

CEGSA NEWS



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

Volume 66 Number 4

Issue 264

November 2021

KANGAROO ISLAND SPECIAL



ISSN 2209-1785

CAVE EXPLORATION GROUP (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) Inc.

PO Box 144, Rundle Mall, South Australia, 5000. <http://www.cegsa.org.au> Meetings held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except December, at 7.30 PM usually in the Royal Society meeting room, South Australian Museum.

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Safety Officer	Matt Smith	As above
Science Officer	Ian Lewis	As above
Training	Andrew Stempel	As above
Website Trip Log	All Trip Coordinators	See list p90

Area Coordinators

Eyre Peninsula, Murray Mallee, Torrens, NE of SA, Pitjandjara lands, NW of SA	Records Officer	As above
Gawler Ranges	Steve Milner	As above
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Representatives

ASF	Ian Lewis	As above
	Pam Payne	
SA Speleological Council	Ian Lewis	As above
	Pam Payne	
CDAA Liaison	Ian Lewis	As above
SA Scout Liaison	Matt Smith	As above

Cover Photograph: The amazing rejuvenation after the disastrous bushfires on Kangaroo Island.
Photo: Grant Gartrell.

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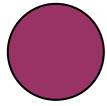
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QUARTERMASTERS NOTE.

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 67 Number 1 (Issue 265) must reach the Editor by Wednesday **10th FEBRUARY 2022**. Material not meeting this deadline may be retained for possible use in a following issue. The preferred method is via E-MAIL to atholjax@adam.com.au as an **attachment** or on a memory stick or CD, in Word *.doc(x) or *.rtf files. Of course other forms of communication will still be gratefully accepted. Photographs are preferred to be in colour as separate files and note in the article where to be inserted. (***.jpg format** under 500Kb unless for the cover). 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

What a messy speleo-year 2021 has become. Very disappointing that we have had to postpone the ASF Ceduna-Nullarbor conference yet again for another year. However, we all agreed that rather than a half-conference (probably confined to SA Cavers due to Covid restrictions!), it was far better to retain the option of all Australian speleos to enjoy the Nullarbor together a year further down the track when hopefully we have free cross-border access again. Of course, we may be able to travel all over the planet by then (except for WA of course, *still*, so they will have to sneak over and do some real Nullarbor caving on our side of the dotted line). By the way – some interesting history about that border line. In 1494, the Pope in Rome was called upon to stop the maritime wars between Spain and Portugal as they spread out all over the globe acquiring territories everywhere, centuries before the British and the French got going. The Pope's solution was to draw a longitude line around the globe mostly through the oceans (before Australia was known) and designate all land west as Portuguese, all land east as Spanish. That political line has long since disappeared as empires rose and fell, but there is one relic of it left – believe it or not, it is the longitude of the SA-WA border. If you extrapolate this line north to Asia, you can see what were once Portuguese Timor, Macao, Goa and Madagascar to the west, and the formerly Spanish Philippines to the east. Somehow the Australian colonies divided up the Nullarbor the same way 200 years later. SA has the Spanish side! A most interesting introduction with which to open the 2023 conference when it happens, don't you think!!

Our maps of the Nullarbor Caves on the SA side are largely derived from the simple sketches done by Captain Maitland Thomson from his first systematic cave expeditions out there in the 1920's-1940's. He was an inaugural member of CEGSA when they had the first meeting at the SA Museum in 1955, but stormed out when Elery, Noel and Cynthia Mollett, Bob Sexton and others there said that women were to be welcomed as members too, of course. This was too much for the Captain who had commanded all-male crews from his days of running sail-rigged ships around Cape Horne at the turn of the 1900's. In the mid-70's, twenty years later after his walk-out, I went and knocked on his front door and said 'G'day, I'm from CEGSA'. He received me very coldly as he was *still* pissed off with CEGSA from the 1955 decision but warmed up quickly when I showed him the cave diving photos we took from first two great CEGSA-ASF cave diving expeditions which I ran in 1972 and 1974.

He finally said that he would have done that diving himself in the 1930's if SCUBA was available then, being a strong explorer-type himself. Subsequently he gave me all his maps from his expeditions for CEGSA to enjoy and keep and allowed Kevin Mott to copy all his black-and-white photos and early hand-tinted colored 3-inch glass slides! So we have a brilliant historical record of all his early work, none of it lost, which I plan to present at our conference in a couple of talks and on display panels. The conference has obtained a National Parks Permit to visit all these caves and we finally have the chance to examine, assess and re-map them using modern methods and detail approximately 80 years after they were first properly investigated. Fantastic!

In the meantime, I have been your Prez for about the last four years with a bit of a break in the middle. Now I live in Mount Gambier and only get to a couple of CEGSA meetings each year – the last one where Jessie gave her fabbo fossil talk was a great event and I enjoyed meeting up face-to-face with you all again! However, as it is 3 months to our AGM, (which I will attend and even promise to Chair it!) it's time for CEGSA to consider if it you feel adequately represented by a mostly-absent President who shuns chairing duties or if there is a better way for CEGSA to be led rather than as a figurehead/public relations role. Have a ponder about this while I also have a ponder about whether to stand again or not - I am open to suggestion, encouragement or discouragement or whatever you variously think!

Have a great Xmas break and let's see if caving prospects notably improve in 2022!

Cheers to all from Ian

TRIP REPORTS

Trip Report for KI August 2021

We had an extended trip in August as Heather, Simon and I were supposed to be skiing for the week that Victoria went into (another) lockdown so we chose to use that time on KI instead with Pam joining us for the weekend and Nick coming out with us most days to keep us out of trouble.

We effectively cleared all the unknown spots in the main Kelly Hill area, a few left in the south of Flinders Chase and all of the West Bay Hollow area, 99 points in total about 1/3 new features, 1/3 corrected or modified existing points and 1/3 confirmed nothing. It was a particularly productive trip in part because of the extra time but also because we had put a lot more effort into preplanning with new and improved survey sheets, maps by Joel, new role and survey protocol laminated sheets with a checklist of equipment each person needs and a description of all survey responsibilities including end of the day jobs back at the caravan park to avoid steps being overlooked, quadrant maps with a list of all points needing to be checked and their descriptions for route planning (helpful for keeping track of all the nothings), Kevin's spreadsheet for directly entering survey data at the end of the day, route preparation (rogaine style) before heading into the field each day and using the collector app to estimate achievable route distances with a plan for each day of the week on the fridge matched to the weather forecast and time allocated at the end of each day to enter all survey data then sort and upload photos with data sheets by cave onto the google drive.

Kelly Hill

Since we were mopping up leftover points unchecked on previous trips, mostly from lidar, we were often going to depressions of varying sizes with a sprinkling of features with actual entrances, some large enough to enter but probably nothing that would be a priority for future trips. Nick has a nice dirt hole (Ranger Cave) at the bottom of a large doline that should excite Grant, which started out as the size of my hand and has been expanded to 1 ranger wide and looks prime for digging. There were a few close calls with some danger noodles but at least one of those resulted in finding a new cave that wasn't on the list although his buddy interrupted the logging of the cave. There is a lot more vegetation, particularly compared to the October 2020 trip, we took some photos at caves previously tagged that were almost completely unrecognisable from when they were first checked off. The *acacia paradoxa* is now about knee height in some areas, essentially the exact height to get you in the gap between Gaiters and shorts for some added excitement.

Flinders Chase

We spent a morning in the south of Flinders Chase crossing off some points, adding a new feature of Nick's and updating the coordinates of Admirals Arch (out by 1km in the ocean).

West Bay Hollow

After finishing off Kelly Hill, Nick was good enough to take us out the West Bay road (currently closed) for the very long trudge out to West Bay Hollow to check out the cluster of points out there. While there were a few nothings we eventually found the 2 entrances of West Bay Hollow cave although at different locations and we were pretty excited to finally be able to get into a reasonable sized cave after a week of bush bashing. Unfortunately, West Bay hollow is currently flooded after the first big chamber of the West entrance which has some decoration and lots of mud and soft dirt. There are a few smaller entrances nearby in large dolines choked with native tobacco and to the west was our most significant new cave of the trip KXDG24 which we have tentatively been calling Black Lung due to its significant airflow and the surrounding tobacco. It has 2 entrances into a large chamber 10m x 10m dropping down about 8m to a small hole (again approximately 1 ranger wide) in a dirt floor with significant airflow and looks to continue but would probably want some digging and some work to stabilise.

K195

With all the local unchecked points ticked off we took another look in K195 located on the March trip focusing on other parts of the cave we didn't explore in March. The cave has lots of frogs and still contains a resident possum. Interestingly, compared to March, the pool that was full at the start of the big room after the squeeze (maybe 20cm deep) is now completely dry although there are a lot of drips coming off formations, more than we noticed previously.

