

**BULLETIN** *of the*

**S***ydney*

**U***niversity*

**S***peleological*



**S***ociety*

SUSS BULLETIN 31(1) MARCH 1991

# SUSS TRIPS AND MEETINGS

- MARCH 16-17 Jenolan Caves Mark Staraj 042 296760, 2387715w 2377800w  
23-24 Wyanbene Cave and Big Hole Carol Layton 5199769  
26 SUSS Committee meeting- 6.30pm, Tuesday night, Harold Park Hotel.  
29 to 2 Jenolan Caves Uni holidays Easter trip. A minimum of 5 days at Jenolan should enable everybody to become familiar with the place. Martin Scott 4494092
- APRIL 29 to 7 Tasmania Vertical caving for Easter & uni holidays at Junee-Florentine and Ida Bay. Carol Layton 5199769  
4 SUSS Meeting. 7.30pm at Common Room, Holme Building. Wine & Cheese and slides. Caving in WA Patrick Larkin will show slides from his recent trip to WA, particularly those from the southwest.
- MAY 2 SUSS Annual General Meeting. 7.30pm at Common Room, Holme Building. Wine & Cheese. Another slide show to be organised.  
18-19 Jenolan Caves

Membership for 1991 is now due. See Carol Layton our treasurer, or mail cheques to:-  
SUSS, Box 35, Holme Building, University of Sydney 2006.

\$12.00 - Prospective membership  
\$25.00 - Full membership

More trips are being organised for April and May. Come to the April meeting to find out, and see some great slides.

WHAT IS A CAVER ?

He is a hardy, adventurous type ...



From "Muddy Oxbows" by Phil Hendy

# EDITORIAL

A special welcome to the new members of SUSS. You have joined the largest caving group in Australia and one of the most prestigious! We all hope you will enjoy your time with the club. Orientation was successful with not only fifty nine new members (see over for list) but more importantly the record for the milk crate squeeze was broken in a time of 23 seconds !! (Sorry I don't have the name).

You may notice that a good many of the articles in this Bulletin have the same author. This is not the Chris Norton appreciation society (no offence Chris) and I would love to see articles from some of the oldies - I have your names - and also it would be good to hear from some of the freshers after you have been on a trip or two. The idea of the bulletin is to record what has been happening and only those who do it can write it!

We are still awaiting with bated breath for the Mt Etna issue and when it comes it will be an interesting comparison to the present Yessabah litigation. See the insert for a brief update and a plea for hands to reach into pockets. Let's all do our part and make a small sacrifice.

That's all for now.

SARAH

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

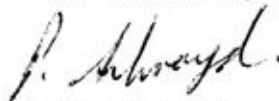
Dear Sarah,

Patrick Larkin is trying to hoodwink half of SUSS!

Mr Larkin has burst into print defaming both Alan Skea and Dr Mike Lake in the letters to the editor section, SUSS Bull 30(2):2. In fact Dr Lake got it right. Psychologists do write that sort of stuff (reprinted in SUSS Bull 30(1)).

A casual glance at the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association Vol 37, No. 3, pp 727-735, 1989, will reveal all, including the passage to which Mr Larkin took exception.

Yours in caving,

  
Peter Ackroyd

# NEW MEMBERS 1991

Alexander Aitkin : 457 Darling St, Balmain 2041 (ph) 810 1862  
 Denise Benger : 6 Finney St, Old Toongabbie 2146 (ph) 631 8470  
 Peter Best + family : 46 Upper St, Tamworth 2340 (ph) 067 66 7948  
 Stephen Bray : 35 Milne St, Shortland 2307 (ph) 516 3685  
 Andy Chaleff : 396A Abercrombie St, Chippendale 2008 (ph) 318 2550  
 John Chisholm : 1/10 Bridge St, Windsor 2756 (ph) (045) 77 6801  
 Daniel Clark : 35 Saunders Rd, Oakville 2765 (ph) 045 72 3545  
 Murray Clatworthy : 3/10 Mansfield St, Glebe 2037 (ph) 692 8379  
 Marcus Claxton : 31 Bowman Ave, Camden 2570 (ph) 046 55 9781  
 James Cleland : 2 Wirreanda Cl, Warrawee 2074 (ph) 44 5605  
 Michael Coatel : St John's College, University of Sydney 2006 (ph) 042 29 3506  
 Peter Copell : 2 Arundel St, Glebe 2032 (ph) 552 4904  
 Benjamin Crosby : 28 Mclean Ave, Chatswood 2067 (ph) 411 2960  
 Robert Curtis : 78 The Esplanade, French's Forest 2086 (ph) 452 4166  
 Kathryn Davey : 18 Reiby Pl, McGraths Hill 2756 (ph) 045 77 4457  
 Michel De Leeuwe : 80 West St, Sth Hurstville 2221 (ph) 546 1277  
 Amanda Dingle : 36 Plunkett St, Drummoyne 2047 (ph) 719 8674  
 Rohan Dredge : 4 Waterloo Ave, Castle Hill 2154 (ph) 680 2296  
 Leah Georgiou : 12 Vickery Ave, Carlingford 2118 (ph) 871 6298  
 Stephen Greasley : 63 Raglan St, Mosman 2088 (ph) 969 2560  
 Edwina Hatch : 60 Slopes Rd, Kurmond 2757 (ph) 045 73 1534  
 Chris Hennessey : 26 Milner St, Mosman 2088 (ph) 969 6719  
 Scott Herring : 130 Hall Rd, Pennant Hills 2125 (ph) 484 7318  
 Gregory Hinwood : 111 Norman Ave, Thornleigh 2120 (ph) 875 1697  
 Kylie Hutchison : 4A Nield Ave, Greenwich 2065 (ph) 692 8379  
 James Johnson : 7 Lord St, North Sydney 2060 (ph) 261 3599  
 Darren Jones : 3 Watts Place, Cherrybrook 2126 (ph) 481 9717  
 Anthony Jones : 6/16 Mackenzie St, Lavender Bay 2060 (ph) 959 4379  
 Paul Kirwan : 35 Banks Rd, Earlwood 2206 (ph) 558 4354  
 Katrina Langford : 17 Constitution Cres, Carlingford 2118 (ph) 683 1267  
 Scott Lawlor : , 2756 (ph) 045 77 6817  
 Patrick Lesslie : 18 Boyce St, Glebe 2037 (ph) 692 0548  
 Barbara Ling : 56 Johnston Pde, South Coogee 2034 (ph) 349 6405  
 Peter Lynam : 18 Forest Rd, Double Bay 2028 (ph) 327 4618  
 Andrew Mackie : 22 Alvona Ave, St Ives 2075 (ph) 449 4484  
 Heather McNair : 181 Chandos St, Crows Nest 2065 (ph) 438 4839  
 Fiona Mitchell : 29 Craigholm St, Sylvania Heights 2224 (ph) 522 8237  
 John Mo : 34 Sheppard St, Chippendale 2008 (ph) 211 0101  
 Carolyn Needham : 241 Bridge Rd, Forest Lodge 2037 (ph) 660 2076  
 Cherie Nicholson : 17 Finlayson St, Lane Cove 2066 (ph) 428 4970  
 John Palamara : 7 Hill St, Coogee 2034 (ph) 665 7344  
 Richard Pfeil : 23 Altana St, Abbotsford 2046 (ph) 713 9460  
 Rohan Pinto : 35 Heighway Ave, Ashfield 2131 (ph) 798 4615  
 Morgan Pollard : 7/86 Darling St, Balmain 2041 (ph) 810 3183  
 David Powell : 26 Shadforth St, Mosman 2088 (ph) 960 1599  
 Eric Rattray : 70 Mansion Pt Rd, Grays Point 2232 (ph) 526 1932  
 Amanda Rose : 12 Wride St, Maroubra 2035 (ph) 349 3792  
 Gregory Rossington : 16 Hillary St, West Pymble 2073 (ph) 44 1507  
 Julian Rumsey : 6 Lucia Ave, St Ives 2075 (ph) 449 7698  
 Massimo Russo : 29 Woodlands Rd, Taren Point 2229 (ph) 525 7109  
 Jonathan Rutherford : 126 Lawson St, Redfern 2016 (ph) 310 2328  
 Elaine Saoler : 20 Sunbury St, Sutherland 2232 (ph) 521 5575  
 Michael Serdy : 14 The Bastion, Castlecrag 2068 (ph) 958 1624  
 Gerald Soworka : 97 Victoria St, Lewisham 2049 (ph) 568 2618  
 Michael Sutcliffe : 50 Catherine Fields Rd, Catherine Fields 2171 (ph) 606 6541  
 Stephen Tidman : 47 Maguires Rd, Maraylya 2765 (ph) 045 73 6232  
 Alison Williams : 10 Jerome Ave, Winston Hills 2153 (ph) 639 0465  
 Ruth Woods : 4/109 Ramsgate St, Bondi 2026 (ph) 365 5191  
 Nathan Zamprogno : 53 Saunders Rd, Oakville 2705 (ph) 045 73 6337

**Book Review: Superted and the Pothole Rescue**

This slender tome was presented to Ian Houghton at the SUSS Christmas party, and he kindly offered a dramatic reading which was offset by the colourful illustrations in the book.

The story is well-known to every caver. When her companion is trapped in a cave by a rockfall, a young caver summons Superted, secret weapon of British Cave Rescue, from his space station home via his magic video screen. With companion Spotty, Superted rescues the victim, who comes within seconds of drowning as floodwaters rise. The rescue is not effected, however, until rockfalls, free-dives and trecherous waterfall descents have been encountered.

Character study is well-handled, even in the short space of this brief work. When Spotty disappears over a waterfall, Superted faces a moral dilemma - should he rescue his friend, thus allowing the victim to drown, or should he put his civic duty first and leave his loyal companion to an uncertain fate? Such complex problems are at the heart of all caving expeditons.

From a caver's point of view, the author is to be commended for his illustration of safety procedures - Spotty and Superted are exhorted to 'wear a helmet to protect you', and when Spotty declines, his constant bumping of his head almost leads to his downfall. This reviewer, however, was disappointed at the lack of innovation shown when Spotty is told to leave his rocket back-pack at the cave mouth as "It won't be much use in the cave!". Surely such a device, used with care, would be excellent for descending the pitches in the cave and could have saved him from near death when his rubber dinghy plunged over the waterfall? Superted's judicious use of his rocket boots is to be commended.

Overall, however, this book is both entertaining and informative. For confirmation, one need go no further than Michael Lake, who expressed interest in purchasing multiple copies for use as a training manual for Cave Rescue. The book's compact size would make it ideal for carrying in pockets of a trog-suit or in a helmet.

Recommended Retail Price: £0:95p

Full colour video also available.

Chris Norton



Lechuguilla Cave, that fabulous one in New Mexico with the name no-one can pronounce, has reached 50 miles in length and is still growing (that's about eighty kilometres folks!). This cave is also some 1,565 feet deep (the deepest in the States). The next expedition is scheduled for December 1990 which hopes to substantially increase its length to make it America's third-deepest cave.

For those of you for whom the tantalizing glimpses of this cave given by the Speleo Projects calendar are not enough, **National Geographic** is planning a full-colour feature on Lechuguilla in a forthcoming issue - probably January 1991. If you're not a subscriber, don't panic - the issue is sure to be gracing your doctor's waiting room table for many months.

Source: **NSS News** October 1990

### Histoplasmosis

The following is extracted from an article about histoplasmosis by Warren C. Lewis, which appeared in **NSS News** Vol.51, No.1.

Histoplasmosis is a fungal infection of interest to cave explorers. Many of those who inhale spores of the fungus at any given time will have no adverse reaction because they have already developed immunity. In those who are not immune the reaction is likely to be more severe. Histoplasmosis is not only an infectious disease brought on by inhaling the spores of the fungus but also an allergic disease in which individual susceptibility is determined for the most part by the extent of previous exposure.

