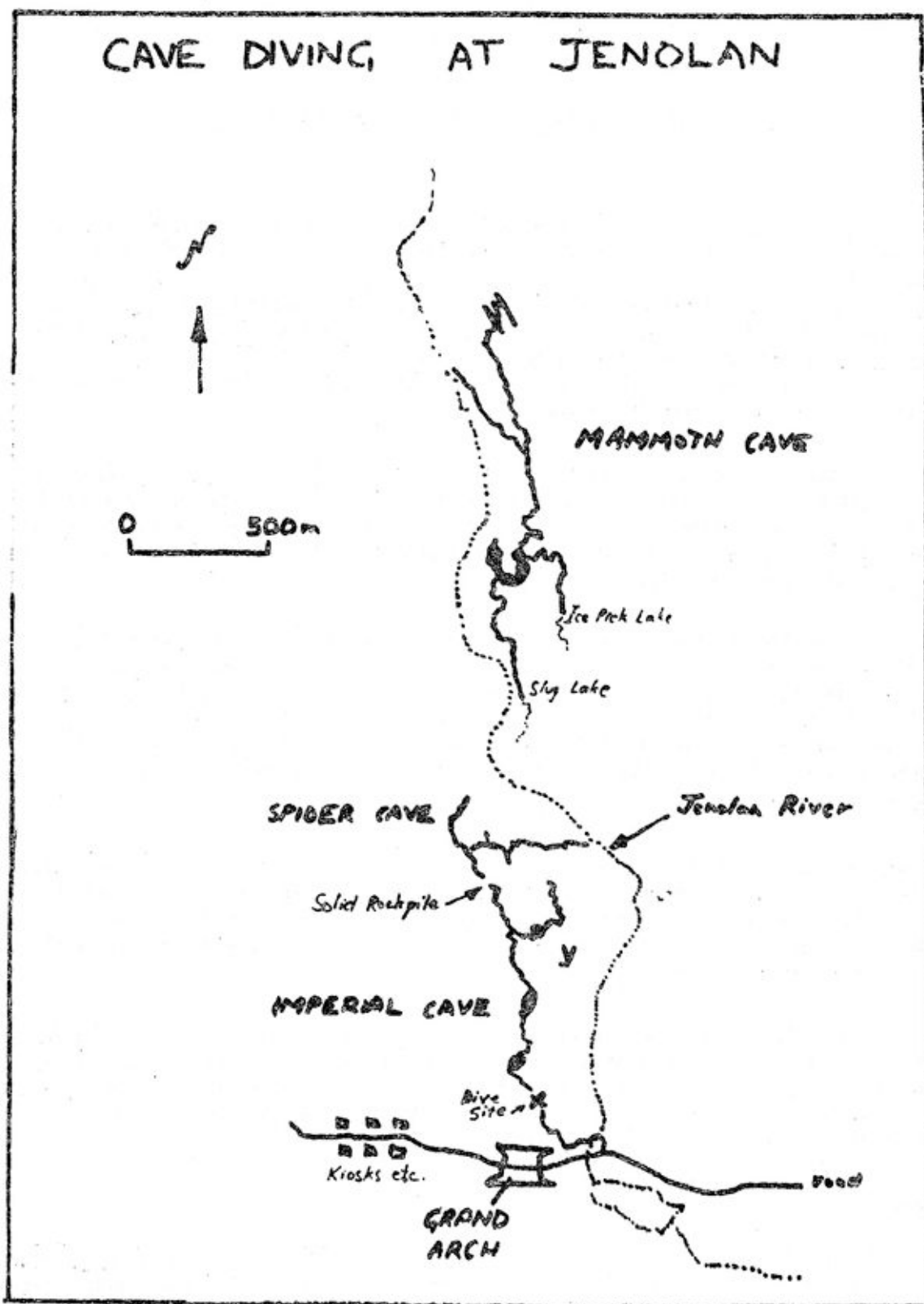
In the meantime, we pushed as far up the river passage as we could, heading north. The main passage stopped in a huge jammed up rockpile where the stream trickled out from the bottom. As you can see from the map, that rockpile was tantalisingly close to the end of Spider Cave where the river sumps. We didn't know that at the time, as the river in Spider Cave was only found a few months later.

