

CEGSA NEWS



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

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NOVEMBER 2001



CAVE EXPLORATION GROUP (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) Inc.

PO Box 144, Rundle Mall, Adelaide, South Australia, 5000.

<http://www.users.on.net/smilner/index.html>

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.

2001 Committee

President / Key & GPS / Quartermaster	Paul Harper	(H) 8270 2359 (E) pharper@mail.rah.sa.gov.au	(W) 8222 5615
Secretary	Peter Horne	(H) 8295 6031 (E) ppuddles1@yahoo.com.au	
Museum Representative	Neville Pledge	(H) 8272 5483 (E) npledge@senet.com.au	
Publications	Athol Jackson	(H) 8337 8759 (E) atholjax@senet.com.au	
Public Officer / SASC Rep.	Graham Pilkington	(H) 8395 6713 (E) pch@chariot.net.au	(W) 8396 3044
Search & Rescue	Frank Hankinson	(H) 8322 4300 (E) speleospice@telstra.easymail.com.au	(M) 0413 428 078
Fundraising Coordinator / Leadership Standards / Training Coord. / SASC Rep / Trip Liaison (Logbook)	Marie Choi	(H) 8322 0895 (M) 0429 696 299 (E) battymariec@picknowl.com.au	(W) 8326 1777

Other Office Bearers

Treasurer / Membership	Chris Gibbons	(H) 8258 9847	
Visitor / New Member Liaison	June MacLucas	(H) 8261 4180 (E) junemacl@senet.com.au	
Librarian / Records	George MacLucas	(H) 8261 4180	
Safety Officer	Tim Payne	(M) 0402 315 179 (E) tppayne@one.net.au	(W) 8259 5724

Area Coordinators

Nullarbor Plain, Eyre Peninsula	Max Meth	(H) 8625 2700 (E) maxmeth@arcom.com.au	
Upper & Lower S E, Glenelg River	Kevin Mott	(H) 8723 1461 (E) mott.kevin@saugov.sa.gov.au	(W) 8735 1131
Adelaide	Grant Gartrell	(H) 8556 9100 (E) bluebree@dove.net.au	
Flinders	Bill Binks	(H) 8595 9164 (E) binks.bill@saugov.sa.gov.au	(W) 8595 9138

Representatives

ASF	Peter Kraehenbuehl	(H) 8278 4531 (E) krunchy@bigpond.com	
	Graham Pilkington		As Above
SA Speleological Council	Graham Pilkington		As Above
	Marie Choi		As Above
Leadership Standards - Working Group	Peter Kraehenbuehl		As Above
	Marie Choi		As Above

Cover Photograph: Ray and Terry Gibbons inspect the vast flood plain of rockhole 6N1999.
Photo taken by Peter Ackroyd.

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QUARTERMASTERS NOTE.

High usage equipment will now be stored at the quartermaster's residence. Please make arrangements with the QM well in advance of required date for equipment. The QM can be contacted at the telephone numbers on the previous page.

NEWSLETTER MATERIAL

The deadline for copy or background material for Volume 47 Number 1 (Issue 185) must reach the Editor by Wednesday **13th February 2002**. Material not meeting this deadline may be retained for possible use in a following issue. The preferred method is via E-MAIL at atholjax@senet.com.au as an attachment or on 3.5" IBM floppy disk, 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

You will find that this issue of the newsletter is rather small, for once its no ones fault in particular it is just that nothing is happening at the moment.

With the loss of our insurance the club has not run any official trips, and very few members have gone off to do private trips. So the activity level of the club has nearly ceased, although there never seems to be a lack of paperwork for the committee to plough through.

There is good news on the insurance front, the ASF have found an insurer and are negotiating a policy with them. CEGSA has paid the insurance levy on behalf of its members to the ASF, and the ASF will pay the insurers once the policy is agreed to.

This will mean that each member will be required to pay \$25 a year for insurance cover while before it was \$7. We now have to wait for the green light to go caving.

Its time for our Christmas party again it will be on Sunday 16/12/01 from 11am onwards. Graham Pilkington has been kind enough to let us use his house for the festivities. We will supply a large BBQ hot plate but its BYO everything food, drinks and seating. Rumour has it that Graham has a pool so bring your bathers and a towel also.

Michael Caruana has resigned from the committee due to work commitments, Michael has been on the committee for several years now and I would like to thank him on behalf of the committee and the club for the work that he has done.

We will not replace Michael as the end of the year is so near.

Time has nearly come for the AGM and the issuing of Leather Medals, These are awarded for great feats of achievement as well as acts of gross stupidity so if you know of anyone who you feel deserves a medal contact me with the details.

Have a Merry Christmas and a safe (with plenty of caving) New Year

Paul Harper

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Letter to The Editor

Several articles in volume 46 no 3 referred to fossil deposits in new caves in the South East. I was disappointed to find details of the discoveries linked to actual caves in the articles.

It was requested that any articles concerning the bones not directly link the discoveries to any specific cave. The preferred option was to have them as unrelated articles, preferably in separate editions.

The owner of the site was extremely disappointed as he was assured that nothing published in the newsletter would identify the site. These slip ups have the potential to deny us access to some cave sites. There are several fossil and other cave sites around not included in CEGSA records because the owners or discoverers deemed such disclosures were not worth the risk.

No doubt this occurred to a break down in communication and the relative newness of the sites. As some caves contain sensitive information a register of such caves needs to be made available to the editor to ensure information that should not be published is not. Where new discoveries have not yet made it to the Records Officer's desk then a verification check should be made with the discoverer of the cave or the owner.

Kevin Mott

TRIP REPORTS

Nullarbor Trip Report, 28 September to 13 October 2001

CEGSA: Graham Pilkington, Ray & Terry Gibbons, Peter Ackroyd, Grant Gartrell;
CEGSA Visitor: Tom Wigley

WASG: Ann-Marie Meredith

Karst features visited:

5N262-263, N526-527, N1992

6N83, N1303-1304, N1350-1351, N1993-2000, N2090-2094

Friday 28 Sep: Peter had arrived in Adelaide from Melbourne a few days early which enabled two of us to travel at a comfortable pace to Max & Hennie's at Ceduna. The evening and part of the night was spent catching up with the Nullarbor data held by Max and gathering info for our trip.

Saturday 29: Peter and I had a lazy start with Hennie making a sumptuous breakfast. Ray & Terry set off at 4 AM from Adelaide and caught up with us before Nullarbor Roadhouse. We waited there to pickup Ann-Marie who had caught a coach from Kalgoorlie. We spent the rest of the day trying to locate various features near the highway between Nullarbor Roadhouse and the border before camping for the night but did not find any. The problem was that the boggy ground from recent rains had made the tracks difficult to stay on but easy to stay in, whilst walking became 4-wheel drive unless you were slow and cautious.

Sunday 30: An exploration day chasing breezes but achieving nothing but hope.

Monday 1 Oct: Having obtained prior permission from SA National Parks & Wildlife Service at Ceduna to visit "Black Surprise Cave" 5N265, we spent the day surveying. Ray & Peter completed the entrance area except for the blind hole in the main doline. Graham & Ann-Marie mapped the western side of the "Surprise" rockpile down to about 25m. At that depth, a ray over to the roof/floor contact up a scree slope was a failure. Then scree levelled off in the roof holes and went down the other side into a decorated passage. We had to stop after 30m of 1m high 6m wide decorated tunnel due to lack of time and complexity of the passage. Oh well, more for next time.

Tuesday 2: Moving to "Wedding Cave" 6N1734, we located 5N526 & N527 along a north-trending track between the Old Highway and the Coach Road. N526 was a 29x19x0.7m deep depression in soil with a massive wombat dig on the east. N527 was much larger – 150x130x2m deep sloping down a rocky incline to an inner flat soil floor of 90x70m. A 2x1x0.5m rockhole 5N1992 was found on the 32x10m SW rock pavement close to Plain level. Later we located and tagged blowholes N263 (total depth 5.4m) & N262 (total depth 3.8m).



N262@150 Photo: G. Pilkington

The tracks had mostly dried out but the spear grass was ready for harvesting which my van did with ease. We needed regular stops to clear the engine before a fire could



N262@230 Photo: G. Pilkington

start. On one occasion we had to put the flames out. Ray had a “regular” vehicle with a radiator grill up front, these do not gather grass very well as the bumper pushes the grass down. The van’s bumper is used to whip to the grass up into the radiator and engine.

