



C.D.A.A. Newsletter
No. 138 - DECEMBER 2016

THIS ISSUE...

- *2016 AGM & Symposium Report & Photos*
- *Interview with Bill Silvester*
- *World's Deepest Cave Found in the Czech Republic*

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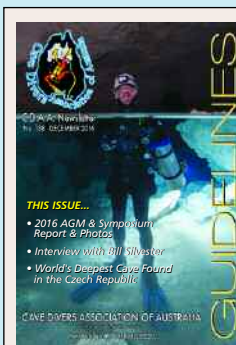
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Cover:

Timor Cave Diving.

Image by:
Liz Rogers

CAVE DIVERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

ABN 65 062 259 956

P.O. BOX 544, Mt Gambier, SA 5291

GUIDELINES is a newsletter of the Cave Divers Association of Australia. All articles for the following issue are to be sent to the Publications Director, Email: publications@cavedivers.com.au

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CONTACT LIST

Please contact the most relevant person or, if unsure write to:
 C.D.A.A. P.O. Box 544 Mt Gambier SA 5291 www.cavedivers.com.au

NATIONAL DIRECTOR - John Vanderleest
 Email: national@cavedivers.com.au Mobile: 0419 775 771

STANDARDS DIRECTOR - John Dalla-Zuanna Mobile: 0407 887 060
 Email: standards@cavedivers.com.au

Quality Control Officer - Linda Claridge Mobile: 0408 052 070
 Email: quality@cavedivers.com.au

Risk Officer - Andy Rands Mobile: 0403 825 590
 Email: risk@cavedivers.com.au

Search & Rescue Officer - Richard Harris
 Email: sar@cavedivers.com.au Mobile: 0417 177 830

Instructor Materials - Deb Williams
 Ph: 0419 882 800 Fax: 03 5986 3179 Email: materials@cavedivers.com.au

BUSINESS DIRECTOR - Matthew Rochford
 Email: business@cavedivers.com.au Mobile: 0433 345 743

Treasurer - Treasurer - position vacant, refer to Business Director

CDAA Products - Peter Horak - Mobile: 0403 349 122
 Email: business@cavedivers.com.au

SITE DIRECTOR - Tim Muscat Mobile: 0422 127 802
 Email: site@cavedivers.com.au

Kilsby's Booking Officer - Craig Larkin
 Email: kilsby@cavedivers.com.au Mobile: 0418 821 191

Tank Cave Booking Officer - Noel Dillon
 Email: tankcave@cavedivers.com.au Mobile: 0407 530 103

Shaft Booking Officer - Tim Muscat
 Email: shaft@cavedivers.com.au Mobile: 0422 127 802

PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS DIRECTOR - Rowan Stevens
 Email: publications@cavedivers.com.au - Mobile: 0417 550 509

Records Officer (Members & Instructors) - Meggan Anderson
 Email: records@cavedivers.com.au - Mobile: 0415 291 904

Guidelines - Graphics & Advertising - David Bryant
 Email: guidelines@cavedivers.com.au - Mobile: 0417 125 710

Webmaster: Simon Roberts Email: web@cavedivers.com.au Mobile: 0433 069 751

AREA REPRESENTATIVES

ACT: Alasdair BLAKE. Mob: 0404 823 007 Email: actrep@cavedivers.com.au

NSW: Ryan DUCHATEL. Mob: 0419 268 714 Email: nswrep@cavedivers.com.au

N.T.: Jeffrey SWANN. Mob: 0419 561 515 Email: ntrep@cavedivers.com.au

QLD: Terry CUMMINS. Mob: 0439 945 123 Email: qldrep@cavedivers.com.au

SA: Damian BISHOP. Mob: 0433 345 743 Email: sarep@cavedivers.com.au

S.E. SA: Leon RADEMEYER. Mob: 0467 070 740 Email: sesarep@cavedivers.com.au

WA: Geoff PAYNTER. Mob: 0407 445 112 Email: warep@cavedivers.com.au

VIC: Peter WOLF. Mob: 0413 083 644 Email: vicrep@cavedivers.com.au

Public Officer - Andrew Seifried Email: publicofficer@cavedivers.com.au
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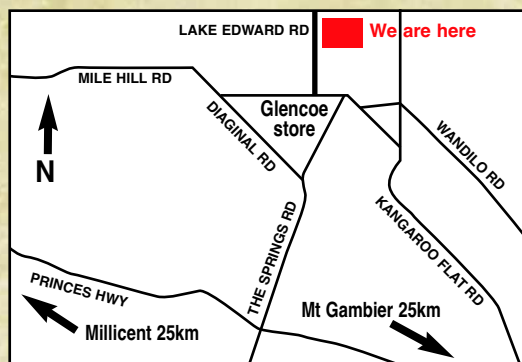
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EDITORIAL ROWAN STEVENS



Welcome to the December 2016 issue of Guidelines. This has certainly been another interesting year for the Association – Site access negotiations, Director changes, and new volunteers stepping forward to help. It's never dull.

I hope that you celebrate and enjoy the festive season with your family and loved ones. Have a merry Christmas and happy new year.

In the meantime, enjoy the following articles that we have assembled for you – World's Deepest Cave found in the Czech Republic, CDAA History, AGM and Member's Symposium 2016, Helmet Diving in Pines in 1967, Diving in the USA, and another great diving pioneer of Australia.

Until 2017, safe and happy diving

*Rowan Stevens #3177 | Publications and Records Director
M: 0417 550 509 | E: publications@cavedivers.com.au*

FROM THE DESIGNERS' DESK...

Hello to all CDAA Members. firstly, thank you for everyone's ongoing support of Guidelines - without your stories and pictures this wouldn't be such a great magazine. Please keep up the amazing photographs and travel stories, and please keep submitting them, small or large, they make Guidelines a great read!

It's amazing how time flies - I have now been designing Guidelines for the past 15 years but I have been working in the dive industry since the early 1990's. In that time I have gotten to know many iconic names in this industry, as well as international explorers and diving legends. We have our own legends right here in Australia and it's time to get 'them' to tell their story before they are unable to. In 2016 I published two interviews in Guidelines with diving pioneers. Neither were really Cave Divers, though they did indulge in early days at Mount Gambier before the CDAA evolved. It is now my intention, somehow and some way, to Video Interview some of the Pioneers who are still with us. I am building a website call P.A.S.D (Pioneers of Scuba Diving). Ultimately I would like to travel interstate and meet these people face to face and interview them, but this will take time. With your help we might be able to do this simpler and faster. I am planning to design the website and launch it in 2017. See my advert on page 5. If you can help, please send me an email.

Thanks again, Dave Bryant.

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NATIONAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

DECEMBER 2016

With the end of year looming, it's time once again to reflect on the positives of the year and make resolutions for the following year.

For the CDAA, we need to think back about some of our achievements and there have been many. Never before in our history have we had so many dive sites open at the same time, along with other sites close to being opened. Even though the challenges presented by the Kilsbys have been a negative, there is still a positive in that members have been compelled to face into our core values and principles, decide on what sort of organisation the CDAA will be in the future.

On some of the discussions around our State meetings, we have had several people volunteer their time and expertise to help determine whether placing Tank Cave into a trust is a good or poor idea. While we have not yet progressed things on this front, it was heartening to see so many people volunteer to help.

For development opportunities at Tank Cave, the Millicent Council were extremely helpful about how we may go about this if we vote to do so. They have provided a list of local companies that could assist us in construction, provided guidance on what sort of permits we should seek, advice regarding camping, what options we should consider with sewerage, fire management and so forth.

On the training front, we have talked to a few known international instructors who are keen on offering CDAA training and certifications. We even have a few fellow Australians who are in the

US, who are hoping to be part of a pilot program. Kilsby's Sinkhole continues to dominate many discussions. Where there are many questions we could ask ourselves, we have distilled it down to a simple decision – do we wish to accept that divers not trained in cave diving techniques can be trusted to dive only in the open area of sinkholes and not enter into the overhead environment. If we believe this, then we need to change our Rules to cater for this. This will be the focus of our forthcoming member discussion & voting.

On the finance front, we can be extremely happy. Never in our history have our finances been so strong. We have a healthy bank balance and no debts. We own a significant asset and are in a position where we can invest into things that will help us continue to strengthen our sport, strengthen our landowner relationships, and improve site facilities for all.

We would like to thank our sponsors for providing fantastic support for our 2016 Symposium, which proved amazingly popular. City of Mount Gambier for hosting us, Halcyon with a limited edition, carbon fiber, "20th Anniversary" back plate system, Hollis with one of their new Katana Side Mount systems and Scubapro with a MK 17/G260 regulator. We also had our local friends at TMF Engineering with a digital pressure gauge, Redboats with 10 boat trips, and Scuba Fiend with a primary reel. Please continue to support those who support us and keep an eye out for some photos of the winners across Facebook in the coming weeks.

But all of this would not be possible without our volunteers. So take a few minutes to thank them for the great year we have had:

State reps: Joseph Bicanic, Damian Bishop, Al Blake, Terry Cummins, Ryan Duchatel, Geoff Paynter, Leon Rademeyer, Jeff Swann, Peter Wolf.

TCMC: Kelynn Ball, Rob Brennan, Chris Edwards, Tim Muscat, Matt Rochford.

SROP volunteers: Linda Claridge, John Dalla-Zuanna, Richard Harris, Tim Payne.

AGM speakers and hosts: Bradley Dohnt, Michelle Doolan, Tim Muscat, Tim Payne, Ken Smith.

