

CEGSA NEWS



Newsletter of the Cave Exploration Group (South Australia) Inc.

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CAVE EXPLORATION GROUP (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) Inc.

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Meetings held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except December, at 7.30 PM usually in the Royal Society of South Australia meeting room, Natural Science Building, South Australian Museum.

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Cover Photograph: Gary Woodcock and Jeanette Chapman with "The incredible Hot Water Device" at Bagalowie Station Homestead, home to visitors to Southern Flinders caves.

Photo: Frank Hankinson.

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QUARTERMASTERS NOTE.

Due to a rearrangement of priorities the high usage equipment will now be stored at the quartermasters residence at 1 Hall St. Norwood. Please make arrangements with Simon well in advance of required date for equipment. Simon can be contacted at the telephone numbers on the previous page.

NEWSLETTER MATERIAL

The deadline for copy or background material for Volume 44 Number 4 (Issue 176) must reach the Editor by Wednesday **10th November 1999**. Material not meeting this deadline may be retained for possible use in a following issue. The preferred method is on 3.5" IBM floppy disk or via E-MAIL at atholjax@cobweb.com.au as an attachment, in Word or ASCII text format. Of course other forms of communication will still be gratefully accepted.

The views expressed in this publication are those of individual authors and not necessarily those of the Cave Exploration Group (South Australia) Inc., its Committee or the Editor.



PRESIDENTS SPOT

Well the year is racing ahead and its time to start planning events for the end of year bash. If you have got any creative ideas for the CEGSA Xmas show then give us a call. Last year we held a BBQ at Woodhouse and some fun on the Challenge Hill obstacle course. I also have to start thinking about awards, so if you know some deserving club members and funny incidents then please let me know.

Its been great to observe a number of new people who have been turning up at meetings and on trips in recent times, some have since joined the club so welcome to them. Please be sure to let us know any ideas you may have for interesting trips or events and we will be sure to address them.

Finally you will see that we have two special events coming up soon. The first being the fossil dig at Naracoorte with Liz Reed. This is an excellent opportunity to learn some new and useful skills and to improve on our working relationship with Naracoorte. The next event is a visit from the Snake Catcher Ian Renton. I have been visiting Ian with my youth centre clients for a number of years, to teach them about behaviour around snakes and reptiles and the importance of protecting our wildlife. Ian does a great demonstration. This is even a session worth bringing other members of your family too.

I hope to see many of you at the next few meetings.

Marie Choi.

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TRIP REPORTS

OZZIE INVASION of the USA

If you had asked me 10 years ago if I would go overseas, especially to the US, the answer would have been no! Until I got involved in caving I had no real desire to travel and especially to the US. If you asked me 3 years ago I would have told you that yes I would love to go caving overseas but that the only place I wanted to check out was England and Wales (that was the "Pom's" influence and all the mags I had read on British caves) The US was the last place I had considered, partly because of my view of Americans being a bit full of themselves. Well Pom got work in the US and convinced me to give it a go.

So off I went. The trip started off a bit stressful because my flight to Sydney got cancelled due to fog, they stuck me on another flight that would leave ½an hour later, promising me that my US flight would not leave without me. It didn't, in fact there was a 3hour delay in Sydney because of the fog. Now I only had to worry about my connecting flight from L.A to San Francisco. I arrived in L.A 3 hours late, tired and with the worst migraine (they really pack you in on those international flights) First we had to make our way through Immigration, I tell you what they were cherry happy bunch NOT! Not a good impression for first time visitors. However the customs people and other airport staff well and truly made up for them, they were happy, helpful and polite.

I tried to ring the Pom to let them know what had happened but the phone kept eating my change. I finally left a message and caught my connecting flight.

I couldn't get over the sizes of both L.A and San Francisco as we flew over them, they were huge. Finally I landed and there they were at the gates; what a relief. It seems I forgot to tell them what my flight number was originally and there are flights every ½hour from L.A. Amanda then informs me they are in the middle of a heat wave and that it was around 106 F. (I hate the heat even in SA)

It was about a 2-hour drive back to their place. Most of the driving was on freeways (I will never complain about Adelaide traffic again) mind you I was so tired all I could think about was sleeping. Pom was giving me a great description of the area we were driving through but all I wanted to do was snooze. I was really impressed with how clean the freeways were, they have an 'adopt a freeway' program and \$1000 (US) littering fines. A lot of their road signs were in fractions 22 and 1/4miles etc.

We finally arrived at Prioaso Hot Springs Resort, poor Pom had to shoot off to work whilst Amanda, Damon and I headed to the hot pools for a soak to get over the jet lag. Thank god, the temperature was a lot cooler at their place. The springs are an ideal way to relax after a long flight

Friday July 2nd - Monday July 5th – Cave Research Foundation

Trip members: Bill Farr, Carol Vesely, Brian Farr, Brad Hacker, Mary Wenzel, Scott Smith, Merrilee Proffitt, Peter Bosted, Lyn Jesaitis, Charlie Hotz, Art Fortini, Kate Lysaght, Paul Nelson, Greg Stock (park geologist), Joel Despain (Sequoia and Kings Canyon Karst Manager), Christopher Pluhar, Raymond Wheler, Damian (Pom) Grindley and Marie Choi.

I had a day and a half to rest up before the first caving trip. It was to Lilburn and Mays cave in Sequoia National Park with the Cave Research Foundation. These caves are formed in a band of limestone 3,000ft long, 700ft wide and 400ft deep. We left Friday afternoon for the 4hour drive. Americans are sure into fast food, Taco Bells, Burger King, McDonalds, Wendy's, Subway and many more lined much of the road. We were lucky and had a good run through the traffic. It was a pretty warm drive but as we started to gain some altitude the temperature dropped. It was around 9pm when we arrived at the car park where we then had to begin our 8km hike to the cave. This was all a new experience for me. I have never hiked that far with a full pack (sleeping gear, food, caving gear etc) in fact, I have never hiked at all with a pack that size. First we had to make sure that the car was secure with no food scraps, apparently the bears have been known to severely damage cars when food is seen or smelt.

The hike started at an altitude of about 6,000 feet, during the hike we actually go down about a thousand feet, although the walk is a mixture of up and down hill. Amanda warned me that the altitude would affect me, I didn't believe here but it did. Thank god it was the cool of the evening when we walked in and although I tripped and stumbled a few times, (okay a lot of times) we did the walk in 3 hours. Pom's memory always amazes me as he had only done this trip once and remembered without a mistake. We were the first to arrive at the Hut and quickly set up a spot to sleep in the attic.