By chance we met up with Grant & Tom near Eucla and could travel together to Wedding Cave. Just as well because the recent rains had almost obliterated the track of six months ago.

Wednesday 3: Graham, Peter, Ray, and Ann-Marie surveyed the doline of N1734. This was done as a stack of 7 levels about 0.7m apart. We did not survey the small cave that leads to a 1m diam 12m drop into the main chamber. The 4m diam roof window drops 1.5m to the top of a rockpile from a 34x25x4.6m doline in a 75x50x0.3m depression. The entrance chamber is a gentle arc 61x29.

Grant and Tom explored the cave and found a good blowing dig spot at 39m depth.

Thursday 4: Grant and Ray with the help of everyone else dug into the 50x25x4m “Reception Room” off the dig. No way was found on from there but it reached 43m depth at the far end.

Friday 5: Moving on to Old Homestead Cave we cleared 3km of Link Track at the eastern end.

Saturday 6: Ray & Peter installed a skylight in the shed; adjusted the mapping table; made a drain for the toilet overflow and tap water as well as a “basin” for the tap. They also did some gardening.

Grant & Tom visited the N83 South Cave while Graham & Ann-Marie surveyed 30m of upper-level passage from the Potholes balcony to the other side of the main-run roofhole to the north. An unsurveyed extension of about 40m was dug into off the upper passage on the far side of the roofhole.

Sunday 7: Graham & Ann-Marie surveyed about 50m of mostly walking tunnel and rockpile in the Officers Mess just past the Mesa. Grant & Tom made a tour of the N83 North Cave nearly to RDFNC. Ray Terry & Peter did a surface walk to the SW and located & tagged N1993 to N2000. Except for one rockhole, N1999, these were blowholes.



6N1993@020



6N1995@310



6N1996@320

All 3 photos taken by Peter Ackroyd



N1994@260



6N1997@330

Photos taken by Peter Ackroyd

Monday 8: Ray & Terry left for Adelaide while Grant & Tom moved down to Mundrabilla for a few days caving. Graham drove down the track SW from N83 and took GPS readings to accurately plot its position. From the track, a surface walk located N1303 & N1304, which were about 500m from their pre-GPS positions. N1350 & N1351 were about 1.2km south of their pre-GPS positions. All had been tagged which removed any doubts about their identity. The new features N2090 to N2094 were mainly holes blowing air. Ann-Marie walked out the 5km to join Graham at the end of the day.

Tuesday 9: Graham & Peter continued the survey of the Officers Mess for 12 hours. An interesting tube was surveyed leaving the wall of one rockpile. It had a floorhole dropping down into a chamber that we had already surveyed but we had not identified the hole amongst the roof pendants. It finished with a view sideways down into a chamber in the Gentleman's Mess that had also been surveyed without seeing the tube. Again it was almost impossible to pick it out being 3m up the wall at roof height in a zone of vuggy solution pockets. Just goes to show that more cave is waiting to be found.

Ann-Marie had had to abandon going underground because she had hurt her shoulder . . . while sleeping! It was a good turn of events as a storm passed over camp that day and Ann-Marie had to salvage sleeping gear from our waterlogged tents and put it in the shed to dry.

Wednesday 10: Ann-Marie plotted our surface data onto the local maps drawn by Max Meth then attempted to find N1302 with no more success than Graham had had two days ago. Graham & Peter went to the Potholes Backdoor to tackle a blowing side tunnel that had been left off the survey made six months ago. The entrance was 1m wide by 0.5m high into phreatic tubes. It looked like it would break up onto impassable tubes within 3m. Instead after 2m it joined an almost parallel tunnel that became walking passage 3m high and 2m wide that we followed for 60m before it closed down in a collapse chamber. Not surveyed was a passage about 2m lower for the last 20m that went under part of the collapse but blocked by it.

Thursday 11: All three of us surveyed in the Gentleman's Mess. This was to continue a survey made in 1995 by Graham, Ann-Marie and Steve. We were disappointed by an early end to all the leads we travelled.

Friday 12: Again all three to the Gentleman's Mess. We completed the area, which included an interesting loop passage, but mostly it was low flanking heavily calcified underhangs - "wall detail". A 20m long passage was mapped at the start of the GM that had also been missed on the initial survey – it was hiding behind a slab of boxwork calcified mud. Just goes to show that there will always be more cave waiting to be found.

Saturday 13: We left for Mundrabilla Roadhouse to get Ann-Marie onto a bus for Kalgoorlie then Peter & Graham went on to Max's for a debrief and drop off the updated maps. We did stop a few kilometres short of Ceduna, not that we intended to, all the power in the van went off. The Nullarbor had vibrated one of the battery terminal connectors off, lying on top off the terminal and held in position by years of habit. The van's battery is held under the drivers' seat and difficult to inspect. I suspect that it had come loose much earlier in the trip because my DC/AC inverter (used to power my notebook PC for access to the Nullarbor karst database) had been complaining that its' input power supply was faulty. After a quick fix we were at Max's.

Sunday 14: Return to Adelaide.

Surveying in Old Homestead Cave was all within 300m of the entrance and added up to 300m taking the surveyed length to 29.0 km. Most of the new passage was previously unknown cave, and interestingly, about 150m of this was walking size. We allocated 14 new features including 13 near OHC and took accurate GPS readings of a further 8 known features.

Graham Pilkington

% % % % % % % % % % % % % % % % % %

Corra Lynn Trip Report, 20 October 2001

CEGSA: Graham, Rodger and Siona Pilkington, Marie Choi.

Mercedes College: teacher and 13 students

CEGSA led a four-hour adventure tour to introduce some students to caving. Marie and Siona led their group from Grand Central to the Rope Crevasse then Bushwalkers Chamber. Some even climbed back up the Rope Crevasse without using the rope.

Graham and Rodger took a tour of Bushwalkers – Crystal Maze – Taylor’s Tomb – Grand Central. Where a climbing option was present, we took it. The students surprised themselves at successfully managing what looked to them impossible climbs and squeezes. Teamwork gradually became the norm as they had hand torches that needed passing and lights shone for others. The occasional push or fleshy foothold was also used.

Graham Pilkington

% % % % % % % % % % % % % % % % % %

TECHNICAL and OTHER ARTICLES

MEMBERSHIP

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

8604 David Trehearne

17 Highland Drive BELLEVUE HEIGHTS SA 5050 (H) 8227-1113

CHANGE OF E-MAIL ADDRESS

9903 Gerret Springer rolukage@ozemail.com.au

CHANGE OF PHONE NUMBER

8109 Gary Woodcock (H) 8380-5154

Would all members please advise any changes, if not done already and recorded in the Newsletters, of any changes in Membership details (address, telephone numbers, e-mail, mobile Numbers etc) as soon as possible for inclusion in the Annual Report Membership List for next year

*Chris Gibbons.
Membership Officer.*

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GETTING TO KNOW OUR COUNTRY MEMBERS

Motty



Kevin started caving in about 1970 with the Congregation Youth Group who travelled down to the South East to assist Fred with caving and mapping. That first trip was to the Glenelg River and as he was a survey draftsman he was immediately “encouraged” to assist with survey and mapping work.

This has continued till the present where he has not only produced many cave and area maps himself but has assisted many others to enjoy the fruitful hours belly crawling through indescribable places to produce those masterpieces we call maps.

The bug caught hold and he finally saw the light and joined CEGSA in 1974. He has held the positions of Secretary, Quartermaster, Safety and Training, ASF Rep and President and was a committee member for most of those years till he moved to Mount Gambier in 1990.

Kevin has also has an interest in cave management and through the ASF and ACKMA has been part of project teams preparing plans of management. Photography has also been an interest, as previous awards at conference photo competitions will testify. Part of his photographic interest saw him produce, with Jim Cundy a photographic record of entrances in the Lower South East. He was also part of the trip that photographed the entire Nullarbor cliff line.

His interest in cave documentation and survey has taken him to the Nullarbor and Kangaroo Island where countless new caves were documented through the 1970's and 1980's. Many a time Claude the continent conquering cangaroo cilling caving cortina was found in places a two wheel drive vehicle was not supposed to be.

Search and rescue have also been an interest. Along with Pilko he set up training sessions and rescue exercises for CEGSA, Star Force and SES.

He suffers from persistent rumours of dubious deeds and conference exploits, which he insists, are filaments of illumination from the deranged minds of those who seek to perpetuate the esteemed awards of Leather Medals. If any one needs culinary advice such as how to make jelly bean jaffles with a square jaffle iron he is the guru. Many rumours of a strange "wonganui" lurking around Naracoorte caves in shorts on frosty mornings still persist.