I know there was some interest in the points still remaining in the wilderness area south of Kelly Hill at the CEGSA meeting which got me rummaging around and doing some calculations on the data

from all our trips to give an indication about what it would take to get to those points. I looked up all our recorded tracks for each trip to work out our average distances covered and pace for each trip, obviously as more time goes on the bush becomes harder to get through but as you can see we only do about 1.5-1.8 km/hr and the maximum distance we have done is about 10km. This doesn't sound like much but if you haven't had the pleasure of trudging through the area for hours, particularly when hot, people start physically or mentally checking out or we need to bail out to avoid being shot or leave time for data entry. So, wilderness area points, as a rough estimate from the track on the western Grassdale side (not sure if its currently accessible plus might have a swamp in the way currently) it would be 17.7km to collect all points and return, from the track on the east side of the park (not sure about accessibility) 21.8km return or from the wilderness walking track from the car park it would be about 22.2km return. So given our going pace for the trips this would take about 10-12hrs or be an overnight hike. So if a group is willing I would suggest each of those points out there be double or triple checked for their value (most are described as depressions or potential drainage points which we have not had great success with) before anyone commits to what I don't think will be a super fun time.

Some fun Stats:

October 2020:

Ave km/day: 8.4km

Ave pace: 1.8km/hr

March 2021:

Ave km/day: 6.3km

Ave pace: 1.5km/hr

May 2021:

Ave km/Day: 8.9km

Ave pace: 1.5km/hr

August 2021:

Ave km/Day: 9.8km

Ave pace: 1.8km/hr

A very productive week, even if we weren't out skiing like we planned. Thanks to Heather, Simon, Nick and Pam for their efforts on this trip!!

Minky Cockshell



Braving the swamp area.



Clearing another quadrant.



The crew.



Logging a new cave ...under the shrubbery.

All photos by Minky Cockshell.



A hard days work.



Heather in the jungle of native tobacco in the West Bay Hollow area.



Minky route planning.

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Kangaroo Island September 2021 Trip Report

Dates of trip: 17-19 September, 2021

In September 2021 a small group of dedicated cavers headed across to Kangaroo Island, to continue the work in the Kelly Hill project - discovering, rediscovering, documenting and surveying caves in the area revealed following the bushfires in early 2020.

The plan for this weekend was relatively simple - complete the survey of 5K-195 Phoenix Cave, and tag caves in the surrounding area. While neither of these tasks were completed, it was for a great reason!

We started on Friday with the plan of visiting 5K-195, continuing and hopefully completing its survey. While the last visit to the cave in March 2021 left some part of the cave unexplored, we assumed at the time we were close to the end, and that there was probably less than 100m of survey left to go.

While the survey team started to pick up where the previous work finished, more eager members of the group started to push some of the unexplored passages of the cave. By the time we progressed the survey to where we thought the "end" of the cave was likely to be, these explorers were reporting that there were numerous passages found, as well as large chambers with quite impressive decoration!

The team were also reporting that the cave appeared to have little in the way of walls! It does of course have them, but one distinguishing feature of the cave are low, but long flatteners - hard to survey even with a DistoX. The floor of these flatteners is typically a damp claylike soil with the ceilings being the usual soft Kelly Hill limestone.

The flatteners head off in numerous directions, with the cave mostly heading in the north easterly direction from the entrance. They ultimately converged on a large straw filled chamber, which at the time we named the "Birthday Chamber". After a rousing rendition of *Happy Birthday* for Minky, the survey team decided to head back and resume the survey, with this chamber being the target.

Later that afternoon, as we journeyed back to the cars, we tagged a couple of features in the area including another new cave (5K-135 - a relatively small cave with two chambers big enough to stand in but no obvious leads) and 5K-34 New Years Day cave.

On Saturday morning, filled with enthusiasm we headed back to 5K-195 to continue the survey to the Birthday Chamber. Whilst doing so, our intrepid explorers soon reported that they'd found another straw filled chamber. At this point it felt like the cave was almost never ending, with countless secrets to be revealed. Both chambers felt like they were very close together though, but we couldn't identify any common features for reference. The decoration was too dense and fragile for the team to move through it. We figured the survey data would help reveal the relationship between these two chambers, so we continued our work.

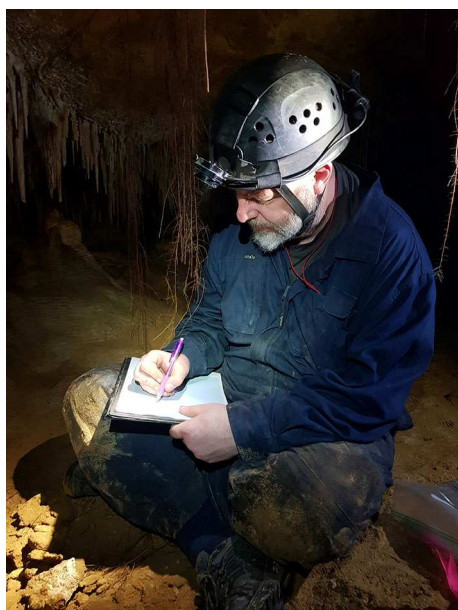
That afternoon we surveyed some interesting features, including a shallow dry lake type formation approximately 7m across, with two horn shaped stalagmites on the "shore". This was promptly nicknamed *Devils Lake*. Numerous unexplored passages were noted as we surveyed.

The final day of the trip, we planned to complete the survey of the second pretty chamber, noting at the time that the survey legs were pretty long, and seemed to be going around the previously surveyed chamber. Eventually, as we peered through the straws, we noticed one of the previous day's survey markers in the distance. It was revealed that it was actually all one chamber, however the "Birthday Chamber" part discovered earlier, was a self-contained area surrounded by a "wall" of hard to negotiate straws.

By the end of the trip, we were able to add over 250m to the survey, bringing the current surveyed length of the cave to 357m. We believe there is easily 200m+ of explored, but undocumented passage remaining to be surveyed, and several other leads to be explored. We will be heading back to this cave, to continue the exploration and survey, as well as undertake some important track marking.

September 2021 Survey & Exploration team: Matt Smith (CEGSA/Scout Caving Group), Minky Cockshell (CEGSA/Scout Caving Group), Pam Payne (CEGSA), Adam Simpson (Scout Caving Group), Neville Skinner (CEGSA), Nick Heath (National Parks)

Matt Smith.



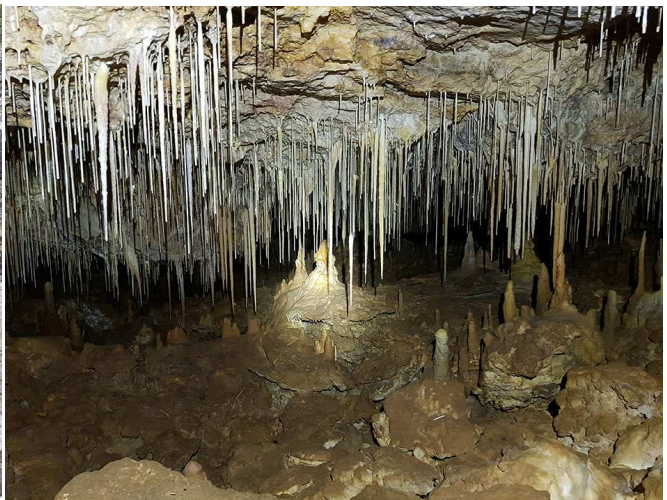
Matt starting the survey of K195.



The Birthday chamber.



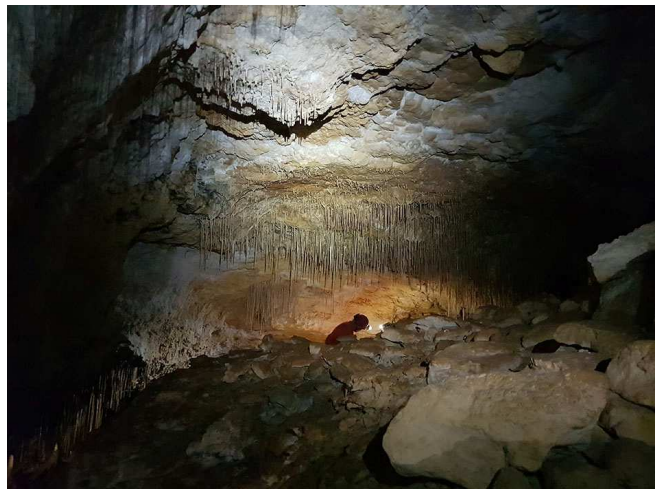
Matt tagging .



Birthday chamber K195.



The outer birthday chamber.



Heading into unsurveyed territory.



Surveying progress.



Possum in the mud K195.

All photos by Minky Cockshell.

Trip Report for KI October 2021

We had a larger group of 11 cavers for the last planned KI trip of 2021 with CEGSA, FUSSI and the Scout caving group all represented.

We tagged over 70 features and completely cleared quadrants C2, B2, B3, A5 and made significant headway in A4 and A2 and made a start on A3 (the most "cave dense" area around the walking track and tourist cave area). An impressive feat given a day of rain plus snakes, bees, spiders, and the ever-growing *acacia paradoxa*. For those who have asked, the tags we have used are cold rolled galvanized sheet steel 0.92mm thick, 28mm diameter and hand punched (which took a lot more effort than I expected) and attached with some heavy duty Liquid Nails. Five new features were also recorded over the weekend, demonstrating there will always be more stuff out there! The vertical team were able to get into five of the newly discovered vertical entrance caves with some preliminary surveying done. Saturday night included a screening for 16 legs for those interested who were staying at the caravan park. On Sunday we took Ken's pingers into K195, now named Phoenix Cave, to set up in the birthday chamber and with a radio relay from the surface through the cave the surface team was able to locate the above-ground location and mark it, a very interesting exercise! Track marking to the birthday chamber was also done in the short amount of time we had.