I arose in the morning to find out that I had just missed out on seeing a bear wander through the campsite, and that our group had swelled to 18. There was a mixed group of cavers some of them still arriving as we had breakfast. It was interesting to find out that all the trip leaders that day were females. As I was still a little (well a LOT) jet lagged I decided to tag along with Carol and Greg to Mays Cave to try out a new inventory form they are developing. This is a smaller cave near a stream that was 221metres long and had a depth of 18metres. The cave is in a very **hard** limestone and had a lot of marbling in it. It then shocked me to find out that these caves are only 50,000 years old. What a difference to the limestone in the South-east of South Australia. I always assumed the harder the limestone the older it was. We spent 3hours collating information on cave life and geology. We located a solitary rare bat *Cory Norhinus Townsedii Intermedius* (hope that's right). Then we had the 10metre free climb out of the vertical entrance

Pom spent his time in Lilburn getting really grotty as usual. Several teams had gone into the cave to follow a number of leads and continue the survey. The one thing that I found interesting about these caves is just how cool they get with an estimated air temperature of 9 Celsius.

The evening was spent around the fireplace in the hut to get away from the mozzies. Here we discussed similarities and differences of the clubs and caves; you're usual spattering of cave politics and Aussie slang and definitions (they didn't know what a dunny or a wanker was). It seems lack of attendance at meetings is a common problem. The relationship between the Caves Manager and cavers is quite a positive and productive one, and it seems it was a joint effort to build the very comfortable cavers hut. In winter, they ski to the Hut to go caving.

Day 2 I still wasn't up to a hard core caving trip so I joined Peter Bosted and the Pom on a digging trip in Mays, although it's a relatively small cave it is quite fascinating how it changes from walking passage down to some tight winding passage. None of the leads we checked seemed to go, but we did spend about 5hours poking around and taking some photographs of the spectacular marbling. Peter then took us on a quick trip (2hours) into Lilburn cave to photograph some quite spectacular

shawls. Lilburn is California's longest cave at 17 miles, it has a vertical range of 150 metres and it gets very wet.

The evening was again spent inside the hut and away from the mozzies, mind you I was surprised at the lack of flies. Some people had an early start as they had meetings to go to and were planning what time to leave. They reckon they could walk out in 2 - 2 1/2 hours (remember that's mostly up hill) . I tried not to think about it too much as I knew it was going to be harder going out as it would also be warmer.

Well it didn't take long before I started puffing and panting, I think I took an hour of rest stops including 20 minutes under one of those big Sequoia trees, (it was bigger than my house) but after 3 and 1/2 hours I finally reached the car park to find the "Pom" relaxing under a tree having a beer. He said he had the beer incentive to walk without a stop, except to check that I hadn't dropped dead on the way. Being the ultimate tour guide Pom took me to the interpretive centre and then to Crystal Show cave, I went to check out the tour only to find it was a 1km walk down hill, to the cave. Unfortunately, you have to buy your tickets at the interpretive centre so I didn't get a chance to see it. (Mind you by this time I could barely shuffle let alone walk) I did manage to find a postcard of the very unique spider web gate. The gate was designed in the 1930s and has a spider as the lock.

We then drove on to see General Grants tree, these trees are amazing. Near this tree is a "log" that has been put on display to show the age of some of these giants. This was only a baby tree compared to Grants, as it was much smaller in circumference, but it had been dated back to 230 BC, that's almost as old as "Fred". It also showed all the bushfires it had survived over its 2,000 years. We then took the scenic route back to Poms House.

I spent the next few days recovering and sight seeing. Amanda and Pom took me out to dinner for my birthday to a local Mexican restaurant, Amanda had arranged a surprise birthday cake, and they made me eat cactus. It wasn't bad either. We spent the next day in a town called Carmel, where Clint Eastwood Lives, (we only saw his photos). This is a beautiful little costal town with great sea views, and lots of tourist shops. We found a jar of vegemite in a gourmet shop for \$6 (same one here is a \$1 something). Our guide through the area was Ann, the wife of Poms boss and it was a great day that ended with a traditional American hamburger BBQ at their house.

Thursday night we had dinner at the home of Mark Rosbrook, who is the national coordinator of Lecuguilla. He showed us a collection of his personal Lech slides and then I showed him a collection of slides on caves from Tassie, Victoria, LSE, USE, Flinders, York, and the Murray as well as the Nullarbor and Margaret River. He is now considering a trip over here. Mark also told us how he managed to scam his way onto his first Lech trip several years ago. It also happened to be only his second caving trip. Talk about being in the right place at the right time.

Friday July 9th - Sunday 11th

TRIP PARTICIPANTS: Eric Miles, John Komas, Mick (the Irishman) Kristen , Rebecca and Us

When Pom got home from work the 4 of us (Amanda, Damon, Pom and myself) piled into the car and headed of to Millerton Lake Cave for the weekend and on our way to the NSS Conference. The drive there was without incident other than the yoghurt popping as we gained altitude. We arrived at the campgrounds around sunset, which was absolutely spectacular, especially against the flat tops of the mountains. There were already a few people at the campsite with a few more that arrived shortly after. Soon as Mick knew we were Aussies the payouts started, he has been living and working in the US for a couple of years and says he misses paying people out as the Americans don't do it. (I thought only Aussies payed each other out).

We moved off to go caving mid morning, it was a 2km hike to the cave (these Americans like to walk to their caves) and it was really hot, Millerton Lake Cave is the largest Granite cave in and is divided into 3 sections, most of the group was going up to the top part of the cave but we decided to start at the lower level as the heat was already taking its toll on me. This was frustrating as this was a great fun cave, and would have been even more fun if the water levels had been up as they were on the Pom's trip a few weeks earlier. The cave is beautifully scalloped, with numerous pools of water and mini waterfalls; unfortunately I was feeling so crook that I only took one photo. The dead rats in the

water we were wading through didn't help. When I finally managed to extract myself with a bit of guidance from Pom, I was stuffed. (Putting on 10 kilos since quitting smoking didn't help).

Amanda and the Pom went to check the middle cave whilst I waited with Damon in the only bit of shade I could find. Whilst I was sitting there resting with my eyes closed, young Damon calmly tells me "oh what a pretty snake"! I opened my eyes to see a very pretty striped snake less than a meter away and heading straight for me. It appeared to want my bit of shade and I wasn't going to argue! We then proceeded to watch it from a safe distance. Pom and Amanda returned about 1 ½ hours later, with Amanda being slightly hypothermic. After a short rest we began the up hill walk back to the car (Oh for caves you can drive up to and jump in). Both Amanda and I were a little worse for wear, I was a mess (it was really hot) but we did get back okay. It seems we weren't the only ones as some in the other group also had the same problem. We had intended to stay the next day and participate in some short rope abseils off the bridge into the water (no end knot), but decided to make an early start to the conference.