All the Site Access Officers & Clean up days' Volunteers who tirelessly keep the Association running in the background.

Our Guidelines Editor, Records Officer, Book Keeper, Products, Instructor Materials, Science, Risk, and Mapping officers.

And many more silent workers who have helped keep our association going.

May you all have a merry & safe Christmas and as always, may your drysuit remain wet on the outside.

The National Committee.



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World's Deepest Underwater Cave Found in Czech Republic

Team led by Polish diver Krzysztof Starnawski says 404m Hranice abyss may be even deeper after test using robot

A team of explorers say they have found the world's deepest underwater cave, in the Czech Republic.

The Polish cave diver Krzysztof Starnawski, who led the expedition, said he felt like a "Columbus of the 21st century" to have made the discovery of the cave, which is at least 404 metres (1,325ft) deep, near the eastern town of Hranice.

On Tuesday, Starnawski dived to 200 metres down the flooded limestone Hranice abyss, then used a remotely operated underwater robot to reach a further 204 metres, the total length of its cord. However, he said, the robot did not seem to have hit the bottom of the abyss.

In 2015, Starnawski dived to 265 metres at Hranice, which required him to spend more than six hours in a decompression chamber.

Speaking on the phone from his home in Kraków, Starnawski said Hranice abyss, which divers have explored for decades, was 12 metres deeper than the previous record holder, a flooded sinkhole in Italy called Pozzo del Merro.

The Czech Speleological Society said it believed the cave was deeper than 404 metres. "It [the robot] was as deep as its rope could go, but the bottom was still nowhere in sight," the society said in a statement.

Mud and a water temperature of 15C (59F) make diving in the cave difficult. The water's mineral composition damaged both equipment and exposed skin, Starnawski said, "but that is the only price to be paid for this discovery and it was worth paying".

On Saturday, he planned to dive to 200 metres again to bring the robot back through the narrow passage leading to the

bottom of the abyss. The device was made for the expedition and operated by the Polish company GRALmarine.

Starnawski said National Geographic, which first reported the discovery, covered some of the cost of the operation.



Krzysztof Starnawski (left) and Bartłomiej Grynda check the progress of the ROV



Krzysztof Starnawski explores the Hranice abyss in the Czech Republic. Photograph: Krzysztof Starnawski/AP



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Diver Dave to Hang up His Fins!

By Peter Horne ~ Photos courtesy Jan Coleman, Engelbrechts Cave

For the past 20 years, "Diver Dave" (aka "Diver Dan" or "Fright" as he was also known in his earliest years) has silently entertained hordes of tourists, suspended above the tourist walkway in Engelbrecht Cave's western chamber. Dave is one of Mount Gambier's most enduring tourist icons and he has served a very useful role in providing visitors with a realistic experience of what it is like to be a cave diver in the system's beautiful underwater chambers.

But time stops for no man or dummy, and like a lot of us older cave divers, Dave is beginning to show his age! So Engelbrecht Cave's Manager ("boss lady") Jan Coleman is currently considering updating him, and she'd welcome any ideas, equipment and hands-on support that CDAA members can supply. It's also possible that Dave will remain and have a companion, or even be totally replaced by some kind of animatronics thingy.

Diver Dave didn't just appear in the cave overnight. The concept of having a life-sized model of a fully equipped cave diver lighting up the chamber for tourists originated with former Mount Gambier CEO Greg Muller, who has always been a very supportive advocate for cave diving in the Mount.

Greg appreciated how much the region benefited from the publicity and tourism dollars that visiting cave divers generated, and during the 30-odd years in which we shared ideas and discussions both personally and in my capacity of Manager of the CDAA's original Site Access and Landowner Liaison Committee we often discussed ideas about providing more opportunities for non-diving visitors to interact with cave divers.

In September 1992, Greg told me how impressed he had been by a video about cave divers in Engelbrechts which was made by renowned Adelaide underwater cameraman Tony Carlisle in the late 1980s. Greg said he thought it would be great if people could watch a new, shorter video while they were in the entry hut before they descended into the cave where they would then encounter a life-sized "cave diver" suspended from the ceiling. I agreed that it was a terrific

idea and also suggested that the dummy's helmet-mounted lights be modified to emit blue light via filters etc so as to better replicate what we cave divers really see underwater (Jan recently informed me that she had made this happen many years later). Greg was keen to involve members of the cave diving community in the project by sourcing real gear (battered, scratched and non-functioning) to make everything look more realistic, so I contacted Chris Brown in Adelaide to see if he was willing to help as I knew that Chris had a huge range of hands-on skills as well as access to some of the most "battered" REAL cave diving gear in the country! Chris was very supportive and eager to manage the entire project, and Tony Carlisle was happy to negotiate making a new video with Greg.

A couple of months later, Greg sourced a suitable mannequin through "Fright Special FX" in Adelaide and suggested that Chris try to get gear for the dummy that had the same general configuration and approximate colour of the gear that Greg Bulling had been wearing in Tony's original video. However the decision to make a new film with Chris as the diving model meant that properly-matched gear could now be used, and Chris gained the support of Seasuits in Christies Beach (SA) to dress both the dummy and himself in the same style and colour wetsuit so the movie and real dummies would look identical. The seamstress at Seasuits who made the two wetsuits actually apologised to Chris for a slight delay caused by the mannequin's needing a lot of extra padding to match his girth! Greg also arranged for Chris to work with tourist consultant Rob Walter towards the completion of the project.



I must thank Chris here for providing me with a lot of detailed info regarding what was involved. Diver Dave's base dummy was a standard plastic store mannequin which Chris and Fright Special FX modified by breaking its legs and fibreglassing them into a more "cave diver-like finning position". Stainless-steel plates were then added to the front and back of the mannequin and long stainless bolts ran through the body, connecting the harness back-plate and twin tank bands as well as serving as attachment points for suspending the dummy from the ceiling. By late 1996 when Dave was finally ready to be installed in the cave, Chris had put many hours of work into creating the loveable guy we know today.

In addition to getting the dummy and himself outfitted in the right wetsuits, Chris manufactured and/or supplied most of the dummy's gear:

- the stainless steel support system for the dummy
- the two "scuba cylinders", which were actually manufactured and assembled from sheet galvanised iron; the tank tops were spun by a local company in Adelaide.
- tank valves, DIN yoke adaptors & regulator hoses
- twin tank band system
- the harness, stainless steel 'D' rings and buckles
- the aluminium back-plate (made together with Phil Prust)
- main cave reel and the jump reels (made together with Paul Arbon)
- contents gauges, compass and depth gauges (all past their use-by dates)

- torch battery housings
- the helmet, line arrows, clips, light bodies and sundry other small items.

The dummy's red buoyancy "wings" were made by Ron Allum for the 1987 Pannikin Plains Cave Diving expedition and were filled with polystyrene balls so they would appear to be inflated; Brian Davies supplied the Poseidon first-stage regulators (obsolete equipment used by the Fisheries Department...the regulator hose outlets didn't suit the hose configuration, so Chris drilled and tapped the bodies of the regs to streamline the hose configuration); and Russel Kitt from Oceanic Australia supplied the Oceanic second-stage regulators, mask and fins.

It'll be a bit sad to see Dave go, but as Greg told me during a recent conversation, "Diver Dave has played a terrific role in promoting both cave diving and Mount Gambier's caves both locally and internationally, and the fact that we are still talking about Diver Dave and his successor shows how all of the key players have pride in taking ownership of this simple but extremely effective tourist icon".

So long, Dave – thank you for all the years you have put into lighting the way and educating visitors to this magnificent cave diving site. Here's hoping that whoever or whatever replaces you will be equal to the task for the tourists of the future!

(With thanks to CDAA Life Member Chris Brown, Engelbrecht Cave Manager Jan Coleman and former CEO of the City of Mount Gambier, Greg Muller).

Mount Gambier hosts annual meeting

By Leon Rademeyer - borderwatch.com.au ~ 28th October 2016

“CAVE diving is about exploration in the first place, not about chasing depth or records,” keynote speaker and world renowned South African cave diver Don Shirley told a gathering of cave divers in Mount Gambier on the weekend. More than 60 cave divers from across the country gathered in the city on Saturday for the 43th Annual General Meeting and members symposium of the Cave Divers Association of Australia (CDAA).

The highlight of the symposium was presentations by Mr Shirley and his wife, Andre, regarding their extreme cave diving explorations over more than three decades.

Mr Shirley's keynote presentation related to the tragic death of his friend, Australian cave diver Dave Shaw, who lost his life in 2005 at a depth of 270 metres in a South African underwater cave.

The men were leading a team of divers to recover the body of Deon Dreyer, 20, who disappeared in the cave during a diving accident a decade earlier.

Mr Dreyer's body was discovered by Mr Shaw at a depth of 270 metres during an exploration dive with Mr Shirley in Bushman's Hole - one of the deepest underwater caves in the world - in October 2004.

Mr Shaw secured the body, which was on the cave floor with a cave line to the main line leading up to the cave's entrance for future reference.

After the dive, he decided to recover the body for the sake of Mr Dreyer's parents and asked for Mr Shirley's assistance in coordinating and managing the operation as well as being his deep support diver.

The recovery dive took place on January 8, 2005, amid international media attention, but sadly Mr Shaw did not return to the surface after he experienced a number of problems - including getting entangled in the cave line which played a part in prohibiting him from reaching the main line to ascend to the surface.

