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Speleological



Society

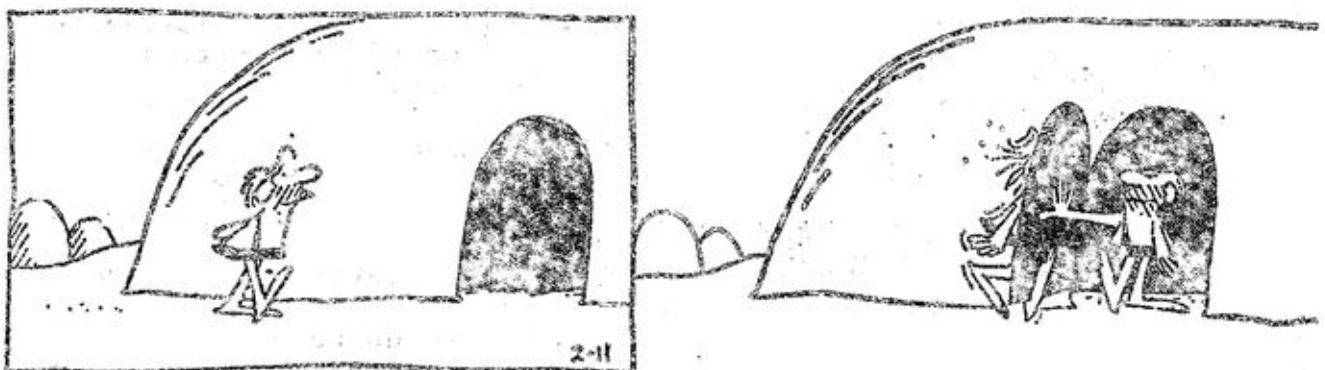
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Editorial

At last, another SUSS Bull! I would like to reassure all the doubters amongst our avid readers that we have not ceased publication. SUSS always has difficulty in producing bulletins around the end of each year. Most of our contributors are university students who tend to suffer from attacks of guilt and panic every November. The last real bulletin produced was September (really October due to our quaint titling system) and after that we suffered a severe lack of material to print. This problem would normally be resolved towards the end of November, but this time most of the contributors headed off to go caving (shock, horror) as soon as their exams had finished. My plans to produce a bulletin in January were disrupted when I decided to go to Thailand. However, all has not been lost and I now have a reasonable amount of material to print (or at least promised). I expect us to publish this Bull in mid-March, another at the beginning of April and then at the start of every month until I have nothing to print again in November.

The lack of a bulletin in the last few months just shows how dependent we are on just a handful of SUSS members. Despite being the largest single speleo club in the country (if you ignore VSA who are a state organisation), the bulletin is being produced by only a very few members. If, as happened at the end of the year, these people decide to go caving, there is nothing to print and nobody to print it. So, why don't you volunteer to help, either with the actual production or by writing articles and reports. The bulletin is produced using the Computer Science Department's facilities and I would be only too glad to introduce you into the crafts involved in creating a bulletin (typing, type-setting, layout, printing). If you want a frequent and interesting bulletin, it's up to you to help.



Secretarial

With the Annual General Meeting coming upon us fast and with the huge influx of new members, I thought a few words on the roles of each of the committee positions would be in order.

If you know of anybody who would be suitable for any of these positions, please come along and vote for them as they are the ones who will be running the club for the next twelve months. If you wish to nominate for any of the positions, please take note of the responsibilities you would be undertaking.

President

Chairs general meetings and attends such meetings as necessary to represent the club (e.g. Union finance meetings)

Vice President

This position automatically goes to the retiring President. This person generally just stands in when the President is unavailable.

Correspondence Secretary

This person attends to the day-to-day correspondence and the clearing of the mail box.

Minutes Secretary

This person takes minutes at all meetings (committee and general). It is essential that this person should be able to attend all such meetings and can write legibly.

Treasurer

Responsible for the club's financial affairs. A flair with figures and a devious mind are absolute essentials.

Editor

I would say that this is the hardest position on the committee. This person is responsible for producing the club's bulletin and for harassing the small horde of helpers and writers.

Equipment Officer

This person is responsible for the maintenance of the club's equipment. This person must have some convenient place to store the equipment.

ASF Liason and Safety Officer

This position involves basically three tasks: representing the club at ASF committee and NSW Liason Council meetings as well as reporting back to the club on these meetings; sending reports on the club's activities to the ASF Newsletter editor; reporting on any accidents that happen to the ASF Safety Officer.

Publicity Officer

This position was created to represent the club at meetings with government and other such bodies.

General Committee Members

These people are supposed to help out wherever necessary in the running of the club.

Well, they're the positions and now it is up to you, the members, to exercise your vote at the Annual General Meeting. One further point for your information, only the President, Vice President and Correspondence Secretary are allowed to apply for caving permits.

Trip Report
Thursday 25th November
(The Day We Got Paid For Acting)

Leaders: Ian Mann, Ed (Sir Edmund) Hillary and some advertising director.

Others: Numerous S.U.S.S. personalities, an advertising crew, women from Women's College, a beekeeper (minus bees), a Sherpa and a little red car.

After a source contacted Paul Greenfield, this trip was organised by Mr Organisation - alias Ian Mann, to raise funds for S.U.S.S.. I do believe we did actually make some money in the end; after we paid Mike for some parts for the battery charger and bought some chicken and champagne (and ice) for the ensuing S.U.S.S. Christmas party.

Well this trip was like any other caving trip, in having to get up early to get to our location which was the Women's College - but not to go caving, nor draining or burning, raping and pillaging (as someone thought who kept trying to light fires everywhere and smoke us all out) - but instead to engage in that evil of evils, the production of propaganda - advertising. Obviously someone knew how good we were at acting and thought we would make a great audience for Ed Hillary to lecture at - as was our scene in the ad, or else it had something to do with Hillary, Sherpas, Everest and the Mountaineering Club (which S.U.S.S. owns anyway) Whatever the case, we ended up in this ad promoting the forthcoming "Sherpa" car.