We still have A1, B1, South of A2, middle of A4 (all with 10-15 features to tag) and A3 (approx. 65 features) areas left to tag so with the ongoing vegetation regrowth, getting this tagging completed remains a project priority.

A big thank you for all the effort of those who attended the October trip. Thank you especially to Pam for helping to coordinate tagging teams and the never-ending data entry at the end of each day, Kevin and Joel for the back of house stuff with the database, maps and app, and Matt Smith for creating a working map for K195 to use.

So that is a wrap for 2021 on KI, after 5 trips this year and the preliminary trip in October 2020 we have documented over 120 new features which have now all been allocated official "K" numbers, tagged over 70 of these, and have over 350m of survey completed in K195 (Phoenix Cave) which was discovered in March with many more promising leads left to go and a significant grant that Clare has been heading up to be submitted to continue the project. So it is a great time to take stock of what we have achieved for the year and reassess the future of the project and our priorities. We already have some ideas for improving the running of these trips, as coordinating cavers from across multiple groups, multiple locations in the caravan park and often working to different time lines is difficult. Hopefully we can implement some of these ideas in the future and keep focused on the goals of the project.

Thank you to everyone who has dedicated this project over the year!

Minky Cockshell



On tagging duty.



Neville on tagging duty.



Ken on tagging duty.



Preparing the pinger in the Birthday Chamber K195



Ken setting up the pinger.

All photos by Minky Cockshell.

5K-195 Phoenix Cave

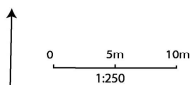
Kangaroo Island, South Australia

Surveyed by: Matt Smith, Minky Cockshell, Pam Payne, Heather Siebert

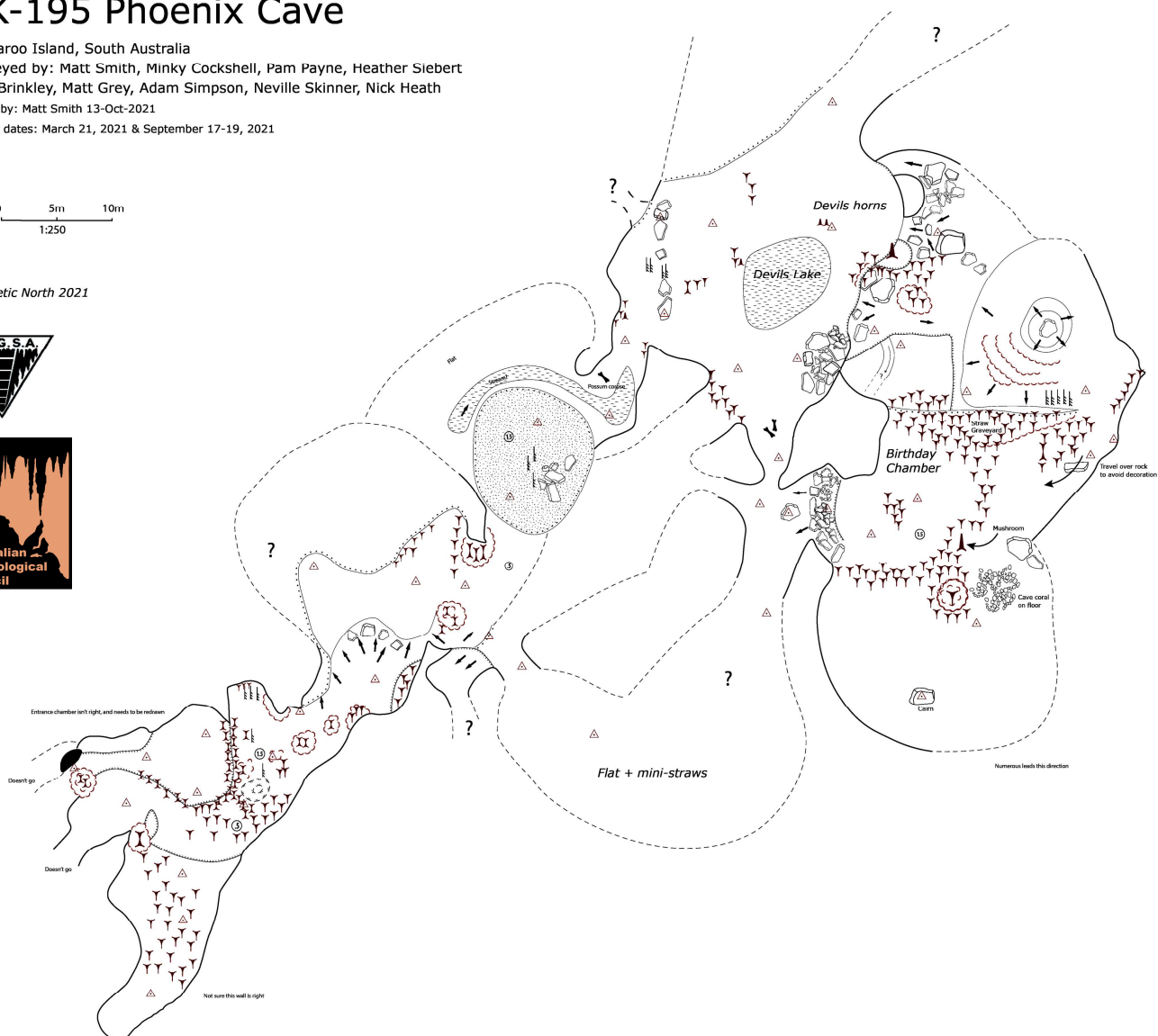
Matt Brinkley, Matt Grey, Adam Simpson, Neville Skinner, Nick Heath

Drawn by: Matt Smith 13-Oct-2021

Survey dates: March 21, 2021 & September 17-19, 2021



Magnetic North 2021



5K-195.CEG8101

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Past Trips from General Meetings

Aug 2021

- **Graham Pilkington** described a Mercedes College trip to Corra Lynn on the 16th August. Twenty-four students participated and several were keen to do more caving with CEGSA.
- **Pam Payne** and **Minky Cockshell** showed the results of ongoing work on Kangaroo Island. The surface survey of all but one sector covering the Kelly Hill reserve has been completed but investigation of the Wilderness area still needs to be done. They also visited K17 and K49 at West Bay Hollow, and completed a surface survey of that quadrant. Several new caves were found and some surveying was done in OMG cave (K195).
- **Mark Sefton** described the preliminary results of this year's Bullita expedition which was postponed for two weeks due to Covid-related border restrictions. **Graham Pilkington** then gave a presentation on his work in a small part of Berks Backyard where the surveyed length of that part has more than doubled in the last three years by adding three kilometres of extra passages.

Sept 2021

- **Matt Smith** reported on the recent trip to Kangaroo Island. Surveying was conducted in K195 where a decorated chamber, more than 50 m across, was found. The surveyed length is now 357 m and there is still more to find there. Matt then showed a plot of the cave survey and after the meeting showed members the field sketches of the cave.

Oct 2021

- **Steve Milner** went on a reconnaissance trip to the Baxter Cliffs to assess access options. Aerial photography had indicated 40 good targets here. Use of a drone to further investigate these indicated that one was probably blind but the remainder continue to look promising. Access to the cliff edge is not easy and long walks of up to 11 km were needed.
- **Minky Cockshell** described the recent trip to Kangaroo Island during which 77 features were tagged. Areas remaining to be similarly documented are those more easily accessed. A vertical team were able to get into 5 of the newly discovered vertical entrance caves. Ken Smith's fingers were taken into K195 to set up in the Birthday chamber in Phoenix Cave and, with some difficulty, the surface team was eventually able to locate the above-ground position and mark it. Track marking to the Birthday chamber was also done. Saturday night included a screening of '16 Legs' for those interested who were staying at the caravan park. Grant Gartrell commented on the excellent accommodation available at the Western Caravan Park.
- **Grant Gartrell** and Mark Corbett have been to a property in Delamere and have an interesting digging prospect there.
- **Neville Skinner** described a five day survey trip to the Flinders Ranges where F214 was surveyed in detail over four days. Around 250 m of passage was mapped and the cave extends down several vertical sections to a depth of 61 m. **Graham Pilkington** then showed the meeting a draft of the map.
- **Matt Smith** described a trip to the Flinders Ranges where Clara St Dora, Mairs, Good Friday and Arcoota Creek Caves were visited. Mt Simms Cave could not be entered because of gate key problem. The lower (adit) entrance to Clara St Dora is starting to show signs of collapse.

TECHNICAL and OTHER ARTICLES

MEMBERSHIP FEES

CEGSA MEMBERSHIP FEES become due on January 1st. To ensure continuity of membership and privileges (particularly insurance) please pay before March 31st.

Joining fee applies to renewal after March 31st.