As his support diver, Mr Shirley had problems of his own, with a component of his diving gear imploding at a depth of 250 metres as a result of the immense water pressure.

In his own struggle for survival, Mr Shirley broke the surface around 12 hours later with, among other things, a serious inner ear problem requiring many hours of recompression treatment.

However, when the main diving line was recovered from the cave days later it brought Mr Shaw's and Mr Dreyer's bodies to the surface as both had been entangled in the cave line which was still attached to the main line.

“In the end, Dave did recover Deon's body, just as he said he would,” Mr Shirley told those attending. Relating to his experience, Mr Shirley said he stayed perfectly calm and “did what he had to do”.

“In a situation like that, you tackle each problem separately and when the next thing to do is to breathe - you breathe.” Mr Shirley said he started cave diving “to see what was around the next corner”, not to reach a specific goal or break a long-standing record.

“If exploring necessitates depth, a dive would be deeper, but exploration could also entail long penetration dives at shallower depths,” he said.

“In the end it's about training, experience and planning.”

The couple - who own and operate the Komati Springs dive centre in South Africa's Mpumalanga province - spoke about their experiences at CDAA



CAVE DIVERS: South African cave diving couple Don and Andre Shirley with Cave Divers Association of Australia national director John Vanderleest and standards director John Dalla-Zuanna at Mount Gambier's Main Corner. The Shirleys were invited as keynote speakers for the CDAA's 43rd Annual General Meeting and divers symposium on the weekend. Picture: LEON RADEMEYER

events in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne before arriving in Mount Gambier.

“We are off to the Nullarbor shortly and will also be speaking in Perth and Cairns before returning to South Africa,” Ms Shirley told The Border Watch.

“Our reception in Australia has been absolutely wonderful and we have made many friends.

“We took time to dive Tank Cave earlier and it was without doubt an experience to remember.

“The Limestone Coast with its caves and sinkholes is truly a special place and one to which we will return.”

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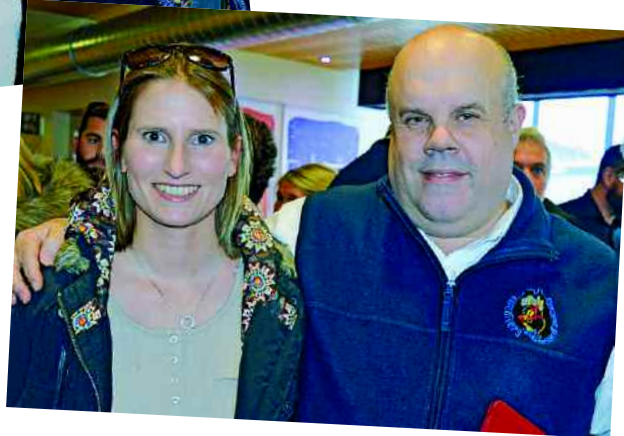
Outgoing CDAA standards director Linda Claridge flanked by Tom Gower from Melbourne and Warnambool's Andrew Ottanelli.

New CDAA site director Tim Muscat and his cave diving partner Michelle Doolan having a break at the CDAA's AGM.



CDAA South Australia rep. Damian Bishop (right) with partner Meg Anderson and fellow cave diver Peter Williamson - all three from Adelaide.

Adelaide based CDAA member Meg Anderson with CDAA publications and records director Rowan Stevens from Melbourne.



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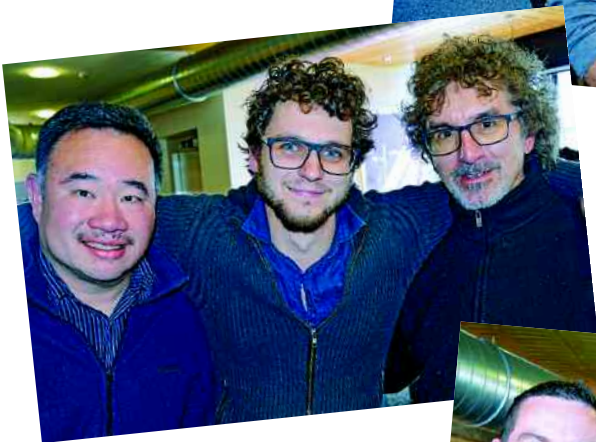
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Mount Gambier CDAA member Heinrich van der Westhuizen with Adelaide based members Dr Richard "Harry" Harris and Ken Smith. Harry and Ken Smith are members of the internationally renowned "Wet Mules" exploration group.



Mount Gambier based CDAA member Jake Manser (centre) joined by fellow cave divers Peter Chew and Michael Mallis from Melbourne.



CDAA business director Mathew Rochford with Cairns member Steve Bates during a coffee break.



CDAA guest speakers and world-renowned South African cave diving couple Don and Andre Shirley (second and third from left) with CDAA members Heinrich van der Westhuizen, Annie Rademeyer and CDAA Mount Gambier representative Leon Rademeyer.



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HELMET DIVING IN THE PINES, MT. GAMBIER: THE REAL STORY

As told to Cathy Deane by Con Penglis

Over the Australia Day long weekend in 1967, HDS Aus-Pac member Con Penglis was staying at the home of local Mt Gambier diving identity Graham MacKenzie, a pioneering diver who opened up many of the caves and sink holes in the area during the early 60's. As the "go to" person for all Mount Gambier diving at the time, it was Graham who was contacted with an unusual request by Victorian diver John Allen, who wanted to see if Graham was able to provide safety support for a dive he was planning. The catch was that he intended this to be a helmet dive in The Pines, a cave located in the Burrungule Forest near Mt Gambier.

While agreeing with Graham that John Allen must surely be nuts, Con confirmed that he was "in", giving John the assurance that they would be able to provide the support he needed to dive. John offered to give the support team a go at helmet diving before the cave dive on Sunday. So on the Saturday morning of that weekend, a quartet of divers comprising Con, Graham, and Adelaide divers Eddy Gertner and Allan Walden met John at the Port MacDonnell jetty, where they and the dive gear were quickly surrounded by a crowd of onlookers. Allan declined the offer of a helmet dive, but used the jetty dives under John's tutelage to hone his role of communications officer for the dive in The Pines.

Con went first, and he recalls that he did not find the helmet dive too much of a problem since he was a fit and seasoned commercial diver, comfortable with working on a surface air supply, albeit in a different set-up. He quickly mastered the necessary skills to make the 5 metre dive under the jetty, and spent about 15 minutes on the bottom. Looking back, Con reflects that it was a strange way of diving, with limited mobility, unlike the relative freedom he knew from his time as an abalone and commercial diver; but soon enough, he was able to walk around the bottom on the toes of his boots, and exchange banter though the comms.

The helmet which John Allen brought with him for the dive in The Pines was a Siebe Gorman 12-bolt which appears to have been modified to incorporate a 4th light. Air was delivered via a 72 cu ft steel tank. A CIG oxygen regulator reduced the tank pressure to 60 psi. Allan Walden maintained con-

tact with John from the surface using a communications panel with a line connected to the helmet. Graham MacKenzie provided surface support as the dive tender and Con entered the water as the safety diver. He carried a Pet 35mm camera with flash, both in home-made housings, with the idea of taking photos of the dive. John descended to the floor of the cavern at around 20 metres, and Con remembers watching him achieve neutral buoyancy and commence hopping from rock to rock. After about 15 minutes he inflated his dress and came to the surface. Con managed to get one shot with his camera, unfortunately, when the film was developed there was only a half frame image.

Con believes that it may have been the first helmet dive was made in the Mt Gambier caves. More recently, in November 2013, Portland-based HDS Aus-Pac member Frank Zeigler of Professional Diving Services made a demonstration dive in the Little Blue sinkhole as part of the Cave Divers Association of Australia's 40th Anniversary celebrations.

POST SCRIPT:

SO WHY IS THIS THE REAL STORY?

Don't let the truth get in the way of a good story – a lesson for anyone using an oral history approach to writing about the past – it's important to check facts from a range of sources, and to recognise that our memories are not that good.

I first got wind of this story after hearing Con tell it at a get-together of SA HDS members. It was at least a year before I wrote up my notes, and I then wanted to catch up with Con to check facts, and fill



A crowd of onlookers surround Con Penglis who dressed to dive Port MacDonnell jetty, with Graham MacKenzie (left) acting as tender. Note the yellow box containing the communications panel.

a few gaps in what had been written so far. In the first story I wrote, according to Con's original recollection: the diver was a man named Robinson from South Pacific Divers Club in Sydney; Con was still living and working in Mt Gambier as an abalone diver; the tank used was 220 cu ft capacity; the depth of The Pines was 180 feet; there were only 3 divers on the safety team; and the dive was done in 1965.

I saw Con at another HDS event, and together we went through my article to fill the missing pieces of information. Since Con was not a helmet buff, he couldn't tell me what it was, but a photo he produced confirmed it as a Siebe Gorman – tick one piece of factual evidence. He couldn't remember Robinson's first name, and there was no photo to jog his memory. Subsequently I was able to confirm (thanks to the Internet) that there was a Denis Robinson who was a contemporary of Tom Byron, and the founding President of the SPDC, a club that did a lot of diving promotions, and used hard hats in club activities. Denis was an adventurous diver, so the dive was something he would have conceivably been involved with. I added a few words to the article to put Denis in context for the period. Tick another fact for my story. A quick check of CDAA records for The Pines suggested that the cave floor bottomed at about 20 metres before branching off into tunnels – another correct fact for the article.