On the drive to the conference we stopped at small town called Truckie, where I managed to purchase some Native American jewellery, not traditional as I hoped but we were in the wrong area. We had tea in the town, before driving on further to find a campground for the evening. We even had to drive through an area where a bush fire was raging. We eventually found a little campground on the shores of a lake, of course it was dark by this time and we couldn't see much of the view other than the large mozzies. We had to get up during the night and move the tents as the water was getting a little close for comfort. Sunrise showed we had nothing to worry about; the wind was just causing a few waves during the night.

It was a hot drive the rest of the way and we were all getting a little stressed. It helped when we stopped at a servo and had a shower. We managed to arrive at the NSS conference just before they closed the registrations for the day.

Monday July 12th – Thursday July 15th – NSS Conference, IDAHO

MONDAY

We were lucky to arrive when we did as they were closing up registrations for the start of the Howdy party. It's hard to believe we drove through 3 states to get here. Our first visions of the conference were of a massive camp ground with tents and RVs everywhere. The party started with free food (spuds of course), beer, soft drinks and music. Everyone gets a conference mug as well. The bands performed under a large covered area. Of course 'Pom' had to make sure people knew he was there by recruiting all the little kiddies in a hay fight. Somehow I ended up in it (I got dragged in). Whilst we wandered around we spotted a guy in a Naracoorte T-shirt. We managed to track him down and discovered his name was Tom Rea and he had been to the recent ACKMA conference. He even said that Motty was well behaved during that conference. I told him that couldn't be right; Mott doesn't know how to behave. Anyway he enjoyed his time in Australia, said Brian Clarke was a real party animal and would send me some photos. I can't wait! Tom was nice enough to offer to show us Crater of the Moons National park during the conference. He also introduced us to Cheryl and Lee who also attended the conference.

After meeting Tom, Amanda and I went looking for the 'Pom' and found him getting up to mischief. He and another pom, Mark, were about to try and climb around the shelter. A large arched scaffolding like structure. Fortunately the Pom saw the cop coming and managed to get down quickly, however Mark wasn't so lucky and was threatened with arrest. Luckily he made it down safely and without being arrested, but did get a scolding by NSS organisers. Pom got off scot-free! The party went onto the early hours of the morning.

TUESDAY

The next morning we wandered around the displays and stalls, I was drooling over the gear and books, when we ran into Tom. He invited to take us out to "Craters of the Moon" so Pom baby-sat whilst we went off. It was a 1½ hour drive there and was an amazing site. This lava flow was only 2,000 years old and actually looked very fresh. It was certainly a lot different to Mt Eccles or Byaduck in Victoria. The landscape is quite bare and in the distance you could still see snow on the hills. We wandered around the area looking at the various lava forms when we came across a spattercone.

This was only about 5 metres deep and fenced off. It still had snow in the bottom. Apparently, the whole area is covered in snow during the winter.

We then made our way to a few small lava caves that are open to the public, although Amanda wasn't that sure as she read a sign that said "Surprise cave closed". Tom pointed out to her that that was the name of one particular cave. (do I have to mention hair colours). Unfortunately, we hadn't brought any gear with us, and all we had was a small mag light of Toms. We managed to have a look in 2 small caves. The first one, Dew Drop Cave, did not go very far but the very cool atmosphere was a relief from the heat. It had a vertical range of -30 feet. Boy Scout cave was a much longer cave but because we only had one small mag light between us we only went a short way in. We were amazed to find ice crystals in the cave and other frozen pools of water. This cave had a vertical range of -25 feet.

The evening was spent wandering the displays and spending too much money at the stalls. We then joined the members of the San Francisco Bay Chapter Grotto for their party in camp. Some of the campsites were quite creative and strange; we wandered past petting pens full of blow up sheep and other creatures, as well as a car with a shark in it.

WEDNESDAY

Pom headed off caving with the big boys, whilst Amanda borrowed my gear and took Damon caving. I spent the day veging out and wandering around the exhibitions and spending more money. I am not looking forward to my visa account coming in. When Amanda returned we headed into Falls Creek to get take away and almost ended up in an episode of "Cops". Four cop cars with armed police who had their guns drawn at two suspects in a black car. Amanda wanted to photograph them but I pointed out that they might think the camera was something else, so we headed back to camp to eat.

After eating we wandered around until we came across the "Giant Spud", a mobile portable cave. Amanda decided to give it a go and took about 20 minutes to make her way out. Pom could not be outdone even though Amanda warned him it was really tight in places, and not really made for tall people. That's like a red rag to a bull, he was in there quickly. Pity he wasn't out as quick, we did consider sending a rescue party when after half an hour we finally heard him at the exit. It still took him several minutes to get out of the tight exit. He's such a big kid!

THURSDAY

Our last day at the Conference, we caught the shuttle over to the school to sit in on some of the slide shows and to spend my last few dollars. We got cornered by Glenn (a member of the Poms US club) who knew I had some Aussie slides with me. He conned the 2 of us into a presentation at the end of the day's sessions. I didn't mind too much being really shy I thought we would be lucky to have fifty in the audience, as by then I thought they would have been bored by slides. Did I underestimate that? I believe that almost 200 sat in on our little Display. I started the presentation by explaining the difference between Poms and Aussies (everyone thinks Damian sounds Australian). We spoke about and showed slides on, Mole Creek, Byaduck, Mt Eccles, LSE, USE, Flinders, Murray, Yorke, the Nullarbor, and Margaret River. They seemed quite impressed especially of a picture of Linda Deer going through Rats Squeeze in Corra Lyn. They were also impressed with pictures of tree roots, as they don't see much of that in the US. At the end of the show people kept coming up to hear us talk as they love Aussie accents, some are looking forward to future trips down here too.

Glenn then took us all to a swimming area at Snake River with the rest of the club, after which we went to a very cute Mexican restaurant for tea. We then headed to the School Auditorium for what is called the "Photo Salon". This was a great way to end the conference for us, as we got to see all the photos, slides, videos and songs that were entered in competitions. The standard was really high although there was one section Athol could have given them a run for their money with – his wombat slide tour. We also got to see a preview of the next Conference in West Virginia in 2000. Makes me want to go (as long as I don't have to hike to those bloody caves!!).