CEGSA MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2022 YEAR

Full Membership	\$30.00
Associate Membership	25.00
Long Term Associate (more than 2 years as an Associate)	30.00
3 Month Introductory	5.00
3 Month Introductory family	10.00
3 Month Associate Membership (including joining fee)	19.00
Joining Fee (not applicable to 3 Month Introductory)	12.00
Country membership discount (residing more than 80km from Adelaide GPO)	
Single member or one-parent family	6.00
Two- parent family	12.00

ASF LEVY FEE FOR 2022 YEAR

Single	\$70.00
2-parent Family	123.00
1-parent Family	88.00
Retired, pensioner, student, or unemployed	46.00
Honorary (not caving)	21.00
12 Month Introductory	20.00
12 Month Introductory family	35.00

Example 2022 YEAR FEES

	CEGSA	ASF	TOTAL
Full Membership	\$30.00	\$70.00	\$100.00
Full Membership retired	30.00	46.00	76.00
Full Country Membership	24.00	70.00	94.00
Associate Membership	25.00	70.00	95.00
Associate Membership student	25.00	46.00	71.00
Inactive Full (needs Committee approval)	30.00	21.00	51.00
3 Month Introductory	5.00	20.00	25.00
3 Month Associate Membership	19.00	18.00	37.00

Examples for Family Membership

1st Full Member + 2nd Full Member	\$60.00	\$123.00	\$183.00
1st Full Member + 2nd Associate Member	55.00	123.00	178.00
1st Assoc Member + 2nd Assoc Member	50.00	123.00	173.00
NOTE Country Membership discount on the above examples would be \$12.			
Full Member 1-parent Family	30.00	88.00	118.00

Please make sure your payment of fees includes CEGSA and ASF, if applicable.

Membership Fees can be paid directly into CEGSA Account

CEGSA

BSB 105-900

Account No 950661040

reference with your Name or Membership Number and fee year; eg 7201-22.

Graham Pilkington, Membership Officer.

Approved CEGSA Trip Leaders

Name	Caving Leader levels
Stan Flavel	Horizontal and Laddering
Grant Gartrell	Coordinator
Paul Harper	Horizontal and Laddering
Richard Harris	Horizontal
Peter Horne	Horizontal and Laddering
Peter Kraehenbuehl	Horizontal, Laddering and Vertical
Ian Lewis	Horizontal and Laddering
George MacLucas	Horizontal and Laddering
Steve Milner	Horizontal, Laddering and Vertical
Tim Payne	Horizontal, Laddering and Vertical
Graham Pilkington	Horizontal and Laddering
Mark Sefton	Horizontal and Laddering
Neville Skinner	Horizontal, Laddering and Vertical
Matt Smith	Horizontal and Laddering
Tom Szabo	Horizontal and Laddering
Michael Woodward	Horizontal, Laddering and Vertical

All the above named are also CEGSA Trip Coordinators.

Members may query the classification of any Trip Leader at any time with the Committee.

It is a requirement that each trip be organised by an approved Trip Coordinator to be classed as an official CEGSA trip. It's also a requirement that all trips be led by an approved Trip Leader at the appropriate skill level for the cave being entered. Trip Leaders ensure that every caving party has a member with current First Aid training.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2022 AGM will be held at Pam and Tim Payne's residence at 143 Tyeka Drive, ONE TREE HILL SA 5114 on Saturday the 12th February. The meeting will commence at 7:30 p.m. for the presentation of reports and election of officers and will be preceded by a BBQ and/or pizza (Pizza dough and oven provided) commencing at 6:00 p.m. BYO food and drinks. Please note that all nominations for officers must be submitted to the secretary prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Could all office bearers have their submissions for the Annual Report to the editor by the 29th January.

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ASF CEDUNA CONFERENCE

Regretfully the next ASF conference in Ceduna will be postponed again to April 2023. New dates will be announced soon.

This decision has been made by the conference committee and ASF executive in light of the ongoing uncertainty regarding covid, travel restrictions, vaccinations, boosters etc.

The activities, field trips and social aspects of the conference are a highlight for many and we want to make sure everyone who wants to attend can get there in person!

There are some things to look forward to though... :-)

- There will be a series of exciting online talks and workshops to be held in early 2022 - more details to come
- The conference has been issued permits to access caves on the South Australian Nullarbor. The field trips in 2023 will be a rare opportunity to visit caves that have not been accessible for many years.
- Early bird registration extended to January 2023

We will contact those who have already registered to discuss whether you'd like a refund or to roll over your registration to 2023.

KANGAROO ISLAND IS AN AMAZING PLACE

Kangaroo Island is an amazingly resilient place. It has been through some unprecedentedly tough times over the last couple of years, because of devastating fires, but it is springing back again better than ever. I wasn't there while those recent fires were burning, but I was keen to return as soon as it was safe and sensible to do so without being a burden on those who had to spend a long time even just restoring some basic order. I am in awe of those who had little choice but to battle unstoppable blazes. Buildings and possessions that are lost can eventually be replaced, up to a point, but people, domestic animals, stock and wildlife cannot. It is all unspeakably awful. Two dreadful casualties of the fires were pilot Dick Lang and his surgeon son Clayton, who were trapped in their vehicle while returning to their farm after fighting a fire for two days. It was awful that it happened to anyone, but brought home more starkly because about 27 years ago Dick flew me, and a channel 7 film crew to Naracoorte so they could record an interview with me inside a genuine cave about Southern Quarries blowing up Sellicks Hill Quarry Cave, which, needless to say, was no longer available. Dick was a highly competent genuine knockabout bush pilot who had a lot in common with my father-in-law, Alf Humble, inland Australia's first flying vet. Dick and Alf were both legends in their own lifetimes. Oh dear! When I did first return to the Island with my wife Merry and simply drove west along the south coast road for a while I will never forget the dawning realization seeping into our consciousness as to the scale and severity, totality, of the desolation. It was overwhelming and beyond comprehension to envisage that any vestige of life whatsoever could remain in the surreal charcoal stick forests disappearing over distant horizons in every direction. The feelings became so strong it just did not seem right to drive further, and we didn't.

These were not the first fires on Kangaroo Island, and undoubtedly they won't be the last, but also undoubtedly they have been the most devastating fires in living memory. And yet, even out of such adversity, opportunities can arise, and in this case the pretty much total incineration of scrub across not only the Kelly Hill Conservation Park, but much of Flinders Chase as well, gave an unprecedented opportunity to search for new cave entrances previously hidden in dense scrub with a view to eventually gaining a better understanding of the complexity of the cave systems of the area.

"Now, as one comes to the brow of the hill from which the first view of Kelly's Hill can be obtained, all one sees is blackened timber stretching gaunt arms to the sky, and a hill with never a green leaf on it. A fire started up 10 miles to the northward, and the caretaker barely had time to make a hurried departure before the flames raged furiously over the hillside. It was a great sight, the flames leaping into the air 50 feet and 70 feet high in places, and vast volumes of smoke rolling heavenwards. It was a sad picture of desolation next day, after the fire had done its worst. The hill was covered in green mallee, wattles, and acacias. But all that is left are the scorched and blackened sticks, in places twisted out of all recognition by the terrible heat. Here and there small heaps of bones are lying among the ashes, telling of the sad fate of the wallabies and opossums. The fire being over 10 miles wide, there was no hope of escape for them. Now every hole on the hill there can be plainly seen."

This is not a report from the fire that recently swept through Kelly Hill, but following one almost a hundred years earlier. It won't be the last. With the accelerating incidence and severity of global warming induced extreme weather, and the proven ease with which dry lightning triggers wild fires, we can expect many similar events into the future. As back then, the blackened sticks have again done an amazing job of producing new green buds bursting through the charcoal, and the bush is rapidly springing back eternal. The big difference is that this time there have been a team of cavers not only systematically searching for and recording the existence of previously hidden entrances, but also recording their coordinates with modern high-powered hand-held GPS (Global Positioning System) units, which take advantage of several independent systems of special satellites to triangulate the positions of recorded entrances to an accuracy often better than 2 metres. While it is amazing just what our forebears achieved without such devices, I am sure they would have gladly taken advantage of them had they been available, and then quite possibly the apocryphal story of Kelly the vanishing horse may have had a different ending. If you haven't yet heard of Kelly the horse, you are about to do so, because without Kelly how could there possibly be a Kelly Hill?

ACCOUNTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE KELLY HILL AND MOUNT TAYLOR CAVES

What follows next is a compendium of accounts of the early history of both the Kelly Hill and the Mount Taylor Caves as supplied to me in June 2021 by my old friend Doug Seton, who has had a very long-standing interest in the area. Doug was one of the earliest people to be employed by the South Australian Tourist Bureau as a Supervisor and guide at Kelly Hill, working there from 1953 to 1960. Doug was also one of Kangaroo Island's early beekeepers. He was the owner of a property on the north-eastern corner of the intersection of the Mount Taylor Road and the South Coast Road, and

he worked as an assistant to John Masterman, Government Apiarist, who managed a government apiary at Rocky River in Flinders Chase for the breeding of queens for the pure strain of Ligurian honey bees that had previously been introduced to Kangaroo Island.

Doug has also had a long interest in marine history and became an accomplished SCUBA diver. He named his property "Montebello" to commemorate the shipwreck of a French vessel of that name on the nearby south coast of the Island.

The account reproduces multiple individual reports of a number of events, some from various newspapers of the day, and is therefore by its very nature somewhat repetitive. A few of those reports may have been scanned by optical character recognition software, and occasionally there has been a need to manually correct, as far as is possible, errors that may have been introduced as a consequence. The result follows:

"The area around Kelly Hill Caves was originally a pastoral lease owned by Charlie May who sold it to Messrs. Stockdale and Taylor - it was added to the Karatta Station leasehold.