I tidied up the text, and emailed the next iteration to Con, so that he could take more time to look at it again, and make sure that it was accurate. Two days later, I called Con to see what changes were needed. Amazingly, once he had sat down quietly to read the story, he knew it was wrong. He then proceeded to pull apart his collection of old articles, his log books and other resources to correct the largely fictitious story that he and I between us had managed to concoct. We laughed at the tricks that our memories can play in taking a multitude of 'facts' we have in our brain and assembling into something resembling a fairy tale.

The key trigger for Con's memory was an article he wrote as the Scuba Divers' Club SA Publicity Officer in Australian Skin Diver March/April 1967. It was a page from a collection of photocopies of



Graham MacKenzie in dress at Port MacDonnell

SDCSA contributions a friend had assembled for Con. So let us not underestimate the importance of recently written club reports and recollections, which are far more likely to reflect the truth than our memories of events which took place 50 years ago.

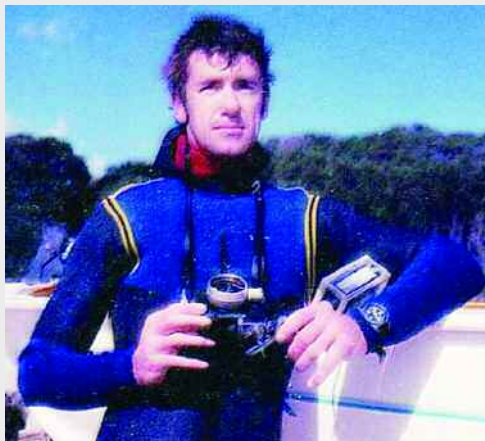
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Bill Silvester - A Pioneer of Diving in Australia, & Author of Down Under Magic.

Interview By Dave Bryant

Looking back at the 1950's in Melbourne, there were dozens of spearfisher men and woman who went on to become some of the first scuba divers in Australia. Bill Silvester was one of those. He wrote a book titled Down Under Magic, about his early days and the transition from snorkel to scuba, becoming a part-owner in one of Melbourne's first dive stores and even diving some of the locations in Mount Gambier which later became the sites that you as a cave diver know so well. Like many other divers, Bill cut a few corners in the 1960's. A lot of the things divers did in the early days and lived to tell the tale are not surprising, like being at 50 metres in Piccs with a dolphin torch between two divers, and you can probably guess where that went! It's all part of Bill's story and when you read on you'll discover the 60+ years of one of our early pioneers of scuba diving, his errors, his successes and his losses of the sport we all love so much.

In 1955, Bill and four of his fellow skindiving mates created one of Melbourne's first diving clubs called The Black Rock Skindivers. In years later the club was to become the Black Rock Underwater Diving Group (BRUDG). Bill also co-owned ADI, The Associated Divers Academy, and assisted in the foundation of FAUI, the Federation of Underwater Instructors. Later in 1973 he opened the first dive store in Byron Bay. In the years leading up to Bill's big move north he witnessed the tragic loss of Harold Holt whom Bill knew quite well. Another memory written in his book reflects on a close encounter with a 4 metre bronze whaler shark off Mentone beach who wasn't going to say no to Bill's fresh catch of butterflyfish! Bill's story starts in



England in 1936, born on Christmas Eve. In 1946 the whole family set sail on a vessel called the Asturias, one of the first migrant ships to leave for Australia. It was Bill's first adventure on the sea and gave him the opportunity to see dolphins and flying fish. Throughout the next 5 years the family lived both in Melbourne, then Perth, but in 1951 they returned to Melbourne and made a

permanent home in the coastal town of Black Rock, just 25 km's south east of the city.

In his book, Bill recalls many memories, but there is one which would have great meaning to all young boys with dreams of adventure. He talks about his bedroom in the new house, and says "this was a very special room. It was situated on a bluff on a sweeping bend where I



Moomba Parade 1956

had the only view of the sea. I could see the rocks and reef. McGregor Rocks were right in front of the house. It was from this house that the early history of the Black Rock Underwater Diving Group began".

The first time I heard of Bill Silvester:

I knew of Bill Silvester only by mention at a scuba expo in 1992 when I also dived Julian Rocks while driving through to the Gold Coast. In August 2014 I came across Bill's book by chance, at a cafe in Rosebud on the Mornington Peninsula. I started reading and was absorbed by Bill's story. I was then fortunate to meet Bill later in 2014 and asked if he would like to be interviewed... and this is his story of all those years ago...

Bill, if we go back to the mid 1950's when you were first introduced to skin diving, tell us about your first encounter, your equipment and if your first marine adventure scared you or made you want for more?

It was my father that introduced me to skindiving when I was 17. It was 1953. Our first skin dive was at Fossil Beach near Mornington. I had a round mask - no safety glass, Turnbull fins (not flippers), a ping pong ball snorkel that made me panic when the ball got stuck shut, and a hand spear with multi-pronged head. I speared a small sea sweep. My father said it was important to eat my first fish even though it was very small. So I did. It was OK.

My first impressions? Because skindiving was so new to me - and most people too, I was scared that even the humble sting ray would attack me, or an octopus - let alone a shark. Because I did not want to show fear to my father, I just had to show I was brave. Dad then bought me a copy of Hans Hass' book 'Under the Red Sea' and 'he' became my hero from then on. No wet suits then, or even any personal protection, it really was skindiving and I got bloody cold too.

In your book, you mention the many times you had a close encounter with a shark while skin diving in Port Phillip Bay. Were you in awe of such creatures or was it a fear that you naturally learnt to live with as you progressed from snorkel to scuba?



Piccs 1967

I was in total awe of sharks and scared too. I was somewhat comforted however, by the Port Phillip Bay statistics that recorded only one shark fatality and I think that was back in 1930's. The event was told to me by a witness - Steve Abbott - who was the father of a girl friend at that time. Nevertheless, I was always looking over my shoulder as his graphic story was a fearful picture in my mind. When graduating to SCUBA in the late 50's there were so many other factors to deal with that sharks were the least of my concerns. To this day the near death incident that nearly took my life at the Cerberus is still so clear in my mind. That is why I wrote it up in my book. Perhaps it is the aspect of being totally submerged with SCUBA and being able to see and breath underwater, that seeing sharks have become an exciting experience and not a fear. My most terrifying experience took place when I was building a blood line for FJ Walkers meat works in the late 1970's, and I met a white pointer just under the swirl of excrement coming out of the pipeline's exit. I thought my time had come that day.

You talk about the mid 1950's with your mates with whom you drive to Bermagui for your first spearfishing competition. Tell us about your mates and the experience of your first big adventure; the drive, the dirt roads, the sea views and the waters around Montague Island.

To this day Bermagui holds a special place in my heart. Magnificent scenery! Green, lush, with the surrounding hills topped by the

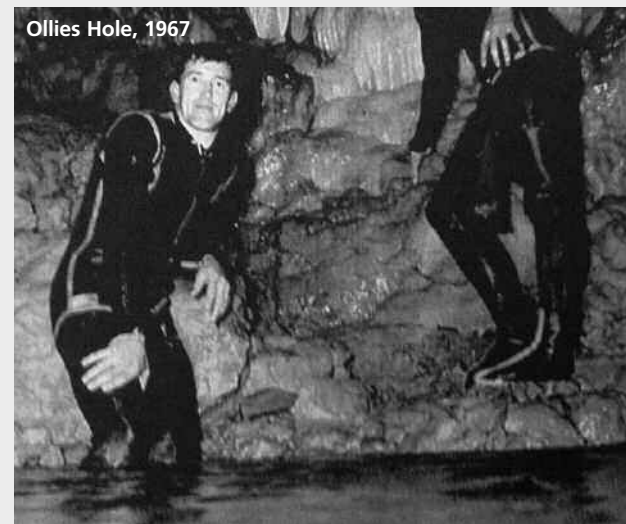
towering Mount Dromedary and a boat harbour that is nestled into the north side of the town have always been a sacred place for us to visit. Zane Grey's pool on the ocean side has good skindiving, and the many impressive rocky headlands and bays are great for snorkel diving. The drive up from Melbourne in unreliable old vehicles was a challenge, and with over 150 km's of dirt roads to deal with (in 1960) the heading east of Cann River was a nightmare to and dangerous too. But we believed it was worth it. Sometimes we would leave directly after work, take the long drive to reach Bermagui in the wee small hours of the morning and dive the Saturday. On Sunday we would dive early in the morning and then drive back to Melbourne. It was crazy stuff but incredibly bonding with our co-diving friends. Montague Island of course was a real mind blowing experience for us. The calm waters on the leewards side to contrast with the ocean breakers on the open side had to be seen to be appreciated. And the ocean was so clear too.

Not many divers really know of the history of scuba diving in Australia and how much of it was related to Ted Eldred and stuff that went on in Melbourne. In a few paragraphs, give us a historical reference as to what happened in the 1950's and how it changed your life, and when did you have your first 'open water' scuba dive, and where?

There is of course a story about who was the first to invent the single hose two stage regulator. I suppose one would have to say that



**Above: Robot camera system in 1959.
Below: David Perry with his Nikons.**



Ollies Hole, 1967

Ted Eldred was the first one to do so. This original regulator was taken up by Bob Wallace-Mitchell and sold commercially. However, Lionel Martin was not far behind. This is where we came in. The Sea Bee regulator was actually made by Lionel Martin but Jim Agar refined it to become one of the best of the early used models and a must use for Hookah use. Lionel was a genius and a wonderful man to get to know and befriend. We spent hours at his Delta Instrument Company

shop taking the copper wire off the 26 cubic foot disposal bottles, cold zinc galvanizing them to keep away corrosion, and making up the primitive demand valves and hoses to connect to the Aceweld reducers procured by Lionel. When we completed the new SCUBA gear Geoff Hume and I had our first dive at Half Moon Bay along with other Black Rock Skindiver members, and the rest of the story is written up in my book. Even though it was a scary experience for me, I just had to keep on going.