Overall, the Conference was a great experience, and has given me a lot of ideas on how we could improve ours. We will never have the numbers that they have in the US (1000 at this conference) but

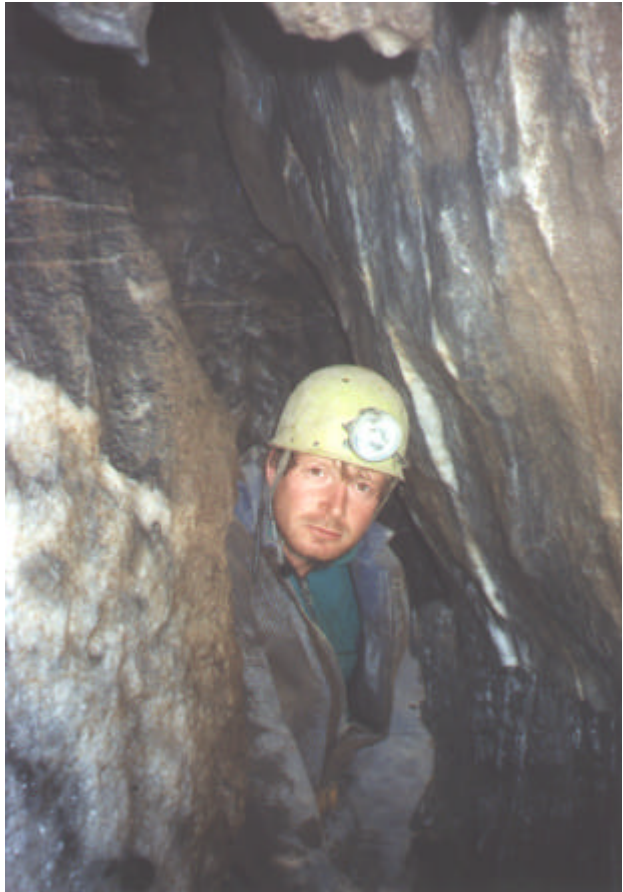
some of their ideas don't need big numbers. The people I met were all great and went out of their way to make you feel at home. It was just a pity we had to miss the final nights dinner.

I spent my last night in the US at a friend of the Pom's near San Francisco, so we were close to the airport. We got a late start so didn't get to do a lot of sightseeing before my flight out. We did manage to get to a look out over the Golden Gate Bridge and take the last few photos. Even though I was looking forward to getting home and back into a cool climate it was sad to leave my mates behind. I had a great time even with the heat and the jet lag.

Pom, thanks for talking me into going.

Marie Choi.

Ps I apologise for any incorrect names or data as it was a lot to remember and I didn't write a lot down.



The 'Pom' in Mays Cave
Photo: Marie Choi

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Lower Flinders Rangers – Buckalowie Creek-Long weekend May 1999.

Trip members

Gary Woodcock, Jeanette Chapman, Alex, Russell, Frank Hankinson and visitors Sheree Knap, Jason and Jessica.

Friday May 14th

The Woodcock clan met Frank, Sheree and children at the Roseworthy Pub on Friday night and left for Buckalowie Creek at 8pm via an unscheduled stop at an RBT station. We arrived at the house around midnight unloaded and crashed.

Saturday May 15th

Upon arising we could not help but notice the amount of work that Nugget Chapman has done repairing, painting and generally improving the homestead and its surroundings. The outside tables and barbecue are great and we really loved the device which heats the hot water, Gary and Frank were very intrigued by it. You fill the device with water, light a fire under it and when it heats up you can pour cold water in the top and get a flow of hot water out of it.

After Frank, Jason and Jessica returned from a two-hour lazy morning walk the crew made its way to "Clara St Dora" for an exploration of the main cave. Fortunately Gary had young Russell



Jason Knap in Clara St. Dora Cave
Photo: Frank Hankinson

along to assist him through the smallish bits. Photos were taken and unsuspecting children and one caver who should have known better were sent to check out the “Trust Me! Of course it goes!” Leads. Two hours later a very dusty group headed back to the comforts of Nuggets hot water device and a campfire.

Sunday May 16th

After an enjoyably lazy morning the crew less Jeanette and Russell drove to “Mairs Cave”. Sheree and the Kids amused themselves while Gary and Frank rigged a belay for the fixed ladder. After everyone was in, we all headed off on the usual trip to “Just before the End of the Cave”. Cameras flashed and visitors were suitably impressed, enabling us to exit the cave after three and one half-hours.

Again we all sampled the delights of Nuggets water heater and wine and dined around the campfire.

Monday May 17th

We arose at a reasonable hour, packed the cars, cleaned the house and departed on our journey home around midday. Apart from a stop for lunch we had an uneventful trip back to Adelaide.

Sheree and Frank

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Go Batty Weekend, June Long Weekend 12th – 14th.

Trip Participants: Fred Aslin, Debbie Callison (FUSS), Marie Choi, Linda Deer, Dave Glowacki, Yvonne Ingeme (VSA, CCV), Spot Matthews, Jude Matthews, Kevin Mott, Reto Zollinger.

The ‘Go Batty Weekend’ was soon renamed the ‘Where have you gone Batties?!?’ weekend.

Cathedral, Robertsons, Blanche, Joanna Bat, Fox, Cave Park, Blackberry, and a collection at Avenue Range were some of the caves visited during the weekend. Kevin and Fred remained above ground continuing survey work while the rest of the party split into two groups and went their separate ways. After a day of hectic bat counting and data collecting, they re-grouped to share their findings. One group reported no sightings, while the other group reported several hundred bats in Blanche Cave. Reto and Yvonne witnessed a large number of bats flying out of Bat Cave later that evening. This and the Bent Wing Café proved to be the most successful viewing of bats all weekend!!

The following day was spent out at Avenue Range surveying a number of new features. We were all glad of our rain jackets as it rained most of the day. A lone bat was sighted just inside the entrance of the biggest feature visited.

Monday was spent caving in Mildara Blass. While some of us went exploring, Dave Glowacki completed a survey of the cave.

Even though we turned out battier than the non-existent bats, all who attended had a most enjoyable time. The question remains however as to the whereabouts of the South East Bat Population.

Linda Deer.

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Six Months of Caving With Simon

JANUARY 14th to 22nd

On Thursday I left work at 5.30pm raced home and quickly changed before getting picked up for the 1300km drive to the Blue Mountains, which took a greater part of Thursday night, and Friday. This was a big trip and included myself, six Scout Caving Group members, ten Venturers and four Leaders. On Saturday we visited Fortress Canyon [grade 2] in the morning and Grand Canyon [grade 2] in the afternoon. On Sunday it was off to Bowen’s Creek North Canyon [grade 3] before relaxing at

"The Edge" maxi screen theatre in Katoomba. Monday was an exciting day in Claustal Canyon [grade 4]. Tuesday started off as an easy, fun day in Sheep Dip Canyon [grade 2] before an accident resulted in us calling the paramedics from Lithgow and a stretcher rescue. On Wednesday we visited Rocky Creek Canyon [grade 1] before returning to Mt Victoria and starting the pack-up. We started the long drive home with visits to Temple of Baal Cave 2J9 at Jenolan and the Japanese Garden & Cultural Centre in Cowra on the way. It was an exhausted group who arrived home on Friday.