From 1880 to Aug 1884 Karatta sheep station was being run by Messrs. Stockdale and Taylor, but in Dec 1883, Robert Stockdale died and the remaining lease owners, the Taylor brothers were in financial trouble with low numbers of wool bales and loss of stock. Of the 20,000 sheep shipped to KI only 1,500 were accountable in Dec 1883. By 1884 the Taylor brothers were declared bankrupt. In September 1884 Karatta Station lease was owned by Frank Ayliffe and the property was managed by Hugh Harper (in some cases spelt "Harpur")

Kelly Hill Caves were named after a horse named "Kelly" fell into a sink hole. The folklore dates, the incident and the name of the horse varies across several sources. The dates range from 1880, through 1883, to 1885. The potential names of the horse included 'Ned Kelly', 'Dan Kelly', 'Kate Kelly', and just 'Kelly'. The rider's name was 'Fred Kelsey', 'Fred Kersley', or possibly 'Tresdail'.

Variations:

"In 1885, a local stockman called Fred Kelsey was riding his horse, Kate Kelly, looking for lost sheep, when they both accidentally fell into a massive sinkhole. Kelsey managed to find his way out of the caves, but Kelly was injured in the fall. On his return to the sinkhole to show other locals what had happened, he couldn't find either the horse or the sinkhole. The remains of the horse have never been found but the legend gave rise to the name of the caves."

Jim Melville, a wallaby hunter, claimed he had found the caves in 1885 and that earlier, in about 1883, while mustering, a horse ridden by Fred Kersley broke through the surface and went down out of sight. The horse bones, together with the saddle and bridle are still in the hole.

Second version and date is from Mr William J May who lived at Rocky River a few years before the station became a Reserve in 1919. From a Newsletter dated 17th Aug 1948: Writing from Kingscote, Mr William J May lets daylight into the Museum announcement about the extinct pygmy emu bones, which were discovered by Mr Edward Burgess in the Kelly's Hill caves in 1926.

"The caves were known to exist many years previous to this, in about 1880 when Karatta sheep station was being run by Messrs. Stockdale and Taylor. An uncle of mine (Frederick John Bates) was employed on the station, and one day several men out mustering sheep rode over the hill. One man lost his horse when the ground broke beneath it, leaving the man only enough time to remove the saddle and bridle before the horse disappeared down the hole. Its name was "Ned Kelly", hence "Kelly's Hill Caves".¹

Third version from Professor Wood Jones: "There is a story that in the early days a youth was riding a horse, named 'Dan Kelly' after the famous bushranger, when the horse stumbled and fell. The youth flung himself from the back of the animal, but on looking around could find no trace of the horse. It was assumed that the crust of the earth covering one of the caves had given way and the horse had disappeared through the opening. So far, its remains have not been found in any of the caves examined. The hill nearby is now called Kelly's Hill.

Fourth version: Joy Wheaton "Tough Time, Tough People": Taylor Brothers owned Karatta Station at the time the Kelly Gang were at large, and, on the Station, there was a horse that was a 'real outlaw', so it was named "Kelly". A stockman taking a mob of rams to Sou' West River, took a short cut on his return journey across the hill. His horse's leg broke through the cover of a sink hole, so he took off the saddle and bridle and went to Karatta for help. On returning to the horse, they put a rope around its neck and tried to lift out its front legs. They gave the horse a whack and it struggled and fell through. They heard a thud some distance below – hence the name Kelly Hill. No sign of the horse has ever been found.

Local stockmen were wary of riding in the area because of a number of sink holes in the area and ever since the 1880's, there were reports of other sink holes and cave entrances.

Therefore, the incident of the horse 'Kelly' during the Taylor period would more likely have occurred within the time frame 1880 to 1883, which fits in with other quotes of 1883, but not 1885 because the area was then owned by Frank Ayliffe and managed by Hugh Harper. From 1880 to 1883 the two Taylor Brothers employed about 6 to 8 people building the Karatta Station, the outbuildings & stockyards plus extensive fence lines. It was in the period 1880 to 1883 that stockmen reported seeing caves and pot holes at Mount Taylor and Kelly Hill.

In December 1925, the existing Caves were officially discovered and verified by a police officer. Jim Melville claims he discovered an entrance to a cave system in 1885. He may have discovered an entrance to a cave but was unable to convince other people of their existence. Since there are several caves in the area, it is unknown if "his" discovery was the same caves.

BACKGROUND:

From NPWS Booklet & Web Site:

In 1885 a local stockman called 'Fred Kelsey' was riding his horse, "Kate Kelly", looking for lost sheep when they both accidentally fell into a massive sinkhole. Kelsey managed to find his way out of the cave, but Kelly was injured in the fall. On his attempted return to the sinkhole to show other locals what had happened, he couldn't find either the horse or the sinkhole. The remains of Kelly have never been found but the legend gave rise to the name of the caves, as currently known.

However, it was many years later, in fact 1925, until the caves were rediscovered by a group of adventuring Kangaroo Islanders, and that discovery verified by a police officer.

23 March 1927 Register Newspaper, page 15: Caves on Kangaroo Island – Their Discovery and Exploration. By one of the discoverers.

On 18th November 1925, while spending a few weeks at Stunsail Boom River, three young island residents, Misses Olive Burgess and Edith May and Mr Harold Bell, decided to explore a cave that was known to exist in the Mount Taylor area, a conspicuous landmark seven miles to the north from the Station.

After an uneventful ride though the scrub, they climbed the mountain side, then made preparations for a descent into the cave. Each with a lighted candle, they squeezed through narrow holes and passed through archways and great chambers and halls. The stalactites and stalagmites so attracted the eye that the explorers gave no thought to the possibility of losing their way. After examining the wonderful formations, which included large pillars supporting the roof, the party decided to retrace their footsteps. They were conscious of a strange fear as they noticed the many winding passages and the large chambers leading off on every side. Turning to each other, they asked "Where must we go to get out of the place!" They all confessed they did not know, and each suggested a different route. As their candles were burning down, they made a frantic search in all directions. After a period that seemed like hours, they were rewarded by discovering the passageway that led to the entrance, and a few more minutes of scrambling and crawling brought them once more into the open air. After a while curiosity impelled them to re-enter the cave, when they further explored it. Thereafter they returned to the Stunsail Boom Station full of excitement and enthusiasm over the day's adventure.

Kelly's Hill

Subsequently several Island pioneers told them of a hill which was reputed to be literally honeycombed with caves. The hill was called "Kelly's Hill" because of a horse, which was the bearer of the name "Ned Kelly", having fallen into one of the caves and never having been seen again. People were beginning to show signs of cave mania, so it was not long before a party of five people made up their minds to explore Kelly's Hill. They consisted of Mr & Mrs Edward Burgess, Mr Harold Bell, Misses Olive Burgess and Ida May.

On 21st December 1925 the group discovered the entrance. All came back the same day in great excitement to say they had discovered a cave of great beauty and that the stalactites and stalagmites and other formations were magnificently beautiful, the cavern at Mount Taylor being poor in comparison with the newly discovered cave. Accompanied by the local police officer, they returned to Kelly's Hill to verify their discovery.

At times, the footprints of strange animals have been noticed at the very bottom of some of the caves there, and the explorers are at a loss to account for an animal that could enter or find a means to exist in a place well-nigh inaccessible even to a man on a rope, and where there is no sign of any vegetation – only boulders strewn over the loose sand.

Some of the explorers confessed to having the 'wind up' when a distinct trail through the wet sand was discovered, resembling that of a crocodile. In several places the bones of emus, wallabies, and opossums and kangaroo rats have been picked up. Some were at the bottom of caves, hundreds of yards from the nearest entrance. The caves are about four miles from the sea, and several old

Islanders are of the opinion that the tracks seen were made by seals, and that there is an underground river from the hill to the sea, the seals coming up the riverbed. The explorers, however, do not consider that such is the case.

December 1925 Kangaroo Island Courier: Caves on Kangaroo Island.

Mr James Melville, of Wilky Siding, wrote: "I read with interest the recent discovery of caves on KI. It may be of interest to know that these caves were discovered and entered by me in 1885, some forty years ago. Having carefully examined the different chambers I was struck with admiration and could scarcely believe that such beauties could exist in such useless lands surrounding them. I told of the caves to a few others, but nobody believed what I told them. Some ten years later I visited the caves again, this time determined to take proof of what I had found, and broke pieces of crystal and took them to my home at Cygnet River, and no doubt some of them are about my old home now. I am exceedingly pleased to see that these beautiful caves have been discovered by the second generation, and trust that they will be alive to the fact that such beauties are rare in Australia and that it is their duty to see that they are protected. While I have my pen, I will tell a little more that may, or may not, be of interest to your readers. There is a dry cave between South-West River and Karatta – I penetrated this cave to a distance of about seventy feet, the walls in places being from ten to twelve feet high, and as I advanced, I was struck by this strange smell. I only had matches to light the way and as I advanced, I began to find they only gave a little light and went out. I felt depressed and began to perspire. I concluded that the air was bad and retraced my steps in disappointment. At this stage I would like to warn the would-be explorer not to enter the cave without a lighted candle and to return as soon as he or they find their light getting dim, for then there is danger ahead. The floor of this cave is strewn with bones of opossum, cats and other small bones I could not identify.