Once you have learnt to scuba dive, and the skin diving group has been re-named Black Rock Underwater Diving Group, there are a few accidents and deaths of close friends, but you progress further and soon create The Associated Divers Academy. Then you go on to partake in the establishment of the Federation of Australian Underwater Instructors (FAUI). What had you learnt by this stage and why did you feel the need to create these Associations. Was it for safety, to build and promote the sport or for another reason.



Deal Island wreck hunting trip 1969

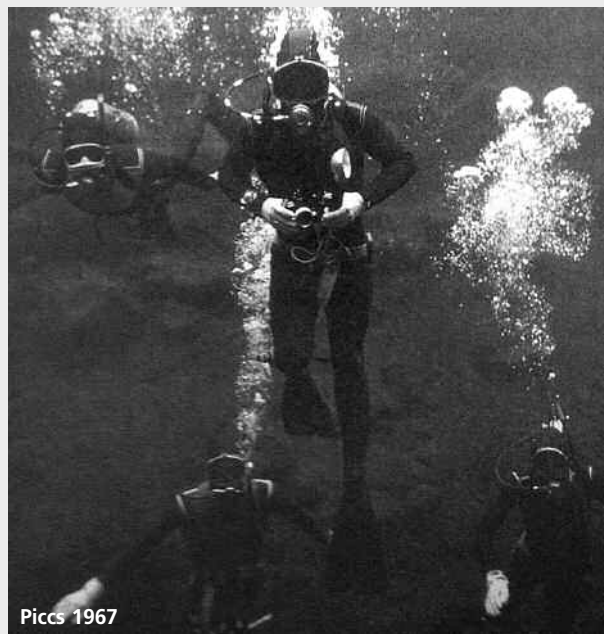
The establishment of The Associated Divers Academy became a natural progression from voluntary teaching of SCUBA in the BRUDG. We had an ally in Keith Webb who worked at the Melbourne Sports Depot in the underwater section. He had a lot of people asking him where they could learn to dive. As a member of the club he suggested that if we formed a teaching organisation he thought we would do well. Geoff Hume, Ray Lyons and myself - club members of BRUDG - made the decision to go for it. I was working for Holeproof Limited in Brunswick at the time and called on Foys in Bourke Street in my position in sales. Coincidentally Foys were expanding their sports department to add SCUBA to their stocks. When I met Brian Farrell, the then manager of the sports department, he offered to equip us with White Stag equipment and Voit snorkel gear for free if we sent all our pupils back to his store, we jumped at it! We received 10 sets of gear from Del Cantando the CEO of White Stag and we were in business. We negotiated with the then YMCA to use their pool on a Tuesday evening. The reason for the setting up of FAUI was to avoid the government stepping in and legislating the sport. If the government had legislated SCUBA diving it would have meant that Australian navy personnel would take over the teaching of SCUBA. A disaster for free agency! With Ern Ireland who also owned a dive

school, FAUI was formed with the support of Tony De Fina - the president of the Underwater and Spear Fishermen's Association. Collectively we wrote the standards and so the first instructor agency in Australia was born. At this time both Ray Lyons and Geoff Hume had resigned from ADA and David Perry came on as my partner, and his expertise was brilliant in writing up and improving the quality of our teaching.

In Chapter 13 you write about the disappearance of the then Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt, and the many times you then dived the same area he was tragically lost. You also reflect a time when you had the fortune of meeting and snorkeling with him in 1965. In Chapter 14 you ask, What Happened to Prime Minister Holt? I'm not going to give anything away, so I will ask you... What were your memories of a man who was a great swimmer, spear fisherman and a lover of the sea, similar to yourself?

Harold Holt spoke in a cultured and correct English speaking accent. A snob? By no means! But he was much the gentleman, and to us young men we were much in awe of the strong presence he commanded. However, when he spent time with us snorkel diving, it was then we realised that he was just a good bloke who loved his sport just as we did. And he treated us as his equal, and made easy conversation when he showed off the butterfly he speared.

I have wondered what brings about the death of experienced swimmers and divers as it still happens today that they get into trouble. One tends to think that they become blasé to whatever the sea throws up. That is when they make their mistake. It is quite possible that the day that Holt disappeared he was not quite up to the extreme sea conditions on December 17th. but went for a swim anyway. Alan Stewart tried to warn Holt it was dangerous to go in the ocean at Cheviot beach that day, and even tried to follow him in. Alan called Holt to come back when he felt the pull of the rip at his own legs. When his call to return was ignored Alan would not follow. Alan lived Holt disappeared. A more complete story is in the book.



Piccs 1967

In Chapter 15 you delve in to the first dives you did at Mount Gambier, and your actual first dive which was almost fateful. Further to the text from the book, what else can you tell the readers who are cave divers and know Piccaninnie Ponds quite well? What else do you remember from that almost fateful day. What type of torch were you using? How did you manage to get out of that situation? What did you change so that a mishap like that didn't happen again?

I have re-typed a few paragraphs from page 175 of Bills book below...

The first dive with buddy Geoff Hume and myself was both fascinating and near fateful. There were others in the party, but as buddies Geoff and I stuck together. The dive took us out from Piccaninnie Lagoon where the limestone was covered in a splendor of green grasses and algae, and into the Chasm. This is where we experienced the near vertigo feeling of being suspended in mid air as we passed over the deepest portion of the Ponds. It was just spectacular! Nevertheless, I

think from my own perspective, I missed the absence of marine life. It was so different to diving in the ocean.

Now it was our turn to explore the Chasm. We had a torch - just one between us, and a rope which was let out as we descended to the bottom of the Chasm at 30 metres. The Chasm narrowed quite rapidly and sort of dog legged and continued down. Finding that we no longer needed weight belts we removed them, tied off the rope to both belts, and kept on descending down in to a fast narrowing hole. I led the way down, Geoff followed. The hole narrowed further, and as our gauges were in feet in those days, when we checked the depth we had passed 50 metres (165 feet) and there was still more depth to go. We could not see the bottom. It was now very dark, and the water was extremely cold. What we had yet to realize was that as we descended we were dislodging; articles that has previously adhered to the limestone, and now it was rapidly silting up the water.

Without warning I felt Geoff tug at my torch. He wrenched it out of my hands and I was left in total darkness. The next thing that happened was my mask was knocked off my face and a blast of cold water struck my eyes. In his panic in the darkness, Geoff had kicked off the mask with his fins. I was in deep trouble - and I mean deep! No torch, no mask, black, freezing water, in a narrow tunnel: where was up? The sound of air bubbles thundered in my head. Panic rising! The blackness was indescribable. The loneliness and the thought that I might perish enveloped my consciousness.

Bill's answer to my question follows...

The first dive we made into Piccaninnie Ponds and down into the chasm was made using White Stag regulators and bac pacs brought into Australia by the managing Director of the company Del Cantando. He negotiated to sell only Foy and Gibson in Melbourne. Bac Pacs supplied too. No flotation system with these, just a harness system. The White Stag equipment came about with our arrangement with Foy and Gibson to train their new divers. It netted us 10 sets of SCUBA equip-



Harold Holt (left) with Bill Livester (right) at the spearfishing symposium, Somers, Westernport Bay, 1963.

ment free in return for sending our customers and sales back to Foys. The white Stag was a straightforward single hose two stage regulator with no venturi assist to aid breathing. It breathed hard! The tanks were White Stag steel fitted with reserve lever type valves. There was no such thing as a pressure gauge in those days.

There was also no emergency second demand valve system either. If one buddy ran out or low on air it was shared by buddy breathing with the one who still had a supply. Obviously, when having to get to the buddy breathing stage, it was vital to make a slow emergency ascent heads up, not exceeding the largest bubbles.

In the case of my being left without light when Geoff panicked and left me down in darkness of the deep hole with just a pin hole of light - and even that was difficult to find because he stirred up the side walls and it all became a milky mess. My survival at that time was a miracle, and I surprised myself by not panicking. It was not hard to refit my mask to my face and clear it, but I still had to get to the surface. I reached up to feel the air bubbles flowing out from my demand valve. I knew that air being so light must rise so I just followed them until I could see some light. It taught

me that a surface line is vital support when entering these deep holes.

Re the torch! I cannot recall the name. It was yellow and used 3 C-cell batteries. It didn't leak which enabled Geoff to get to the top of the chasm even in his unhappy state! I really gave him 'What for' when I got out of the water.

Later in your book you also talk about diving some of the shipwrecks located close to Port Phillip Heads, especially the 'Time', This shipwreck was featured in an old B&W film titled On The Beach, where it depicted the desolate last days on Earth. In fact you dedicate two chapters to your time diving this unique shipwreck. You must have fond memories of dives on that vessel, including a chapter titled 'The Day We Nearly Blew Up The Boat'. Of all the dives you had on this wreck, what was your most memorable, and why?