Overall it was a pretty easy trip; all we had to do was sit, occasionally clap and occasionally stand up. Eve Innes had the hardest part and had to take off her hat about a dozen times, but not to Geoff, as they wouldn't let him sit next to her because of his hairy legs. Other highlights were the "chatting up" of some of the women from the college - who was that girl, Pike? I myself met the daughter of the owners of Abercrombie House, so if you're going to Abercrombie Caves, visit the house and say you're from S.U.S.S. (and be prepared to be thrown straight out).

Well eventually the director and camera crew got it right, or else they realised Ed was a bit hot in his Tweed Suit (it was 40 degrees that day), and let us back out into the real world.

So, after such a hard task, the active people (all the S.U.S.S. contingent), moved outside to celebrate our new found fame and fortune and Christmas at the same time, and also the end of exams for the students. It is truly amazing how many can celebrate so much in so little time!

Well, the chicken and champagne was delicious, though I'm not sure if Ma Hunter enjoyed the champers, as, when he poured it into his cup, which was in his shirt pocket, he would bend over to put the bottle back and consequently pour the champagne back into the Esky. I am sure Judy and Winnie enjoyed it, as Judy was heard to say "Richard looks cute in the bushes"!!!! And everyone else seemed to enjoy it, as Ian, who thought he had solved the bun-fighting complex that S.U.S.S.

members have, by buying loaves, neglected S.U.S.S. ingenuity as the hot weather made for an ideal ice and later hose fight. Uncle Bruce, missing his son Henry, decided to play along with the "kiddies", the result was a soaked but refreshingly cool S.U.S.S. Christmas party. As Pike would say, "a good time was had by all"...that reminds me, Mike, where did that girl end up?

Guy McKenna

Trip Report
Australia Day Long Weekend, 1983

Present: Richard Mackay, Kristin Young, Mark Hunter, Michael Garben, Michael Lake.

We arrived at the parking spot for the Wallara Canyon on Sunday morning, having spent a pleasant night at the Youngs' holiday (?) house on the Cox's River, and having caught an unpleasant traffic jam at Jenolan. We set off at a desperate pace, expecting to strike the canyon after about 10 minutes. Instead, we followed a track in the wrong direction and from that moment on, we were lost for the rest of the day.

We arrived at a spot which allowed a view of the area and set off through the bush downwards. We struck a dry creekbed which Richard seemed to recognize and followed it, by-passing various cliffs which Richard and I thought were familiar. We then met up with a larger (and almost dry) creekbed which made us realize that we must have been on a tributary of the correct creek. Instead we were miles off course.

We followed this creek for some distance till we came to a "largish" drop which we tried to convince ourselves was Margaret Falls. But this drop was about 150 feet too short, so we decided to leave the creek by a spur on the left. After all, we had done a couple of "pissy" abseils. The top of the spur revealed a hill on the left which we convinced ourselves was Mt. Pindari, but in fact was Mt. Maxwell.

We ascended this by scrambling up a cliff and then realized we were about 3 miles off course and had been in a separate creek system, East Christie's rather than Central Christie's.

We got back to the cars and camped at Boyd River. Apathy and lack of confidence prevented us trying to get ourselves lost in Tuglow on Monday. Instead, we successfully negotiated Hampton and the road home.

Mark Hunter

Note. This report has been left almost untouched, just to make Mike Lake feel more literate.

Yet Another Sea Cave.

The Northern Beaches region of Sydney is not only well known for its surf and bathing beauties, but also for its seacaves, such as the Ovens at South Whale Beach and St Michael's of North Avalon and another at North Warriewood and now yet another has been found at South Dee Why.

This latter seacave lies halfway along the headland between Dee Why and Curl Curl beaches, though it can only be reached from the Dee Why end and really only at low tide if one wants to get there at all.

The cave itself is a couple of metres above sea level and about ten metres before the shoreline. The cave is about twenty metres long (and is aphotic at the end when one enters and blocks the light). The entrance is rectangular and looks like a corridor (about 3m by 4m). This shape decreases in size and symmetry as the cave recedes into the cliff. The floor is of talus and has obviously filled in most of the cave. This talus is covered in guano from the numerous pigeons that roost in the cave. The roof is covered with moss and creepers and forms a spectacular hanging garden. Just outside the cave is much fresh talus which has fallen from the overhanging cliff, which looks rather precarious.

This cave is similar to the Warriewood seacave but is not as long. It is also presumably of a post-Tertiary date like the other dyke-controlled seacaves of the region.

There are also some spectacular weathered sandstone formations nearby as well as some fine cliffs for those interested in seacliff climbing.