The fungus is dimorphic growing as a mold and as a yeast. However, if the spores are inhaled by a warm blooded creature like a bat or a human being a different form develops. The spore bores through the alveolar wall of the lung setting up a local inflammatory reaction. The spore is carried to the spleen and invades cells of the endothelial system. In these cells it multiplies like a yeast until released into the bloodstream to circulate again. The cells may pass into the intestinal tract and be deposited into the soil to start a new cycle.

In September 1972 a group of cavers from the

suburbs of Sidney (sic) visited Church Cave, Wee Jasper. Because they lived some distance apart it was several weeks later that each learned that the others had been sick. Each had developed bronchitis with fever, blocked nose, cough and headache. Public Health authorities responded. Soil studies were made, cave temperatures recorded, and nearby caves investigated. One cave serves as a maternity roost for bats from Church Cave so both are under suspicion.

Every caver should familiarise himself with the disease and with infected areas. He should try to protect himself from needless exposure to this fungus and try to help others to avoid exposure until immunity has developed.

#### Suggestions

1. Stay upright. Keep your face as far above the guano as possible.
2. Avoid stirring up dust.
3. Stay out of caves containing large numbers of bats. They not only have their own pathogens but they harbour a variety of biting arthropods that are ready to transfer these pathogens to you.
4. Make sure your first exposure is a light one. Do your early caving in an area of lightly infected caves or visit bird roosts.
5. Avoid infected caves unless you have a positive histoplasmin skin test or have had adequate previous exposure.
6. Do not have any contact with the fungus if you have suppressed immunity or have AIDS.
7. Be wary of any dirt brought out of a cave. Do not shake out cave clothing or equipment in such a way that dust will be inhaled. Wash boots in running water if possible. Use care in cleaning survey instruments.
8. Handle bats and other cave creatures with care.
9. Respect both wet and dry caves. Cave dirt can be infective no matter how much moisture it contains. If there is a crust on the guano, step in such a way as to avoid breaking it.
10. Keep in good physical condition to keep your immunity high. Avoid excessive fatigue and protein depletion. Even if you know you are immune, do not get a heavier exposure than necessary.

The development of a vaccine is not such a remote possibility as it might seem. An experimental vaccine already has been produced. Histoplasmosis spores were killed by exposure to steam for ten minutes. When tested on rabbits, killed spores protected them from injection of lethal doses of live spores. Promotion of a histoplasmosis vaccine might be a suitable project to be taken up by the organized caving community.

Australians have tended to take histo in their stride, not giving a second thought to the possibility of infection. However, Australia's climate is particularly conducive to the fungus' growth. Tests on cavers at the recent Tropicon convention in December 1989 showed not only that many cavers had already been exposed to histo, but that over 70% of Queensland cavers gave positive results. Obviously, histo is an undeniable aspect of Australian speleology, and with a young man currently lying in Westmead Hospital suffering from what seems like a terminal case of this disease, we should be careful when working in any area where infection is possible.

### Safety

The British magazine **Caves and Caving** (No.49) suggests that placing an overhand knot close to a re-belay (on the non-weight-bearing side, of course) may help absorb the shock of a fall should the re-belay fail. Unfortunately, no empirical confirmation of this assertion is given.

### Great Moments in Nomenclature

Proving the inventiveness of the caving community, the same issue of **Caves and Caving** reports some new discoveries by British expeditions abroad and their subsequent names. Cambridge University Caving Club had a ball in the 499-metre deep Kaninchenhöhle in Austria, with quirky names such as Gob on You Pitch, Afghanisroute (for a far-flung, dead passage), and several musically inspired passages, including Wish You Were Here (Not Me) Pitch (at a far flung corner of the cave) leading to the limit of exploration, The Final Cut. Elsewhere, passage is terminated when one meets Thumper, the Talking Sump. The best musical inspiration would have to be Scraping Foetus Off the Pitch, with the best individual name being the paradoxical Rift Sans Nom. Best sequence goes to the large passage leading to the main



route of descent - Big Sainsburys is entered by Automatic Doors Pitch and is left through Check-Out Pitch. If one misses this pitch, one may descend the blind 29-m shaft Alternative Shopper.

From the sublime to the ridiculous - another British expedition has shown an unhealthy preoccupation with Australian soap opera in naming the Cueva del Humo in Spain. Highlights (?) include Ramsey Street Inlet, Sealed with a Kiss and I Should Be So Lucky.

Speleo Spiel No.263 is dedicated to the caves of Ida Bay, in the vicinity of Bender's Quarry, and includes maps of major caves and a list of untagged caves, some of which lie in the quarry itself.

Chris Norton

The Hard  
Female Caver



The Decorative  
Female Caver



a) the first  
trip

b) subsequent trips



## JOURNALS RECEIVED

**Australian Caver** No.124  
**Bulletin, South African Spelaeological Asson.**  
Vol.26, 1985 (Reprint)  
Vol.30, 1989  
**Caver's Chronicle** Vol.17, No.2  
**Caves and Caving\*** Nos.48 and 49  
**Cave Science\*** Vol.16, No.3  
Vol.17, No.1  
**Chillagoe Caving Club Newsletter** December 1990  
**FUSSI** Vol.2, No.4  
**Journal of the Sydney Speleological Society**  
Vol.34, Nos.6-11  
**Nargun** Vol.23, Nos.3-6  
**Newsletter, Hills Speleology Club Ltd**  
Vol.6, Nos.1-2  
**New Zealand Speleological Bulletin**  
No.152  
**NSS Bulletin** Vol.51, No.1  
**NSS News** May-October 1990  
**Speleo Spiel** Nos.262-263  
**Stalactite** 1988 Nos.1-2  
1989 No.1  
**Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group Journal**  
No.4  
**Trog** Vol.26, Nos.1-3  
**Troglodyte** Vol.2, Nos.7-8

*And for those more linguistically talented than I...*

**Die Höhle** 1990 Nos.1-2 (German)  
**Laichinger Höhlenfreund** 1990, No.1 (German)  
**Travaux de l'Institut de Spéologie „Émile Racovitza"**  
Vol.28, 1989 (French, English)  
**Union Internationale de Spéléologie Bulletin**  
1989, Nos.1-2 (French, German, English)  
**Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti**  
Various publications of a geological nature (Unknown)

\* New publication for our library. Thanks to Mark Staraj.

# A RELAXING DAY AT JENOLAN

**Present:** Martin Scott (T.L.), Kevin Costa, Catherine, Mike Gibian, Monica, Julian Dryden, Andrew Jenkins.

**Date:** 14th April, 1990

As those who were involved would agree, the Easter trip to Jenolan was a pretty big affair with quite a few speleo-types turning up during the course of the weekend. As such, over the weekend a number of trips were being run simultaneously. One such trip involved a rather epic voyage in search of the elusive Great North Cavern in Mammoth. Those, however, who didn't go on this expedition decided that what was needed was a nice easy days caving and so it was decided that we should wander down and check out Henry's Hole and Playing Fields Cave.

As is SUSS tradition the trip didn't get under way until well into the day and by the time we actually found the entrance to Henry's Hole it was early afternoon. The entrance to the cave was guarded by a fierce a frightening beast, a large and rather hairy looking spider past which we inched, one at a time, always aware that it's beady little arachnidic eyes were watching us, waiting for a tasty morsel on which to snack.

Eventually we found our way down to the main chamber and decided that the only way to go was down; not so Andrew, who decided that he would try a rather interesting little climb into a hole in the ceiling. He promptly returned, announcing that it didn't "go".

When the whole group finally arrived in the main chamber a few hardy explorers decided to continue down to the lower level through a rather tight little vertical drop and after some squeezing and wriggling four of us had made our way to the lower chamber and begun crawling in all directions. While the others headed off to the right to look at the dig site, I shot off to the left in search of miles and miles of virgin passage and the huge and, as yet, undiscovered chamber which surely lay nearby. Needless to say I found neither and after a rather uneventful little crawl around we returned to the surface without any major incidents.

The next thing to do was to look for the entrance to Playing Field Cave which Martin informed us was 2m high and 50cm wide. So off we went, scouring the mountain side for this tall, narrow entrance. Some 25 minutes later we stumbled upon the elusive J133 tag, over a cave entrance which was only 50 cm high and 2m wide, not quite what we were looking for, but we went in anyway.

Playing Fields Cave is a very interesting little cave which is basically divided into two sections. After the initial crawl into the cave a rather large, long passage is encountered. Judging by the size of this passage and the scalloping to be found on the walls it must, at some time, have taken quite a large flow of water and yet every lead in the cave chokes out before too long. The inner half of the cave is dominated by rockfall and contains quite a few small, tight passages some of which quite possibly go on with a bit of digging.

After the crawl through the first rockpile the number in our party had reduced somewhat and only four of us now continued

ahead, wriggled through a rather low section of passage and proceeded to poke into various holes at the end of the passage. Most of these holes I had trouble getting in any further than one body length before they became too tight. Eventually, however, I found a passage which looked to have potential, and there seemed to be a slight breeze blowing from it. I crawled in and discovered that the passage split into two paths, one of which continued straight ahead and looked quite tight and another, to the right which continued up over a rockpile, but seemed to get very tight after only 6 metres or so.

At this point Martin arrived on the scene and after feeling the slight breeze decided to have a look and so he climbed up through the rockpile, I had a quick peek at the lower passage. I had only managed to get myself caught up in the first obstacle (an "over and under" section) when I heard the tap of Martin's hammer, so off I went to investigate. Martin had managed to chip through a piece of bedrock, squeeze past the point which I had thought was a touch tight and had continued on to a few more metres of passage, at the end of which the way was blocked. I wriggled up to join him, but by the time that I had negotiated the squeeze which had just been chipped out, he had climbed down into a small chamber off the right hand side of the passage. I soon dropped into the little chamber to join him.

From the condition of the mud and the fact that we had to cut through the rock to get in, Martin was sure that no one had been here before us. The chamber itself was only some 2m by 4m with a maximum height of 3m. From it three possibilities extended. While Martin checked out the lower of these I tried to get into a small passage directly below the drop into the chamber, this however, was just too tight and after Martin gave his lead up as hopeless he had a go at mine and decided that the effort was useless. This left one very small hole between two sizable boulders and so I tried to get myself in. I wriggled and twisted but simply couldn't get my shoulders through. I could however see a very tight piece of passage continuing on, but I couldn't tell how far it went. There was no way that I could get through without a great deal of digging and chipping, and so we gave this cave up for the time being and decided to retire from Playing Fields Cave, satisfied with a good day's caving only to discover that it was nearly dark and that our fellow group members had left some time earlier. By the time we arrived back at the cottage it was totally dark and the shower was vacant, and so a nice hot shower, without the usual wait, nicely rounded off a rather fun little days caving.

Kevin Costa.

THE DEAD-LEAD, MUD-CAKED, WATER-SOAKED,

MOSSIE-STUNG TUGLOW BLUES

1 & 2 December 1990

Hopes were high. It hadn't rained for over a month, and Martin was keen to race up to Tuglow to check out his lead, agreed by all to be the most promising in the main cave. Martin had even constructed a special digging aid to assist in ferrying debris back down his small tunnel. "What we really need, though," he mused to Keir as we waited for our party to assemble at Oberon in the closing hours of Spring, "is a small burrowing creature that we can send down a hole."

Keir grinned mischeviously and glanced at me...and so it was that a few hours later, I found myself standing in the streamway waiting for the last of our party to descend the second pitch with an eager Keir beside me straining at the bit to get going. "Come on, let's dig!" His enthusiasm led Martin to abandon his wait for Deirdre's descent & we splashed upstream.

We made good time, and despite Keir disappearing up a few high rifts en route in search of an as-yet-undiscovered higher level, we arrived at Martin's lead, off a tributary to the main streamway, in under an hour.

"Aw no - it's full of water!" groaned Martin. I couldn't see what he was pointing to, due to the slightly constricted nature of the room in which we were waiting, but judging by the spashing noises going on, there was a considerable quantity of water involved. "Hey, no problem - we can use your digging bucket as a bailer." said Keir.