FEBRUARY 10th & 11th

Tracy Colhoun and myself took four people from the Department of Family & Community Affairs to Mt Simms Cave 5F7 on Wednesday and Mairs Cave 5F3 & Clara St Dora Cave 5F4 on Thursday. We stayed at Bagalowie homestead and were impressed with the B.B.Q. Nugget has built.

FEBRUARY 14th

On Sunday myself, Zoe Grigg from Scout Caving Group and four Venturer Scouts visited Punyelroo Cave 5M1 and River Road Cave 5M18.

MARCH 6th

While on a quick tourist trip to the Lower South East Tracy Colhoun and myself caught up with both Kevin Mott and David Trehearne, plus spent a few wet, cold hours checking out Sheavers Cave 5L144. The low water table has made this former dive cave accessible to "dry" cavers.

MARCH 29th

Monday morning saw Tracy Colhoun and myself at the University of South Australia, Underdale Campus to meet seven outdoor education students plus a lecturer. We had a fun filled day visiting Punyelroo Cave 5M1 and River Road Cave 5M18, plus looked at the benefits of caving for group work and teenage development.

APRIL 8th to 14th

We picked up a 12 seat mini bus on Wednesday and then myself, Zoe Grigg from Scout Caving Group, five Venturer Scouts and a Leader drove to Iron Knob. Tracy Colhoun and Tony Colhoun, an ex-CEGSA member, joined us that night. On Thursday the driving continued but was punctuated by a suspension re-build on the trailer, before eventually setting up camp near Mullahmullang Cave. On Friday we visited Kestrel Cave 6N40 and prepared for Saturdays visit to the Dome in Mullahmullang Cave 6N37. Sunday was a "day of rest" as we drove to Mundrabilla and did another re-build of the trailer's suspension. Tracy and Tony left for Adelaide. On Monday we fitted in visits to Purple Gorange Cave 6N360 and Thylacine Cave 6N63. While on Tuesday we visited Bug Hole 6N1426, Weebubbie Cave 6N2, re-built the trailer suspension, for the third and final time, and drove to Ceduna. We arrived back in Adelaide on Wednesday.

APRIL 24th to 26th

Zoe Grigg from Scout Caving Group and myself ran a trip on behalf of the Scout Outdoor Centre for nine people to the Lower South East. We stayed at Wiska's Woolshed and visited Quarry Cave 5L15, Gran Gran Cave 5L60, Grave Yard Cave 5L35/36/37, Mt Burr Cave 5L69 and Morgans Cave 5L34 on the Saturday. On the Sunday Snake Hill Cave 5L119, Umpherstons Cave 5L6, L23, Wrecked Car Cave 5L21 and Monbulla Cave 5L5 were visited. To finish the trip we had a cold, wet and muddy trip to Sheathers Cave 5L144 on Monday morning before driving home.

MAY 8th

This was a day trip to Corra Lynn Cave 5Y1 to help lead on the CEGSA family trip. I was joined by Ellen (a Scout Outdoor Centre staff member) and prospective CEGSA members Alli and Cori. It was a good day and along with inflicting some bruises and aching muscles on a number of innocent people, I discovered I still fit through a number of Corra Lynn's tight squeezes.

JUNE 10th

Melinda Mulley from Scout Caving Group and myself took 17 science students (studying acids & bases), plus 3 teachers from Faith Lutheran High School, Tanunda, to Punyelroo Cave 5M1 to look at acids at work. Any excuse to get out of the class room!

Simon Kendrick.

TECHNICAL and OTHER ARTICLES

ABSEILING INCIDENT

Frank Hankinson, Safety Officer

TRIP: Joint CEGSA, FUSSI abseiling / S.R.T. training day.
LOCATION: End of Flinders University footbridge.
DATE: Sunday 2nd May 1999.
TIME: Approximately 2:00pm.
ROPE: Bluewater II⁺ 11mm static
DEVICE: Spelean Whaletail twin gate & Clog screwgate krab 2800 kg
HARNESS: Vertical Gym

At approximately 2:00pm on Sunday the 2nd of May 99 an inexperienced abseiler (had abseiled 5 times on a previous bridge training day and twice at Onkaparinga Gorge, with the longest abseil being approximately 40 meters) was attempting their second abseil for the day on a short novice rope of about 8 metres in total.

The previous abseil was on the same rope, with the same equipment and had proceeded without problem except it was noted that the rope was extremely stiff and slow. The abseiler used 3 slots on the abseil device (whaletail) and could hardly move down. So it was decided to release from three slots to two slots on the device if the same problem was encountered on the second attempt.

INCIDENT:

The abseiler stood on the Footbridge and was taken through the procedure of releasing the rope from the third slot and rigged by a more experienced helper.

1. Short cows tail was clipped into safety loop.
2. Rope was fed through three slots of whaletail.
3. Top gate of whaletail was adjusted to cover top two slots and partly cover third slot, aligned with manufacturers mark and thumbscrew tightened. Abseiler was told that if it was difficult to move it would be possible to release the rope from the third slot, and descend on two slots.
4. Rope was put over device for soft lock and then through the crab and over device for hard lock.
5. Helper checked over harness and gear.
6. Abseiler climbed over rail and took position. Helper guided abseil device and cowstail over rail to prevent snagging.
7. Helper checked abseiler again.
8. The abseiler released device to soft lock. Helper checked bottom belay.
9. The abseiler released the device from soft lock and tested for ease of use and security.
10. Abseiler and bottom belay checked again. Helper cleared abseiler to descend and released cowstail for abseil.
11. Abseiler went fine but was having difficulty moving and feeding rope through due to stiffness of rope.
12. After about two metres abseiler attempted to release rope from third slot on whaletail. The rope was observed by both abseiler and helper above to release from third and then the second slot, This left the rope just through the top slot of the whaletail.
13. The abseiler then went into a rapid decent.
14. The bottom belay (experienced) put a lot of pressure on the rope but due to the lack of friction was unable to reduce the speed of descent.
15. The abseiler travelled about six metres then hit the ground at a rate that fortunately was not so rapid as to cause injury.

INJURIES:

The abseiler sustained injuries from rope burn that looked extremely unpleasant but fortunately turned out to be superficial.

- Left hand; little finger and ring finger.
- Right hand; all four fingers.
- Right upper; arm two burns on inside of arm.
- Right armpit; one burn.

Note: Abseiler was not wearing gloves.

REVIEW

Simon Kendrick, Training Officer

We have witnessed the increasing popularity of abseiling as an adrenalin “sport”, due no doubt to the “*high level of perceived risk*”. Climbing and caving groups have always appreciated that there also exists a “*high level of actual risk*” and have tended to treat abseiling as a “means to an end” rather than as a sport in it’s own right – we train to abseil as part of our recreation/sport. A separate safety belay, with a competent belayer, would have virtually eliminated all risk of an incident such as the one described above. Because a belay rope can be both a hindrance and a safety issue when entering a cave it is important that all cavers attain a level of competency such that they do not need a belay rope. We rely on our knowledge and our skill to prevent accidents.