Guy McKenna

Some Sandstone Stalagmites

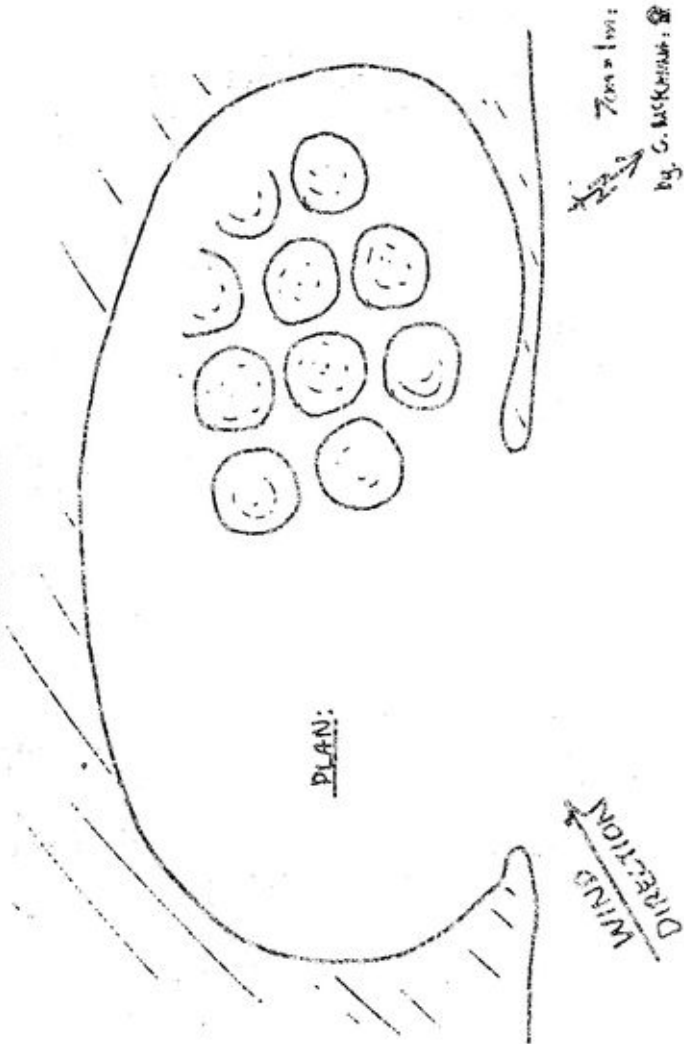
Just off a fire trail that runs between Road, Ingleside and McCarr's Creek Road, there is a small cave (2m by 1m by 1m) in the side of a small sandstone cliff. Well, Noddy doesn't live here, (he lives in the next one down), but in this cave there is something just as fantastical - sandstone stalagmites, the things you occasionally hear rumoured about and never see. Well, believe me, they do exist! (hey, wow!!!) There are about eight of them hanging from the roof of this little grotto. They are about six inches long and about six inches in diameter at the base and about three inches at the tip. And they are also white (as is the whole little cliff), just like real stalagmites.

However they did not form in the same way as limestone stalagmites. These sandstone stals appear to have been originally eroded by the capillary action of water and then weathered by wind, to their present shape, imitating the stalagmites we are all so used to, or maybe Noddy made them, who knows? (Why not ask him?) But they do exist and are entirely composed of sandstone!

Guy McKenna

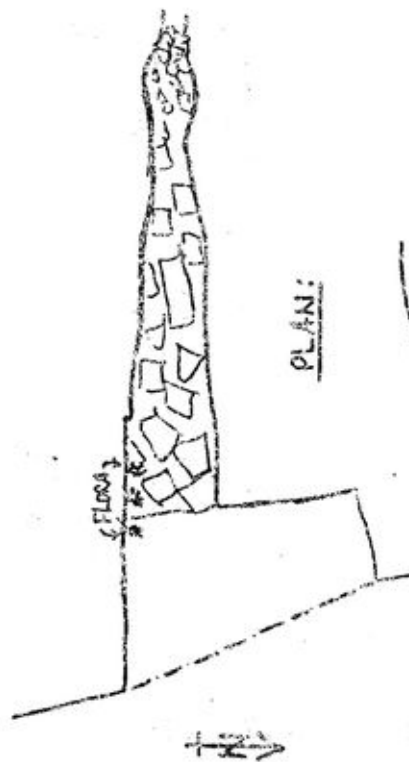
SANDSTONE STAGGITES:-

(NIGARAS CREEK)



HANGING GARDENS SEA CAVE:

DEE WHY:



ASST. GRADE 1:
by G. McGowan: 18. 10
10000 ft. 1000

0.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9 2.0

Trip Report - Arethusa Canyon

Present: John Kaye, Martin Scott, Grant Henderson, Daniel Large.

An early start was made from the car, parked above Henson Brook on the Mt. Hay Road. The descent into Henson Brook was burnt, muddy and steep (lots of fun). Once in Henson Brook, it was a two kilometre creek bash to its junction with Arethusa Brook. Along the way there were two short swims, Martin was able to chimney the first one and stay dry, much to our disgust, and later was to become the object of duckweed projectiles. At the second swim it was necessary to get wet, this being the junction with Arethusa Brook.

Thirty more minutes of creek bashing and we entered a wide canyon quite like Grand Canyon. After more jokes about the water being septic and duckweed adventures, we reached the abseil about 10.30 AM.

At this point the canyon is fairly wide, but the abseil descends into the narrowest and darkest parts of the canyon. The abseil is on the right-hand side of a waterfall. The abseil starts from the bottom of a human sized pothole which forms a small window in the canyon wall. Rope retrieval from the lip of the pothole was easy. Looking up into the waterfall we saw the possibility of abseilling down through the boulder choke at the top of the waterfall. This would be a more spectacular abseil taking one down through an eroded pothole through which the waterfall gurgles. This abseil would require more thought.

The bottom of the abseil leads to more swims and jumps as the canyon widens out. We soon reached the flat, wide ledge above a 25m. waterfall that marks the end of the canyon. Here we stopped for a waterlogged lunch.

After lunch we attempted to find the shortcut out of the canyon described as a "tricky traverse". All attempts by Grant and Martin to find a way through the traverse were not successful. Further investigation back up the canyon was also unsuccessful. By one o'clock, blue sky had turned to thunderclouds. A drop in temperature, and a drizzle that steadily turned into a downpour combined to dampen our spirits. Deciding that it was unwise to be caught on the lip of the waterfall should the water level rise, we decided to take the long cut out via the Grose Gorge and Grand Canyon.

Finding a sturdy sapling to tie off from, we abseilled down a rope that only just reached the rocks 20m. below. From here the way out was very wet and dismal. Clambering over boulders down the gully, we reached a point where it was possible to cut across the spurs to the cliffline below the Pylon Lookout. During the walk out we passed a tree stump still smouldering three weeks after the bush fires.

Eventually we reached the track that led through Rodriguez Pass and up to Evans Lookout. Very wet and exhausted we reached the lookout about 7.30PM. From here two kind Canadian tourists gave us a lift to the top of Evans Head Road. One taxi ride and \$18.00 later we reached the car, so ending our masochistic trip.