"Um, no we can't."

"Why not?"

"Because it's in Deirdre's pack, and you wouldn't let me wait for Deirdre to get down before we left. So I don't have it."

We did still have the shovel, though, which allowed Martin & Keir to dig a drainage chute down which most of the water escaped. The passage was now passable, although not particularly inviting. In leapt Martin, who, with a few grunts, was out the other side & began enlarging it for Keir. "You may have to take off your helmet to get



through."

"Nonsense!" said Keir. "I can get through Dingo Dig with my helmet on!" However, once he had entered the tunnel, it took several minutes of guttural noises and remarks about perverse activities with waterfowl before the passage was finally clear.

It was now my turn. The mud at the bottom of the tunnel still had a large amount of water in it, and was about the consistency of a thick shake. Nevertheless, progress was fairly easy until I was confronted with a dark shape slithering down the tunnel towards me. Keir wanted me to do a bit of digging, so that he could get back. It wasn't easy, with both arms out in front of me, to make a meaningful impact upon the slush-and-gravel floor, but I think a small deepening of the passage occurred. I don't know if Martin has named this delightful thoroughfare, but I will provisionally dub it Muddy Waters Tunnel.

I then joined the others in a small room big enough for about 3 people. Now, I was informed, was the time to enter small-burrowing-creature mode. I was pointed at the hole. It didn't look easy, but the apparent widening on the other side beckoned me on. Removing helmet, I entered what was to become Beckoning Duct. However, I was diverted by a riftlike passage entering from my right. Martin apparently had not noticed it, so I decided that, as it looked roomier, I would try to enter it. I could get most of my body around; however, because of the sharp angle at which I had to turn to get into position, I could not bring my legs around fully. Nevertheless, I saw an apparent aven leading upwards and back towards Martin & Keir.

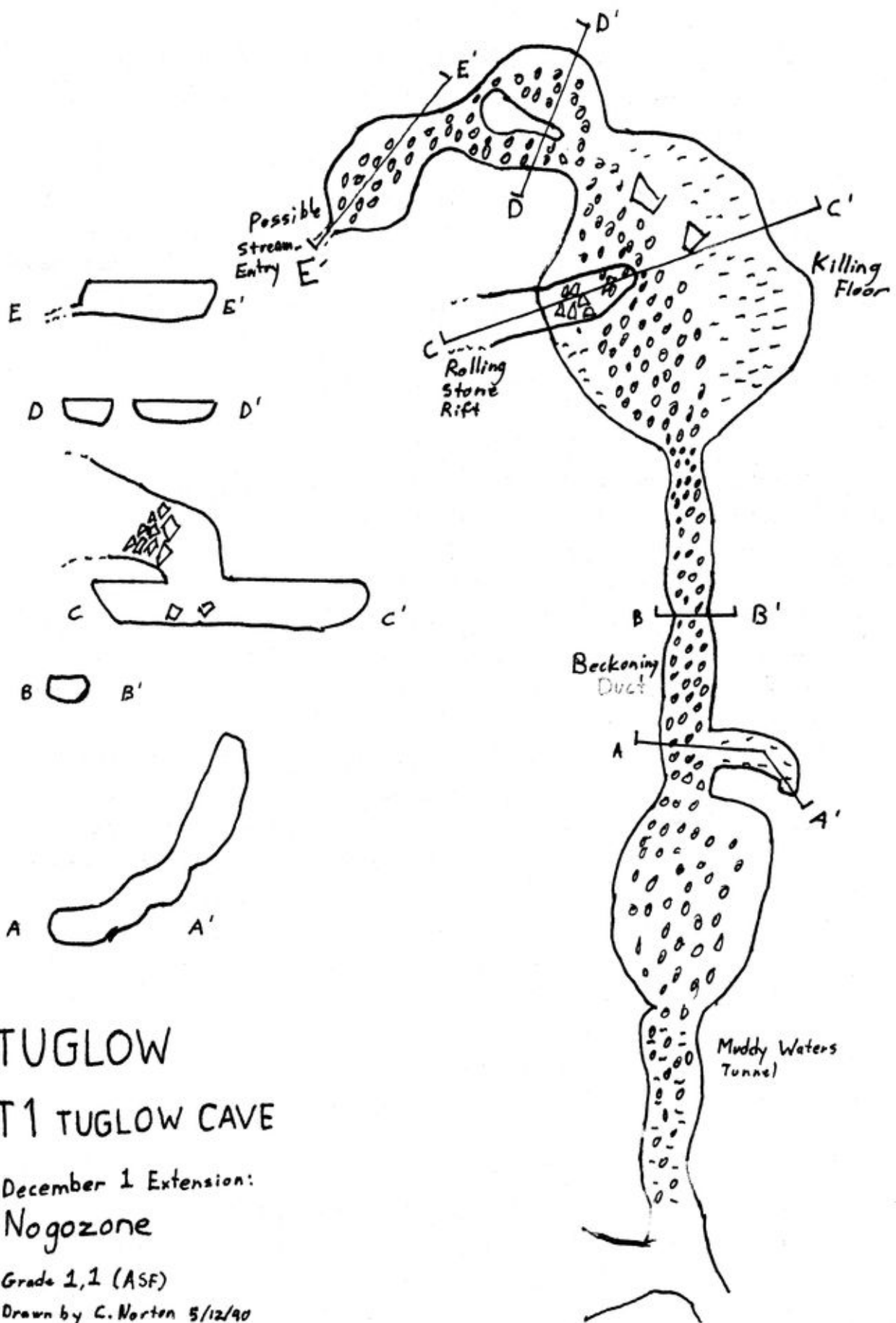
I left the side passage & pressed on up Beckoning Duct to the constriction that had stopped Martin's exploration. I had already removed my helmet, as the passage was less than 20cm high, and now realised that my battery would also need to be removed. I retreated to the waiting room, where Keir tried to press the shovel on me. I was certain, however, that I could fit through unaided, and once more entered the Duct.

This time, I was successful. A concerted heave sent me past the constriction, and I inched into a (relatively) large chamber - still low, but about 2.5 by 3 metres. Although muddy at the sides, the floor of this chamber was

of gravel, with several pools of water in the bottom - it definitely carries water, although not necessarily as an active streamway. About halfway along this chamber, a vertical slit in the roof led into what looked at first like a rockpile. I positioned myself underneath this so that I could sit with my head sticking into the slot. It turned out to be a thin vertical rift, leading back towards the chamber we had entered the lead from, with rocks caught in its thin base. With effort, I could shift a few of these, hopefully allowing me progress up the rift. However, due to the nature of the choke, the rocks were very unstable, & as I removed one, the whole pile would shudder & rocks would tumble down onto my legs below, making the name Rolling Stone Rift quite appropriate. I assessed the situation - as I had to have my arms in the middle of the choke, & my body under it, in order to move the rocks, & I was not wearing my helmet, the consequences of my actions could be serious (& I didn't want to have to be rescued from there, thank you). The dangerous nature of this place suggested the name Killing Floor for the chamber.

With Martin goading me on, I turned my attention back to the streamway. It seemed to bifurcate, & I crawled first into the larger branch to the right - however, it became too narrow & I was forced to retreat. The left hand branch needed some excavation, but I finally squeezed through the hole lubricated by the 2-inch deep puddle of water that lay obstinately in the middle. This was not made any easier by the number of medium-sized streamway rocks which, dislodged by my flailings, kept hitting my legs.

I turned the final corner at the end of this passage breathless with anticipation (& also with exhaustion). Where did the stream come from? Answer: nowhere - apparently, anyway. Ever since leaving the chamber where Martin & Keir were now awaiting my return with news of kilometres of new passage, the roof had continued at a steady height, & was fairly flat. In this chamber, the roof suddenly dropped to a few millimetres above the floor, which continued back all around the chamber at a height which excluded even the smallest of small burrowing creatures. The only indication of the possible direction from which the stream emanated was a puddle of water protruding from out



of the small crack at one point.

Well, no lead. Oh well, better go back & break the news of its death gently to Martin. I oozed backwards through the small passageway to Killing Floor, turned myself around & went back to the others.

Martin's place in the small waiting room had been taken by Kevin Costa, & a substantial amount of dirt had been removed from the wall opposite the passage to the right of Beckoning Duct. I decided to try to enter it again. Squeezing for all I was worth, & with Kevin shovelling dirt from under my feet, I was just able to squeeze around the corner into the small passage, which was liberally plastered with mud that seemed closely related to that of Dwyer's Cave, Jenolan. Unfortunately, however, my mammoth squeezing effort was to no avail as the passage died a couple of metres further up. I retreated, & replaced my helmet & battery, both of which were thick with mud which was not properly removed until the following day's waterfall abseil.

Rather disconsolate, we slithered back down the well-lubricated Muddy Waters Tunnel (to be greeted by a pristine Ben, who had very sensibly stayed out of the mud) & started towards the flies & mosquitos that awaited us on the surface. Martin was a little disappointed that the lead gave up its secrets so readily - he'd expected to spend a couple of weeks digging the bottom of Beckoning Duct. He was even more disappointed when he told me of his other hope for the area - a rift choked with rocks leading down to what looked like a streamway passage - & I observed that it sounded just like a top view of Rolling Stone Rift.

Well, at least we won't have to go back there. As an overall name for the new section, I would suggest Nogozone - not only because of the lead's sudden & untimely death, but also because no-one in their right mind would want to enter it again (the prospect of digging out the possible stream passage is totally unappetising. For reference, I have included below a rough memory sketch.

Chris Norton

# GLOUCESTER: ANOTHER OBSCURE KARST AREA

Ian Cooper.

Monday, October 1 and Tuesday, October 2 1990.

Ian Cooper, Steve Keenleyside, Carol Layton, Chris Norton, Rasmus Torkel,  
Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Sue Willis.

After a week of caving at Yessabah it was decided to visit the Gloucester karst on the way back to Sydney. I for one was surprised by the caves and their geological and biological richness. Below is a description of the area which has mostly been extracted from Pavey, (1974).

## LOCATION

The caves are clearly marked on the Gungah, (9939-IV-N), 1:25000 topographic map at grid reference 1325 5245 while the resurgence is located at grid reference 1385 5212. This gives an approximate distance between the sinks and the resurgence of 600m. The sinks are at 230 m ASL and the resurgence is at 190 m ASL. The caves are located 4 kilometres south of the Taree - Gloucester road on the property "Mayvale" which is owned by Peter Green and managed by George Fisher, (see Map 1). Both men were found to be very friendly and willingly allowed us to camp next to the caves.