Wow! so many memories how does one pick out the most memorable. One was certainly when the hookah line became lodged under a piece of wreckage when the air cut out. Upon rising towards the surface holding the angled anchor line because of the raging outgoing current, I was



Bill, you certainly have a passion for diving, not unlike many other divers I have gotten to know over the years, and your efforts to better the sport then led to you opening the first dive store in Byron Bay. Even though your book doesn't go in to great detail, and the location of Byron being the place I will soon be moving to and possibly live out my days at, tell us why you loved this unique environment so much. When did you start the dive shop here, why and was it for a change from the colder waters of Melbourne, or was it just a

part of life's adventure?

I first dived Byron Bay in 1960 when there was still a number of giant groper in the cod hole. Giant Jewfish too. I had never seen such a proliferation of marine life before - even at Montague Island. It was enchanting to dive there and the sea temperature that summer was around 25 degrees C. At that time I gave my heart to the Julian Rocks and the then very sleepy little town of Byron Bay. I just wanted to live there one day, but the time wasn't yet right.

The right time came about in 1972. I was on a business trip to sell wet suits for Ron Harding. When I walked into Ponto Bell's sports shop in Jonson Street Byron Bay, he told me that he was going to sell up, build a trawler and go catch prawns. I immediately inquired about his asking price, and it was low enough for me to think I could borrow enough to buy it. There was another catch however. We, Sharon and I needed to have some security before we accepted the deal. About that time there was a land auction at Wategos Beach. We bid on a block and it was knocked down to us - a paltry \$3800. Wow! We negotiated to buy the shop from Ponto Bell, went to the National Bank wrote a detailed marketing plan and the bank loaned us the money. We were in! In February 1973 we moved to Byron Bay, took over the shop and then began Australia's first onshore dive charter business using boats belonging to the local amateur fishermen. What happened after that is another long, long story yet to be completed.

SHARK ATTACK 'MAY SPARK HYSTERIA'



**Byron Bay Newspaper:
September 15th, 1979**

SHARK ATTACK victim Michael Oliver was swimming with this group of people before he was attacked at The Pass, at Byron Bay yesterday morning. Bill Silvester, left rushed Michael to the Byron District Hospital after the attack. Also pictured are Ken Wise, Nick van Kempen, Carolynne Chernago, Deborah Ferrell and Maurice Viewrow.

A diving instructor who treated a young Sydney man after a shark attack at Byron Bay yesterday fears a wave of 'unwarranted hysteria' in the wake of the incident.

Mr. Bill Silvester, who has trained hundreds of scuba divers, said there was no connection between yesterday's surprise attack and a discharge pipe-line connected to F. J. Walker's abattoir.

"Already there has been hysterical speculation that the attack is somehow connected to Walker's bloodline," he said.

"That is just not correct. It was just one of those fluke things that happen," said Mr. Silvester, an instructor for 17 years.

He said hysteria was unnecessary and unwarranted.

Mr. Silvester was speaking after he and fellow instructor Maurice Viewrow, the regional director of the Federation of Australian Underwater Instructors, acted swiftly and unobtrusively when an 18-year-old member of their trainee scuba squad was badly gashed on his right leg by a small shark.

Michael Andrew Oliver of the inner city suburb of Chateau had extensive wounds above and below his knee but the 2-m shark missed a main artery by centimetres, according to a Byron District Hospital spokesman.

applied above the wounds within moments of the attack.

Then Mr. Silvester returned to pick up the rest of the group nearing the end of a 500-m swim, a course requirement.

Although no one sighted the shark, Oliver told his rescuers it was 'grey, and about four or five feet long'.

Bronze whaler

This description fits the bronze whaler, a shark which can be dangerous when disturbed.

Matron S. Nelson, of Byron Hospital, later praised the rapid rescue action and said the diving instructors acted superbly in the emergency.

A medical team reached Oliver 14 minutes after the incident and rushed him to hospital.

Matron Nelson said the instructors kept Oliver warm, talked to him and did enough to prevent shock setting in.

Mr. Silvester said the accident was the first in his instructing career.

"Between Maurice and I we would have trained about 2700 divers," he estimated.

"All we did was apply our first aid knowledge and stayed calm."

Experienced Cave Divers Die During Underwater Exploration

BY ERIC DOUGLAS POSTED MAR 24TH, 2016

For Brad and Lee, there was no greater thrill than finding new passageways in underwater cave systems — especially networks they had explored before. The idea that more people have been on the surface of the moon than in some of the caves they visited kept them going. It was all about the thrill of discovery. When Brad noticed a small corridor leading off the main cave system, he signaled to Lee that they should check it out. She immediately agreed. They didn't let the other buddy team on the dive know they were taking off; they planned to be gone from the main line for only a minute. They just wanted to take a quick look so they could return later to map it for their records. After looking around for a few minutes and confirming they had found a cave neither had ever seen before, Brad signaled that they should return to find the other dive team. They turned around, heading back the way they came, but never found the main cave or the line the other divers had laid down.

THE DIVERS

Brad and Lee were husband and wife. They found that their long relationship aided in their cave explorations, helping them to anticipate each other's moves before they happened.

Both were experienced cave divers who had similar goals when it came to exploration. Brad was a cave-diving instructor and typically led the way, but Lee was never far behind him. They were in their mid-40s with no health issues to speak of. Brad and Lee joined a second pair of divers to explore a cave system all four of them knew well. Even though they had dived the site many times, Brad and Lee never stopped looking around for new offshoot caves. Most of the time, they didn't see much. New passages would go only a few feet before closing off to nothing, but it didn't keep them from searching.

THE DIVE

Both divers on the other team had been certified for cave diving by Brad, so he knew their skills and was comfortable with them. As a group, they agreed that the two less-experienced divers would lead, laying out the cave reel and controlling the dive. A cave reel is a strong, thin line attached outside — or just inside — a cave open-

ing that divers use to find their way back to the surface. In general, divers know to never leave the reel without tying another line to it so they don't get lost in the system.

When crafting a dive plan, cave divers determine their bottom time using the Rule of Thirds: allocating one third of their air for cave penetration, one third for the return to the surface, and the remaining one third for contingencies — though some prefer having even greater reserves. Brad and Lee agreed that when any member of the dive pair hit the Rule of Thirds and determined it was time to exit the cave circuit, they would all four begin making their way toward the surface. Recent rains had churned up the water somewhat, fouling the visibility, but they all agreed that the conditions would make the dive more interesting.

THE ACCIDENT

The foursome entered the freshwater spring and made their way to the cave-system entrance. The lead diver secured his line outside the cave and confirmed that everyone was ready to enter before he moved forward. His buddy went second, followed by Brad. Lee entered the circuit last. Visibility was worse than expected, but they still

moved forward. Brad often said, "Any day diving is a good day," so none of them considered aborting the dive at that point.

To keep from interfering with the first team, Brad and Lee held back a bit. When one of them noticed a small opening off to one side of the corridor, they decided to check it out. Both divers were carrying cave reels of their own, but neither pulled them out to secure a jump line to the one their friends had laid.

There is no way to know what happened next, but when the first buddy team turned the dive and began heading toward the surface, they realized Brad and Lee were no longer following them. They assumed there had been a problem and that Brad and Lee aborted the dive, so they continued reeling in their line as they left the cave. It was only after they returned to the surface that they realized Brad and Lee were missing. They knew the divers were still in the cave somewhere.

Brad and Lee's bodies were later recovered 250 feet from the cave entrance. Both divers had completely exhausted their air supplies.

ANALYSIS

Brad and Lee broke a cardinal rule of cave diving, one they both knew very well: Never leave the main line without attaching a jump line to it to ensure that you can find your way back out. The couple let their own familiarity with the cave system override their decision-making, and that got them in trouble.

If Brad and Lee had tied off a jump line, they could have easily followed it back to catch up with the other divers. And if Brad and Lee were still in the offshoot when their friends came back, the line would show the other divers that they were still underwater. Then the other team could have waited, or left the primary cave line in place. Cave divers typically do not leave cave lines tied off in an effort to keep untrained divers from following them. The first dive team could have left a slate where they found the jump line tied off to say they had exited and to ask Brad to bring the reel to the surface. None of that happened.

There is an important lesson to learn from this dive accident, even for noncave divers. Brad and Lee were overconfident and chose to break the rules, rules Brad taught to all of his students. Too often, experienced divers and instructors believe they can rely on their experience to solve a problem that never should have come up in the first place.

There are no "diving police" to catch you if you violate any rule of diving. Often, people can take risks and violate safety rules and make it back to the surface without a problem — that is, until the one time things don't go their way.

Don't take shortcuts or fail to prepare for the diving environment. Underwater is an unforgiving place, and the moment you don't take it seriously, you are at risk. Watching your pressure gauge drop to zero is no way to spend the last few minutes of your life.

LESSONS FOR LIFE

1. Get Proper Training and Equipment Diving in any overhead environment is a sure way to get in trouble if you don't know what you're doing.
2. Follow the Rules Safety rules in scuba diving were often created based on other people's mistakes. Learn from that.
3. Protect Yourself There is nothing underwater worth dying for. Follow the safety rules and live to dive another day.

Eric Douglas co-authored the book *Scuba Diving Safety, and has written a series of adventure novels, children's books, and short stories - all with an ocean and scuba-diving theme. Check out his website at booksbyeric.com.

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NEW GEAR

Scubapro NOVA 2100 Light

The powerful new Nova 2100 SF (Spot Flood) multi-use dive light offers both a 65° wide beam and a 15° spot beam to perfectly match different diving situations. Five light modes plus an emergency signal mode provide lots of versatility, with one-button control for easy operation. Extremely reliable, the waterproof battery compartment is isolated so even if the O-ring seal fails, water cannot reach the internal electronics.