On a Spelean Whaletail the top gate covers the top two slots and partially covers the third. The bottom gate, if attached, would normally cover the fourth and fifth slots, while also partially covering the third. It would appear that while trying to remove the rope from the third slot the top gate was pushed up slightly – intentionally or unintentionally. With the change in friction (going from three slots to two) and the resultant acceleration, it is possible for the rope to be in such a position that, if the top gate is loose, the rope can continue pushing the gate up. Thus, allowing the rope to escape from the second slot. Once this has happened neither the abseiler nor the bottom belayer can control the rate of decent.

It should be noted that it is possible to safely change from three slots down to two slots while abseiling on a Whaletail. However, it is not an easy manoeuvre, unless it has been practiced. !

In the incident described above, we have an inexperienced abseiler attempting an *in situ* adjustment to their abseiling devise for the first time, resulting in an uncontrolled decent. While I do not believe any one factor was totally responsible for this unfortunate incident, it was nevertheless avoidable.

As already stated, a separate safety belay, with a competent belayer, would have prevented an uncontrolled decent. However, at some point, abseilers need to progress beyond the security of a belay and accept responsibility for their own safety. Gloves would have minimised the rope burns, but would not have prevented an uncontrolled decent. In fact, gloves may have made this already difficult manoeuvre even harder.

A French prussic, locked off above the Whaletail, prior to making any adjustments, would have held the abseiler in place while the Whaletail was adjusted. To be released only after everything has been checked. Alternatively, a prussic knot attached above the Whaletail, but not locked off, might have locked once the decent became uncontrolled.

Thoroughly practicing changing from three slots to two slots in a safe environment, before attempting it during an abseil, would increase the safety of this manoeuvre.

Finally, we can use our knowledge of abseiling to match the abseiler with the device, technique, rope, environment and purpose. If a first abseil is very slow, then prior to making a second decent, careful consideration should be given to changing the friction on the device, changing the rope being used or even changing the abseil device. The more inexperienced the abseiler, the more important it is to make these decisions prior to commencing the abseil.

With skill and knowledge we can avoid injuries to ourselves and to those we instruct.

I believe the Whaletail to be a safe and reliable device and as per accepted protocols I have passed a copy of this report on to the manufacturer of the Whaletail for their information.

Frank and Simon.

TRAINING

Compiled by Simon Kendrick
Training Officer CEGSA
Assistant Manager, Scout Outdoor Centre

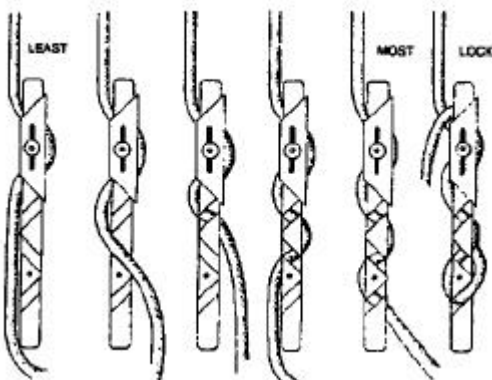


A semi-variable friction rappel device is one that has the ability of friction change while on rope, but only in stepped amounts with little or no variation between steps. The Spelean WHALETAIL™ is one such semi-variable device, which works with the bars (pegs) fixed in place with only the number of bars (pegs) used, being changeable. It is milled from special tempered extrusions with a series of overlapping wedge-shaped pegs down one edge, giving the descender its name.

The Whaletail was invented in America by G.A. Wood (1967) but did not achieve popularity there due to competition from the better established Rack, and because the American design did not include a safety gate across the first two slots. The lack of a gate caused several serious incidents where the rope popped right out of the device. A safety gate was added in Australia by Neil Montgomery and commercialised by Spelean. The device has since become popular for vertical caving. A single safety gate prevents total failure while the addition of a second safety gate almost entirely eliminates the risk of the rope popping out.

The rope weaves between the pegs such that the shaped peg overlays the rope and holds it in place. Additional security is provided by a sliding gate(s) at the top (away from the body). Friction is varied by weaving the rope between more or less pegs (minimum of three).

There are several combinations:



As with any friction rappelling device, additional friction can be obtained, fine-tuned or adjusted with the control hand. Whaletails are fast to load and easy to use but their major positive feature is the excellent heat sink the block of aluminium provides. This would make the Whaletail ideal for use on big drops if it were not for the fact that it is not as easy to vary friction as with an open rack. Increasing the number of pegs and the friction during descent is a skill, which has to be learnt.

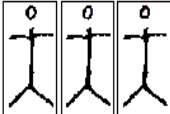
With use, the rope wears away the pegs. The first peg gets worn down the quickest, as it receives the most wear and when this become excessive the Whaletail should be reversed. If using a single gate, move the gate, thumbscrew and washer to the other end. With care, several years of hard use should be possible.

The Spelean Whaletail has a rated strength in excess of 4000kg and the gate assembly will withstand a sideways load in excess of 1000kg. It has two 29mm diameter attachment holes to permit two large karabiners to be connected simultaneously. This is very useful when suspending packs or doing assisted abseils. The Whaletail is best suited to ropes of 10-13mm diameter.

REFERENCES

Padgett, A. & Smith, B. 1987 *ON ROPE*.
Montgomery, N.R. 1977 *SINGLE ROPE TECHNIQUES a guide for vertical cavers*
Spelean, 1993 *THE WHALETAIL* pamphlet
Warild, A. 1994 *VERTICAL*

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Thampanna Cave, Part 4

Ken Boland

Ken concludes his four articles on Thampanna Cave with a description of the Seeing Red Series, the Tube Paddock and some of the lesser known parts of the cave.

The fortuitous discovery of the Seeing Red Series in Thampanna Cave [6N-206] on the Nullarbor Plain occurred on 4th December 1991.

A group, intending to survey in the Railway Tunnel, stopped on the way to enjoy lunch in The Lunchroom. My nephew, Matt Dempsey, then aged 18 and on his first caving trip, and having been on the Nullarbor for just a few days, decided to have a crawl around in an area where everybody knew there was nothing. He disappeared.

Once lunch was over, a search by all found both Matthew and the Seeing Red Series. Initially there was much confusion in an apparently complicated mixture of fallen blocks and phreatic passages. Once this had been passed, the main passage was found to be amazingly straight, presumably following a joint.