## HISTORY

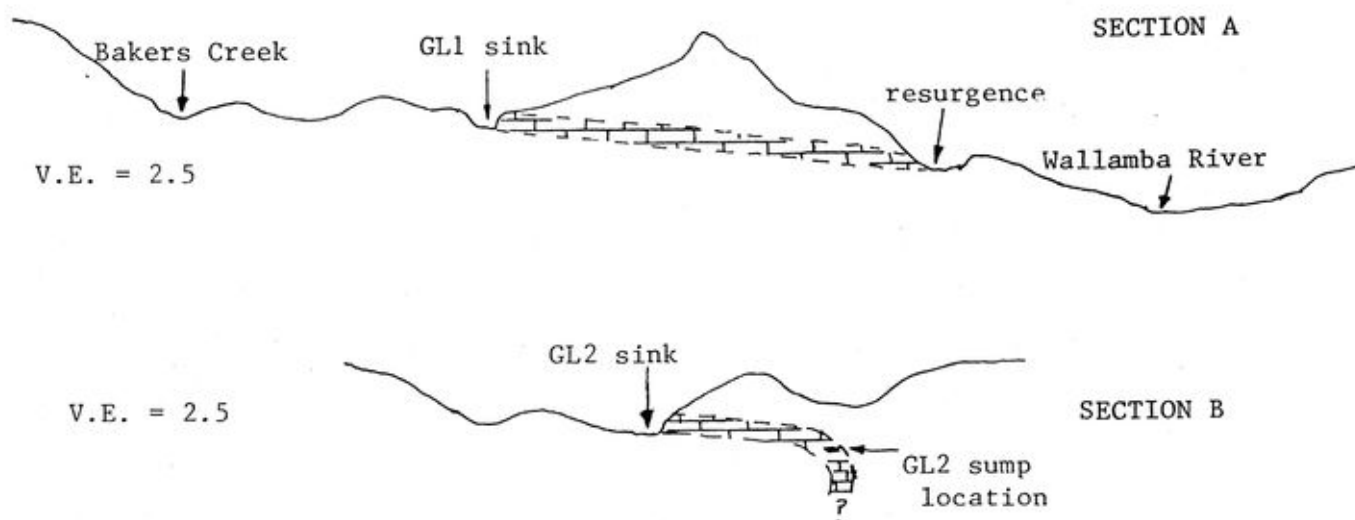
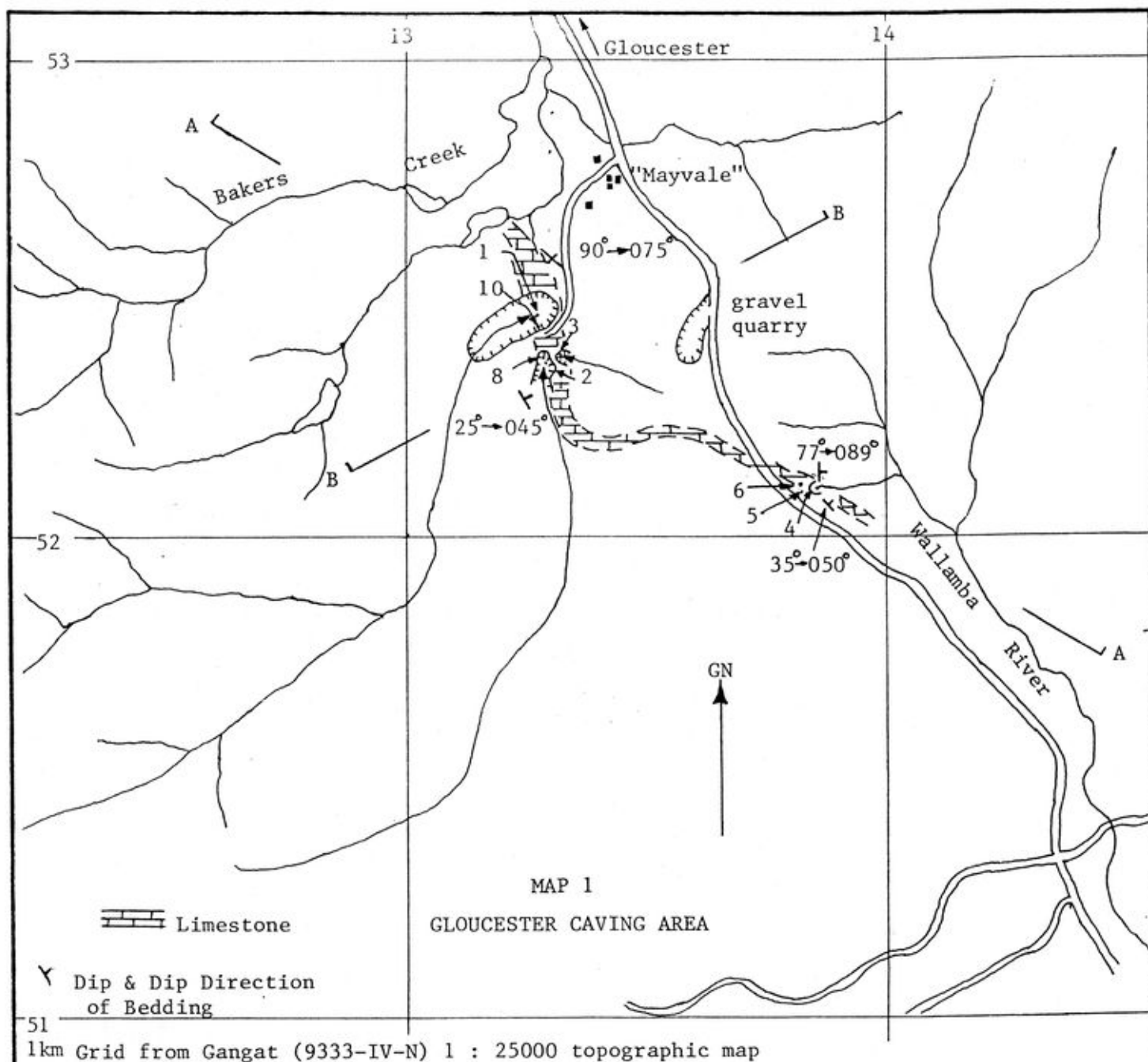
The discovery of both the limestone and the caves does not seem to be recorded but they appear to have been known since settlement of the area. The limestone is first reported by Carne & Jones, (1919). Attempts have been made to quarry the limestone for use as agricultural lime as evidenced by the many old drillholes around GL2. Apparently the limestone was found to be too hard and expensive to crush, (Fisher, pers. comm.). The first recorded speleos in the area appear to be NTUCSS, (now defunct), in the early 1960's, (Matthews 1985). In the early 1970's there were several trips to the area by UNSWSS resulting in an area description by Pavey, (1974). Typical visitation rates are 3 to 5 times a year.

## CAVE DESCRIPTIONS

### GL1 The Cascades

The large blind valley nearest the farmhouse contains an active stream which sinks into a rockpile at its eastern end. Entry to the cave is through a squeeze about 2m above the stream. Another entrance at stream level involves lying in the water to negotiate a simple squeeze. The first obstacle to progress is a 3m long gravel floored squeeze containing the stream. The rockpile then continues for another 5m before opening into a chamber. The stream and cave then bifurcate, the left hand passage leading to a rather pleasant series of cascades.





From here a simple rectangular stream passage leads to three sumps. The first sump receives the stream and is penetrable for about 1m. The second sump is just a pool at the same level but separated from the first by a natural dam. The third sump is more complex and depending on water level is free diveable. A roof sniffing passage beyond goes about 4m to a small chamber where the passage continues underwater. Diving prospects are poor. Warning, this cave is subject to flooding with flood debris seen to roof level throughout. See Map 2.

Estimated Length: 150m

Estimated Depth: 20m

#### GL2 / GL8 The Glowworm Sieve

SSE of GL1 is another blind valley. The stream sinks in a gravel bed 8m from a low limestone cliff, at the base of which the cave entrances are found. The GL2 entrance involves an initial 8m drop that is free climbable but a handline is advisable. The GL8 entrance is about 5m north of GL2 and is a much simpler series of climbs. Close to the GL8 entrance a small daylight hole is present some 12m above the cave floor. At the bottom there is a choice of passages. The upper passage across the hole continues as a muddy crawl and then emerges into a high rift containing bats. A series of squeezes continues through a joint plane maze section to some tight squeezes, the last of which is particularly grotty with a sloppy mud floor. The passage becomes larger and continues down leading finally to a steep slope ending in a sump. This has been free dived to the north and any continuation appears to be tight and going down, (underwater).

The main passage is low and rectangular with the stream on the lower side and a number of bedrock columns and roof slabs filling the void. This area contains numerous glowworms and sizeable bat colony. Towards the bottom a small stream enters on the right just before the sump. The sump is a low passage which is reported to have an air space on the far side. See Map 3.

Estimated Length: 180m

Estimated Depth: 25m

#### GL3

Another small blind valley to the east of GL2 contains a faint trickle of water. This valley has been recently bulldozed and it appears that the cave has been filled. In 1974 the cave was described as dropping 2m to a tight 3m deep slot. Due to its proximity to GL2, GL3 is assumed to be a tributary of GL2.

#### GL4

On the eastern side of the surface divide from GL1,2,3 is the resurgence. This is GL4 and is an impenetrable rockpile. The tag is 1m above water level.

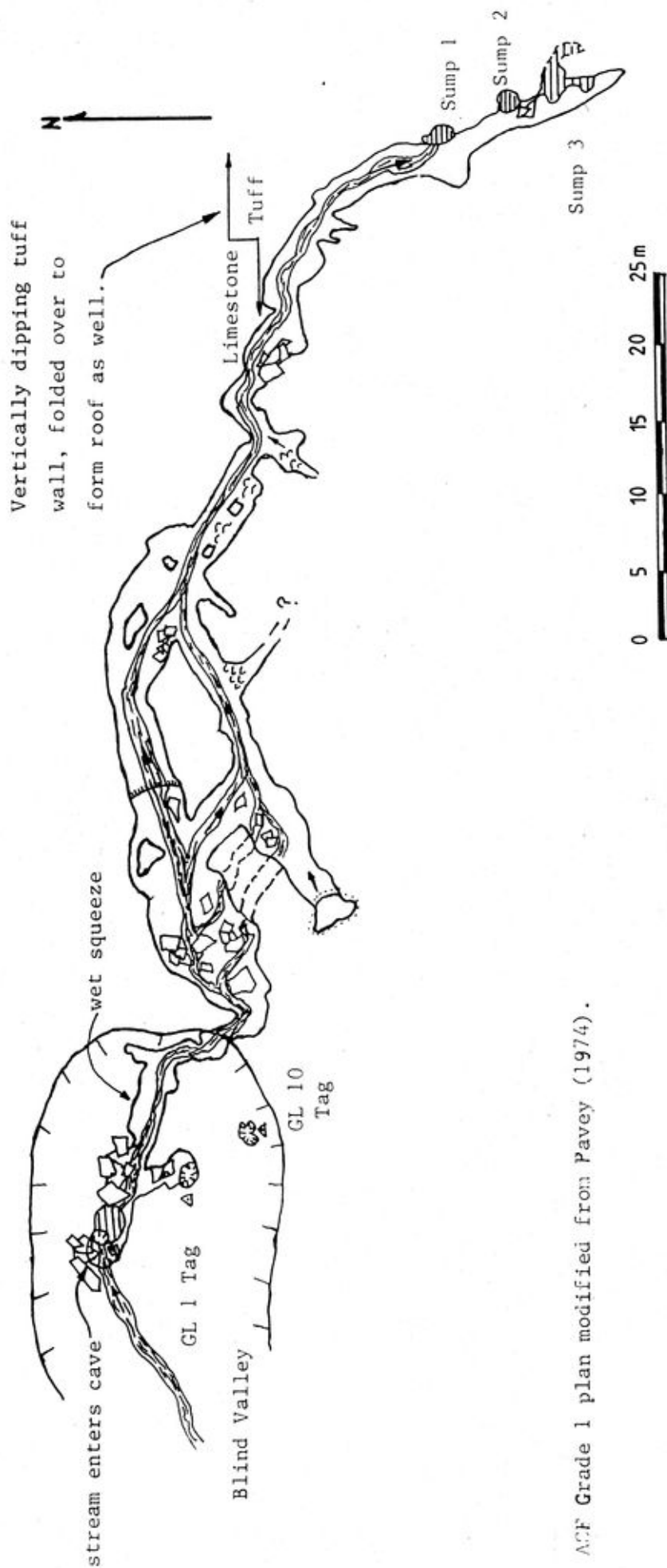
#### GL5

8m west of GL4 and higher on the slope is a 3m descent through rockpile to water. The stream flows between boulders and cannot be followed in either direction.

# GL1 THE CASCADES

Gloucester N.S.W.

MAP 2



ACF Grade 1 plan modified from Pavey (1974).

2GL1.SUS1

I.B.C. A4 draft 23/10/1990

#### GL6

A dig by A. Pavey and D. Perkins, (UNSWES), about 6m north of GL5 leads down to water amongst boulders at a depth of 2.5m. A side passage to the west also leads to water but could not be penetrated more than a couple of metres. At the upstream end the water is about 1.2m deep. Prospects slim.