### PHASE 2.

With the discovery of Spider Cave's river passage and the possibility of upward connections in Imperial, Ron Allun, Phil Prust and Terry Reardon explored the Spider Cave sumps on a quick trip in October. Spider Cave is knobbly and awkward and long - so it was no fun getting in and out even with the help of tame speleos to do the heavy work (we can always find some of those ..... they like being associated with the glory!). Ron dived

deep going upstream in Spider Cave, where the submerged passageway became a squeeze. Downstream singly ended in the same rockpile as Imperial but from the other side. The speleos scrambled about in the roof of Spider Cave above the northern sump but have not yet fully explored some reasonable leads. No other diving was attempted on this trip due to time and effort needed, but the same river in Mammoth Cave beckoned with sumps of its own to explore.....

# CAVE DIVING AT JENOLAN



## PHASE 3.

So in Easter 1980 a larger team of divers tackled the system. Besides the others already listed, Robin Garrad, Jenny Hiscock, Robyn Allum, Peter Rogers and Cheryl B. accompanied us. The object of this trip was to explore Ice-Pick Lake and Slug Lake Sur in the hope of making a connection with Spider Cave by diving. Ian dived Ice-Pick and negotiated a series of small passages linking larger chambers for a distance of 70 metres and 17m. depth, but had to turn around due to using up his air - the passage just kept going (this is heartbreak to a cave diver). Ron entered a very deep and high vertical passage which got longer and longer. He reached a depth of 30 metres which was by means the bottom and found a small muddy air chamber which didn't lead anywhere. Like Ice-Pick Lake, the passage continued .....

Newer information from the Canberra Speleos suggests that the gravel beds above the cave between Mammoth and Spider extend to a depth of 60 metres or more. The prospects of joining the two caves look good theoretically, but the logistics are enormous. Ice Pick may provide a bypass but this is rather unlikely - it will probably rejoin the Slug Lake river section somewhere downstream.

When we drew up our maps, though, there is only something like 300 metres to go to join the 2 caves, and therefore the entire Mammoth/Spider/Imperial/Tourist caves complex a potential 12 kilometres or more, and as long as Mulla Mulliang. Worth diving for.

And as almost a footnote, Ron and Peter discovered the elusive floorhole in Imperial from the underside while Ian recovered the long-lost tobacco pipe as proof of the connection.

The roofhole was marked by old signatures on the walls, and a blockage of wire netting and posts in the top of it, all put there during reconstruction of the path above in the last decade. The Guides instantly knew where to look for it, and attempts will now be made to clear the debris out and provide access to the river beyond the sump - up till now the domain of the divers.

It took 25 years until divers got back to Jenolan, and discovered passages seemingly everywhere. Although it's a long haul from Adelaide, we'll be back - after all, who else would bother!? Besides which, the new discoveries there have given a real boost to the guides and the local speleos, and any discovery at Jenolan is noteworthy.

IAN LEWIS.

reprinted from CEGSA newsletter 25(2)

#### BUNGONIA TRIP REPORT

26 - 10 - 80

Present: Guy Cox, Ian Mann, Jeff Crass

This was a one day trip with the intention of bottomming Argyle ( B 31 ).