On 8th January 1926, an attempt to further explore Kelly's Hill was made by a party consisting of Mr. Edward Burgess, Ivy and Douglass Burgess, and Edith and Frank May. They examined several caves but did not find anything to rival the beauties discovered in the "Midnight Cave", as it was named by the discoverers.

So far, this cave is the only one which has proved worthy of a careful search. The entrance is small, but opens out larger after a few chains. It seemed hard to realize that such beauties could exist underground. Stalactites hanging down as thick as they could be, crystals looking as though they had been frosted over, big vinegar jars and huge pillars. The stalactites vary in colour – amber, chocolate, yellow, crystal, cream, white, brown and blood-red ones; and there are big red patches on the walls and floor that look as though some animal had been killed there.

Little statues and statuettes resembling men, women and children (one looks like a picture I once saw representing Lot's wife turned to a pillar of salt), small dogs, elephants, salt cellars, bottles, and places that look as though an octopus had been spread over them, with great feelers hanging down from the heights. There are downy tree roots from the roof of the cave, just like curtains, so fine as to make one wonder if they really could be tree roots. They resemble a woman's head of dark-brown hair, some of these roots grow to a length of 15 ft. It puts the finishing touch on the beauty of the big hall to see these curtains hanging down from the heights, and from between the stalactites. There are big pieces of crystal jutting out from the sides of the cave, termed 'shawls', as thin as a knife blade and golden coloured. Some of them are webbed, just like the spikes along a fish's back. This cave must be about a mile long.

After spending several hours searching around in this place, the party retraced their footsteps and then climbed downhill to the swamp, where they had left their cars. Armed with a lighted candle each, and the leader of the party with a lantern, they set out, threading their way in single file through an extremely dense thicket of wattles, acacias, mallees, gum trees, fallen logs and tea-tree thickets 20 ft high. The sky was cloudy, with not a star visible, and the leader, although an experienced bushman, confessed himself puzzled. As for the rest of the party, each one insisted on going in a different direction to the others. After a search for about half an hour, they discovered their lorry in the billabong or swamp, and soon they were asleep, on beds of broom brush, while the mosquitoes sang a lullaby overhead and all around them. Next morning they searched for further new caves, being joined later by Miss Lina Burgess and Mary Bell and Mr Harold Bell. They discovered nothing of any special interest, and so gave up cave hunting for that time.

Strange Sights.

On 22nd January 1926, the Crown Lands Manager (Mr P.E.S. McEwin) appointed one of the discoverers (Mr Harold Bell) to act as caretaker of the Kelly Hill and Mount Taylor Caves, and declared these caves closed to the public.

Searching the 'Midnight Cave' further, one day, the caretaker squeezed through a small crevice, and found another series of halls and passageways, containing stalactite formations far more beautiful

than any previously discovered. The whole floor in places looks as though it was covered with candied honey, piled high, and gleaming silver grey in the soft candlelight. In places spikes stand up from the floor like big tacks, resembling sharks' teeth. In another place there is a miniature salt pool, the salt, as it seemed to be, drying around the edge.

All this is worked out in the clearest crystal as hard as flint to the touch. That place has gained the name of 'Salt Lake City'. The chamber the 'city' is in is large and lofty, the roof being 40 ft high in places and the chamber about two chains across. There are a great many crystal stalactites, the majority about 3 feet in length. Some are as thin as a pencil, much resembling a glass tube. Others resemble carrots, kites and flying foxes. Large thick pillars support the roof in places. Some of them are 10 feet through. In the next chamber (to gain which one has to crawl under a rock – go down a storey as it were) a section has been aptly named Noah's Ark; a long row of animals is marching in at the door, and appearing smaller and smaller, until they are lost sight of on the other side of the hill. It looked very realistic. We placed a candle in a chamber to guide us back to the entrance, and after going further on looked back and saw its light shining uncertainly in the distance, showing up the stalactites as dark shadows against the glimmer of the light.

Drops of water gleam on the end of each stalactite. Some of these stalactites are 3 feet in circumference. The majority are golden yellow, but others are pale and ash grey. Great pieces of crystal stone descending from the roof of the chamber remind one of hanging lamps fit to grace the palace of any king. Very impressive is the uncanny silence and stillness.

Truly it would be a terrible fate to be lost in there, and one's light to burn out. The atmosphere is damp. Everything in there is cool and fresh, even on the most broiling summer's day. Daylight and darkness make no difference so far underground. The biggest bush-fire imaginable could rage all over the hill, and any person who was in the cave would know nothing of it until they gained the entrance.

A Misadventure.

The wonderful daintiness of the formations takes the eye of those who visit the caves for the first time. The working on the walls, roof, and even floors in places, is so fine and perfect as to make cut glass seem clumsy in comparison. The floor is of marble, shining soft and cool. Stalactites in some of the chambers take the form of large carrots, hanging three deep. Small pieces project from their sides, reminding one of carrot roots. Some of the pieces in this chamber resemble the tail of a kite.

The party were trying to take a few flashlight photos, and one of their number (Mr E. Burgess) went ahead of the rest towards the entrance. After about half an hour the others followed and were surprised on reaching the mouth of the cave to see no sign of their companion. Another hour elapsed, with still no sign of the missing man. Then the two youngest members of the party re-entered the cave and searched for the lost man. (As the cave winds and twists a great deal it was easy for anyone to lose his way in it). They scrambled right back to where they had last seen him, calling out now and again as they advanced, but not getting a sign of him. Then they gave a farewell call, which provoked a faint 'Halloo' in the distance. They scrambled to where they heard the cry and were pleased to find their companion safe and sound. He had lost himself and finally sat down on the floor of the cavern and said "Well. I am beaten." He had been wandering up and down channels, over big rocks, under arch ways, squeezing through cracks and climbing cliffs. He thought he would never get out and said he must have walked for miles and all in places where, as far as he could tell, no human had ever set foot before. He was lost for about four hours altogether.

To search for new caves at Kelly's Hill was a wearying task. The scrub was so thick and the dead undergrowth so very dense that at times one was walking 2 feet off the ground on the dead rubbish. But all that is changed. The thickets were the homes of numberless opossums and wallabies.

Now, as one comes to the brow of the hill from which the first view of Kelly's Hill can be obtained, all one sees is blackened timber stretching gaunt arms to the sky, and a hill with never a green leaf on it. A fire started up 10 miles to the northward, and the caretaker barely had time to make a hurried departure before the flames raged furiously over the hillside. It was a great sight, the flames leaping into the air 50 feet and 70 feet high in places, and vast volumes of smoke rolling heavenwards. It was a sad picture of desolation next day, after the fire had done its worst. The hill was covered in green mallee, wattles, and acacias. But all that is left are the scorched and blackened sticks, in places twisted out of all recognition by the terrible heat. Here and there small heaps of bones are lying among the ashes, telling of the sad fate of the wallabies and opossums. The fire being over 10 miles wide, there was no hope of escape for them. Now every hole on the hill there can be plainly seen.

More Work Ahead.

On searching the Midnight Cave further one day the caretaker and his companion discovered a narrow crevice through which a noticeable draught was blowing. After enlarging this a little they managed to squeeze through, and found themselves in the 'Animal Cave' where the strange animal tracks had been found. This entrance is much easier to negotiate than the old one and has constantly been used since. It is possible now to go in at one entrance, go through the whole cave, and come out at the other end so that one has no need to retrace one's footsteps or to go back over one's tracks in any place. The writer has been in this 'Animal Cave', and has examined the strange tracks found therein.

Although familiar with every animal track in the district in which I live, I have never seen any tracks that resembled those in this cave. The largest tracks are a long trail, resembling the mark of a kerosene case dragged through the sand, with large elbow marks on each side of it. The animal cannot be very tall, as its trail is under several overhanging rocks, only 2 feet or so in height. The explorers who have seen the tracks are confident that they are made by some unknown animals.

In conclusion I must explain that the 'Midnight Cave' has not been fully explored even to this day, and no one knows how much further into the hill it goes, or whether there are any more entrances, or perhaps still more beauties waiting to be discovered.

Absolutely Lovely

On Friday 5th February 1926 the Government Geologist (Mr L.K. Ward) paid a visit of inspection to the Kelly Hill Caves, accompanied by Messrs R. William Chapman, Edward Burgess and T. Beatty, and two scientists, who were collecting bones for the museum. Mr Ward was very much attracted by the 'mystery formation', as the horns and branches of trees, &c are called. I understand that a cave is valued by the amount of such formation that it contains, and if that is correct, then the newly discovered cave at Kelly's Hill should prove a valuable find indeed. Mr Ward pronounced himself very well satisfied with the cave and said that Naracoorte caves held nothing to beat the different things he'd seen that day. He pronounced them to be 'absolutely lovely.' The explorers were pleased to hear such a favourable verdict on their discovery. The writer knows people who have seen the entrances to the caves, but not dreaming that there would be any beauty therein, or that they were anything but mere cavities in the limestone rocks, never troubled to investigate. The writer's own father and brothers have walked past the 'Midnight Cave' entrance many times.

On 8th February 1926 the caretaker, Mr and Mrs W.J. May and daughter, and Mr E. Burgess and daughter searched all along in places where holes were known to exist, to see if they could find a cave to rival the one at Kelly's Hill, but after three days of scrambling through the dense thickets they gave up in despair. They found several holes, but their contents were only sand and rocks. The south coast of Kangaroo Island is very stony, and there are numerous caverns and holes, both along the coast and further inland. The explorers feel that probably there are many more holes that would repay investigation. The newly found caves will prove a great attraction to visitors to the island. The Government intend taking them over and fitting them up with electric light.