John Kaye

Trip Report -- Jenolan
20th-21st November 1982

Present: Paul Greenfield, Danuta Kucharska, Grant Elliott, Chris Maltby, Craig Emmelhainz, Lucas Tuberqan, Steve Moore

With talk in the air of another Jenolan book, this time on Spider and Wiburds Lake Caves this weekend had the aim of having a look at what had to be done. Specifically this involved a thorough look at Wiburds Lake Cave for familiarisation and assessing the most promising digs.

So on Saturday morning after lengthy discussions with the Guides we set off from Mammoth Flat (cars had to be parked at the boom gates) up McKeowans Valley. Wiburds Lake Cave now (and for the last 7 years) is minus the lake and the stream has dried up to become an unconnected line of puddles.

Our first task was to have a look at some possible extra passage the guides believed existed in the Neddy's Knock area. Ernie Holland told us he had reached a point from which the river was audible below. After looking behind many rocks, Paul found what he believed was the new lead. After about 10m in a reasonably spacious rockpile a drop was located that seemed to match the point that Ernie had found. With the aid of Paul's waist tape I descended about a 7m drop only to find the ditch clogged with sand in every direction. It is a possible digging site but others look more promising and accessible. Nevertheless this area will have to be surveyed on a future trip.

The lasting impression of Neddy's Knock is of the fine calcite crystals there, which in some cases are superbly developed.

When we returned to Western Passage the others were already looking at other possible leads further along. We all proceeded to Pitter Patter Passage and relocated what is probably one of the most promising digs. The Sand Trap Number 1 is a silted up phreatic tube that seems to be inviting a digging attempt.

Western Passage itself has numerous side passages that are silted up, which we recorded hopefully to investigate completely in the future. We gradually moved back through the cave to Henry's Dig. This area still remains probably one of the most likely approaches to the Jenolan Lower River from Wiburds Lake Cave, if one exists. However inactivity on the dig for several years means that digging will now be necessary to find the digging site.

On the way back down the valley Paul and I had a look at J73 or Blowing Hole. This entrance is located on Century Bluff which has a notable absence of major cave, yet is certainly not far from the probable course of the underground river. Indeed J73 suggests cave has existed there, for below it is a large doline and the cave itself issues a strong draft. Unfortunately the hole is clogged with rocks and they would have to be awkwardly moved before any extension could be considered. Added to this the rocks in the cave are extremely sharp. However the chock to the right, as one enters the cave, is probably the best prospect.

We returned to Mammoth Flat and spent a leisurely night around the fire. At this stage Chris amazingly recited sketch after sketch of Monty Python for our amusement.

On Sunday we had intended to visit Spider but given the large number of freshers in the party we decided on Mammoth Cave to investigate Central River given the fact it was now dry, but this plan too had to be altered. Paul decided (with his fiendish sense of humour) that he wanted to see his friends (who are over 6ft tall) squirm in agony in Mammoth Squeeze. By the time most had gone through and the others by the rockpile we only had time to go to the Lower River, given the stated desire by some members of the party to be home with their families by Christmas. After some of us had a quick swim in the hydro weir, we did indeed decide to return to our residences (such a useful word, Mike), concluding yet another enjoyable Jenolan Trip.

Grant Elliott

Spring Creek Canyon
Saturday February 5th 1983

Present: Mike Lake, Ian Mann, Bruce Stewart, John Kaye, Daniel Large.

We left Ian's residence at Croydon at 6.00 am Saturday in the Bedford van and arrived at the walk-in point at about 8.30 am. During the walk in the scenery looked slightly different from usual. This difference became more accentuated when a one hundred foot pitch appeared unexpectedly in front of us.

Surmising that we had stumbled into Long Gully due to a trivial navigational error, we cut up the ridge on the right then back down to enter the real Spring Creek at last.

Soon we reached the classic slippery dip. I plummeted down first (after Ian had checked for logs etc at the bottom) and John and Bruce actually climbed up the rope to slide down again.

The water is reasonably clean with only a trace of light brown. The other pitches followed quickly with occasional stops for Daniel to take photos while we posed.

As the day was sunny we all had a pleasant time in the warm water and a good cool swim at the Shoalhaven rapids just before our walk out, which, unfortunately, was still in the heat of the day. We finished the trip by reaching the cars at about 6.00 at night after a tiring walk out.

Mike Lake

Claustral
or "Ugly Mob Scenes in Canyon"
or
"Mike Lake and Audi Escape Uninjured"
13th February, 1983.

On Saturday afternoon we attended a barbecue at Ian Mann's residence (thanks Mike) and, after a good feed, played with puzzles, a guitar and babies. The weather looked threatening, with thunder and rain, but we were fairly sure Claustral wouldn't be too wet to do. More worried were we about the hordes of unscrupulous tourists that are known to descend on poor Claustral every Sunday to rape and pillage, or as Mike said (I think) "to probe and prod into her private passages". That is why we decided to drive up to Mt Tomah on Saturday evening to camp and get an early start.

Grant Elliott had arranged to meet two non-S.U.S.S. friends at home, so we arranged to see him at Mt Tomah. Mike Lake and Mark Hunter set off in the Audi, while Bruce and I, in his (trusty) Holden, had the same intention, but, alas, were not to have it fulfilled. At the end of Ian's street, he noticed the automatic transmission had become grossly dysfunctional. We got to Concord, where he tried to diagnose and fix it, but only managed to get filthy. As we were parked outside a car salesyard, a couple of salesmen offered him a trade-in for a new Commodore and one even offered to buy his cassette player from him. Bruce declined all such offers.

Knowing that Mike and Mark were waiting on us at Richmond, I rang home and begged for the Kingswood. We limped back to Cremorne in Bruce's car, picked up the trusty HZ and got to Richmond, a little shamefaced, an hour and a half late.