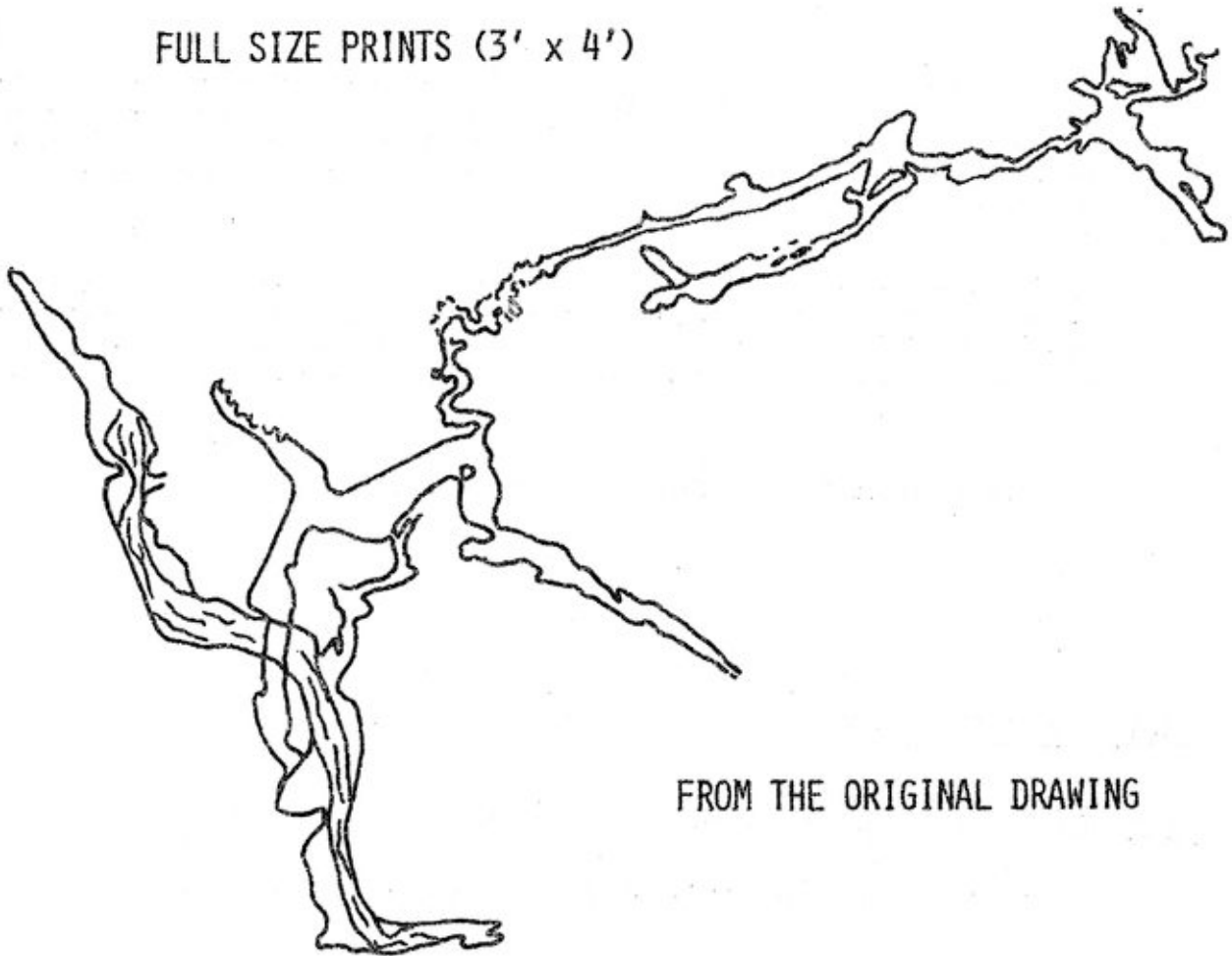
We left Sydney at 7:45 am and entered B 31 at 11:00 am. The air was found to be clear of CO<sub>2</sub> so we headed down the first pitch. We kept moving at a steady pace reaching sump no. 1 in approximately 2 hours. After a short rest we started out, reaching the surface at 4:00 pm.

The following is a list of SRT equipment needed for the pitches which can be used as a reference for future trips.

Pitch 1 : 40 feet long; need a 60 foot rope and two protectors, or one very long protector.