Kevin is still found lurking among the caves of the South East and you are likely to be harangued about the virtues of documentation and mapping if you have the pleasure of crossing his path above or below ground.

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MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2002

YEAR 2002 CEGSA MEMBERSHIP FEES	CEGSA	+ ASF	TOTAL
FULL MEMBERSHIP	\$40.00	\$37.00	\$77.00
FULL COUNTRY MEMBERSHIP	\$34.00	\$37.00	\$71.00
ASSOCIATE MEMBER	\$33.00	\$37.00	\$70.00
LONG TERM ASSOCIATE	\$40.00	\$37.00	\$77.00
First Year Associate (no Australian Caver)	\$33.00	\$25.00	\$58.00
Life Member (Active)	\$0.00	\$37.00	\$37.00
Life Member (Active) (no Australian Caver)	\$0.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
ASF fee for full time students		\$31.50	

VARIATION FOR FAMILY MEMBERSHIP	CEGSA	+ ASF	TOTAL
1) First Full member \$40 + second Full member \$40	\$80.00	\$68.50	\$148.50
Less \$16 for only 1 CEGSA NEWS	\$64.00	\$68.50	\$132.50
2) First Full member \$40 + Second Assoc. member \$33	\$73.00	\$68.50	\$141.50
Less \$16 for only 1 CEGSA NEWS	\$57.00	\$68.50	\$125.50
3) First Assoc. member \$33 + second Assoc. member \$33	\$66.00	\$68.50	\$134.50
Less \$16 for only one CEGSA NEWS	\$50.00	\$68.50	\$118.50

Would you please note that the ASF Fees are now in 2 components, Levy and Insurance. The ASF fees are yet to be confirmed by the ASF and may need adjusting later.

ASF LEVY FEE FOR YEAR 2002

Individual Full/Associate/Life Membership	\$19.00 + Ins
Family Membership	\$32.50 + Ins
Student	\$13.50 + Ins
1st Year Assoc. Member (Include Australian Caver)	\$19.00 + Ins
1st Year Assoc. Member (Without Australian Caver)	\$0.00 + Ins

ASF Insurance fee for existing 2001 full year members is \$18.00 (\$7.00 already paid last year). For new 2002 members the Insurance is \$25.00

Enclosed with the Newsletter is the account for 2002 fees, made up of ASF Insurance, ASF Levy and CEGSA Fees. Some adjustments have been made to some accounts to allow for underpayment and prepayment of current year's fees.

Please make sure the payment of fees includes both CEGSA and ASF if applicable. If there are any queries regarding the accounts please give me a ring on 8258-9847.

Chris Gibbons.
Treasurer.

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Notice of Motion to Alter Constitution

This motion is to be voted on at the General Meeting to be held in the Royal Society Room, SA Museum on January 23rd at 7:30 PM.

6(f) Quorum:

from

- (i) A quorum for GMs EGMs and AGMs shall consist of 30% of financial Members and Affiliates permanently residing within 80 kilometres of Adelaide South Australia.

to

- (i) A quorum for GMs EGMs and AGMs shall consist of the lesser of 12 or 30% of financial Members and Affiliates permanently residing within 80 kilometres of Adelaide City South Australia.

This is the equivalent of "capping" Adelaide membership at 40.

With the decline in meeting attendance by members it is becoming most difficult to get a quorum so that the business of the group can be carried out efficiently.

Graham Pilkington

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Discussion Paper on possible Membership and Rule Changes

The aim of this paper is to have the membership consider some possible rule and membership changes that would make CEGSA more open to the family of CEGSA members and to be clearer in some of our rules.

Currently if family members wish to attend meetings, lectures or even the odd caving trip they have to be signed up as members after the 3-activity rule. They may only attend the AGM and the odd caving trip so this seems an unfair financial strain if they are not active cavers.

I believe that we should follow the example of some other clubs and include in our rules / constitution a clause that allows the partners / spouses and children of members to attend unlimited meetings, dinners and talks. I would also like to see them, at the discretion of the committee be able to attend a maximum of 2 Caving trips a year as the Guest of the club. This is of course if we can have this covered by the insurance and it is my understanding

that with the past policy that our visitors were covered as they are written into our constitution as a regular club activity.

It has been pointed out over the past couple of years that a number of our members have partners and children who may attend the odd trip, especially a long weekend or long trip interstate that may be part of the family holidays. These people do not meet the visitor guidelines and therefore we are breaching our constitution and rules and invalidating our insurance. With the tightening up of policies we need to abide by our own rules, and this seems the most logical solution.

This brings me to my next issue. Our constitution currently allows visitors to attend 3 activities, many believe that this means caving trips. Unfortunately it means any activities, including meetings. I believe anyone should be able to attend any of our meetings and that this clause to be changed to 3 caving trips (excluding training days). I have excluded training due to insurance issues. I believe that this change makes the clause more practical and clearer.

My next issue is in regards to new members. When people first sign up they receive copies of the constitution, as well as other material, including past newsletters when available and soon a New Members Handbook. This all costs the club money and as time goes on finances are getting tighter. It is my recommendation that we charge a joining / administration fee of \$10 and present each new Member with a package that includes:

New Members Hand Book
CEGSA Constitution
ASF Guidelines
1 Past CEGSA Newsletter or Annual Report

This would ensure that we are also covering our legal obligations in regards to ensuring that everyone has the guidelines and safety rules.

This also raises another issue. In the past many of our members have been very late paying their dues. They often have to be sent a number of reminder letters (which cost money and time). I believe that we need to tighten up on this and that if a member is more than 3 months late with their fees and that they haven't notified the committee or treasurer at the due date that they may be late due to a good reason (loss of income, illness, moving ect) then they be charged the Admin fee before re-joining. This may ensure that we receive most of our fees in a timely matter.

To Summarise

Let's bring in a clause to include family members as Guests on 2 trips a year.

Change the visitors clause from 3 activities to 3 caving trips, excluding training.

Bring in a \$10 joining/ admin fee for new members.

Charge the admin fee to members who are 3 months late with their fees.

Think about these issues and let's have some constructive and reasonable discussion about them.

Marie Choi.



Australian Speleological Federation Inc.

To all Corporate Members

In the recent e-mails asking for contributions towards the insurance premium, we foreshadowed a Discussion Paper on the future of insurance.

This is a preliminary Circular canvassing some of the issues. From your response to these, we will circulate a final Discussion Paper later this month, with recommendations for the next ASF Council Meeting.

Why do this now?

- You can raise questions about the insurance & we'll try to answer them in the next 2 weeks, rather than take up time at the Council Meeting
- clubs can discuss the key issues among members & send suggestions for future action
- from these responses, we can draft recommendations for the Council meeting
- we can circulate the recommendations to all clubs before your last meeting of the year
- you will have time to brief your delegates to the ASF Council Meeting
- the Council Meeting can then concentrate on future action

Why not a more comprehensive Discussion Paper right now?

Because time is short and we don't want to spend unnecessary time addressing questions which in fact may not be an issue for most members. We want to concentrate on matters that are an issue.

What do we want from you?

Please let CEGSA committee know if you have any specific concerns.

We look forward to your responses to this and to the proposal relating to the Membership Year.

John Dunkley, Joe Sydney & Jodie Rutledge

Circular re Insurance - November 2001

Introduction

There are three main components to the insurance, totalling an estimated \$18,827.

1. The first covers Officers and Executive of the ASF and all member clubs. This cost \$2,420 and by a previous determination of the Council, all members are required to contribute.
2. The second is Professional / Products Liability, which covers professional advice, training etc. ASF is currently negotiating extending this to 'member-to-member' training in the field as well as classroom training (currently only the latter is provided). The estimated cost is \$3,000 and by previous resolution this also is shared among all members.

3. The third is Public Liability insurance which indemnifies landholders, lessees, the Crown etc. against claims by members of the public arising from actions of ASF members. This cost us \$13,407. Again, by a previous determination of the Council a contribution is payable by all members except those who had earlier not accepted it.

The background

This has been explained previously at great length. Since June, the ASF Executive has forwarded letters from the President and from Alan Jevons (our Insurance Commissioner), along with 5 updates. Joe Sydney has mailed numerous individual replies to both clubs and members. If anyone is still unclear about particular aspects, contact one of the people listed below and we'll try to help.