When all is ready and the caves are thrown open to the public, there should be a large increase in the number of tourists visiting the island. Several islanders have gone out to view the caves, not knowing that they were closed. As the caves are situated about 60 miles from Kingscote (the capital of the island), they had a long journey in vain.

19th February 1927 KI Courier page 3 Fauna and Flora Board of South Australia. Kelly's Hill Caves

These caves and the land in which they are situated are vested in the Fauna and Flora Board of South Australia. The Board has appointed Mr Edward Burgess of Cygnet River as custodian during the present summer tourist season. Visitors may inspect the caves under the guidance of Mr Burgess on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. Unauthorised visitors will be regarded as trespassers, and those committing acts of vandalism will be prosecuted. By Order P. Wood Jones, Secretary, Fauna and Flora Board.

19th Feb 1926 Kangaroo Island caves Investigations by Local Residents.

Following on the publication on Monday of the report of the Government Geologist (Mr L. Keith Ward) with respect to the caves on the southern side of Kangaroo Island, to the south-west of Kingscote, Mr Edward Burgess, a local resident of the island called at The Register Office on Thursday and supplied further particulars.

An Exploratory Visit:

Mr Burgess was born on the island, and has resided there ever since, and he says he has been aware of the existence of the caves for many years. On 21st December 1926, in company with Misses Ida May, Olive Burgess (daughter), Mrs Burgess, and Mr Harold Bell, he made a brief exploration of the first series of caves at Kelly's Hill, in the Hundred of Ritchie, south of the main road to Rocky River. Members of the party took a number of photographs, which gave an idea of the dimensions of certain parts and revealed many novel features.

Mr Burgess said that the first chamber extended for an approximate length of 100 yards, the width varying from 15 to 60 ft., with a rather low overhanging wall. From that chamber they descended into another, where the height increased to about 30 feet, and the width ranged from 60 to 80 feet. The stalactite formation stood out brilliantly in the dim light, and included many beautiful pendants as clear as crystal, at the bottom of which hung large translucent knobs, some as large as cauliflowers. The irregularity of shape added to their appearance. There were also forms with arms branching out like antlers; the origin of those 'mysteries' appeared to be unknown.

The entrance to the last chamber, which was explored by Mr Burgess alone, was estimated to be about 300 yards from the first chamber. By the aid of candlelight, the explorer wandered through what he described as a maze of corridors leading off from the chamber, which contained stalactites and stalagmites of varying size and beauty. 'I have never been lost in the scrub,' said Mr Burgess, 'but I confess that I did not know where I was on that occasion. I walked in and out amid all this beauty, and after several hours I happened to retrace my steps and recognised that I had returned to a spot near the entrance.'

Speaking of the 'mystery' formation, the explorer said that when he subsequently conducted the Government Geologist through the chambers, Mr. Ward said he had seen nothing else in the State to beat them, although the cave lacked the big stalactites which existed in certain caves in other parts of South Australia.

A Plea for Visitors.

Mr Burgess said that he had read the published report of Mr Ward's investigations with considerable interest. He was impressed with the prospects of the caves as a medium of interest and education for tourists. At present the caves were closed to the public, and the Government had placed Mr Bell in charge. He hoped that the Government would arrange for the caves to be opened to the public, as many visitors to the island had been disappointed at not being able to see them.

Two scientists from Adelaide recently made the trip, only to find on arrival that they could not be admitted. If the Government were not prepared to open up the caves, he was sure the local residents would be willing to undertake the job.

27th March 1926 Observer Newspaper page 11:

Caves on Kangaroo Island. Their discovery and Exploration.

By One of the Discoverers.

On 18th November 1925, while spending a few weeks at Stunsail Boom River, three young island residents, Misses Olive Burgess and Edith May and Mr Harold Bell, decided to explore a cave that was known to exist in Mount Taylor, a conspicuous landmark seven miles to the north from the station. After an uneventful ride through the scrub, they climbed the mount side and made preparations for a descent into the cave. Each with a lighted candle, they squeezed through narrow holes and passed through archways and great chambers and halls. The stalactites and stalagmites so attracted the eye that the explorers gave no thought to the possibility of losing their way. After examining the wonderful formations, which included the large pillars supporting the roof, the party decided to retrace their footsteps. They were conscious of a strange fear as they noticed the many winding passages and the large chambers leading off on every side. Turning to each other, they asked "Where must we go to get out of the place?" They confessed they did not know, and each suggested a different route. As their candles were burning down, they made a frantic search in all directions. After a period of time that seemed like hours they were rewarded by discovering the passageway that led to the entrance, and a few more minutes of scrambling and crawling brought them once more into the open air. After a while curiosity impelled them to re-enter the cave, when they further explored it. Thereafter they returned to the station full of excitement and enthusiasm over the day's adventure.

14th April 1926. Register Newspaper article (repeated on 17th April 1926 Observer Newspaper) Kangaroo Island Caves.

The Kelly's Hill caves have been vested in the Fauna and Flora Board (writes our Kingscote correspondent). As soon as Professor Wood Jones returns from Europe it is intended to have the

caves thoroughly explored, and it is hoped that by next summer proper entrances to them will have been made for the benefit of visitors. It is necessary that these beauty spots should be protected, and islanders will support the board in their desire to prevent spoliation by thoughtless persons. Much satisfaction was expressed when it was known that the caves would be open to the public during the present month. The Fauna and Flora Board have appointed Mr G. Burgess as official guide, and no one is allowed entrance to the caves without permission, and then they do so at their own risk. A large party of motorists were the first to visit the caves since their opening to the public. This they did last Wednesday, under the guidance of Mr. Burgess. They were surprised at the extent and beauty of the cave system, although they were able to visit only a few of the many chambers. Mr Burgess states that he is enlarging the present entrance, which is very narrow, also several other entrances to different chambers. Visitors to Kangaroo Island who have seen the caves of New Zealand and those at Jenolan and Naracoorte, state that the Kelly's Hill caves compare very favourably with the former places.

Data from Paris: In 1926 Mr E. Burgess found the limestone Kelly Hill Caves on the Island, and in them the skeleton of the small Emu. Later, museum officers picked up more skulls and bones. Sir James Gosse, chairman of Flinders Chase reserve board and member of the Museum Board thoughtfully suggested that with this available material and from data in the Paris Museum, it might be possible to reconstruct the dwarf Emu as it appeared in life. The Director of the Paris Museum supplied photographs of plumage etc. of the single mounted specimen in existence, and the work was put in hand here.

Mr Condon, museum ornithologist, thinks a bushfire between 1802 and 1836 annihilated this Emu. Egg remains were discovered by Mr H.M. Cooper at a native camp site near Pennington Bay in 1936, and there is said to be a KI Emu egg in England. Mr. G.E. Mason bought it for a few shillings with George Dawson Rowley's collection offered in London in 1934.

20th Feb 1926 Chronicle News article: New Caves Government Geologist's report.

Two systems of caves have been discovered recently, on the southern side of Kangaroo Island, to the south-west of Kingscote, and have attracted some public attention. Mr L. Keith Ward (Government Geologist) says: -

The first series is on the north western flank of Mount Taylor, in the Hundred of Newland, and the other series, explored more lately, at Kelly's Hill, in the Hundred of Ritchie, immediately to the south of the main road to Rocky River and the eastward of Southwest River. The way of approaching the caves is by the road to Vivonne Bay, which is nearly 40 miles from Kingscote.

About four miles to the west of Harriet River mouth there is a track leading from the Rocky River Road in a north-north westerly direction past Mount Taylor. The main road itself is followed for a distance of 17 miles from the Harriet River almost as far as South-west River, when the Kelly's Hill caves are visited, and a short track along a dry creek channel leads from the road to a point within a few chains of the entrance to the main cave.

After giving an interesting account of the formation of cave generally, Mr Ward says the caves in the south-western part of the Hundred of Ritchie, like those at Mount Taylor, occur in the calcareous dune rock that is so widely distributed along the southern coast of Australia. The calcareous sand at both localities is hardened superficially by a coating of redeposited carbonate of lime, which cements sand grains and forms a hard, dense limestone.

There are a great many sinkholes on Kelly's Hill, in the Hundred of Ritchie, some large, some small, leading into a very complex system of caves. The rather friable nature of the rock beneath the outer hard crust has prevented the formation of very large caverns. But there is a very great number of smaller ones.

Translucent and Beautiful

In the largest cave system, which is entered from the northern flank of Kelly's Hill, the number and variety of the stalactites is noteworthy. In the oldest chambers near the entrance, they are rather dull and stained with iron, but at no great depth they are remarkably translucent and beautiful. In the profusion of stalactite growths there are many which possess curiously irregular and grotesque shapes.

Forms with arms branching in all directions are numerous, and many of these 'mysteries' are almost transparent. There is abundant stalagmitic material on the floors of different chambers, but relatively few large individual stalagmites built upwards from the level of the floor. Some of the floors are horizontal, but there are a number of steeply sloping lower surfaces to narrow cave openings, and these inclined floors, when illuminated, glisten with the reflections from the faces of few feet, and some of the columns have been broken. There is a profusion of shawls or curtains, some appearing white or waxy by transmitted light, others amber coloured.