#### GL7

Not located.

#### GL8

An easy entrance into GL2, The Glowworm Sieve.

#### GL9

Not located.

#### GL10

6m south of GL1 and higher up the slope is GL10. This is a tight 5m deep climb amongst rockpile that does not appear to connect to GL1.

#### GEOLOGY

The geology of the area has been described by Hanlon, (1950). The limestone is contained within the Carboniferous Wootton Beds and outcrops discontinuously between Brushy Ridge, (Grid Reference 1100 5800, Gaugat 1:25000 topographic map 9333-IV-N), and Bulandelah, a distance of 40 km. The only known caves in this belt are the ones listed above.

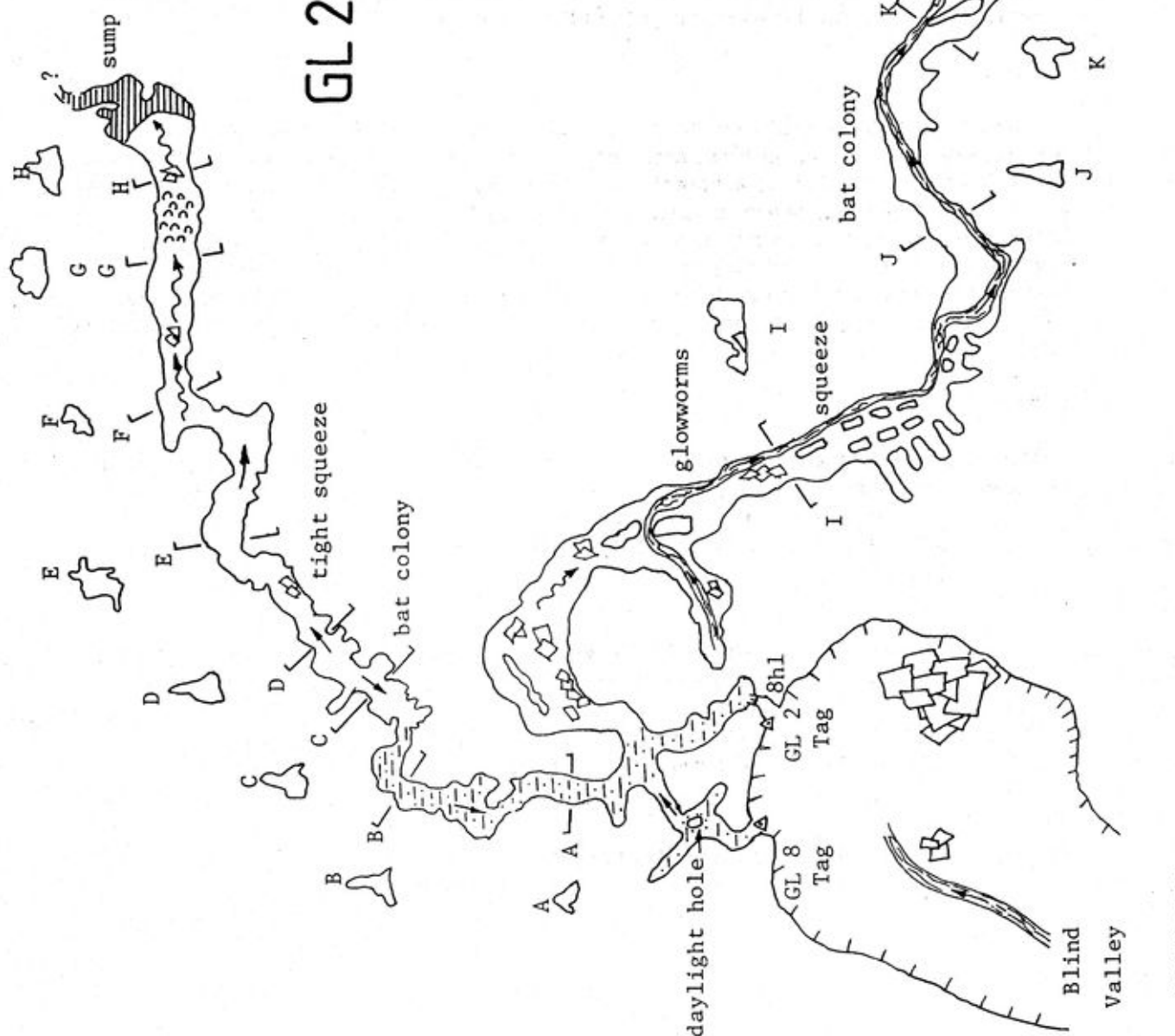
In the caves area the limestone is up to 23m thick and is surrounded by tuffs, tuffaceous shales and sandstones. Some thin limestone beds occur below the main limestone. The limestone itself is a thickly bedded, grey, calc-arenite containing abundant crinoid fragments. There are three main exposures of the limestone contained in a northwest plunging syncline - anticline pair, (see Map 1). Cave development has been strongly influenced by this structure with the sumps in both GL1 and GL2 occurring where bedding becomes vertical, (see section). The resurgence is also located in a similar structural situation.

A chemical analysis of the limestone from Hanlon, (1950) is reproduced below:-

CaCO <sub>3</sub>	94.06%
MgCO <sub>3</sub>	0.93%
Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> + Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	1.25%
Gangue (Dominantly SiO <sub>2</sub> )	2.30%
Total	98.54%

# GL 2 THE GLOWWORM SIEVE GLOUCESTER N.S.W.

ASF Grade 1 plan modified from Pavay (1974)



2GL2.SUS1



## HYDROLOGY

The catchment area for GL1 is 0.75 square kilometres while for GL2 it is 0.35 square kilometres. The 2 streams draining these areas seem to be perennial but the stream supplying the GL3 doline is only intermittent and has a catchment area of 0.05 square kilometres. The average annual rainfall for Gloucester is 1205mm. Estimated observed flow rates are:-

GL1 4 litres per second.

GL2 2 litres per second.

GL4 8 litres per second.

In the early 1960's Peter Green attempted to block GL1 and use the doline as a farm dam. When water was lapping at the doline edge, (depth about 12m), it broke through into the cave causing a considerable flood to emerge from the resurgence GL4. With this type of testing, fluorescein tracing seems somewhat unnecessary! In March 1990 both dolines were filled by flood waters after 430mm of rain fell in two days, (Fisher, pers. comm.). This gives an idea of the hydrological capacity of the caves and suggests that the hydrological connection is restricted. Discouraging news for the cave divers. It is also apparent that flooding has altered the caves since they were described by Pavey, (1974).

The other hydrological feature of note is that the cave drainage breaches the surface drainage divide. Water falling on the west side of the ridge either flows into the caves or into Bakers Creek and then into the Manning River. Water falling on the east side of the ridge flows into the Wallamba River as does the resurgence.

## BIOLOGY

I can only talk in generalities about this topic as my knowledge of biology is very limited. What the Gloucester karst area needs is a visit by someone who knows about cave fauna, (hint Mr. Gibian). It is apparent that both caves contain a diverse fauna. GL1 is less well colonised than GL2 which is almost certainly due to the flood prone nature of GL1. Both caves contain glowworms but they are far more common in GL2. Spiders were also seen in both caves. Carol found live tortoises in both caves. It is assumed that these reptiles have been washed into the caves. GL2 contains a sizeable bat colony of at least 500 individuals. I could not identify the species but they were small bats being about 10cm long.

## SUMMARY

The area is well located for tourist trips being close to the Barrington Tops and Myall Lakes with the Hunter Valley wineries nearby. It was the wineries that we headed for on the way home after a relaxing time at Gloucester. The area can be summarised as containing two beautiful stream caves but little more than a day's caving.

## REFERENCES

- CARNE, J.E. & JONES, J.J., 1919 "The Limestone Deposits of N.S.W."  
N.S.W. Geological Survey, Mineral Resources 25, p237-241.
- HANLON, F.N., 1950 "Limestone Deposits of the District East of Gloucester"  
N.S.W. Geological Survey G.S.1950/007, (unpublished).
- MATTHEWS, P. (Ed.), 1985 "Australian Karst Index"
- PAVEY, A., 1974 "Gloucester Cave Descriptions" Spar 36 p15 - 19.

DUCKMALOI, North of the Northern Limestone.

Ian Cooper

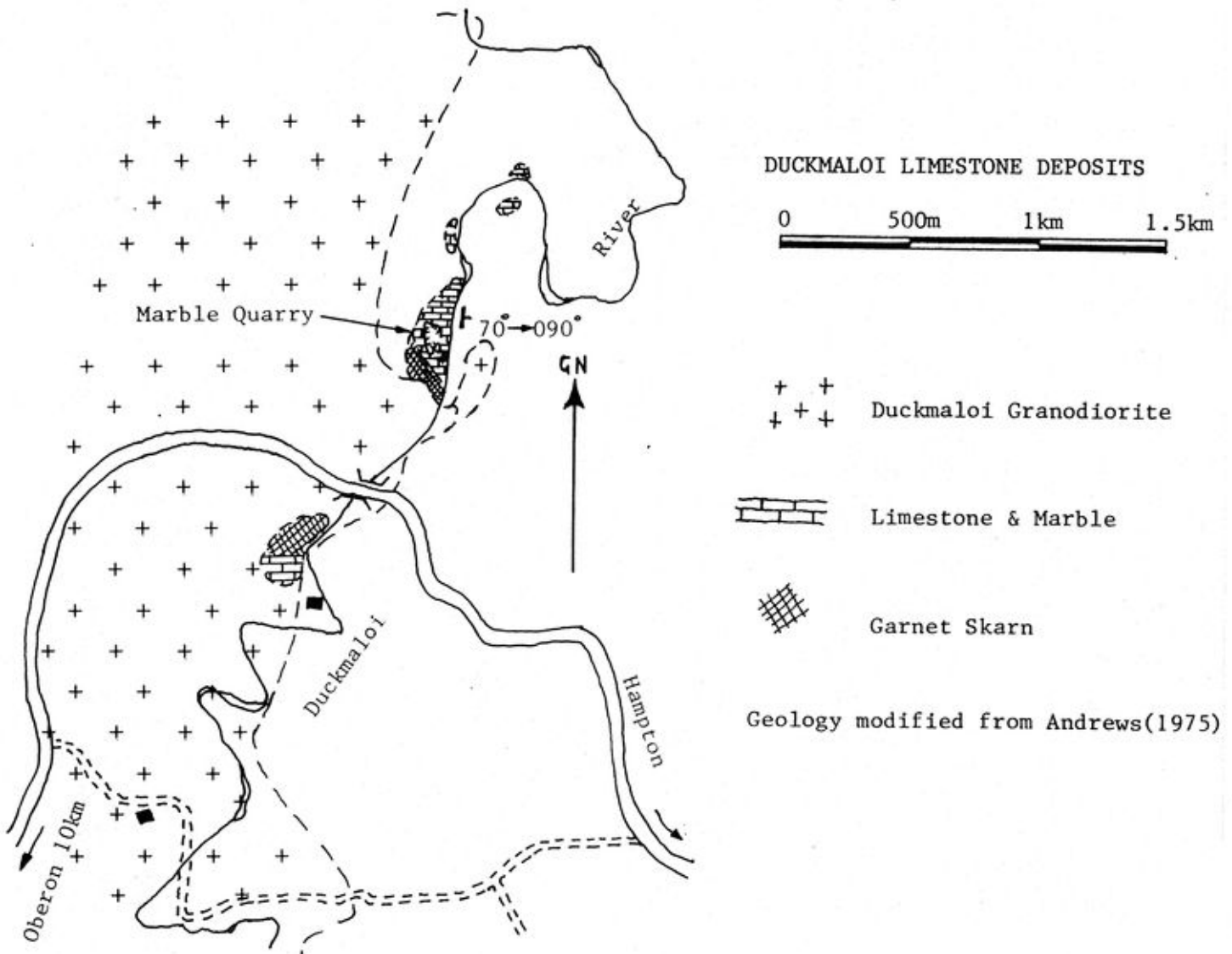
Lying 17km NNW of Jenolan is Duckmaloi. This area has a similar geological setting to Jenolan and even has limestones. These limestones have been extensively altered, by intrusion of the Duckmaloi Granodiorite, to marble and garnet skarn. The marble occurs on both sides of the Oberon - Hampton road, about 10km east of Oberon.