The present situation

The Executive based its actions entirely on earlier determinations by the ASF Council. Accordingly, a contribution to the Public Liability component was required from all Corporate Member clubs except two that we have contacted separately.

The urgency of the matter may have affected this, but at the time of writing not all clubs appear to have paid their contribution. The policy will be taken out *only* if we receive funds to do so.

We found that the premium quoted would NOT be significantly altered unless there was a substantial increase or decrease in numbers covered (of the order of a doubling or halving, at least). This means that the premium is essentially fixed regardless of the number who contribute, so the fewer who contribute, the greater the cost to each member who does pay.

The Future

Proposed Principles

The next ASF Council Meeting should determine a solution according to the following principles:

- It is equitable:
i.e. it relates contribution payable to the risk undertaken, and it considers individuals' ability to pay
- It is efficient:
i.e. it is administratively straightforward to collect for both clubs and ASF officers. Also that calculating the obligation of each club is easy to understand
- It takes into account the legal requirements of utmost good faith and material disclosure:
This means that we cannot expose the insurer to risks that we were aware of but which were not disclosed to the insurer at the time
It also means that at any point of time *we must know who is covered by the policy*. This implies an obligation on clubs to pay their contribution when required, to maintain accurate, continuously updated membership records on the ASF Website, and on the ASF to ensure that this is in fact done.
- The Insurance Commission and the ASF Executive administer the scheme. However any significant alterations to the risks covered and/or the premium payable, are first discussed with clubs.
- Financing & administering the insurance does not impede ASF's ability to pursue its core objectives

Questions which you may wish to see answered

(please advise which ones, & we will endeavour to do so in the final Discussion Paper, but

PLEASE be reasonable - finalising the Discussion Paper will be very time-consuming. A phone call or e-mail to one of the people below might save a lot of effort)

1. This Discussion Paper is based on the principles immediately above. Are they fair and reasonable?
2. Can ASF reduce the premium for next year i.e. 2002/2003?
3. Could the premium be reduced if ASF and all clubs take a more active role in 'risk management'?
4. Should ASF abandon its role altogether and leave individual clubs who want insurance to find it themselves or join another scheme? How much would this cost those clubs remaining in the scheme?
5. Should we charge a higher contribution to those clubs / individuals engaged in objectively higher risk activities e.g. deep and /or wet vertical caving?
6. Or, should we offer a concession to those *not* undertaking such activities?
7. The new policy does not cover 'member-to-member' claims. What are the implications of this?
8. If landholders in my state do not require insurance of my club, why should I have to pay?
9. Is it true that some kindred outdoor organisations are not paying as much for insurance as us? If so, why?
10. Is it true that some organisations have not been able to obtain insurance at all?
11. Should ASF join forces with other groups to seek a joint policy? (e.g. bushwalkers, cave divers).
12. What support would be needed from clubs to pursue this suggestion?
13. Is it feasible to have a policy with a base rate for most cavers, and additional premiums payable for greater objective risks?
14. What should ASF and member clubs do about lobbying politicians / state governments?
15. If I don't caving at all, why do I need the insurance policy?
16. If I don't go caving at all, why should I have to contribute?
17. Should we continue to offer concessions to new members and Honorary Life Members of clubs and ASF? (at present they contribute a total of \$7)
18. Should we expect a contribution from visitors on club trips? (at present they pay nothing)
19. Should we insist that all visitors be formally signed up as members of some kind?
20. How does training affect the policy premium? Can clubs continue to organise member training sessions, or will these have to be conducted in a classroom?
21. Does the insurance prevent me from going cave diving?

"What if ... ?" questions

Members often ask us questions beginning with the words "*what if ...* "? We can explain what the policy covers but please be aware that we cannot always advise whether certain contingencies would or would not be covered. Interpreting the wording of the policy and advising whether it applies in certain cases is what lawyers do for a living, and what the court system decides.

Where to direct enquiries and responses?

CEGSA COMMITTEE.



Australian Speleological Federation Inc.

ASF Membership Year discussion paper

The Problem

The ASF Constitution and Bylaws do not define the Membership Year, and varying understandings about this have created some confusion.

However fees have been payable on June 30 each year. Several clubs have complained that this is not related to their own financial year, that it is not clear how to pay for members joining during the year, that members miss out on issues of Australian Caver, and so on.

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to examine options for regularising the Membership Year and in particular to propose a system whereby each club nominates its own membership year and pays accordingly. The issue of insurance has made it imperative that we clarify this matter. Note: the Membership Year does not have to bear any relation to the Treasurer's Financial Year, which is separate.

Management considerations - Options

1. Membership year January to December

Having the membership year run from January to December is very convenient for some clubs such as University based clubs. But the ASF treasurer asks for clubs to pay for members each June, each club also forwards on their member list, but any additional members new to the list have already missed out on the first two editions of the Australian Caver magazine. The amount of each edition of the Australian Caver Magazine is published according to the amount of members on the database so although some extras are printed, the amount is not sufficient to be continually back issuing editions. Postage costs would be costly. And the extra time required on the ASF executive to pack and post would also be considerable.

I see another problem in back issuing of the Australian Caver mag mid-year. Those extra members will remain on the ASF database until June the following year when the list is updated again. This means they receive 6 A/Caver magazines. Multiply this by 33 clubs and the ASF would be broke.

The membership year running January to December can work if the clubs update their own database at the beginning of each year (January) and keep it up to date. The ASF risks a loss in this scenario as most clubs don't update regularly, therefore meaning that the ASF are sending magazines to those who aren't renewing their membership for that year.

1. Membership year September to August

Having the membership year run September to August makes sense as it is by this time that all clubs (hopefully) have responded to their June invoice and with it have sent an updated list of the club membership. But still many clubs have their own club membership year that is too different from this, for example SUSS membership year starts February. Which again causes problems with Australian Caver distribution.

2. Membership Year July to June

This corresponds to the existing period for which fee payment is made but suffers from the same problems outlined in Option 1.

4. Proposal for change

I propose that the ASF Membership year run subscription style membership for clubs. That is, that each club defines what their membership year is, and that the ASF manage each club individually. This would take a little more effort on behalf of the Membership secretary and treasurer throughout the year, but lessen the burden of the influx each June/July of administration. It would also lessen the burden of responding to constant complaints about membership and A-Caver issues!

So using SUSS as an example again, if they nominate 1st Feb to 31st Jan as their membership year, then their members will receive the Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring editions of Australian Caver magazine. They will be invoiced each year around the start of their member year with monies due *on* 1st February each year.

As for additional members joining throughout a nominated year, they can join as a 'New' member (ASF fee \$7) but don't receive the Australian Caver magazine for that year. This benefits a member who joins towards the end of the membership year because they have already missed out on most of the A/Caver magazines for the year anyway. Or, they can choose to join *not* as a "New" member so to receive the remaining Australian Caver magazines for that year if they wish. But the ASF cannot routinely issue back copies of the A/Caver magazine in these cases.

In conclusion

I believe that my proposal will allow the distribution of the Australian Caver magazine to run more efficiently. And as this publication is a major member service that we provide, I believe that it is justification enough for such a major change. The ASF; in my view; would also be seen to be running more smoothly, professionally and more cost effectively.

The proposal will be formalised in a recommendation for the next Council meeting, taking account of your responses.

Jodie Rutledge
ASF Membership Secretary
(Ph)02 49261959
(Fx)02 49261772
jodie@rutco.com.au

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FUND RAISING RAFFLE

- 1st Prize: Oldam Cap lamp and cable (Value around \$90, donated By Frank Hankinson)
- 2nd Prize: Glow in dark Caving Tshirt (Value \$25, Donated by Marie Choi)
- 3rd Prize: CEGSA embossed pen

Tickets \$1 each see Marie Choi

A Search for the Story Behind the Fish - CEGSA's Spirit of Caving Award

"This wraith-like drawing appeared in several CEGSA Newsletters from 1975 till 1981 alongside or at the bottom of articles entitled 'Spirit of Caving'. These articles were (sporadically) written by some of the award winners. Each writer gave his or her view on what had constituted the best examples of the spirit of caving in the previous quarter."



Introduction

While I was on a caving trip out on the Nullarbor Plain in early May 2001 June MacLucas approached me, carrying a shoebox. The shoebox bore the inscription "fragile - handle with care". Inside the shoebox was what appeared at first glance to be a dried fish. It was the 'Spirit of Caving' award. June asked if I could present it to the winner for the year 2000, Paul Devine. Paul was due to arrive from Kalgoorlie to join our camp in the middle of nowhere a day or two after every other CEGSA member, except me, had left the Nullarbor.