The Kingswood having thoroughly outrun the Audi on the drive to Mt Tomah, we chose to sleep in the picnic shelter next to the Bell Road as the weather looked bad (as they were too slack to put up tents - Ed). Mark slept on a picnic table, Bruce under it, Mike on one of the benches and me on the floor. We talked about sex and listened to the huge trucks rolling by and a car full of yobboes stopping to answer Nature's call. Meanwhile, Grant and friends had arrived and had gone to the end of the road to camp.

At 1.30 am, Mark tired of the conversation and suggested we go and let Grant's tent down. We dressed and set off into the pitch dark, misty night. Only half way along the road did I remember that Grant's tent was free-standing and could not be let down. Undaunted we pressed on. We prowled around, played with the zip, put shoes on his car, giggled a lot and rattled the tent and ran.

Now ready to go to sleep, we did, until a huge truck pulled up next to us and sat there idling for ten minutes.

Now for the serious bit of the trip. We set off early for the canyon at about 8.00 am. Grant and two others were ahead, behind another party of three. We met up with them soon. The canyon was a little grotty and fairly dry, and all the tracks are very well defined. At the pitches we were caught behind a party who were belaying each other down the abseils. Mark had to show one of them a tape

knot! As we waited, a party of sixteen stacked up behind us, followed by what we were told was another thirty. All this at 9.30 am! This is overcrowding to the point of collective irresponsibility. It was fun abseiling in waterfalls again, but the water was so low that it was rather tame. Also the water was warm. After the pitches we raced through the canyon as fast as we could. This was pleasant and uneventful, but for Bruce almost falling flat on his face on one of the rocks in a shallow leaping pool (I've never seen a leaping pool! ed.) We floated happily through the tunnel swim; Mark even had a buoyancy vest. The sky was overcast, and as we walked slowly out, thunder rolled over the sky.

It was nice to get into good dry clothes again, and we were very glad we weren't still down the canyon with the milling and unruly mobs. That would have been most unpleasant. I now feel that it is irresponsible to go to that canyon on a weekend, unless you like taking risks in floods or just sitting around a lot.

Kristin Young

P.S. For the S.U.S.S. Book of Records, neither Mike Lake nor the Audi suffered any sort of difficulty or injury whatsoever this weekend.

1982 Real Property Final Examination (Law II)

Aubrey owns Yellowacres which adjoins Greyacres, owned by Barry.

Barry has discovered a cave system which extends under both Yellowacres and Greyacres at a depth of two hundred metres. The only entrance to the system is on Greyacres. It can be proved that Barry often enters that part of the system under Yellowacres and that on two occasions he has removed precious stones which were embedded in the walls.

Barry circles over Yellowacres in his helicopter for an hour every day taking photographs of the area at various heights to map the extent of the cave system.

Aubrey wishes to know whether he has any remedies against Barry.

The editor wishes to know whether he can borrow Barry's helicopter for his own surveying work and would also like more information on the nature of the precious stones.

(I suppose that this was regarded as a 'real world' example by the examiner, perhaps an invitation to join a surveying trip would be appreciated.)

Annual Sports Union Dinner
or
Some Notes On Caving

The Sports Union cordially invited the executive of each of its clubs to attend the second Sportsman of the Year Dinner. So off I went to put in an appearance for our club (and the Mountaineering sub-branch) and hopefully drop a few hints that we are poor and improve our chances of actually receiving what we requested for a grant (No, not a Grant Elliott, we already have one of them.) Oh, and there was an offer of a free meal - too good to turn down. Well, I finally got there and to my pleasure found it was open bar (that means free drinks) - what a way to celebrate the last day of civilization before random breath testing came into force. But, it was not quite the same as those "drinks" with other S.U.S.S. chronies, no drunken rumbles, no singing and no campfire.

However the food was slightly better than bush tucker. Fresh (yes, that means real prawns, crab and oysters) seafood cocktail followed by Fillet Steak Au Mignon and fresh veges and lots more - I sure got my Sports Union fees worth. Well, anyway, I sat next to some executive of the Sports Union (that's how I knew all the food was fresh) and dropped good words about our club every now and then - so, don't worry, I earned my dinner. Then came the presentation. The winner, second year in a row, Michael Walker, runner up, a windsurfer - did you know windsurfing is going to be in the next Olympic Games - ah, the "scoops" I get!

Sir Hermann Black (you know, our Chancellor) gave a speech, the essence of which was that no matter what sport you participated in you were representing the University. How true, I thought, but also how often we forget this (as they do at Jenolan). He then went on to the nature of sport and how it means play, not violence, not self-propulsion nor ego-boosting. Now the alcohol must not have been properly incorporated into the blood at this stage, as it made a great deal of sense in what he was saying. Whilst caving is not a competitive sport and there are no winners and losers and recognition is not clear-cut. This may be one of the greatest advantages of the sport (unless one wants to be the world's best and gain special recognition). The other advantage is that it must be one of the very few sports that is a productive leisure.

So for all the debate about what caving is and should be, there you have another opinion.

Guy McKanna

Trip Report -- Bunqonia
June 1981 (somewhat belated)

Present: Anne Gray, Nick Meluish, Mike Lake, Dean, Greg, Gramme

Two years ago, the six of us spent an interesting day at Bunqonia. To start with, we had 250m of rope and 70m of ladders, all this to do the 50m pitch in Drum. We needed a lot more gear than normal as half the group had no prussik gear so they were abseiling in and laddering out with a belay. Gramme was the first person down the pitch and he found that the abseil rope was 3m too short so we went back to the car for more rope while he laddered down the rest of the pitch (it would have been interesting if the ladder had not been there). Mike, being his normal generous and self-sacrificing self, lent me his "copper-plated whaletail" for the pitch.