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FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING

\$5.00 EACH FROM:

GUY COX -

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UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY.

Pitch 2 : 80 ft pitch; need a 32 m rope and 2 protectors. The bolt mentioned in the Bungonia book is not there, but a good belay is a chockstone directly above the pitch.

Pitch 3 : 60 ft pitch; need a 30m rope [ 25m would probably be long enough - G.C. ] and a mat protector at the start of the pitch with 1 protector half way down.

Pitch 4 : 30 ft pitch; need 10m rope plus 2 slings for belay. No protectors.

Pitch 5 : 120 ft handline; need 42m rope with one protector. SRT useful at top.

Ian Mann

TRIP REPORT    Buchan - Part II  
                  ( Part I in Vol 20, No. 6 )

Date : 24-28 August 1980

Present : Mike Lake (T.I.); Richard McNeall; Phillip Cole

Wednesday 27th

Ragnarok is a superb "ladder" cave. The entrance pitch is a tight squeeze and consequently difficult to negotiate while on a ladder. After descending two subsequent pitches to a depth of around 30 metres one reaches a muddy vadose stream passage containing numerous glop-holes. ( Desc. Vol 20, No. 3 )

Eventually this leads to a steep nasty mud slope. At the bottom of this Phillip and myself investigated a squeeze which lead down to water with calcite rafts resting on the surface.

Foresight had lead to the anchoring of my 10m tape at the top of the mud slope and this proved to be of considerable benefit during the ascent. We exited the cave in the early afternoon and looked into a few nearby dolines for cave entrances. One hole was blocked by tin sheeting and rubble whilst another was blocked by a very decayed cow.



### Thursday 28th

East of Buchan township and directly underneath the main road to Orbost is Wilson Cave.

Large rambling passages and lofty chambers, inhabited by bats, satisfied our subterranean desires without exhausting us [ the truth comes out about Mike ! - ed. ] by squeezes or climbs.

Average passage width and height is around 5 metres and this extends for some 200 metres with occasional caverns 20m high. When we exited we found ourselves on the opposite side of the highway! Wilson Cave is one of those caves that one finds describes in story books and which every heavy caver should experience.

### Friday 29th

To top off an enjoyable week at Buchan we decided to do Acoustic Pot, Bungonia, on the way back.

Richard located the entrance for us and thus gained the honour of ascending first, followed by Phillip.

Descending last, I had just negotiated the edge when a cacophony was made manifest. Locking off, I waited, and soon the light from numerous dolphin torches heralded the arrival of "the Sydney Pirateer Caving, Canyoning, Abseiling, Bushwalking Club" as they called themselves. Sensing my concern, they promised NCT to knock off any gear as I proceeded to descend. Down below, Phillip explored a little way into " Snake and Son " while Richard CMied out.

Phillip ascended next on my jumars and upon reaching the top Chumley and Grotty chatted away for 15 minutes, each thinking that the other would lower my jumars, until I loudly proclaimed my presence 32m below !

### Conclusion

The Buchan trip was a superb week of highly enjoyable caving. Thanks to the V.S.A. members who helped us immensely by their suggestions of what caves to visit and their locations, the V.S.A. committee for permission to cave at Buchan and to Rimstone co-operative for accomodation at Homeleigh which is certainly a luxurious mansion when compared to camping out.

Michael Lake



TRIP REPORT - Jenolan, 4th, 5th & 6th October 1980

Present - Mike Lake (TL), Judy Clarke, Guy McKanna, Philip Cole, Bruce Welch, Paula Gard, Peter Winglee, Marianne Winglee, Paul Greenfield, Mac Monks, Debbie Cameron, Steve Doyle.