Unlike the Railway Tunnel (Boland, 1998), there are virtually no water borne sediments in Seeing Red. Most of the passage is delightfully clean and contains shards of rock which ring like dinner plates when stepped on. It is also predominantly a cheerful reddish colour.

Smaller side passages, also probably joint controlled, tend to contain large deposits of fretted powders reminiscent of the Coffee and Cream of Mulla Mullang Cave [6N-37]. During surveying, it was decided not to enter most of these passages as to do so would inevitably cause damage. We now know that it is not necessary to enter them as it has been possible to survey around whole areas

leaving the more delicate passages undisturbed. We have gained enough detail to know that surveying these would not yield very much additional information.

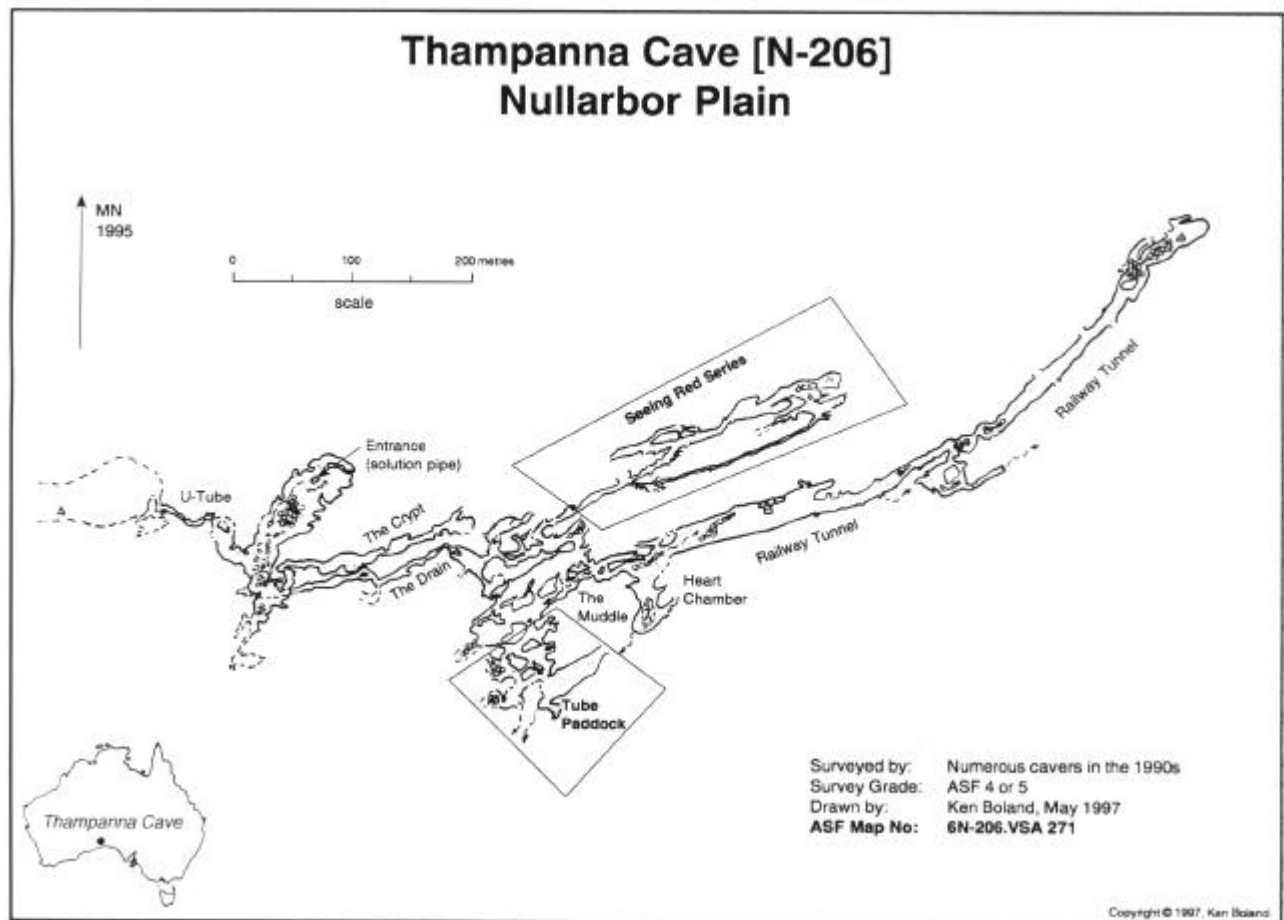
Air movement throughout the Seeing Red Series is always minimal. It is customary to wear very little cloth-



Top: Typical passage in Seeing Red Series.

Above: "The Salted Joint", Seeing Red Series.

Photos: Frank Hankinson, April 1996.



ing as one becomes quite hot and humid and the spaces one must traverse are frequently small.

Water does not seem to have entered the Seeing Red Series for a long time. There is some decoration, white and black, and one 'V' shaped phreatic passage was found which contained a 50—100mm layer of salt in its narrow base. We called it the Salted Joint (see photo).

As yet untouched passages at the western extremity of the series appear to lead back via an alternative route to the Muddle. Other untouched passages remain at the eastern end. The series provides plenty of scope for photographers.

The Tube Paddock

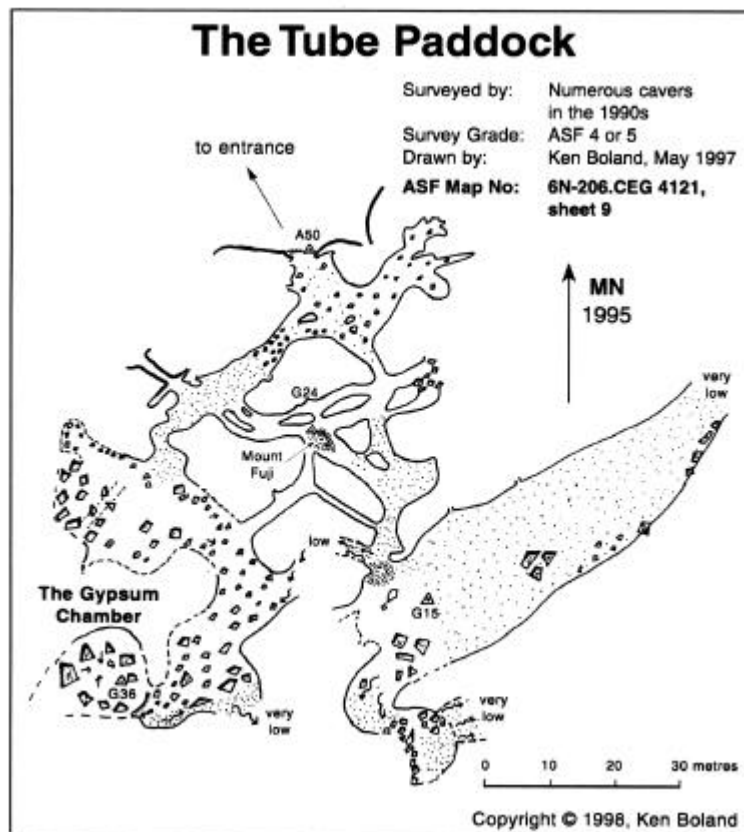
The Tube Paddock is a great area to visit without a map. Visited in this fashion it seems to become more complex and confusing than it really is. From the mud floor of the western end of the Railway Tunnel, one enters a phreatic maze with a rise of just one metre.