FEATURES:

- Dual beams include a powerful 2100 lumen 65° wide beam, and 800 lumen 15° spot.
- Wide beam features 6 Cree XM-L2 LEDs; the spot beam features 1 Cree XPL LED.
- Five primary light modes: 100% Flood, 50% Flood, 100% Spot, 50% Flood + 75% Spot, and 25% Flood + 50% Spot.
- Hidden emergency signal mode offers a one-second blink interval or a SOS Morse code.
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- Provides 55 minutes of burn time at full power and constant brightness.
- Depth tested to 100m/328ft.
- Corrosion-proof metal light head improves heat dispersion and increases durability.
- Completely isolated battery compartment protects internal electronics
- Over-pressure valve releases battery off-gassing.
- Universal 1/4-20 tripod mount attaches to a Goodman handle, Monopod or optional Y-S adapter.



The complete Nova2100 SF set includes: SCUBAPRO UW light head, wide and narrow Goodman handles, pistol grip handle, wrist lanyard, GoPro adapter, 25Wh lithium-Ion rechargeable battery, AC power adapter, charging tray, international plug adapters, spare O-rings, O-ring lubricant, O-ring removal tool, EVA carry case with foam insert and instruction manual. **\$970RRP**



World's Best Cave Dive Sites

A NEW COLUMN BY DAVE BRYANT



BLUE HOLE - Malta

Having been to Malta and stood on the edge of the Mediterranean abuzz with the azure blue water, and NOT even going prepared with my mask and snorkel I can only imagine what wonders lie beneath the surface on this tiny island mecca. Malta is truly an amazing destination and one day I will return and see what awaits in its waters. It's said that the site of The Blue Hole on the island of Gozo (the smaller of the two islands, see map) is "rated among Europe's top dives and located just below "Azure Window", perfect for beginners and seasoned divers with its many depths and routes each can explore two underwater caves with eye-catching light. Furthermore, divers can either go on and swim towards the sea or go back to the caves at the back of the hole. I found a website listing the so called 'top cave dives' in the world, and of course we know there are many Down Under and even more in Mexico and Florida, but having been to Malta I want to tell the world about this amazing destination. Recently Liz Rogers travelled to Malta too, and dived many very deep wrecks. I am hoping to accept a picture gallery of her amazing images for a future issue of Guidelines.

From the internet site, it reads . . .

The Blue Hole is a natural rock formation carved out over the centuries by wind and wave power. Offering a sheltered entry for a number of dives, this site includes a huge archway which starts at 8

metres and has a flat top, almost square in shape, and covered in golden cup coral (parazoanthus axinellae). A large cavern is also worth exploring and can be found at the bottom of the hole to the left of the entry point.

This dive then leads you out of the Blue Hole and across the bay towards the Azure Window and starts at 16 metres at the base of the Blue Hole and rises to 8 – 9 metres under the Azure Window. A large section of the Azure Window collapsed into the sea in April 2012, and these huge rock blocks now partially block the route under the window. **To see the full site report, check the weblink below.**

Location: Directly in front of the Azure Window, at the bottom of Dwejra Point

Access: Reached via a fairly difficult walk over ancient coralline limestone. The rough path leads you down to the shore, where a shallow-water shelf leads to the right where the Blue Hole is formed.

Conditions: Sheltered at most times in the hole, as it is protected by a fringe of rock.

Average depth: 20 m

Maximum depth: 45 m

Average visibility: 45 m

Web Ref:

<http://www.gozodive.com/gozo/diving-sites/blue-hole/>

Cave Diving at the Crossroads of America

By Peter Buzzacott

Each year, in addition to the annual National Speleology Society (NSS) Cave Diving Section (CDS) workshop in Florida, the NSS-CDS hold a similar three day Mid-West Workshop in St Louis. This year I was lucky enough to be invited to speak there so I packed my Jeep with dive gear and drove through four US states to Missouri.

St. Louis is a marvelous city with a rich musical history, having given rise to Chuck Berry, Miles Davis and Tina Turner among many others and I for one found the radio stations here an audible feast. An early visual highlight though, was to see the magnificent Eads Bridge, where decompression sickness in caisson workers was first described in the 19th Century, (following construction of the Brooklyn Bridge in New York). From here I headed South-West to Waynesville for the first cave dive of this event.

The week ahead we were a bit nervous it was going to rain, because Roubideux Cave is

renowned for its high flow, and on the actual morning while we signed in at the local 911 Emergency communications center, thunder rumbled in the distance, then rolled loudly overhead as we dressed in the car-park. A good crowd were there making the dive almost festive and we were relieved the flow was still relatively low. A few divers explored the earlier sections of this magnificently dark cave, my buddy Joshua and I scootered 400 m in on open circuit, depth 45 m or so. The Thornton brothers Josh and Michael went 550 m in and Lamar and Jared Hires went in (I think) ~700 m where it drops down to 67 m


depth. I signaled Joshua as soon as I'd racked up 10 minutes of deco and we turned around to head out, stopping halfway to explore a jump before finally settling for 30 minutes of deco on oxygen. Our plan was relatively conservative and we dived with plenty of gas in reserve in case of delay exiting. It was, as it turned out, Joshua's 100th full cave dive, entitling him to apply for his "Abe Davis Award". Well done Joshua! The diving was a great success all 'round and everyone packed-up just before the rain started in earnest. That



Peter (L), Joshua (Middle) and Andrew (R) at Roubideux Cave after Josh's 100th dive

evening everyone met for drinks and dinner at CJ Muggs in St Louis. A special thanks to the CDS for covering the appetizers (which were delicious).

The next morning we all met downstairs and signed-in, bought raffle tickets and looked over the tables laden with prizes. Joshua had really outdone himself this time, there were more prizes than people. In fact, the raffle raised over US\$2000 for the NSS-CDS, outstanding! Fifty-two people registered and after being introduced I got the ball rolling with a talk on "Expedition level injury prevention". My co-authors and I had just recently had a paper on US cave diving fatalities published in the journal Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine and I highlighted the most relevant findings, like how unacceptably high the number of CNS seizures are in US trained cave diving fatalities. Extra vigilance is needed; please everyone, analyse your gas before every dive, mark your tanks and be very wary when switching gases.




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LOCATION
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WORKSHOP SEPTEMBER 17TH, 2016
CJ MUGGS 101 WEST LOCKWOOD AVE
WEBSTER GROVES, MO 63319





Lamar and Jared Hires preparing to dive Roubideux Cave



Forrest talking about his long friendship with Ken (also pictured)

Lamar Hires, founder of Dive Rite and the Regional Coordinator for the IUCRR in Florida, has so far recovered 23 bodies from flooded caves and also successfully rescued two living divers. I doubt anyone will forget him recounting the evening he got a call to recover a lost diver and sat down to finish dinner first before leaving, only later to find the diver still alive in an air bell! Kelly Jessop described a decade of cave fauna research and showed the fascinating relationship between rainfall and fauna counts. Terry Hall holds the current End-of-Line for Alabama's longest underwater cave and he spoke about survey techniques.

After lunch Forrest Wilson, inventor of the line arrow and all round cave diving pioneer, regaled everyone with sometimes hilarious tales from the earliest days of cave diving. Of particular note to the CDAA was that he fondly recalled decades of friendship with Australian cave divers Ken Smith and Ian Lewis. Forrest holds a special place in US (and international) cave diving. He is still highly active in sump diving and exploration, still manhandles tons of kit in and out of his truck but among friends he is sometimes good-naturedly ribbed about his longevity in this arduous sport of ours. This meeting was no exception and when

he showed a black-and-white slide of an ore cart in a Virginian mine, saying that George Washington had actually part-owned the mine, some wag in the audience asked casually if Forrest had known him, at which point the whole audience spontaneously burst into laughter, (including Forrest).

The Thornton brothers from Utah, Michael and Josh, then gave an engrossing presentation on the challenges of alpine-style cave diving high up above the tree line. Long pitches on ropes, sub-zero air temps, deep, deep dives, these guys are well known in the US tech-diving scene and they are making some very challenging advances in Utah caves. Between presentations prizes were raffled off and people chose prizes from the table till, ultimately, the grand draw saw Tom Kolis with a brand new Shearwater

There was some discussion afterwards about the potential utility of modern electronic compasses.

Lunch was served and everyone sat and ate together at the long-tables, stories were told and people caught up on friends, through friends-in-common. One of the guys at my table showed us all a video clip he'd been sent that morning of Roubideux Cave. After heavy rain overnight it was in full flow and undivable. Luck had been with us the day before.



Lamar talking about cave diver recoveries

Perdix dive computer (and it could not have gone to a nicer guy). There were too many sponsors to name here but a special mention must go to Shearwater, Dive Rite, Sub-Gravity, X-Deep and Kiss. The next day a group of a dozen or so of us met at Cannonball Cave to round out the workshop with one last dive, at about two hours south of Saint Louis. We carried our gear down the short, steep path through the woods by a large lake. This cave is so-named because in the early days divers would throw out a small cannonball tied to a line, in search of the 9m-deep sinkhole at the cave entrance. When the line went taught then they knew the ball had fallen into the basin.