The carbon dioxide was not particularly high so we explored further and went down the 20m pitch (without knowing it!) using a 6m tape (except for Mike who piked here). We then went for a look at the Railway Tunnel and stopped at the 7m pitch which we could not do as we had no rope and the CO2 level was getting higher. The climb back up the 20m pitch was a little more difficult, especially for the first person up, as the other end of the tape was only tied off to Mike.

Nick and I prussiked the 50m pitch on 'untried' systems. Mike and Gramme then started racing each other up the pitch, rope-walking versus laddering. Unfortunately, about two thirds of the way up the pitch, Gramme found that if he was going to stay attached to the belay rope he would have to squeeze between the ladder rungs! He decided instead to unclip completely and reattach himself properly.

The only remaining person was Greg, who weighed about 115kg (about 2.5 standard Mike Lakes). Greg started up the ladder but only 8m up started shouting that he was not going to make it as his arms were getting too tired (did he try using his legs?? ed.). The situation was saved though by some Venturers who had enough gear to rig up a pulley system and Greg was hauled up by three people at a time.

With our successful Drum trip out of the way, Dean and I did Hollands Hole while Mike and Nick set off to do Acoustic Pot. This latter trip was abandoned though when Mike could not find his way out of the Bunqonia car park.

Anne Gray

Trip Report
ASF Conference and South Australia
January 1983

It was holiday season again. Most of the club's active members had gone off to Tasmania, yet some of the hardier speleos remained at home training and preparing for an expedition beyond compare -- a trip to an ASF conference. Yes some people still spend their hard-earned money to represent their society at caving conventions and on behalf of SUSS I would like to thank all those who went for their participation, interest and support. These noble people were John Dunkley, Ian Mann, Rosie (almost) Mann, Guy McKanna, Bill Lowe, Terry O'Leary, Bruce Stewart and Graeme Galloway.

I went with Ian, Rosie, Bill and Terry in the 'Ultimate Speleo' van, whilst the others made their own ways to Adelaide. We left on Boxing Day from Katoomba and, even before we started, I noticed a cave, a portent of the future?! It was situated under the Katoomba railway station, was walk-through, was not aphotic but did have an interesting floor of reworked limestone. I then got into the van only to find another cave, actually six dozen of them to be precise. These caves were too small to enter and would have been difficult to survey in any conventional manner, even by poking in a stick. They were also completely flooded and they had to be drained (i.e. drunk) in order to liberate the cave itself. This was not an onerous task and doing so occupied most of the ensuing days, especially when combined with looking out the window for other passing caves.

That night we decided to camp at Dubbo, well actually the van made the decision by starting to overheat. We took advantage of the stopover to visit Helen Turton but she had the cheek not to be at home.

The next day we continued west, spotting no holes except for places like Cobar, an old mining town. Spring Field Tanks was a real hole with a windmill over it but unfortunately it was too small to allow access. We next went to Wilcannia where we investigated the Darling River for four hours to see if it sank anywhere. We then went on to Broken Hill where we found the most amazing cave system in Australia. Next to the highway is a man-sized tunnel but locked gates (they'll gate anything these days!) stopped us from exploring Telecom's technological marvel so we could not crawl the rest of the way to Broken Hill, quite a pity really as it is surely Australia's longest cave.

The numerous willy-willies we saw that day were topped off by a spectacular dust storm at dusk. It was almost like caving, just the walls were a little less solid than those around the Nullarbor caves.

The next morning we arrived at our destination, Ceduna. Anybody who has been there will tell you that the only way to get to Adelaide is via Ceduna. Contrary to popular belief, Ceduna is not a hole and there are not even any in sight there! I even went snorkelling there and still found no caves. I suppose the White Pointers have filled them all up. Come to think of it though, there was a hole there, in one of the tyres. Due to the lack of caves we had to content ourselves with crabbing, fishing, eating, watching eclipses, eating seafood smorgasbords, swimming, relaxing and drinking; it was a hard life. All this culminated in a party on New Year's Eve.

On New Year's Day we left Ceduna for Adelaide via Port Lincoln. We saw no obvious caves en route although this was not the case on the return trip.

The next day was the ASF committee meeting, my first real exposure to heavy arm-chair caving. Lots of work was done and it was different to normal caving. There were quite a few lectures over the next couple of days. I gave one on Surveying Developments as illustrated by Mammoth Cave (and I would like to thank my assistants, Bruce and Graeme for their support) and Terry gave one on databases. Highlights of the lectures will be printed when the proceedings are published. Generally we saw lots of caves (or at least photographs of them) and were educated in what was going on down-under-all-over. The final day saw another committee meeting with even more work being accomplished. The new ASF president is 'our very own' John Dunkley.

It should also be noted that Adelaide is Australia's most karst-like city; it has the most arcades I have ever seen. I would also highly recommend the women and the beer (Coopers!!!) as well as the cave diving. "SA the festival state" -- rubbish! "SA the cavers state"! If only it had more vertical and stream caves most of us would have stayed there (or at Ceduna).

The conference now having finished, I went west again while Ian, Rosie and Bill set off back to Sydney via the coast and Bruce went off to Kangaroo Island.

I joined Graham Pilkington (the CEGSA conference convenor) and George Parker (CEGSA) in a VW Combi (which they packed for two weeks in a couple of hours) and headed off to Curramulla on the Yorke Peninsula (where, once again, it rained). I seem to have imagined it raining a few times in South Australia, even on the Nullarbor. So we went caving (with a few other conference people). Corralyn was my first S.A. caver and I was surprised to find that it is the third longest cave in Australia (at about 6km). It appears to be a mostly joint-controlled maze and is geologically fascinating, as are some of the vadose passages one has to bridge across. A trip to its extremities was quite sporting (though not comparable to Spider). The limestone in S.A. is quite different from that of the Eastern states. Here it was nodular, whilst on the Eyre Peninsula it was more like sand and on the Nullarbor it was so soft it usually was not supporting the roof!