Several earth filled vadose slots are exposed in the marble quarry shown on the plan below, but alas, no caves. The most significant feature about the Duckmaloi limestones is that they are 10km north of the northern end of the northern limestone. This 10km gap has not been properly mapped giving potential for more limestone and caves. To further support this there has been reports of caves in the area by local farmers.

## Reference

Andrew, A.S., 1975 "Geology of Duckmaloi & The Meadows, N.S.W."

B.Sc. (Hons.) Thesis, University of Sydney.



LESSONS IN FUTILITY

or

The Blind Lead the Blind to the Blind Lead

(A Tragicomedy in Three Acts)

Performed by the SUSS Players, 2 March 1991

Dramatis Personnae

**The Blind Who Were Led:** John Chisholm, Daniel Clark, Marcus Claxton, Kevin Costa, Paul Kirwan, Chris Norton, Mike and Jill Rowlinglake, Stephen Tidman

**The Blind Who Did The Leading:** Keir Vaughan-Taylor

**The Sensible One Who Stayed Behind:** Sue Willis

**The Forces of Evil:** Eight scaling poles, one pack of angle irons.

Act One: Temptation

**Scene One** The SUSS Room

Enter CHRIS. The Patrick Larkin Memorial POLES, sparkling new, sit in the corner.

**CHRIS:** A weekend at Jenolan! Oh, what fun! But what shall be done, to instill into the new disciples the true spirit of SUSS? Something new, something exciting...

**POLES:** Oh, trip leader! Long have we languished here, waiting for cavers to lay their hands onto us and transport us to caverns, where truly we will reveal wondrous new passage.

**CHRIS:** Verily, they speak the truth. For at Jenolan await eager porters, who will do our bidding, and carry these poles for us. I shall take them.

Exit CHRIS, bearing POLES and ANGLE IRONS.

**Scene Two** Jenolan Cottage

The ROWLINGLAKES stir from a listless sleep. They are tired after being kept awake by JOHN, DANIEL, MARCUS and STEPHEN playing war games until 2am the previous night. KEIR is bursting with his usual energy.

**KEIR:** Well, I've got some work to do in Spider. I've been down Mammoth dozens of times.

Enter CHRIS with PAUL and POLES.

**CHRIS:** So fair and foul a day I have not seen - but then again, this is Jenolan. Behold, O people: I bring a means of diversion and amusement!

POLES (aside): Now is our chance! We shall work our powers on the big one - they're the easiest.

KEIR (with strange glint in eye): Scaling poles! I know just the place to take them. But do you think we can get them to Oolite Cavern?

CHRIS: A task easily accomplished, O Captain Chaos, My Captain. For in the next room are gathered four nubile youths, *mens sane in corpore sano*, who will gladly follow your lead and provide loyal support.

JOHN, DANIEL, MARCUS, STEPHEN (offstage): "I blast it with my kill-o-zap gun!" "It explodes into a million pieces." "Hooray!" "Eat plasma, sucker!"

JILL: Are you sure?

CHRIS: Not to worry - we also have Paul, veteran of the volcanos of Indonesia, to assist with our burdens. And the able Kevin, whose unparalleled knowledge and guidance will be of value.

KEIR: Right, let's go! Coming, Sue?

SUE: I think I'll read my magazines.

Exeunt omnes, sed manet SUE. She starts looking at pictures of inflamed stomach ulcers.

## Act Two: Odyssey in Mammoth

### Scene One Entrance Rockpile, Mammoth Cave

Enter cavers down Jughandle. POLES are passed carefully down & stacked above 40'. ANGLE IRONS are then passed.

PAUL: This bag's heavy!

KEIR: Make haste! If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly.

JILL: What's wrong with Keir? Methinks he sounds quite lyrical.

MIKE: I fear he is possessed by some evil force. My natural superstitions are aroused. I must purge myself of evil by going through a squeeze.

Exeunt MIKE, CHRIS, MARCUS & STEPHEN in direction of Mammoth Squeeze. KEIR poises himself perilously halfway up the 40' and the POLES are lowered.

### Scene Two Lower River

The party emerge from the direction of the Gunbarrel.

KEVIN: Gadzooks! The water is all but gone! It has not been in such a state for many moons!

CHRIS: Let's leave the poles here.

MIKE: Forsooth, we must; when holding them, I seem unable to cross running water! There is evil here!

JILL: You bozo, that's because you're wearing the pack of angle irons & you're too heavy to jump across. Your problem, Mike, is that you're too superstitious.

KEIR, JOHN and DANIEL cross Lower River. KEIR crosses back. DANIEL and JOHN proceed towards Slug Lake, but turn back half way. KEIR takes stones out of a cage & drops them in the water.

KEIR: Be free, O stones! From your bondage I release thee!

JILL: Perhaps you're right, Mike. This all seems very pointless.

CHRIS: Let us not tarry. The task awaits.

### Scene Three Oolite Cavern

Enter party through hole in floor. Various people risk injury lifting ANGLE IRONS. POLES are stacked in corner as party eats lunch. CHRIS sees squeeze in wall.

CHRIS: What? No sound from yonder Toilet Bowl? I must investigate.

CHRIS plunges into the constricted space, and tries to enter the tube at the bottom, only to find passage impeded by a projection in the middle.

CHRIS: Confusticate and bother! But this is of interest: some stones that I roll down this tube fall into water, whilst others rattle on. Perchance there is a puddle in the bottom, or a small hole to water whilst the main passage continues. The passage above is also too tight. Retreat!

Watched by the curious others, CHRIS, assisted by KEVIN, escapes from the Toilet Bowl after some five minutes of frantic flailing and straining.

NEW MEMBERS (collectively): Why do you SUSS people do such strange and pointless things? We are going to use these poles, aren't we?

KEIR: Of course! Let us away!

### Scene Four Pitch to Oolite Loop

KEIR: Behold! The lead!

MIKE: But Keir, we don't need the poles. We can throw a rope over that wall, raise a ladder & tie off the rope.

Dramatic pause.

KEIR: Oh.



Mutinous rumblings from rest of party, particularly new members. The ROWLINGLAKES raise the ladder. The POLES are cast aside, but their spell is still not broken.

KEIR (climbing): Is this a lead which I see before me, the entrance toward my head? Come, let me enter thee: I have thee not, and yet I see thee still...

JILL: Yes, but does it go??

KEIR: Umm...I've reached a sort of upside-down aven.

JILL: You mean a pitch.

KEIR: Oh, yes.

He attempts to plumb the depths of the hole with his torch.

KEVIN: But soft! What light from yonder passage breaks? It joins back here, Keir!

KEIR: Seems like we've come all this way for nothing, then.

NEW MEMBERS: Avaunt! and quit our sight! Let the earth hide thee! Thou hast too much speculation in those eyes which thou dost glare with. Hence, horrible shadow! Unreal mockery, hence!

KEIR vanishes, bearing a scaling pole.

MIKE: I told you there were evil and supernatural forces at work, but no-one believed me. You're all too sceptical.

CHRIS: Never mind - let's go for a quick hoon into Railway Tunnel.

The party departs, bearing POLES and ANGLE IRONS.

### Act Three: The Comic Relief

#### Scene One Atop the 40'

Enter the speleos - CHRIS, KEIR & JOHN from the 40' bearing POLES, the others from the rockpile. KEIR continues his exiled trek.

PAUL: Why didn't we get him to take the angle irons?

CHRIS: He must pay penance, but we'll stop short of physical torture.

MIKE: A quick hoon into Railway Tunnel, you said, Chris? Let's go!

Exeunt MIKE and CHRIS at a very irresponsible speed, pursued by a panting PAUL. The others follow at a much more respectable pace.

#### Scene Two Railway Tunnel

The party enter, with some members finding it rather difficult to keep their balance.

MARCUS: This is what we go caving for - mud!

STEPHEN: If mud be the food of cavers, slide on! Give me excess of it; that, surfeiting, the appetite must sicken, and soon die.

MARCUS, DANIEL, JOHN & STEPHEN find a mudslide & entertain themselves sliding around on it. Some people visit the 90', look at it, and come back again. It's still not 90'.

JILL: It's much drier and less slippery than whenever I've been here before. Some of this mud is quite dry.

CHRIS: Oh look - almost dinner time. Let's go back.

As they gingerly slither back towards Horseshoe Cavern, MIKE loses his footing momentarily. His boot descends into the primordial slime.

MIKE: Aw, yuk! Okay, you freshers, here's your challenge - find the way out.

STEPHEN, MARCUS, JOHN and DANIEL cast about aimlessly for several minutes. The party, some by a more circuitous route than others, blunders its way towards Cold Hole.

### Scene Three Cold Hole

DANIEL: Where now?

MARCUS: Down here - I think.

STEPHEN (Climbing through Cold Hole): I don't remember this bit.

Exeunt STEPHEN and MARCUS towards the 40'. Manent JOHN & DANIEL, with the others, staring thoughtfully at Sand Passage.

MIKE: Where do you want to go?

JOHN: I think we'll stay and wait for them.

MIKE: Well, I might go & see how they're getting on. Chris, Kevin, Jill, Paul - you'd better come too.

Exit MIKE through Cold Hole.

JILL: Okay guys - which passage is the most breeze coming out of?

The penny drops. Exeunt omnes through Cold Hole, to find MIKE waiting.

MIKE: I wanted you to leave them there - then we could have sent their mates back to get them.

### Scene Four The Aftermath, Caves House

CHRIS: So, what did you think of the cave, John?

JOHN: It was great!

MIKE: Not as much fun as zapping aliens with plasma bolts, though, I bet.

JOHN: No - well, pretty close.

JILL: You should let Mike explain to you what plasma is.

JOHN: Ah, well, what we mean by plasma is something special - it's a superheated form of matter that's the next stage up from gas...

MIKE is deprived of further education in plasma physics as CHRIS knocks over his drink.

### CURTAIN

#### Author's Note

The reader should be aware that some changes in action and dialogue have been made for dramatic purposes; however, these are only minor. The interesting facts are:

- Trip took place on 2 March 1991 after sustained dry weather, although it had rained heavily the previous night on top of Five Mile Hill.

- Whole of Mammoth much drier than usual, particularly Railway Tunnel.

- Lower River has sunk greatly in recent months, and previously sludgy mud banks at sides have consolidated. Crossing without immersion is possible for the tall and fearless.

- Squeeze at bottom of Toilet Bowl impassable without modification. Stones rolled down sometimes fell into water, but usually rattled down a long slope. Characteristic gurgling of water from Toilet Bowl absent. Upper level passage totally impassable.

- Lead in roof of Oolite Cavern over pitch to Oolite Loop explored and found to lead to hole back to floor of cavern.

- The new scaling poles are light and easily transportable, but the same cannot be said of the angle irons.

- Keir was made to look rather silly.