Most of the passages are crawling size. For an extra challenge, the south-west extremity becomes even lower and has a mud floor with obvious signs of occasional water visitation.

It is quite a pleasant surprise to find the Tube Paddock is bounded on the south-east by a 22 metre wide, walking-height passage with a firm, flat mud floor. Unfortunately, it is short. Intermittent water flow to this passage comes from the Heart Chamber, via an unenterable flattener which, when viewed from the latter, gives no hint of the large passage beyond—a point



Ken Boland surveying in Seeing Red Series.
Photo: Frank Hankinson, April 1996.



worth remembering in other areas showing little ongoing hope.

The South-west Extremities

Not a lot of progress has been made in the south-west extremities of *Thampanna Cave*. The area is characterized by chambers with large piles of loose rocks beneath which there seems to be some evidence that water occasionally flows. This water flow is probably headed in a south-westerly direction, away from the Railway Tunnel, then southwards, skirting the western side of the Tube Paddock. As the 22 metre wide passage in the south-east corner of the Tube Paddock is known to carry water at times, this makes the "Paddock" something of an island.

As elsewhere, there are possibilities for exploration in this area of *Thampanna*. Moreover, photographers could easily spend a day focusing on its many excellent white gypsum decorations.

For the moment this article concludes my series on *Thampanna Cave*. I have chosen to leave aside the well-known, large chamber beyond the U-Tube in the eastern part of the cave.

This area has been much surveyed, but the many different parts, by the many different surveyors, are uncoordinated. Once it is finished this section will be added to the map as sheet 10.

A further chamber, the Mudmen Chamber or "Whatthellarewes", contains unusual wind, water and! or sandblasted eroded stalagmites with redeposited lips. The chamber also contains the complete skeletons of some dasyurids, many bat skeletons and large tree roots. It awaits more work.

The survey has been plotted onto nine A3 size sheets (420 x 297mm) copies of which are available to any interested person for the cost of postage.

Reference

Boland, Ken (1998) *Thampanna Cave*, Part 3. *Nargun* 31(2): 15-19.

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Thanks to Peter Ackroyd for the scans of the photos.



The "Wineglass", a 40cm high, eroded stalagmite in the Mudmen Chamber. The Mudmen Chamber is one of several chambers requiring complete surveying beyond the U-Tube in *Thampanna Cave*.

Photo: Ken Boland, December 1991.

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JUNE MACLUCAS

%%%%%%%%%

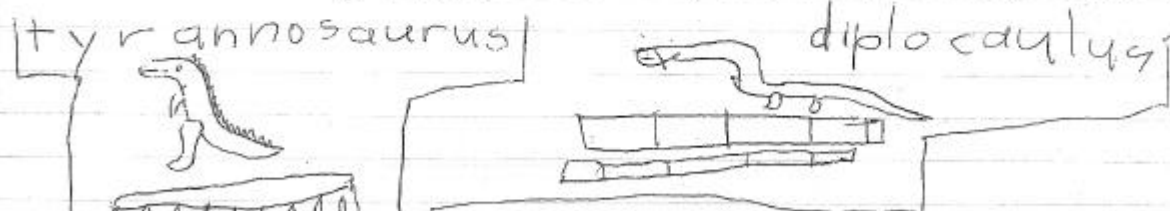
Working Bee Gem

At a recent working bee on the Library and Records this gem was discovered in the past correspondence. It was addressed to Dr. Grant Gartrell, Cave Exploration Group of S.A., c/- Victoria Cave, NARACORTE, Sth. Aust. and dated 16th Aug. 1975. Kevin was seven years old when he wrote this letter. We thought you might be interested to see how a seven year old solved the problem. Come along and find your own gems.

I hear you are wanting the difference between meat eater's & the plant-eater's! well I have the answer. A meat-eater has long sharp teeth like  below. A plant-eater has Blunt grinding teeth like a cow.

~~Part 2~~
After a long time the trees grew smaller so the pt.es. (plant eaters) grew smaller did there teeth chang?

(turn over) ~~Letters from Kevin~~



Any more Answers send back

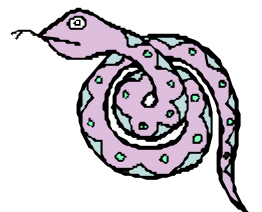
Love from NAME
Kevin



Snake Man

September General Meeting

PRESENTATION STARTS 7.30pm



Get up close and personal to a range of reptiles and other creature. Ian Renton is a professional snake catcher and will bring a selection of his "pets" to this meeting. He will discuss first aide and the correct behaviours around snakes. Ian's collection also includes a range of rare lizards and other creatures. The Meeting will be held after the presentation. If you don't attend any other meetings this year you will



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Type of Event	Description	Contact
28/08/99	Working Bee	Library and Records	George MacLucas
28-29/08/99	Caving/Bones	Well Cave 5L412	Marie Choi
11/09/99	Working Bee	Library and Records	George MacLucas
11-12/09/99	Fossil Weekend	Naracoorte (see ad below)	Marie Choi
15/09/99	Committee Meeting	Simons place – 7PM	Marie Choi
22/09/99	General Meeting	Snake Man (hands on demonstration)	Marie Choi
25/09/99	Working Bee	Library and Records	George MacLucas
25/09 to 5/10/99	Caving	Old Homestead cave.	Graham Pilkington
13/10/99	Committee Meeting	Simons place – 7PM	Marie Choi
16/10/99	Working Bee	Library and Records	George MacLucas
27/10/99	General Meeting	Bass Strait canoe trip (slides and talk)	Marie Choi
30/10/99	Working Bee	Library and records	George MacLucas
10/11/99	Committee Meeting	Simons place – 7PM	Marie Choi
10/11/99	NEWSLETTER	Deadline for Copy	Athol Jackson
13/11/99	Working Bee	Library and records	George MacLucas
24/11/99	General Meeting	Caving Gear (Metropolitan Hotel Meeting)	Marie Choi
27/11/99	Working Bee	Library and records	George MacLucas
8-22/01/00	Caving	Tasmania	Marie Choi / Simon Kendrick

Special Event

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