The next day we went to Town-Well Cave. A beautiful 30m ladder

pitch leads down into a small series of decorated passages. This cave was once Curramulla's water supply and a young boy was killed in 1936 after falling down the entrance shaft. The entrance is now gated. The following day we searched for Cooborie Corner Cave which we relocated and entered. It is a series of low chambers about 2m high. There are interesting fossils in the roof but one tends to fall asleep when lying down looking at them. We also entered Y21 and this has good prospects there are numerous depressions around it, most of which have been filled in by the local farmers. This is typical of the caves on the Yorke Peninsula, there would have been hundreds of cave entrances once but most of them were filled in by the early settlers. They are now starting to reappear as the filling subsides. The south-west tip of the peninsula is also quite spectacular with rough beaches, shipwrecks and a feature called the "Gap" -- like the Big Hole chopped in half and placed on the coast.

The following day we went off to the other peninsula, the Eyre Peninsula, and to Lake Hamilton homestead where the speleos stay in the shearers quarters. The farmer encourages cavers to investigate the holes on his property and he will even misplace their lights to ensure they return. After a fifty metre walk from the cottage one comes across a small cave filled with bottles, plates and other "rubbish" from the turn of the century, a real "Museum Piece" cave and even worth a dig. Another nearby cave was worth an attack with a sledgehammer but it was still excruciatingly small. CEGSA uses an elongated crow-bar for digging. It is very efficient for hooking out rocks and dirt and for general bashing. This implement proved useful in another nearby cave which George and Graham extended considerably while I was surveying yet another (this was no bludge trip!). Their extension was from the entrance collapse, through a squeeze into a fantastically sculptured passage that finally led to a sump. The limestone in this cave was very sandy and almost looked as if it was wind-eroded. We named it "Sculptor's Dreamworld" because of the shapes of its walls, roof and floor. Even though it is only about 2km away, Hamilton Lake Cave is quite different. It is basically a long, low but wide cave with a lake in it that reflects the decorated roof magnificently. One wades through this to another lake. The potential for caves in this area is great as CEGSA now realises and the hydrology and geography of the karst is very interesting and occasionally quite unusual.

One day we visited the south west tip of the Eyre Peninsula; a place called "Whaler's Way" though we renamed it "Coast of a Thousand Sea Caves". Besides being a very spectacular piece of coastline, there were lots and lots and still lots more sea caves. The longest of these were the best sea caves I have ever seen! One was a horse-shoe shape with pools and real calcite decoration. Some of the dyke-formed crevices are also very spectacular. There is also a real cave just a little inland. This cave was discovered by accident, so to speak. The cave entrance formed by a roof collapse in a chamber when a road was being made on top of it; they have since moved the road 100m away. Needless to say, this cave was quite unstable. I thought J168 was unstable until I entered this cave! Bits if it would fall down around you! I thought I saw the roof move and so did not stay in there very long.

We gradually moved up the coast, spotting depressions and caves from the car. We investigated one known cave, Stone Cap Pothole, to dig out the bottom but it had silted up. The 10m pitch and the squeeze above it were most enjoyable though. The Talia sea caves were also enjoyable. These are formed in an eroded horizontal layer of softer rock.

The next day it was off across the Nullarbor. First we looked for a "missing" doline near Nullarbor Station (caves are always getting lost out here, they really do need cavers to look after them (perhaps this is what "Cave Rescue" was set up for?)). We could not find our missing friend, only wombats and dingos (no babies though) so we continued on our way to Cocklebidy via the old Eucla Telegraph Station ruins.

The following day we went off to Cocklebidy cave. Troq gear for non-diving trips is a pair of swimmers and a lilo. The cave itself is very impressive and spectacular, the 120m long lake even more so. Suberb caving was had by all who entered. The next cave on the agenda was Nurra-El-Elevyn. It has a beautiful ladder entrance down a slope to some attractive lakes (oh, splash, I fell in again, what a pity the water is so nice) and then some pretty little "passages" in rockpile and some squeezes that we explored. The others decided to keep crawling, I decided to keep wet. After everyone was out and we had deriqged the cave, the local swallow decided to emerge and put on a spectacular aerobatics show for us.

Our next destination was Mullanullang where we intended to camp in the cave, explore and survey. We were also planning to use a smoke flare to see if the "Dome" went but the breeze in there was not strong enough to allow us to do so. We did however carry our packs the 5km to the Dome, over 48 rockpiles (up to 70m high!). This was, to say the least, tiring, as we had to carry water in as well. After a sleep we explored the Dome rockpile and dug a bit on one side but to no avail. I do remember however that it was a bit much hanging upside down digging that far underground. We then went off to survey in the Ezam (maze spelt backwards). It was incredibly hot in the Ezam, I believe due to the salt breakdown of the limestone there and the idea of surveying crawls above places we had already been did not appeal to all of us, so we left it up to Graham and George. After another sleep we made our way out, finally exiting at 2am on the third day after 38 hours underground. We also collected the last of the telephone cable left behind by the 1966 expedition (gosh it was heavy).

That afternoon we made our way to Witches and did this cave the next morning. The ants were so bad here that I slept on the Combi roof to escape them. This cave is supposedly the most decorated one on the Nullarbor and it was very impressive -- black stals, black flowstone and a shatter debris floor that felt and sounded as if we were walking on broken glass between petrified columns. It really did make for a magic cave. We went into Graham's new extension and found a little more cave, but not the big break through one always hopes for.

Our next journey was to Thampana but while sitting on the roof I spotted another cave last for a couple of years, Harpie Hole. We

also found "Guy Gecho's Coffin Cave" (G2C2). Unfortunately, neither of these were larger than stand-in or lie-down size. We went into Thampana as it started to rain (what an amazing country). The entrance shaft and chamber of this cave are stunning. We went in to survey Graham's new extension called the Drain. This should go somewhere but leads into a collapse series (the Dairy Factory -- a chamber covered in 'cream'). Rock moving revealed a way on but we could not fit. Graham thinks that all that is needed is a determined attack with a hammer and chisel.