Chris Norton

## HUNTING THE WOOLLY RHINOCEROS

Being the report of a dig conducted  
by SUSS on Sunday, March 3, 1991

### The Team

Chris Norton Dip.Sqz.(Mammoth), B.Sqz.(Spider) - Chief  
Ferret  
Dr. Michael Lake - Rockpile Specialist  
Professor Keir Vaughan-Taylor - Earthworks and Obstruction  
Removal  
Sue Willis, F.R.C.S. - Backup lighting and bandaids  
Jill Rowling - Cartographical Section  
Paul Kirwan - Support Crew  
John Chisholm, Daniel Clark, Marcus Claxton, Stephen Tidman  
- Moral support and weapons specialists  
Kevin Costa - Official observer, Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust

The expeditionary force rose early, by the combined machinations of the conclusion of daylight saving and the exhortations of Professor Vaughan-Taylor. The party trekked in the dustcloud of the Professor's Subaru through the mighty sandhills on the recently graded track to Playing Fields, our first site for the day. The Professor was already atop the eastern side of the valley above the large doline, gesticulating wildly. When the team arrived, the Chief Ferret was lowered gingerly into a small, untagged hole about 5m up the hill from J175. Pronouncing it lifeless, he made a quick exit, permitting Rowling to enter and make a sketch, which should appear below. J175 was also explored, and the dig pronounced not a good prospect.

Whilst Vaughan-Taylor and Norton scoured the hillside for Contact Cave, the weapons section grew restless, and it was resolved to set out for points north. The party descended through the scrub and began the long hike towards Serpentine Cave.

En route, a stop was made at Diggins Diggins. First, Norton proceeded down a tunnel heading east under the rockpile beside the entrance to inspect a passage being excavated by Dr. Lake. Due to the breeze in evidence, he pronounced it a good prospect, but extremely difficult to dig because of the location.

Whilst the others journeyed through Diggins Diggins to be sneezed out the Right Nostril, Norton and Professor Vaughan-Taylor engaged in some earthworks at the southern end of the cave where a recent collapse has occurred. After some ten minutes, the Professor decreed the dig a more major project than initially thought, and the two retired to the surface.

While the others investigated McKeown's Hole, Norton, Vaughan-Taylor and Willis descended into Little Canyon Cave to the Nibicon Dig. Whilst the Professor worked at enlarging the passage, impeded slightly by he and Willis having to share the one light source, Norton plunged through and began investigating the rockpile. Following the stream passage, a point was reached where the way on was through a small hole at floor level which executed a tight 90° turn. After a little preliminary excavation, he was able to wiggle around the corner until his upper legs jammed in the hole. After five minutes more of digging, he was able to rotate his hips 180° and thus permit his legs to follow.

The rockpile was very water-worn, with large mud banks on the side of the streamway. A fairly constant breeze was in evidence the whole time. Norton's pulse quickened - was this breeze the breath of the legendary Woolly Rhinoceros? Such a discovery would bring SUSS untold prestige.

Eventually, Norton reached a chamber from which no way on was immediately in evidence. He removed some rocks from the floor and discovered a tight hole connecting back to a small stream passage at floor level with an intermittent breeze emerging. The hole was, however, impassable due to rock projections at the sides. He cursorily investigated one or two other passages before deciding to return to the Professor and request backup, as he was uncertain of the result of a man-to-beast confrontation with the W.R. with no weapons support.

The rest of the team, with the exception of Costa, who retired with a cold, and Dr. Lake, had entered the lower entrance to Serpentine Cave. Dr. Lake was conscripted into the exploratory team and he, Willis and Norton sat down to await the return of Vaughan-Taylor with a hammer. As he was returning, the others emerged slowly from the Upper Serpentine entrance. Finding the squeeze in the meanders passable, the team resisted the idea of blasting into the



rest of the cave with plasma rays (suggested by the weapons technicians) and continued towards Little Canyon Cave. Rowling reports that the lake that normally forms in Serpentine near the Little Canyon turnoff is absent. The team were unable to enter Little Canyon due to a shortage of tape for the long drop down to the Nibicon area, and returned to the upper entrance where John, Daniel and Marcus climbed out, and Norton lowered a ladder for the others. The weapons team decided to make an early departure due to mechanical problems with their transport.

Lake and Norton set off into the Nibicon Dig, leaving Vaughan-Taylor behind to make the entry large enough for his passage. They continued through the 90° squeeze, which, despite Dr. Lake's svelte figure, had to be enlarged before he could pass, and proceeded to the small hole, Lake all the time emitting excited noises such as "I like this cave" and "This looks like the Spider rockpile just before we broke through". They commenced pounding the obstruction in the hole in the floor with the bolt hammer.

Whilst this not-entirely-natural cave formation process was in progress, several high avens were checked out above the hole to see if they afforded an easier way on, but all were found to choke out.

After about an hour or so of work, noise was heard close by. A dishevelled Vaughan-Taylor was spat into the chamber, and he informed us that the squeezes were now veritable railway tunnels. He set about the hammering with vigour as the others investigated various other high-level leads, which either became too narrow or were choked with rocks at a point that must not have been far below the surface. All the avens obviously took water during flood, as attested by the mud banks leading down into the chambers below.

After some time, the hole was large enough for Dr. Lake to poke his upper body through and see round the corner. He reported the passage to be so small that it was impassable, and undiggable. Disconsolate, attention turned to shifting larger boulders away from the watercourse in the floor in the hope of breaking into a larger passage. Here, the Professor's strength, fuelled by zeal for discovery, was of great value. Again, however, the passages uncovered were

all too small for even the Chief Ferret.

Dr. Lake then spied a shaft leading up at the western end of the chamber. He followed a tight passage which headed south and eventually emerged on the other side of a narrow rift that was a water course. Norton quickly followed, with Vaughan-Taylor bringing up the rear, frantically shovelling and moaning "Why do I have to dig every time I want to follow you two?".

The breeze, which had diminished somewhat in the last chamber, was again in evidence. Norton could almost feel the snores of the W.R. As Lake examined the watercourse, Norton attempted to pass through a hole in the roof, but was thwarted by its small size and lack of objects which could provide leverage. It appeared, however, to be yet another rockpile chamber close to the surface, with tree-roots dangling from the roof. Dr. Lake, in the meantime, had found a possible dig site at the southernmost end of the chamber, where another large mud bank terminated in a hole under a roof covered in phreatically-sculpted pendants. Another way on could be through the continuation of the stream passage at the base of the rift; this would also require extensive digging. The three returned to the surface as light was beginning to thicken, having spent some three hours in exploration of this small area, to where Willis, Rowling and Kirwan awaited them. The latter two had entered the passage to the tube just before the 90° squeeze, but decided against continuing. Expedition complete, the team retired to the chinese restaurant in Blackheath for a banquet to celebrate the discovery.

### Epilogue

Although they knew the area beyond Nibicon Dig had been entered, the party were sure that the chambers where they dug had not been entered before, due to the fact that obvious leads were covered by rocks that had to be removed to permit access. It was hypothesised that the 90° squeeze may have been sumped with gravel during previous investigations, thus not permitting passage. On return to Sydney, however, Norton undertook some research & discovered that virtually the entire length of the passage had been entered and mapped by an SSS party led by Simon Bland in 1978, and named the Rambling Rockpile Extension (Bland,

1979). In a series of articles, Bland describes how over a period of several months his team dug out several sections of passage, breaking through into the chamber reached by Norton on September 2, 1978. He writes that he "spent a good length of time exploring and checking all the nooks and crannies for further passages", and reports of attempts to penetrate the tight rift from stream level by Mark Bonwick (Bland, 1978a). He certainly noticed the hole in the floor that occupied much of the SUSS team's time, as it is marked on his map. Not marked, however, is the room on the other side of this rift. It seems unusual that the obvious chimney leading to the high-level passage was missed on both this and the subsequent survey trip (September 23) (Bland, 1978b) - the most probable explanation is that this hole has come into existence subsequent to Bland's exploration. This is quite plausible as this section of cave is obviously still undergoing active development.

Unfortunately, though noting several possible leads accessible with tools, Bland turned his attention to the promising dig in Diggins Diggins Cave, and no mention is made of subsequent visits to the Rambling Rockpile Extension in the JSSS for the next few years. Patrick Larkin (SUSS) has penetrated into the beginning of the rockpile; however, from descriptions given it is likely that he was stopped by the sumped 90° squeeze (M.Staraj, pers.comm.). It is hypothesised that the relative ease with which this section was entered by the SUSS team is due to a combination of the extensive work of Bland et.al. and the fortuitous removal rather than deposit of much debris during the recent floods.

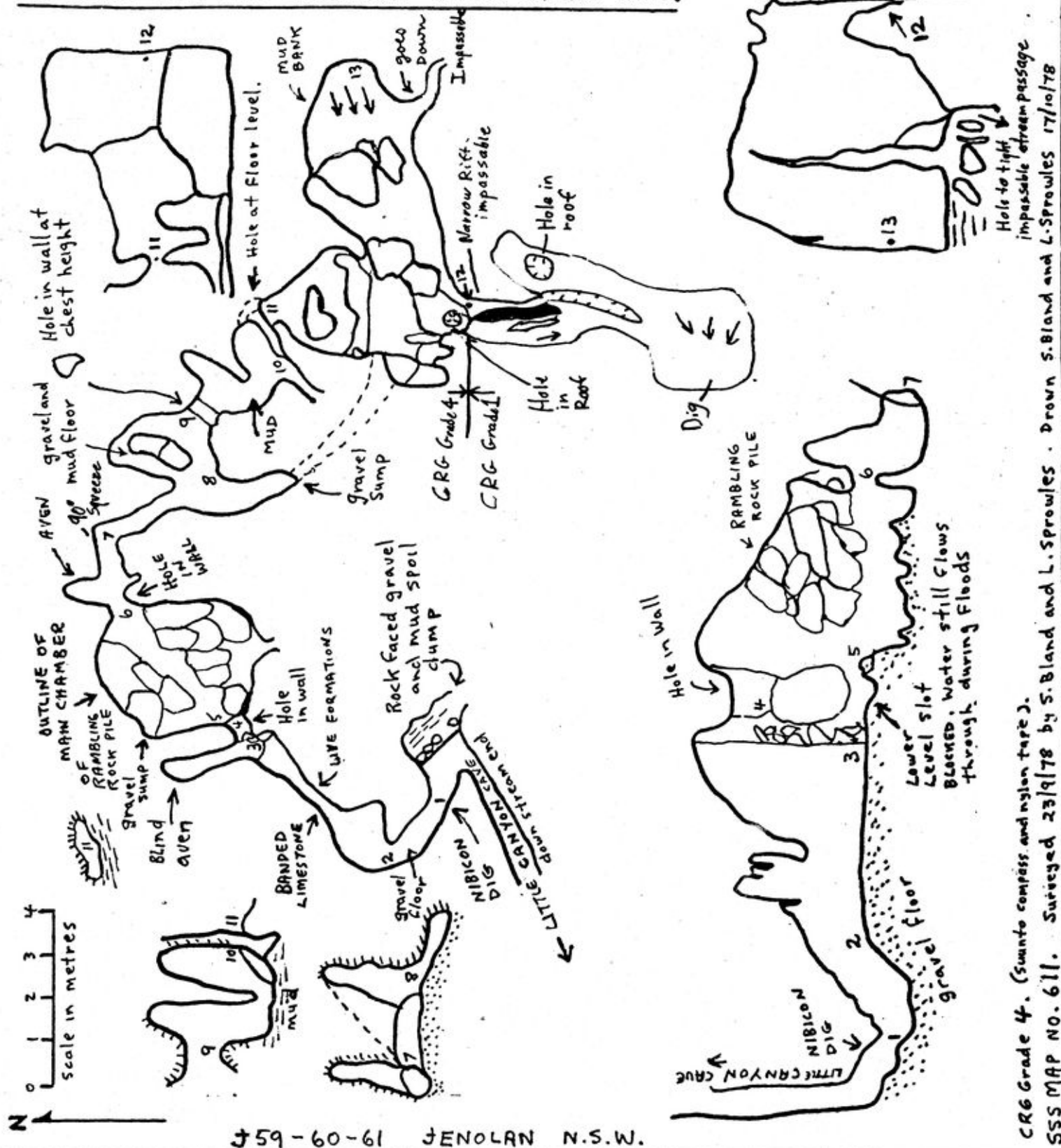
The discovery of the new chamber to the south means that this section of cave is a much better prospect for uncovering the W.R, particularly due to its SSW trend, than must have been apparent to Bland. Norton and Lake intend to commence a large-scale dig at Easter. Would-be explorers are encouraged to join in. To whet appetites, a modified version of the SSS map has been included.