I was honoured to be asked to carry out this task and wondered at the award itself - a frail, desiccated shovel nosed stingray about 350mm long. It had a chain attached to it by which means the recipient of the award could wear it round his or her neck as the occasion demanded. Its appearance had been 'enhanced' by the addition of green painted eyes and red painted 'lips'. Surely there was a story to all this?



"CEGSA's Spirit of Caving award - a desiccated shovel nosed stingray about 350mm long. Note painted eyes and 'lips'. Photo: P J Ackroyd, 7 May 2001."

In discussion with June and others I learnt that no one really knew the origins of 'The Fish' or even of the award. I privately decided to do a little research on the topic when I returned from the trip. Little did I then realise the time that would be required to carry it out, nor the dark places into which it would take me.

The Presentation of the 2000 Spirit of Caving Award

Monday 7th May 2001 was a fine sunny day on the Nullarbor Plain. In a brief but dignified ceremony at the entrance of First Landing Cave (6N-1788), I presented Paul with the Spirit of Caving award. I indicated that the award was for dedication and enthusiasm in all aspects of the science and the art of caving. In my view Paul exemplifies the Spirit of Caving perfectly. He has unbounded enthusiasm for exploration, photography, mapping and documentation of caves, particularly in the Nullarbor.



"Peter Ackroyd (left) presenting Paul Devine with the year 2000 Spirit of Caving award at First Landing Cave (6N-1788) Nullarbor Plain. Photo: Ken Boland, 7 May 2001"

I also indicated that the award is not necessarily made in any one year. It is to be given only in those years in which some younger member of CEGSA has demonstrated sufficient zeal for furthering the science and sport of caving that the immediate past winner or, by agreement, the Committee of the day, decides if the award should be made.

The History of the Spirit

I started to research the history of this award by asking around. I quickly learned that while most people knew of it, none seemed to know much about its origins. It had been found at some remote beach sometime in the distant past. No one had any idea which beach, who had found it or who had painted its eyes and lips. I began to dig deeper. After the passage of some months, several emails and many long distance phone calls a picture began to emerge.

It seems most likely that the original desiccated shovel nosed stingray was found during one of the pack walks the club conducted along the beaches south of Kelly Hill, Kangaroo Island. There were several such trips in the early to mid 1960s, searching for new caves. Alan Hill was at that time involved in the caves of Kangaroo Island and is known to be the originator of the better-known 'Leather Medal' awards. He may well have thought that 'The Fish' could be used in a similar way. He may also have been assisted in this thought by one Peter Aitken, an entomologist at the South Australian Museum. The eyes and lips were painted in rather striking green and red respectively at a very early stage, possibly before the fish was generally known within the club. Yvonne Hill, Alan's artistic wife, may well have had a hand in this aspect (she drew the cover art for the 1966 Mullamullang book, for example).

The presentation of 'The Fish' as some sort of award appears to have begun as a light hearted joke sometime in the early to mid 1960s. A strong supporter of CEGSA, Dr Paul Hossfeld of the University of Adelaide's Geology Department, took up the cause of the fish, presenting it with much aplomb to some young caver who had demonstrated unbounded enthusiasm, perhaps even over-enthusiasm, during the year. The first officially recorded winner, Wayne Goedecke in 1969, may have exemplified the way in which the award was first viewed in those early years. Wayne, then a member of two years' standing, was awarded the Spirit of Caving having arrived at the annual Cavemans' Dinner direct from a 24 hour caving trip to the Lower South East.

However, there is one earlier hint of the Spirit of Caving appearing in an official document. The 1966/67 Annual Report records that Dr Paul Hossfeld was the guest of honour at the Cavemans' Dinner held in December 1966 at which Leather Medals and "other decorations" were presented. A list of the people presented with awards was included, unfortunately without details. The last name on the list was Peter Hawkes. It is possible that he was awarded the Spirit of Caving as the "other decoration".

Less than a year after the 1966 Cavemans' Dinner Dr Paul Hossfeld died (15 July 1967). Hossy, as he was affectionately known, along with the late Dr Brian Daily, also from the Geology Department, was instrumental in securing the CEGSA hut at Naracoorte, and in establishing and maintaining the close relationship between CEGSA and the South Australian Museum as well as the University. The 'Spirit' may have come to be seen as a way of preserving his memory and, in so doing, been transformed into a more serious award.

In the mid 1970s to early 1980s each recipient of the 'Spirit' wrote special pieces for CEGSA News. Dot Peisley (1975), Gordon Peterson (1976), Linda Whaley (1977), Terry Reardon (1978) and Peter Horne (1981) all wrote half page articles in the newsletter about who or what they had regarded as demonstrating the spirit of caving in the previous quarter. It is clear from reading these articles that the award was held in high esteem. For example, the last Spirit of Caving article written by Gordon Peterson reads in part "It has been an honour for me to hold this position and I have tried to do justice to the trust that Dot Peisley (last year's 'Spirit') placed in me. I hope future 'Spirits' will surpass my endeavours in making this award something to be proud of." (Peterson, 1977).

Conclusion

The 'Spirit of Caving' is an award presented to enthusiastic, all-round, up-and-coming members of the club. Many past winners of the award remain active contributors to cave exploration or research, often both, thus demonstrating the value of enthusiasm - the sort of enthusiasm which can cause a person to drive back to Adelaide for a club social event straight from a 24 hour caving trip.

Recipients of the Spirit of Caving Award

(Compiled by Kevin Mott, with additions by Peter Ackroyd.)

1969	Wayne Goedecke	for arriving at the dinner direct from a 24 hour caving trip
1970	Gil (Butch) Alvaro	
1971	Harry Baker	
1972	Ian Lewis	to tow him through the Nullarbor Lakes
1973	Edwin Bailey	to help him haunt the Naracoorte Fossil Cave
1974	Dennis Burke	for efforts in Victoria Cave
1975	Dot Peisley	in praise of the co-equal role of the woman in caving
1976	Gordon Peterson	
1977	Linda Whaley	
1978	Terry Reardon	
1979	Martin Carnes	
1980	John Ellis	
1981	Peter Horne	
1982	John McCormack	
1983	Bill Parker	
1984	Dayle Gilliat	
1985	Chris Hales	
1986	Peter Kraehenbuehl	
1987	Lance Hoey	
1988	Gary White	
1989	Paul Harper	
1990	Eddie Rubessa	
1991	Sue McCormick	
1992	Ian Charlesworth	
1993	Suzanne Charlesworth	
1994	Ray Gibbons	
1995	Frank Hankinson	
1996	Dave Glowacki	
1997	Tom Szabo	
1998	Michael Caruana	
1999	Linda Deer	
2000	Paul Devine	

Acknowledgements

This article has 'grown like Topsy'. I contacted and consulted many people during its creation. Grant Gartrell, Elery Hamilton-Smith, Athol Jackson, Noel and Cynthia Mollett, Kevin Mott, Neville Pledge and Fred Sanders all dredged their memories for me over the past few months. Elery Hamilton-Smith gave me access to his set of CEGSA Newsletters and Annual Reports. George MacLucas allowed me to browse the CEGSA library and he personally reviewed the CEGSA committee and general meeting minutes (and found there was no mention of the 'Spirit' in them). George and June MacLucas helped me track down some early CEGSA members. They also gave me encouragement and a lot of cups of tea.

Reference

Peterson, Gordon (1977) Spirit of Caving, CEGSA Newsletter, Vol 22 No 4 (Nov 1977): 18.

Peter Ackroyd.

POSSIBLE TRAGEDY AVERTED

Gripping headlines indeed by the Border Watch newspaper. The South Eastern Times reported the incident as "Emergency as cave explorers go missing".

Fred and myself received were alerted and placed on standby at 7-30pm on Wednesday 25 July by the Mount Gambier SES as part of the local cave emergency activation plan. Two people were reported, by their partners, as overdue from a trip into L86. As part of the standard protocol, we were gathering equipment and maps and preparing to make our way to SES headquarters when we were advised the situation had been resolved.

The party had emerged from the cave as emergency services arrived. They had been disoriented and had difficulty in finding their way out of the cave.

Fortunately the party had the sense to advise someone of their location and estimated time of return. They did not advise the landowner of their intentions. This cave is well known to locals and this assumed right of entry compromises legitimate access by caving groups.