The next day (I do not know what day it was), we drove towards Abrakurrie. I was in my normal position, on the roof, spotting caves, rockholes, roos and bottles (we decided to clean up the country a little). First stop of any consequence was at Chowilla Landslip. This is actually a doline about 70m wide by 70m deep without a cave at the bottom. Nearby is Abrakurrie, a stunning cave. It has a white railway tunnel that your light just reaches and a silt floor that one could use for a 100m sprint with little trouble. You emerge from the cave thinking you either imagined it all or had eaten too many funny mushrooms that morning - another magic moment.

From there it was off to our last cave, Weebubbie. We never actually reached this cave and unfortunately I spotted another doline. Enthusiastically I got out, trogged up in shorts, singlet and Dolphin, ready to investigate my discovery. Amazingly there was a hole off to one side with a breeze issuing from it. I wriggled through and, to my amazement, found myself on a ledge, 4m from the floor in a 3m wide tube above a jagged floor. I tried to climb down, only to find that the cave was extremely unstable and that it would be foolhardy to continue. I was about to come out when the ledge I was standing on gave way, as did my handholds. Shock, Horror! I was falling. Bump, the light went out and then I landed with a thud. I had landed on the only two flat rocks in the whole cave, one foot on each. I finally fixed the torch and looked around. I found that the walls leant inwards and seemed to be made of limestone bricks. The roof was no better, seeming to be just a lot of boulders hanging in mid-air, no more than 2m from the surface. I moved towards on wall and hoped that the others would not move the Combi to use it as a belay for a ladder (which they did!!). Then the floor suddenly gave way and I sank half a metre. By now I was slightly nervous. The others knew where I was and answered my calls for assistance so all I had to do was wait. In order to calm my racing nerves, I decided to follow the breeze. It went through a hole which I dug out and squeezed through, to the detriment of my ribs. I found myself in a smaller chamber that was even more unstable! This one had rocks embedded in dirt for a roof. Noticing that it did not seem to go any further, I soon got out of there and shot up the ladder when it finally arrived. This cave could lead to something if you were prepared to dig or jump up and down. I am not intending to explore it any further myself, having no adrenalin left for such activities (I must be getting old).

That was the last cave I did on the trip, mainly because I did not see any others on the way back to Sydney via the Barossa, Renmark, Mildura, Canberra and the South Coast.

South Australia is worth a subterranean visit and I can see why SUSS and CEGSA are 'related' societies. I would like to extend the thanks of SUSS and myself for their hospitality at the conference and while we were in their state.

Future Events

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March

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- 19th-20th Wyanbene. Contact Mike Lake (524 5229)(h)
- 26th-27th Kalang and Tuqlow. Contact Mike Lake (524 5229)
Canyoning and caving on one weekend!!
- 28th Committee meeting at Judi Strickland's place.

April

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- 1st-4th The SUSS Annual Easter Cooleman trip.
See Mike Lake for details (524 5229)
- Thurs 7th Annual General Meeting. Come along and vote for
new committee members (as long as you are a full
member). Common Room, Holme Building, 7:00pm.
Note the early start time.
- 16th-17th Jenolan. Cave cleaning in Mammoth, general
exploration. Jubilee and Mammoth via Spider??
Contact Paul Greenfield (560 4952)(h); (692 3524)(w).

N O T I C E O F

A N N U A L G E N E R A L M E E T I N G

This will be held in the Common Room, Holme Building
at 7:00 pm on the 7th of March 1983
Please note the earlier time than usual.

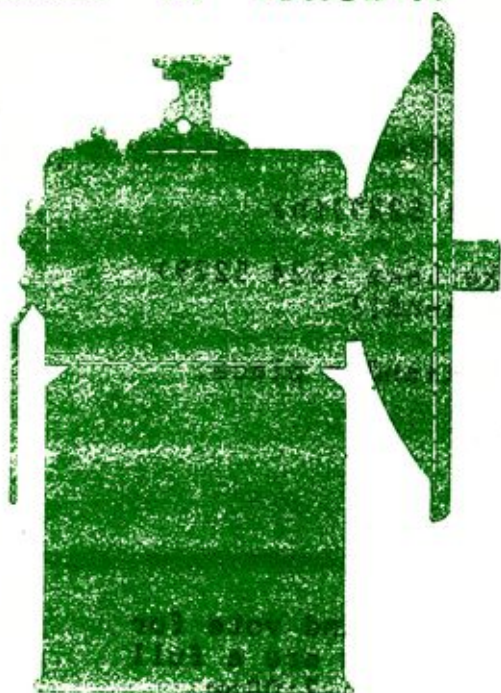
Be there to elect your committee members for 1983.

JOINT SOCIETIES TALK

Caving in the Caribbean and Central America

RUSSELL GURNEE (Vice-president, International
Union of Speleology)

Latin II Room (Upstairs from south-east corner of main quadrangle)
8 pm Thursday 7th April
(after the AGM)



SUSS

BULLETIN
of the

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BOX 35, THE UNION
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Contents

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Page
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117	Editorial	Paul Greenfield
118	Secretarial	Ian Mann
119	The Day We Got Paid for Acting	Guy McKanna
120	Trip Report -- Australia Day Weekend	Mark Hunter
121	Yet Another Sea Cave	Guy McKanna
121	Some Sandstone Stalagmites	Guy McKanna
123	Trip Report -- Arethusa Canyon	John Kaye
124	Trip Report -- Jenolan, November 20-21 1982	Grant Elliott
125	Trip Report -- Spring Creek Canyon Feb 5 1983	Mike Lake
126	Trip Report -- Claustal Canyon Feb 13 1983	Kristin Young
127	Exam Question, Real Property 1982	
128	1982 Sports Union Dinner Report	Guy McKanna
129	Trip Report -- Bunqonia June 1981	Anne Gray
130	ASF Conference Report and Field Trips	Guy McKanna
135	Future Events	
136	Contents	