Chris Norton

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- Bland, S. Digs, Digs and More Digs at Jenolan (1978) 22(11)  
JSS 254
- Bland, S. Surveying, Digging and Water Sampling at Jenolan  
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RAMBLING ROCK PILE EXTENSION - LITTLE CANYON CAVE.



Adapted by C.Norton from (1979) 23(1) JSSS 6



# THREE AQUANAUTS AT JENOLAN

PRESENT: Mark Staraj (T.L.), Danielle Gemenis, Patrick Larkin.  
DATE: 25th April, 1990.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hearing that there had been a flood at Jenolan (again) the three of us were looking forward to seeing northern Mammoth Cave in flood. On a trip just a couple of weeks before Pat and Danielle and others had managed to pass the sumped Dry Syphon - requiring passing a duck under and short sump in succession. They noted all sorts of interesting streams flowing in this area (eg. Infinite Crawl) and then soon came back as not all had passed the sump. At the time they thought they had been the first to do so but I pointed out that a group including Henry Shannon was first with one or two others since. However no detailed observations had been made.

So a thorough investigation was planned - it was going to be exciting as I had never passed a sump before!

## 2. ONE FISH, TWO FISH, AND ONE FISH FINGER!

Upon arrival at Jenolan it suddenly seemed as though we had crossed into some parallel universe! Where I was anticipating an overflowing Blue Lake there was nothing - no lake - nothing!! Some drought of devastating proportions had been visited upon Jenolan. Actually in the tail end of the flood the sluice gate had been opened in order to allow the river to scour out all the sediment. The river itself was still flowing through the Devil's Coachhouse.

Crossing the McKeowns Creek a number of times on the way to the cave gave me hopes of checking a few theories. Bow Cave was taking a reasonable stream. Inside the stream coming from the Rockpile was to all intents and purposes the same size - which was important to the theory. We were unable to source the stream within the rockpile. Sand Passage was as sumped as expected and there was evidence of a recent lake in Horseshoe Cavern.

We set out for Dry Syphon via Debouchement Detour. When we reached Central River we were in for a shock. In normal flows one merely steps across to reach the Bypass. In flood one step across via a few rocks - not even getting feet wet. But this was different. The chamber was unrecognisable. A lake covered the crossing to a depth of 3m - roof clearance was at most only about 1.5m!! The other "normal" route was totally gone - totally sumped. It was now a 25m swim to the other side - which was not even visible. God knows what the Dry Syphon had now become but the duck under must now be a sump - in real terms an underwater squeeze!!

Danielle was looking unhappy. She really wanted to swim across and check out the Dry Syphon. It looked like a damn cold and fruitless business to me. So with all my vast knowledge of Mammoth Cave I pointed out all the evidence that overwhelmingly said the Dry Syphon was impassable. Pat corroborated and as he had been dangling his leg in the lake its numbness now prompted him say that there was absolutely no way he was going to swim across. Well he was in one of those warm PVC-type oversuits and chlorofibre thermals. Sitting in my cotton overalls and thin polypropylene thermals, enthusiasm reached freezing point.

But Danielle was not convinced and tried to cajole us into going. Pat would not be moved. I looked at the lake - NO WAY! Danielle now muttered about going on her own. She was obviously desperate. I could see her point - unless we looked we would never really know (but I was



certain!!). However Danielle wasn't absolutely certain of the way but I knew it like the back of my hand. So as an act of impulsive selflessness:

"Alright. If you really, really, really, really, REALLY want to go - I'll come along." Each "really" had occupied a paragraph to itself - surely she wouldn't put a dear friend out so badly now that he had offered a sacrifice of himself solely for her benefit?

Pat sensed defection and blackmail. "I am categorically NOT going with you."

Five silent minutes later there was a big splash and a Danielle watermill churned itself out of sight. "Mark... aren't you coming?" (Note the sound of chattering teeth).

I had maybe five minutes before an angry, cold Danielle returned. With utmost reluctance I began to slide slowly into the water - it was so damn cold!! I reached a sticky situation, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea - I was either going to lose my manhood or be found lacking one. Well, far better to have had and lost one ... "Pat, we'll be back in about 40 minutes at most." "But I'm not waiting here - I'm too cold." "But this is the first time you've been this way!" "I think I can remember it." Organisation seemed to be crumbling but nevertheless I plunged ahead. Getting out of the water its coldness was belied by just how positively balmy the cave air felt.

In absolutely no time we reached the Dry Syphon and found it with airspace. She had been right, it was apparently no worse than last time although there were signs it had been recently sumped. But with no Pat and already being cold I was not going further today. After roundly blaming Pat for the mission's failure we turned to go back. Danielle then noted my bleeding thumb. Another of the hazards of cold water - it had probably happened during the swim twenty minutes earlier.

We caught up with Pat in the Railway Tunnel. He also had been busy and gone to check on the downstream side of Central Lake at Abusive Intrusive. Not surprisingly he found the waterfall operating into Snakes Gut. It was not jetting out like last time (Staraj, 1988) but there was only 30cm clearance from top to base of the waterfall! Ice Pick Lake and Central Lake had almost merged!

### 3. The DIGGINS DIGGINS CAVE - J35 CONNECTION

The next mission was to check out Diggins Diggins Cave to see if it offered a lead into the so far unreachable streamway beyond the Nibicon Dig in Little Canyon Cave. Danielle had gone back to the cottage. Pat employed me as guide to the cave. After trying to turn off the trail one gully too soon I brought us directly to the destination - in spite of prolific 2m high undergrowth! The weeds had really been thriving in the extended wet. Starting to get cold I elected to wait outside and catch what sun was left. The cave is not very long. A steady cool breeze blew out of the entrance and after 10 minutes I moved further away. Another twenty minutes later and still no sign of Pat and not much left of the world either. I was getting cold and annoyed. I decided to do some nearby surface exploration in an effort to stay warm.

After 3m in the undergrowth I stepped in a small hole and pitched face first into nettles - boy what fun! Shortly Pat appeared from the opposite direction to the cave! His story went like this..

Inside the cave he followed the obvious south trending passage. After a time he could make out the sound of a very large river from

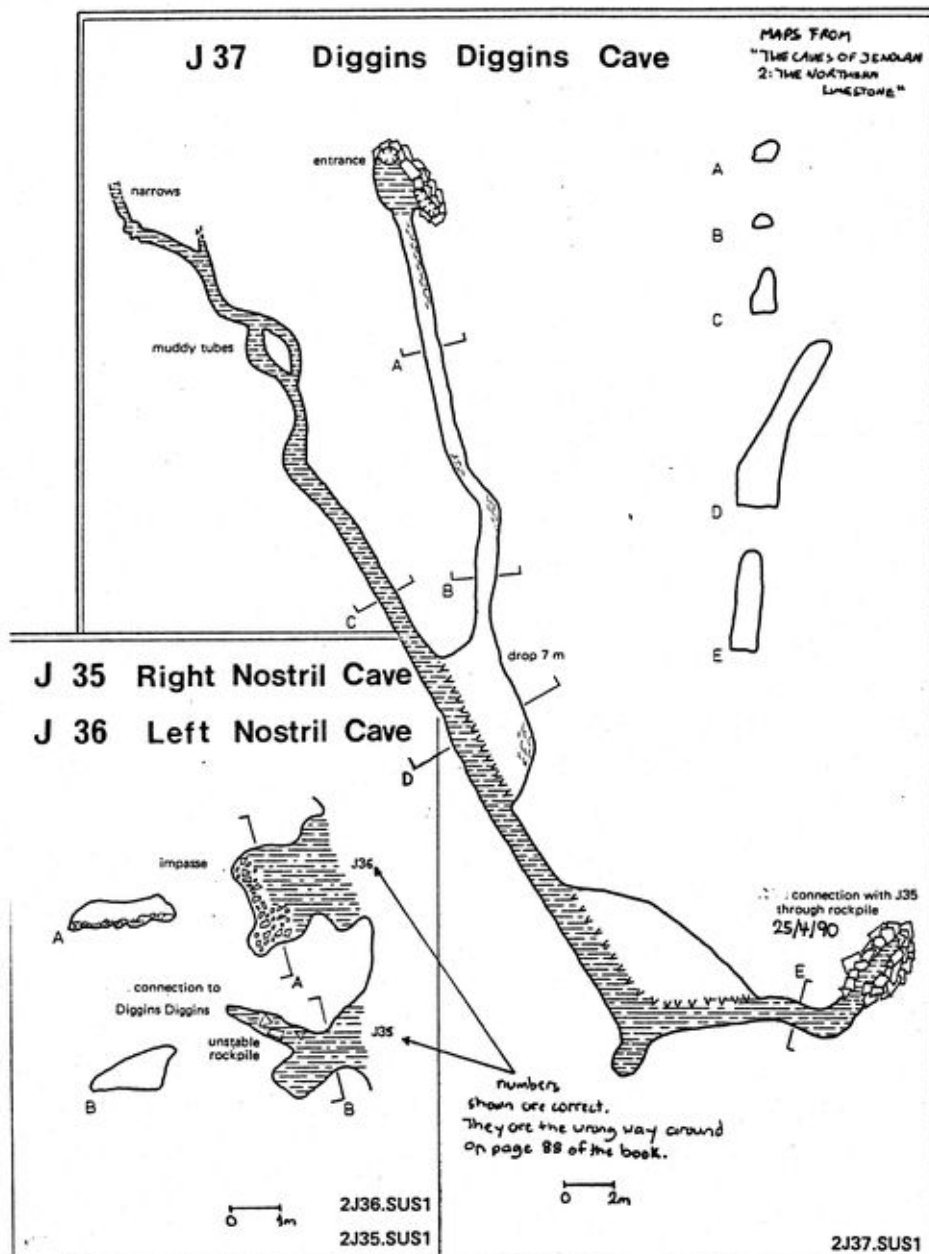
ahead. The Woolly Rhinoceros! Nothing else could be that big. Pat was going to enter the hallowed pages of Jenolan history (..would you think he would come back and get me?). All that was preventing him was a decidedly tight squeeze. Some time later he was succesful and in true Larkin fashion oozed out via the J35 entrance otherwise known as the Right Nostril Cave, described in the Northern Limestone book "as the pick of the two"! Well done Pat.

It was later confirmed to be the first connection between the two caves. It only now needs a Diggins Diggins Cave to Little Canyon Cave link to make things really neat. Following such a notable success we headed home.

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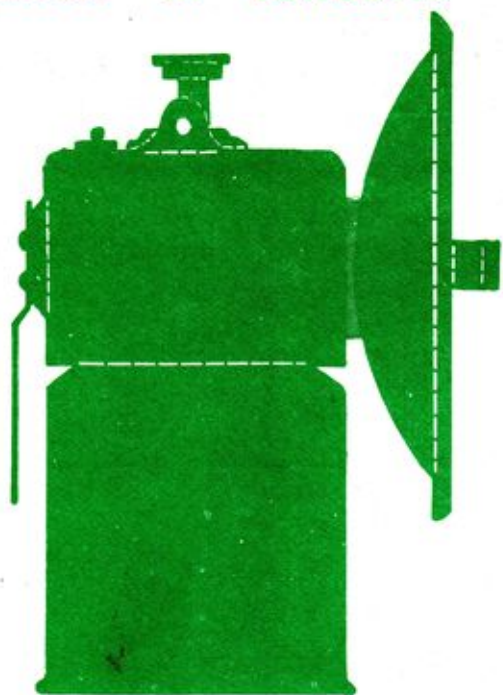
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Mark Staraj.





Lumen in Tenebris



# SUSS

BULLETIN  
of the

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY  
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BOX 35, HOLME BUILDING,  
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY,  
N.S.W. 2006

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