Saturday 4th

Our objective was to try and push the rockpile blocking Central River in Twiddly-Om-Pom. For this assault a naive group consisting of Mike (leader and only one foolish enough to do it again), Judy, Guy, Phillip, Mac, Debbie and Steve assembled at Mammoth Flat. Other than myself, none of the six had been past Skull and Crossbones and I imagine that the tales of bodily torture foretold by Paul Greenfield and his contemporaries were foremost in their minds. Guy decided that seven trogs attired in dark blue overalls was a trifle dull so wore a light green tie with black polka dots.

On the way to the Middle Bit I noticed that Central Lake is now non existent. Progress was initially rapid until Middle Bit Rockpile slowed us down and the Dry Siphon dampened our enthusiasm. On the other side of the very wet Dry Siphon Steve enquired: "Are we coming back this way?". Soon afterwards Debbie meekly asked "Are we half-way there yet?". This sums up beautifully how we all felt - especially on the way back. *(Can't understand how Dry Siphon was wet when it had been dry a few weeks previously, and there had been no rain since - Ed.)*

Finally the constrictive walls of North Tunnel diverged and we found ourselves in GNC. Some difficulty was experienced in finding the pitch down to TOP but eventually Judy found the letter-box squeeze at the top and we all descended. After consuming a lunch of scrumptious mixed lollies some of us crawled through Mud-in-your-Eye Squeeze to reach Central River - alas but fortunately no river existed. The rockpile was poked a bit, but the conclusion was - no go.

Many long hours later we reached Skull and Crossbones after spending half an hour wandering round Middle Bit Rockpile. Enthusiasm was still high so we spent some 15 minutes in northern

Railway Tunnel playing on the mud slopes before exiting for Mammoth Flat after 11 hours underground.

#### Sunday 15th

Excited by the lack of water in Central Lake Peter, Bruce and Paul decided to visit the lake to try and find some negotiable passages at the bottom, while several others and myself looked at Central River and, especially, Grinning Monster Lake. The latter is very low but still contains water. No negotiable ways were found at Central Lake - apparently all passages are blocked by silt.

Spider Cave was visited next by myself and six others. A word about Pirates Delight. Concern about this squeeze has been expressed by the guides who feel that it would present major difficulties in a rescue. At present the squeeze is tightest at the base and digging here would lessen such difficulties. Fortunately Pirates Delight is famous not for its squeeze but for the steep, seemingly endless, slope up to the Bus Stop. So perhaps if future trips could spend a short time digging then the squeeze would be made a little safer without being less sporty. *(How long did you spend digging then, Mike? - Ed.)*

Back now to more serious concerns. The river level was the same as on previous trips. Of note is that on the way back Phillip accidentally knocked loose a large boulder which fell below the Expandable Minimum, just missing Guy. Even a stable rockpile like Spider still needs a little care. The cave was exited after 6 hours underground.

#### Monday 6th

Bottomless Pit had not been inspected for many years and few SUSS people knew much about the cave. Bruce informed me that the bottom was totally blocked by talus, however there is always the chance of making a breakthrough.

I descended first, unravelling the 180' of ladder as I proceeded. After 140' I came to the end of my rope - terminated by a good thick knot. Fortunately the ladder was by my side, and with a spare carabiner (always handy) I clipped on to this while two Guys at the top rebelayed the rope to give me an extra 20 feet, which enabled me to reach the bottom. I still

had to slide down a further 20 foot slope - the pitch is 180' so a 160' rope belayed at the very top just makes it possible.

Well, at the bottom Judy, Guy McKanna, Phillip and I searched thoroughly for any leads to vast innumerables. All we found was a tin of peaches: "Ardmona Peaches - a British Empire Produce" and also considerable steel cable - the remnants of an exploit 20 years earlier. Bottomless Pit certainly terminates and exploration in other sections of the Southern Limestone will have to be initiated.