The local newspaper has not helped the situation by irresponsible reporting and overly dramatic headlines. Conditions in the cave can lead to a major incident if inexperienced cavers take the wrong passage. In this incident it was simply inexperience leading to the party not recognising the way out. The detailed location provided in the article means even blind Freddy could find the cave, making the situation even more difficult for the landowner. Perhaps the newspaper should be held liable if anyone injures themselves when visiting the cave as a result of the article.

The landowner has been given a substantial quote to install a gate on the cave. If suitable materials can be found the caving groups, with their gating experience, should be able to construct a suitable gate more cheaply. I am looking either a concrete pipe or limestone ashlar construction with a metal gate.

Kevin Mott.

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Wanted

Some years ago CEGSA owned some seismic gear which was used to locate cavities/anomalies below the surface. We have the need for this in the South East.

The gear is not currently with the quartermaster and possibly could be with a former QM (eg Stan Flavel, without going through old annual reports, I couldn't list them all).

Could members please ferret around and possibly locate this gear for me. It would be appreciated.

Kevin Mott.

TRAGEDY ON CARRA BEANGA

This article has been extracted from the Internet.(ed)

This article first appeared in the Good Weekend Magazine in the Sydney Morning Herald in Sydney and THE AGE in Melbourne on 20/10/01. Thanks to the publishers and author Matthew Moore for permission to reproduce the article here.

Final Descent

Death in the wilderness

Misadventure

Byline: Matthew Moore

On a crisp day in June last year, nine members of a university outdoors club set off on a weekend canyoning trip. Two would never return. Here, Matthew Moore unravels a tangled tale of the small errors and miscalculations that led to tragedy.

Background:

It took the seven survivors of last year's canyoning disaster three days to walk out of the wilderness, three days in which they discussed the tragedy and decided they would never talk publicly about it. In the 16 months since, they've stuck with their decision not to explain how the leaders of their trip perished in the night, on a rope, out of sight, their bodies later found lying in a shallow pool of water on a rock ledge by police rescuers. Earlier this year, the Coroner in the NSW town of Bathurst investigated and decided no inquest was needed, satisfied that Mark Charles's and Steve Rogers' deaths were an accident which would never be completely explained. Canyoning experts have remained mystified about the details of the accident, struggling to understand the news reports at the time that the two most experienced people on the trip had somehow got caught on the same rope where they'd apparently died of hypothermia. Although the group have declined to talk to the media or outsiders, they did talk to the police. In seven sworn statements, the survivors told a harrowing story of how their weekend adventure turned slowly into tragedy. They detailed a succession of mistakes and miscalculations, in themselves all quite minor, which when added together cost two lives and nearly took several more. These accounts have now been made available to Good Weekend by the Bathurst Coroner. They've allowed us to retrace the trip through the Kanangra wilderness in the southern Blue Mountains to try to piece together what happened. With professional guide Lucas Trihey (who has 20 years' canyoning experience) and fellow climber and NSW Fire Brigade rescue instructor Mick Holton, Good Weekend abseiled into the canyon to prepare this account. We went in winter, as the group had done, and at the same time of day. We completed our final abseil at night, as they had done, giving ourselves the best chance of understanding what happened a year earlier...

By the time they'd left Christina's Pizzeria in the northern Sydney suburb of Thornleigh, the nine canyoners were already running late. They'd stopped there for dinner on Friday night after driving 150 kilometres from Newcastle. And they still had a long haul before a very early start in the morning. All were students and ex-students of Newcastle University, in their twenties and early thirties, who'd signed up for a trip run by the university's mountaineering club. The advertisement for the trip in the club's newsletter, Watson, said: "10 to 12 June, contact Mark, grade medium. To celebrate the Queen's Birthday we thought we'd visit the delightful Kanangra Boyd National Park. Saturday and Sunday will be an overnight dry canyon with more abseils than you can poke a piton at. Monday will be a spot of caving in Tuglow for those still feeling OK ... Abseiling experience and decent fitness required."

Kanangra Boyd National Park is in the southern part of the Blue Mountains wilderness, well away from the more frequented bushland surrounding the bed-and-breakfast belt around Katoomba, to the north-east. The Kanangra terrain is steeper and more inaccessible than almost anywhere in NSW.

On the Monday before they set out, Mark Charles and his good friend and club president Steve Rogers, both 25, hosted a skills night so the group could bone up on their abseiling techniques. Both were passionate climbers classified by the club as having intermediate abseiling and canyoning levels which allowed them to lead the trip and borrow all the climbing equipment they figured they'd need.

They were a mixed group. Steve Ahern was rated an intermediate-level canyoner while the club secretary, Sarah Warner, was also reasonably experienced, with more than 20 canyoning trips under her belt. After bushwalking and canyoning for six years, Claire Doherty was a lot more experienced than the other four. Andrew Bish, at 32 the oldest member of the group, had done a few smaller canyons but never been in such rugged country before. Simon Baker, Dan Weekes and visiting American student Jim Ching-Jen Wang had little experience.

In the past decade, canyoning has become a boom sport in the Blue Mountains, with adventurers poring over topographic maps searching for isolated valleys that might be hiding another pristine sliver of wilderness. To get to that wilderness you need only basic climbing equipment, because you normally start at the top and go down. You do that by tying a strong nylon tape, often seatbelt webbing, around a tree, threading a long rope through it and throwing the ends over the cliff. When the group has abseiled down this doubled rope, the rope is pulled through the tape sling from the bottom and the sling is left behind - this is known as a retrievable abseil.

It was after midnight by the time the group's two cars pulled off the dirt road that runs across the Kanangra plateau and drove into the Boyd River camping area. It was close to freezing and the place was deserted. Rather than set up camp, they simply spread their sleeping-bags under the awning of a shed.

Saturday dawned fine. Mark Charles woke them early and began dividing equipment into nine piles, each with a helmet, whistle, two karabiners, a climbing harness and an abseiling device. There were three ropes, each more than 50 metres long. After breakfast, Sarah Warner and Andrew Bish drove the group a few kilometres back the way they'd come the night before, to the trip's starting point. Before they could set off, however, one of the cars had to be driven to the Kanangra Walls car park (about nine kilometres away), where they would exit on Sunday afternoon. None of the group had done the canyon before and none knew how long it would take, although their guidebook warned: "An early start is needed to get down the steep bit before camping."

Nine is a big group to take canyoning, and with the shortest day of the year less than a fortnight away, Steve Ahern was starting to worry that 10.30 was too late to start. Still, the walking was easy on a good trail through open heathland and gnarled snowgums, reminders that temperatures routinely drop to zero and below. The easy walking stopped when the track gave out after less than an hour and Charles needed his map and compass to guide them through thick scrub on the ridge that leads north-east to Carra Beanga Brook. For the next three or four hours, they struggled towards the headwaters of the creek, stumbling over loose rocks that shifted underfoot. It was flatter going but not much faster in the creek itself, with big ferns and fallen trees making progress slow.

It was after two - perhaps closer to four - when the moist undergrowth finally gave way to a dry, rocky cliff top and the huge Kanangra wilderness burst into view. They were perched at the top of the canyon, and gazed east across 60 kilometres of green-treed valleys capped with sandstone cliffs. Looking down, the creek disappeared over a sheer drop into a moist

confusion of moss and fern. This is the point where the canyon starts: once that first abseil is done, it's very tough to turn back.

Given the hour and the group's slow progress, Sarah Warner was apprehensive. "Right from the start, Mark had made us all aware that we should try to get down the falls before night so that we could camp at the bottom rather than on the falls," she told police later. She raised her concerns with Claire Doherty. And then she asked Rogers if he'd done another Kanangra canyon called Danae, which drops a similar distance. "I assumed he knew how long it would take to complete the abseiling down the falls," she said.

Rogers didn't. Their guidebook said they had "about 10 abseils" to get to the bottom. In fact, there are 16 - they had no chance of reaching the bottom before dark. But they had to keep moving to have a chance of sticking to their ambitious schedule, which required them to get back to their cars by Sunday night in order to use their caving permits on Monday.

Looking down into Carra Beanga Canyon, they could see the waterfall was not one long, sheer drop but a series of steps - although the tree canopy kept hidden any hint of what these steps might look like. Their first abseil took them out of the sun and into the moist undergrowth. It was colder there and some stopped to put on warmer clothes. But not Mark Charles. He was busy establishing a routine, anxious to keep the group moving.