Visibility in the lake was virtually zero so a big thanks to Mike Young from KISS rebreathers for setting-up a dive flag tied to the mainline. It's not often people bring dive flags for cave diving but on this occasion it proved highly useful. I felt my way down to 9 m hand-over-hand, then clipped my oxygen to the



The sign inside Cannonball Cave



Joshua kitting up at Cannonball Cave



The first Wilson line arrow 100-ft into Cannonball Cave, (invented by Forrest)



Lamar Hires in Cannonball Cave

gold-line. Teams and pairs came and went, some found the flow at the entry challenging but visibility inside got better and better the further in we went. I certainly found getting in through the mouth hard work with a large camera housing and video lights. The cave is generally low to start and very, very dark. The water is cool but warm enough to wear neoprene gloves. There is a lot to see and I will certainly be back to see more, having only stayed relatively shallow today messing with my new camera. Finally, just after noon the last divers wearily trudged up the steep path to the car park and people bade their farewells before dispersing north to Wisconsin, east to North Carolina, south to Florida or west to Nevada.

Next year's workshop is already in the planning stage with possible contingency activities in case of undivable conditions, such as a ropes workshop, or a local quarry dive/barbeque. If any CDAA members are planning to be within reach of Missouri next Aug./Sept. then please check the forum on cavediver.net because the CDAA and the NSS-CDS have a reciprocal agreement and any CDAA member is welcome to attend. In fact, if anyone is willing to speak about Australasian cave diving then I am sure the organisers would be delighted to hear from you (e-mail me at pbuzzacott@dan.org and I'll pass your message on). My sincere thanks to the CDS, and to Joshua for inviting me, and to the many sponsors whose support is invaluable.

CDAA INSTRUCTORS

NAME	Deep Cavern	Cave	Adv. Cave
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NEW SOUTH WALES

	BOULTON, Alex (CDAA 4125) Mob: 0407 887 060 E: alex@subaquaservices.com.au	Yes		
	FEATONBY, Tim (CDAA 3327) Worworing Heights, NSW Mob: 0402 129 253 E: tim.featonby@hotmail.com	Yes	Yes	

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

	PAYNE, Timothy (CDAA 2640) Mob: 0448 147 927 E: Tim@diveessentials.com	Yes	Yes	Yes
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VICTORIA

	ALLEN, Terri (CDAA 3483) Mob: 0419 176 633 E: terri.allen@bakeridi.edu.au	Yes	Yes	Yes
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	BARCLAY, Gary (CDAA 1735) Mob: 0407 527 921 E: garinda@bigpond.com	Yes	Yes	Yes
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	BOWMAN, Jane (CDAA 1880) Mob: 0407 566 455 E: janelbowman@hotmail.com	Yes	Yes	Yes
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	CHAMBERS, Geoffrey (CDAA 3484) Mob: 0438 059 886 E: geoffie1@gmail.com		Yes	
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	CLARIDGE, Linda (CDAA 2214) Mob: 0408 052 070 E: garinda@tpgi.com.au	Yes	Yes	Yes
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NAME	Deep Cavern	Cave	Adv. Cave
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VICTORIA Continued

	DALLA-ZUANNA, John (CDAA 236) Mob: 0407 887 060 E: jdz@paintandcustom.com.au	Yes	Yes	Yes
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	EDWARDS, Chris (CDAA 2247) Mob: 0417 116 372 Email: cedwards@aant.com.au	Yes		
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	MCDONALD, Warrick (CDAA 1882) Mob: 0408 374 112 E: info@oceandivers.com.au	Yes	Yes	Yes
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	MONACO, Rubens (CDAA 1731) Mob: 0413 429 533 E: info@idscuba.com.au	Yes	Yes	Yes
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	TIM MUSCAT (CDAA 4557) Mob: 0422 127 802 E: tim_muscat@bigpond.com		Yes	
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

	JOSIP BICANIC (CDAA 4691) Mob: 0421 571 779 Email: joseph_b@me.com	Yes		
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	PAYNTER, Geoff (CDAA 3784) Mob: 0407 445 112 E: gpaynter60@bigpond.com	Yes	Yes	
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CDAA SITE ACCESS - www.cavedivers.com.au

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CN = CAVERN S = SINKHOLE C = CAVE AC = ADVANCED CAVE

SITE	LEVEL	OWNER	ACCESS DETAILS
MT. GAMBIER - SA Ewens Ponds	Nil	DEWNR	Groups of 6 or more, phone DEWNR on (08) 8735 1177 for booking. Smaller groups, no need.
Gouldens	CN	DEWNR	Phone DEWNR on (08) 8735 1177 for booking.
2 Sisters	CN	DEWNR	Generate a DEWNR Permit from www.cavedivers.com.au and either post to DEWNR (PO Box 1046 Mt. Gambier SA 5290) or hand deliver (11 Helen St, Mt. Gambier) before a booking can be made. A CDAA Membership card must be carried at all times. Training: Instructor must generate DEWNR permits from www.cavedivers.com.au for their students and submit to DEWNR before use of the site.
Fossil	C		
Piccaninnie Ponds	S	DEWNR	Bookings can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au
Horse & Cart Tea Tree	CN CN	Dale & Heather Perkins Dale & Heather Perkins	Phone (08) 8738 4083 or email dhperkins@bigpond.com at least 24 hours in advance.
Little Blue	S	District Council of Grant	Booking can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au .
Allendale	C	District Council of Grant	
Ela Elap	S	Dean & Carol Edwards	Obtain key from Management at Bellum Hotel.
One Tree	S	Mr. Peter Norman	Visit the house before diving. If no one is home - no dive!
Dave's Cave	C		Maximum 3 divers all weekends between May & November inclusive (check and update on CDAA website).
Hells Hole	S	Forestry SA	Booking can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au . Show ForestrySA Permit to obtain key from Lady Nelson Tourist Ctr.
Pines	C/AC	Forestry SA	Bookings can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au . Cave Rated divers cannot enter Advanced Cave Section of Pines.
Mud Hole	C	Forestry SA	Bookings can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au
Nettle Bed	AC	Forestry SA	Bookings can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au . Show ForestrySA Permit to obtain key from Lady Nelson Tourist Ctr.
Stinging Nettle Cave	AC	Forestry SA	Bookings can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au . Show ForestrySA Permit to obtain key from Lady Nelson Tourist Ctr.
Iddlebiddy	AC	Forestry SA	Bookings can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au . Show ForestrySA Permit to obtain key from Lady Nelson Tourist Ctr.
Kilsby's	S	Graham Kilsby	Bookings can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au .

CDAA SITE ACCESS - www.cavedivers.com.au

Remember: Access is a privilege, not a right. Please be considerate of landowners wishes.
CN = CAVERN S = SINKHOLE C = CAVE AC = ADVANCED CAVE

SITE	LEVEL	OWNER	ACCESS DETAILS
MT. GAMBIER - SA (continued) The Shaft	S/C	Trevor Ashby	Booking can be made online from www.cavedivers.com.au . Landowner mandates Dive Supervisors (with their own Insurance) leading all dive trips.
Engelbrechts - East - West	C AC	Mt Gambier Council Lessee: Ph: 08 8723 5552 Owner:	Obtain key from Lady Nelson Tourist Information Centre. Diving should be avoided after heavy rain due to possible water contamination. Diving hours are now restricted to 8am to 8pm CST.
Three Sisters Access available for	AC	Wattle Range Council	Download Indemnity from www.cavedivers.com.au and email to council@wattlerange.sa.gov.au . A \$30 processing fee can be made over the phone on (08) 8733 0900 after Council has received your indemnity. Allow 4 wks for indemnities to be processed.
Tank Cave	AC	CDAA	Bookings can be made online at www.cavedivers.com.au . An email to the Tank Cave officer is required to dive. Booking Officer is Noel Dillon Email: tankcave@cavedivers.com.au
Baker's Cave	C	Janet & Bruce Saffin	Bookings can be made online at www.cavedivers.com.au . An email to the Tank Cave officer is required to dive. Booking Officer is Matthew Skinner. Email: bakerscave@cavedivers.com.au Climbing equipment required. One member must have previous dive experience at site.
NULLARBOR - WA			
Cocklebiddy	C/AC	WA Dept of Parks & W/Life	Apply in writing for permission to dive at least 4 weeks in advance of trip to:
Murra El Elevyn	C/AC	WA Dept of Parks & W/Life	District Manager, PO Box 234, Esperance, W.A. 6450. Phone: (08) 9083 2100.
Tommy Grahams	C	WA Dept of Parks & W/Life	
Burnabbie	AC	WA Department of Lands	Apply in writing or email for permission to dive at least four weeks in advance of trip.
Olwolgol Cave	AC	WA Department of Lands	Miss Shannon Alford, Email: Shannon.alford@lands.wa.gov.au Phone: (08) 6552 4661 Fax: (08) 6552 4417 P.O. Box 1143, West Perth WA 6872.
Weebubbie	S/C	WA Department of Lands	A site indemnity form must be filled out for each visit to the site. Diving permission acknowledged by official letter from Land Owner.
WELLINGTON CAVES - NSW			
Limekiln (McCavity) Cave	C/AC	Wellington Caves Management	Access coordinated by Greg Ryan Email: giryan@gmail.com Ph: (02) 9743 4157 Both Cave and Advanced Cave Level are being accepted for this site depending on its water level at the time. When entrance is under water, Advanced Cave Divers only!
Water (Anticline) cave	C	Wellington Caves Management	Access coordinated by Greg Ryan Email: giryan@gmail.com Ph: (02) 9743 4157 Affected by high CO ₂ levels during Summer/Autumn.