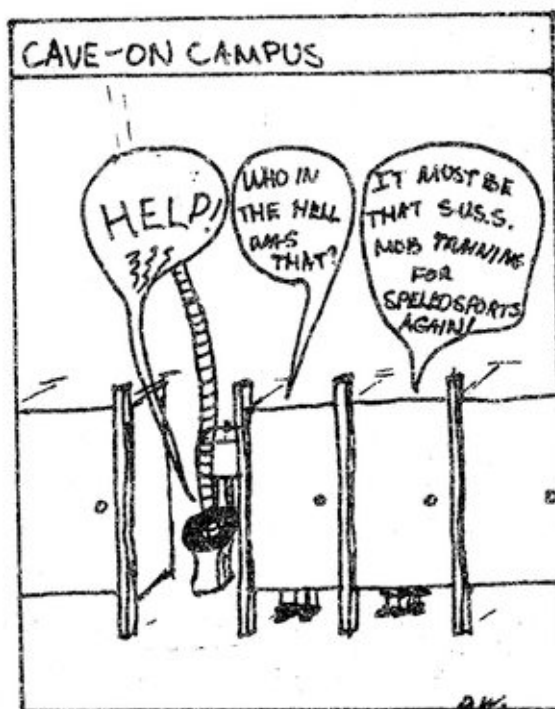
With Central River and Lake absent, now is the time for exploration in Mammoth - don't delay until the next flood! Good luck!

Mike Lake

#### FOOTNOTE

The observant reader may have deduced that I was there on the Monday. I took the opportunity to have another look at Block Cave. There is an obvious spot for a dig at the downstream end of a small streamway at the lowest level of the cave. It will require some labour - rather like Dingo Dig in Spider - but it looks very promising.

G.C.



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## FUTURE EVENTS

### November

Thursday 6th. SUSS General Meeting, 7.30 pm, Common Room,  
Holme Building.

15th- 16th. Bungonia. Drum Cave and other vertical delights.  
Contact Ian Mann 631 4321

Monday 24th. SUSS Committee Meeting. Mike Lake's - 31  
Crescent Rd., Caringbah. 7.30 pm

24th - 28th. Midweek Jenolan Trip. Contact Judy Clarke.

29th-30th Wyanbene. Contact Ivan Desailly, 773 3861

### December

Thursday 4th. SUSS General Meeting. Norm Poulter will  
talk on 'Some Remote and Inaccessible Places'  
Common Room, Holme Bldg., 7.30

13th-14th Jenolan. Mammoth, Spider and Southern Limestone.  
Contact: Mike Lake, 524 5229

26th-31st Cave Convict - ASF Conference at Pharmacy College,  
Melbourne, Ian Mann has registration forms.

A Buchan trip is planned on the way down.

Dec-Jan. New Zealand - contact Steve Bunton 524 8116

\* \* \* \* \*

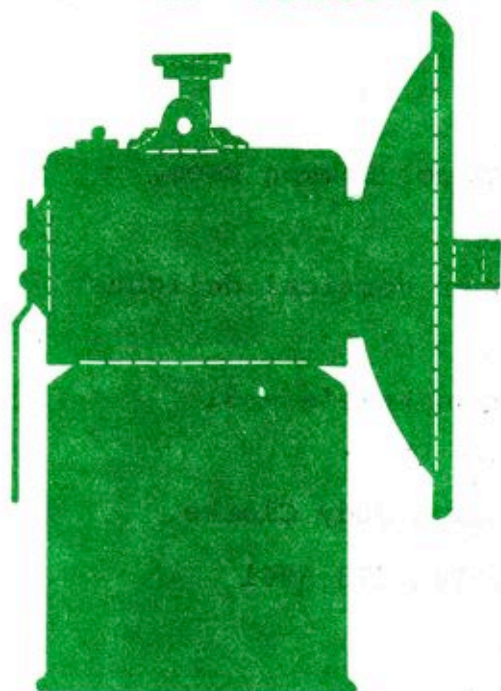
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Lumen in Tenebris



VOLUME 20 NUMBER 7

OCTOBER 1980

# SUSS

BULLETIN  
of the  
SYDNEY UNIVERSITY  
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BOX 35, HOLME BUILDING,  
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