Charles was the first one down each abseil. Once at the bottom, he'd find a tree that would serve as an anchor point for the next abseil and tie a length of climbing tape around it. The first few descents were straightforward and the group made steady progress. But as the light began to fade around 5 pm, so did the enthusiasm. Beneath the trees, they discovered some sloping ledges where they might have stopped but Charles and Rogers were pushing on, looking for somewhere big enough and flat enough to make camp.

On his first overnight abseiling trip, Baker was starting to worry: "The further we descended down the falls, the ledges became smaller and smaller. I was becoming concerned with the fact that it was getting late and it seemed like there was nowhere to stop."

As the last of the light went, Doherty told Warner they should stop. They were hungry, it was getting colder and several members of the group were getting dangerously tired. The short walks between abseils were getting steeper and some struggled to keep their footing on the slippery gravel where a fall could be fatal. Although it was cold and dark, a moon was rising and Charles encouraged them to push on. Those with head-torches turned them on before they began their last major descent for the night.

Andrew Bish was increasingly distressed in terrain he called "rugged and dangerous ... We abseiled over two pitches in the dark and found ourselves on two very narrow, cold and wet ledges. By this stage I was very cold, tired, hungry and wet. I had no idea where I was."

Following in their footsteps, we land on the same narrow ledge, a sliver of cliff and earth perched above a 50-metre drop. It's about five metres long and slopes down to the left towards the waterfall, about six metres away. It's more than a metre wide in parts but it feels less because it also slopes downhill. There's only one tree, perhaps 15 centimetres wide at the base, where wood-boring insects have made their home. Still, it's the most secure thing around and we tie ourselves and our rucksacks to it to avoid slipping off. With a light breeze blowing waterfall spray over us, we put on waterproof pants and jackets.

A year earlier, Mark Charles stood here and quickly tied one end of a rope to that little tree and threw the rest of it out into the dark. With a little more time, and a little more light, he might have managed to climb around to a much bigger tree just 20 metres to his right, away from the waterfall. There, he would have found a bunch of climbing tapes tied around its trunk, evidence of the route taken by most previous canyioners. But he was rushing to get his

group somewhere safe, too busy to put on his waterproof clothing before he threaded the rope through his abseiling device and headed off.

The first three metres take you to another ledge about the same size as the one above, but wetter. The edge of this ledge drops steeply, about 70 degrees, for five metres before it becomes sharply vertical. Carra Beanga is known as a dry canyon, where wetsuits are not required, but the route Charles selected becomes wetter soon after the vertical section starts (see diagram at left). With the wind blowing spray onto him, Charles was wet by the time he got to the shallow pool more than 50 metres down. "Off rope," he called when he reached the flat ground. His head-torch showed his search for a campsite was over. Stretching around him was a huge ledge some 40 metres long and 20 metres deep, covered in boulders but with plenty of room to light a fire and space for a group twice their size to spend the night in relative luxury. He dropped his rucksack there.

Above, and out of his sight, the rest of the party arrived on the ledges, half of them squeezed onto the top where it was drier, the rest forced to find space on the lower ledge. On the top ledge, Rogers and Warner tied two ropes together to form a retrievable abseil, threaded them through the same tape on the little tree that anchored Charles's single rope and threw them over the cliff. They couldn't see Charles, but they heard him shout for the next abseiler to follow. By then, close to 7 pm, some of the group were no longer up to it.

On the lower ledge, Claire Doherty could see things were getting bad. "I noticed Jim Wang was lying in the foetal position ... [he] was shivering like crazy. I started to worry he may be in the early stages of hypothermia."

Cold, hungry and wet, with some close to exhausted, no-one was keen to follow Charles and abseil into the unknown. "I got the impression that Pebie [Steven Rogers' nickname] was reluctant to go first because he asked around for volunteers," said Doherty. But no-one did, so Rogers headed off.

As he disappeared over the ledge, Doherty remembers him issuing one final instruction: "Let down the single rope [that Charles had used] when I get down to the bottom." Rogers had no idea that a safe camping spot lay at the end of this abseil and he wanted the single rope to set up the next abseil. It was to prove a critical error. Rogers fed the rope through his abseil device and moved easily down the steep five metres to the lower ledge, where the cliff becomes vertical. The next bit is wet and slippery but still straightforward. Then there's a sharp indent in the rock face. Here, as your feet lose contact with the rock face, your rucksack pulls you suddenly backwards, dragging your feet up to where your head should be if you're not wearing a chest sling. Rogers wasn't.

From 10 metres below, Mark Charles would have watched Rogers reach a wet rock ledge that marks the end of the long vertical section. It's slippery but quite flat. When we abseil down, it's where we first stop. From there, the final bit of the descent is still steep but it's a slope you can scramble down. Above Rogers, Andrew Bish felt the double rope and found it unweighted. "It's slack, it feels like he's off," he reported, suggesting Rogers was standing on the ledge. Suddenly, the rope went tight again.

Almost certainly this was the moment when Rogers got hurt. The autopsy report revealed he'd suffered a serious wound in the back of his head, just below the helmet, some time before he died. It's possible this happened on the way down to the ledge, if he'd slipped and somehow swung into the cliff face. But this doesn't explain why Bish felt the rope go suddenly slack. More likely is that as Rogers stood on that ledge, a falling rock, unseen in the dark, hit him in the back of the head. He was probably struck as he was looking down towards Charles, attempting to clear the bunched-up ends of the double rope that were found with him on his ledge when morning came. After abseiling down the same pitch, and standing on the same ledge, one of Good Weekend's guides, Mick Holton, says he's "almost certain"

Rogers was hit by a falling rock, a conclusion he reached after accidentally dislodging a large rock himself.

They knew none of this on the ledges above, waiting for Charles to make the call to abseil. When the rope went suddenly tight, it was impossible for others to abseil down it. They grew confused by the shouts from below and the rope that stayed taut. They became uneasy.

"We were calling out, asking if we could abseil or not. I could hear a voice, which was definitely Mark's, but I couldn't understand the sentence he was saying," Steve Ahern said.

For half an hour they shouted, their words muddled into incomprehension by the waterfall and reverberations from the surrounding cliffs.

"Every time we called out, Mark responded, but I could not make out what was being said. I thought Mark sounded troubled," said Ahern.

Rogers had been on the double rope perhaps half an hour when his best chance of rescue disappeared. Confused by the shouting and anxious to help in some way, the group untied the single unweighted rope Charles had used for his descent. They threw it over as Steve Rogers had instructed, but not before pondering the wisdom of doing so.

"I think Sarah may have indicated that she thought it was a bad idea in case something happened and the rest of us needed a rope to get down," Dan Weekes said.

She was right. But at the time, still early in the evening, they were expecting to follow on the double rope Rogers was using. They assumed the shouts from below were part of the preparations for another abseil. With the spare rope gone, they got increasingly edgy. There was no chance to abseil down to investigate, and no-one attempted another technique known as prussiking to descend the double rope far enough to get a clear view of what was happening 30 metres below.

Steve Ahern stood waiting for clearance to use the double rope, shouting slowly and clearly: "Can ... we ... abseil?" No, was the only response they could distinguish. So they waited. Hours passed. About 10.30 pm, Ahern and Warner tried to pull up enough slack to abseil down, but the rope was too tight. On their sloping ledges, and with nowhere for them all to tie onto, organising a rescue was hardly an option. Stuck there, wet and cold, some were struggling to look after themselves. And some were angry. They put their efforts into staying warm.

"We discussed the fact that perhaps Pebie and Mark had decided to sit the night out and wait for daylight," said Doherty. "We decided that was the only thing we could do ... I thought the double rope was now tight because they had locked it off or something."

Their ledges were too small to stretch out and they tried not to sleep for fear of rolling off. But, cold and exhausted, they dozed though the night before dawn broke. "We were expecting Mark or Steve to call out, but there was nothing. By 8 am we got really worried," said Simon Baker.

Bish leaned out from his ledge, hoping for a glimpse of either of the group's two leaders. He saw nothing. He tried again, this time aided by a prussik sling (loops of thin ropes) which he attached to the double rope. This allowed him to lean out far enough to see the first hint of trouble: "I could see a red backpack lying on the ground and half of the single rope lying between the pack, with some in the water."

Leaving an uncoiled rope lying in the water was right out of character for experienced climbers like Charles and Rogers. Also using prussik slings, that allow climbers to ascend and descend climbing ropes, Ahern then came down from the top ledge. He managed to

climb down past the overhang where the double rope was pulled tight against the rock. Leaning out, he saw the two men about 30 metres below, both upside down and attached to the rope. Rogers was still wearing his rucksack. Ahern headed back up to the ledge and turned to Warner.

"I could see from his face that something was wrong," she said. "He was quiet for a while and he said, 'They are tangled together.'"

No-one can know for sure what happened down below. But it's certain that Charles died attempting to rescue his mate. He climbed up to the ledge, probably straight after Rogers was injured, perhaps aided by the single rope before it was thrown down by the group above. He did so quickly, not bothering to get more clothing from his rucksack. When he got there, he stood on the ledge. He then secured himself by looping a prussik sling, connected to his harness, around the double rope just above the point it was threaded through Rogers' abseil device. Wet and freezing, Charles died attempting a courageous rescue. He was unable to get Rogers down those last 10 metres. Cold water can quickly make hands as clumsy as clubs. It's possible Charles was unable even to get himself down, that he became trapped on the rope once his fingers could no longer undo his sling. And it's also possible he simply refused to leave his friend alone in such a bleak spot.

The autopsy report says Charles's death was due to hypothermia, but doesn't pinpoint the time more precisely than between 6.30 pm and when he was found in the morning. Two of the party believe they heard him call out in the early hours of the morning although several experts believe it unlikely he could have survived until then.

The report on Rogers says his cause of death was "not clear" at the time of the autopsy. While hypothermia was a cause, it says "the possibility of perimortem head injury and/ or mechanical asphyxiation are difficult to exclude".

Steve Ahern was in shock when he told Warner what he'd seen. But as the strongest climber in the group, he took control. Using his two prussik slings, he climbed slowly back down the rope, worked his way past the overhang and down to the ledge. He found his friends lying backwards, suspended less than a metre above the ledge they'd been standing on. Charles was on top of Rogers, whose helmet was touching the ledge. He called out their names as he slapped them, hoping for a sign of life, hoping to revive them, desperate to get them to safety so close below.

Ahern then assumed leadership of the group. Six friends were still trapped above him, it was early Sunday morning and no-one would begin to miss them until late Monday night. He cut the prussik cords attaching Charles to the double rope, undid Rogers' abseiling device and both bodies slumped onto the ledge.

He tried to move them but they were too heavy and he used his whistle to call Andrew Bish to abseil down and help him. Together they tried to move the bodies out of the way so the others would not have to see them, but they stopped when they realised they were too heavy and they might easily fall themselves. One by one, the others came down, each of them passing by their dead friends, each of them distressed at what they saw.

It was close to lunchtime when they began their long trek out. They didn't know it then but they still had about nine abseils to do, some of them in tricky spots, over ledges loaded with loose rocks or in places too cramped for more than a couple of people to wait.

By dusk on Sunday, they were still on Carra Beanga Brook. They didn't make the junction with Kanangra Creek until Monday and didn't begin the long, 650-metre climb out until Tuesday, by which time they'd been reported overdue and the police and SES were on their way.

When police recovered the bodies on Wednesday morning, they were no longer on the ledge. They had somehow slipped off the ledge and fallen the last 10 metres into the shallow pool at the bottom.

The silence of the group still mystifies the canyoning community. Rick Jamieson, author of *Canyons Near Sydney*, the canyoning guidebook the party used, has updated the notes on Carra Beanga in the new edition to better warn of the risks he believed might have contributed to the tragedy. He'd been unable, he said, to find out the facts.

Until recently, the Newcastle University Mountaineering Club (NUMC) Web site made no mention of the club's greatest tragedy, although it had a link to another site describing a near disaster on the same spot in the same canyon. Now, the NUMC site includes this acknowledgment of that terrible weekend, written by the vice-president, Steven Ahern: "Steve and Mark represented everything the club stands for. They loved life and they lived it to the fullest. They took what they had been given and did great things with it, often to the enjoyment of those around them. I know that they would love nothing more than to see the NUMC have another year enriched with the pleasures that the outdoors, our own company, and our adventures and sports provide for us."

A tragedy of errors

After completing the canyon trip, Good Weekend asked professional guide Lucas Trihey for his assessment of what might have happened. He said: "The major thing that struck me was how cold it was and consequently how quickly hypothermia would have set in for those guys who were wearing inadequate clothing and no wet-weather gear. "...It's surprising how quickly the hand muscles lose their strength when they get cold and numb. If Mark was trying to do something complicated like undo knots ... then even mild hypothermia would have made it impossible very quickly. "The real issue is that there seem to have been a series of minor errors which, taken together, meant that the group was in a poor position to handle an incident such as Steve's accident while on the rope." In Trihey's view, the group started relatively late for such a long, remote canyon, and kept going after dark while underdressed for such cold and wet conditions. "For such a large group," he says, "there seemed to be too few experienced people capable of investigating the cause of the delay after Mark and Steve disappeared." Given that the group was tired and cold, darkness had fallen, and they were getting confused messages from the canyoners below, it isn't hard to see why they decided to stay put and wait until morning broke. So what are the lessons of the tragedy, according to Trihey? "There's a fine line with this sort of trip between everything going well and having a major epic. Sometimes a seemingly minor incident can tip the balance." To minimise the chances of problems on long, remote canyons, Trihey says these guidelines may help:

- A maximum group size of six for remote canyons means quicker (and safer) trips but still allows a healthy safety margin if someone is hurt.
- Allow plenty of time to get to the destination or to at least reach a safe place to spend the night.
- Thermal, fleece and quality waterproof clothing are essential for all trips.
- At least one member of the group should have done the trip before. A person with good technical skills and experience should be last down and should be equipped with gear (preferably including a spare rope) for rescue use.

(It just goes to show how a few insignificant errors can lead to tragedy. Please do not take all safety procedures lightly. They are there for a reason. **Ed.**)



CEGSA XMAS BBQ & POOL PARTY



WHERE: Graham Pilkingtons House
41 Lindsay Ave, Valley View

WHEN: Sunday December 16th, 11am - Late

BYO: Everything except BBQ
Inc. bathers (there is a pool)



CEGSA AGM AND DINNER

WHEN: Saturday February 9th 2002

WHERE: Maid And Magpie Hotel
Corner Magill & Payneham Roads

TIME: Dinner 6.30 Meeting 8.30

COST: Meals Start at \$15pp (NO PIZZA'S)

BOOKINGS: Marie Choi by February 1st 2002
Call 8322 0895 or email me at
battymariec@picknowl.com.au



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Type of Event	Description	Contact
28/11/01	General Meeting	Old Queens Arms Hotel, 88 Wright St. Adel.	Paul Harper
01/12/01	Working Bee	Library and records	George MacLucas
12/12/01	Committee Meeting	Old Queens Arms Hotel, 88 Wright St. Adel.	Paul Harper
16/12/01	Xmas BBQ	41 Lindsay Ave. Valley View	See Advertisement
28/12/01 -15/1/02	Caving	Tassie, Mole Creek - Ida Bay - Juneeflorentine (see below)	Marie Choi
09/01/02	Committee Meeting	Old Queens Arms Hotel, 88 Wright St. Adel.	Paul Harper
23/01/02	General Meeting	Royal Society Room	Paul Harper
23/01/02	ANNUAL REPORT	Submissions Due	Athol Jackson
26/01/02	Working Bee	Library and Records	George MacLucas
09/02/02	AGM & Dinner	Maid & Magpie Hotel	See Advertisement
13/02/02	Committee Meeting	Old Queens Arms Hotel, 88 Wright St. Adel.	Paul Harper
13/02/02	CEGSA NEWS	Submissions due	Athol Jackson
27/02/02	General Meeting	Royal Society Room.	Paul Harper
02/03/02	Working Bee	Library and Records	George MacLucas
	Caving	Ongoing Vic Fossil Survey contact	Garry Woodcock
	Caving	Regular trips to 5A25 contact	Grant Gartrell

Easter 2002 Nullarbor contact Graham Pilkington for details

Easter 2002 Southern Tasmania contact Tim Payne for details

Don't forget to register your trip with the Trip Liaison Officer so that the trip becomes official and is covered by insurance. If it is not registered then it is not covered and you may be liable. You must also be an accredited trip leader with the appropriate skill endorsement to take a party underground.

Also, please make sure that a report of the trip is submitted.

Please Note: There are no trips advertised for the near future due to the lack of insurance cover. Please keep your eye on the E-news for information about trips after we get insurance confirmation.