In a number of cases these limestone draperies show well-defined banks of colour that are very striking when a strong light is placed behind them. The variety of pendant forms is notable; and there are many chambers, each differing from the others, within a comparatively small compass.

At a few places roots from the trees above have penetrated into the caves and are partly replaced by mineral matter deposited from the water trickling over the vegetable fibres.

The smaller cave system at Mount Taylor, in the Hundred of Newland, is much less attractive. The entrance is large and striking, through a large sinkhole having steep sides and ornamented with stalactites and flowstone drapings. But the openings from the bottom of this sinkhole are not very extensive so far as is yet known. The largest chamber has been spoilt by falls from the roof, and the groups of stalactites and shawls in the smaller chambers are not remarkable for colour or variety.

Other caves may yet be found in this locality, but that now known is not judged to be a likely source of attraction to tourists. There is a channel leading surface water into the Kelly's Cave system in the Hundred of Ritchie, but there is no permanent body of water visible in any of the caves yet opened. They are, so far as is known, all above water level, although not much above it.

At Mount Taylor the accessible openings are much too high for a body of underground water to be exposed. It is not possible to make close comparisons between caves occurring at different localities. The general principles governing the formation of caves, stalactites and stalagmites remain constant for all cases, but there is infinite variety in the local conditions which determine the details of the development of the cavities and their internal ornamentation. And these variations give to each cave system its peculiar characters.

So it is not possible to compare or contrast the newly found caves in the Hundred of Ritchie with those of Naracoorte or Jenolan. Each system has its own special features and its individual beauties.

2nd June 1926 Register newspaper – repeated 5th June 1926 Observer newspaper 7 8th June 1926 South Eastern Times

Kangaroo Island Caves – At the last meeting of the Flinders Chase Fauna and Flora Board it was reported that during the recent visit paid to the caves at Kelly's Hill, Kangaroo Island, a very important find of the bones of extinct animals and birds had been made. The extinct emu of Kangaroo Island, hitherto represented in museums of Australia by only a few stray bones, was found in many of the cave deposits. One practically complete skeleton and some half-dozen partial skeletons were secured for the Adelaide Museum.

Besides that valuable addition to the State collections, the skeletons of numerous animals were found more or less complete. Remains of extinct wombats, native cats, bandicoots, rat kangaroos, wallabies, and rats were collected for examination and description, and the collection bids fair to prove a valuable addition to our knowledge of the former marsupial fauna of Australia. It was reported that the whole system of caves probably contained very large deposits of these important specimens, and the board resolved that every step should be taken for securing and protecting the caves, and for saving the bones for the national collections. The honorary secretary of the board (Professor Wood Jones) reported that the Royal Society of London had granted him the sum of 100 pounds (\$200) in aid of research work on the development and life history of the monotremes and marsupials, and that the sum would be placed at the disposal of the board and the work conducted on Flinders Chase.

CENTENARIES AND ANNIVERSARIES

Flinders Chase turned 100 in October 2019. The plan was to celebrate the event for a full twelve month period, but within 2 months those plans went up in smoke. A successful celebration was held on 16th October in perfect weather at Remarkable Rocks. Joyce and George Lonzar were present. Joyce first went to live at Flinders Chase in 1923, as a toddler with her parents Harry and Violet Hansen, who were the inaugural Rangers. Years later she married George, who was the third Ranger at the Chase, from 1950, where they lived until he retired in 1984.

Kelly Hill's 75th Anniversary was celebrated in November 2000, based on a calendar commencing with the exploration and serious interest first shown by Harold Bell and party in 1925, which seems fair enough despite holes being known in the area at least 40 years earlier and Kelly the horse being reputed to have fallen down one of them somewhere between 1880 and 1885. On that basis we can look forward to a celebration of the Centenary for Kelly Hill being pencilled in for late 2025, only four years from now.

Judging by all the discovery and recording work currently going on in the ambitious work program at Kelly Hill, the timing will be excellent, and there will be a great deal to report and celebrate.

When I first caved at Kelly Hill, the track out to Frosted Floor Cave, K11, had become overgrown, and the cave had been lost for some time. George Lonzar was still the Ranger in charge of Flinders Chase at that time, and George was also an extremely good bushman. He took me for a long walk one day through dense scrub along the Kelly Hill reserve boundary, and after a couple of kilometres

we homed unerringly in on the K11 entrance. That's when I first set out to re-establish the surveyed walking track which Max Meth and I subsequently put a lot of work into, and located part-way along it a set of keys lost many years earlier by Doug Seton. When I later presented the keys to Doug at a formal CEGSA dinner, he wasn't especially grateful because by that time he had changed all the locks.

A Ray of Sunshine Beams Brightly on Kelly Hill

Back in late September 2021 I was re-introduced to Geoff Rayson by a mutual friend, also a Kangaroo Islander, over a completely un-related matter. Although I hadn't seen him for the best part of half a century, Geoff emailed me, as you do these days. "Grant, I remember well your visiting Kelly Hill caves about 1973 where I was a very new guide at Kelly Hill. My mother Edna Rayson had been a guide there for some years." I certainly remembered Geoff well. He was a considerable asset to the community and even taught me all I now know about successfully rescuing goannas that had fallen into Frosted Floor Cave. He made it look easy, but thankfully I have never had to put it into practice.

Geoff lived on the family farm "Sunraysia" adjacent to Sunshine Avenue, which was a magnificent stand of sugar gums through which passed the South Coast Road just west of the Kelly Hill tourist cave, and which was all lost in the latest fires which did such a thorough job on Kelly Hill.

We naturally started talking about the fires and the opportunity they provided to search for new cave entrances normally hidden in the scrub, as well as reminiscing about the good old days. Geoff said "I also remember in the early 1960s, speaking to Harry Hansen, Joyce Lonzar's Dad who used to be Ranger at Flinders Chase before George Lonzar. He said he was walking out from Kingscote to Flinders Chase one school holidays (I guess around 1900) and found an enormous cave entrance that the largest floods would run into. He pointed to (location censored).

To cut a long story short, he gave me sufficient information not only to tie unequivocally into the old Kelly Hill topography, but to significantly extend my understanding of the way in which water has shaped Kelly Hill. I am unable to tell you anything that will identify the exact location of the entrance, but I can tell you that it is consistent with the broad distribution of the local geographical features, and that consequently may reasonably be expected to access a potentially significant cave system. In historical terms it would seem that Harry first located it somewhere around the start of the 20th century, well before Harold Bell and party commenced their systematic exploration and development of what we now know as the multi-entrance main Kelly Hill tourist cave. It is also safe to infer that it has not been visited for perhaps the best part of a century or more. Whether that is an indication that the cave leading off from the "enormous" entrance did not measure up to the expectations such an entrance would engender, we will have to wait to find out. It nevertheless sounds tantalising, and not unreasonable to assume that if the cave was in response to the "largest floods", as deduced by Harry Hansen, there is a reasonable chance of systematic exploration locating a way on, even should none be obvious initially.

Corroborating evidence reinforces Geoff's information, and makes even more sense of the entire Kelly Hill system. In effect, this latest information provides pretty much the missing piece of the jigsaw that not only tells us we should expect to find a significant amount of cave in this location, but also encourages us to continue our recent efforts at 6 Mile Lagoon.

Even though Harry Hansen took it in his stride as a lad, it will be quite a hike to reach the spot, but the information and the indicators leave little doubt that it will be worthwhile.

Grant Gartrell.



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL COUNCIL WINS THE LOTTERY

Winning the lottery? Must be a mistake, as the caving fraternity doesn't receive dollars from government agencies or anyone else for that matter!



However, it is true and it is all due to the massive amount of work done on Kangaroo Is over the last twelve months by those of us trundling around the bush, with clip boards, LIDAR imagery, and distoXs.

Back in August and September Dave Gillieson and I worked up an application for the Friends of Parks Small Grants programme for \$5000.00. The application, supported by National Parks on KI, was for support to pay for ferry costs, ESRI licences and for work on developing an app based geological trail highlighting the caves and karst of the western end of KI.

We had submitted this application and, about two days later, the Friends of Parks announced another grant round, and this time it was for serious dosh: \$75,000.00. So, Dave and I, along with Brett Dalzell, Pete Hannan - National parks KI Rangers in charge of what we do on KI - set to again to work up an application. Numerous zoom meetings, lots of talking with cavers, the ASF, ACKMA, Airborne Research Australia, local organisations on KI, archaeologists and lots of hours on budgets by Heiko, and another application was submitted in early November.



There must be a cave around here somewhere? Cave hunting on KI, October 2020. Photo: C Buswell.

Just after the collective grant writers put their computers to sleep and decided on getting a life, news came through that we were successful in gaining \$5000.00 from the Small Grants scheme.

Now the questions are: where to from here?

There is a heap of work to do on KI, and members of all three caving clubs are involved in various ways. However, there are some serious issues that need to be addressed around cave surveying, data processing, software licences, and workloads. In order to sort some of this out and get the ball rolling in mid-January, the SASC will call a meeting of those interested to sort out some of these issues. So those of you with cave survey skills, or ArcGIS skills, or computer drawing skills, we need your help. Put your hand up and get involved as, for once, we have some money to help put what cavers do out there in the big wide world.

How about a cave mapping festival, starting with reading instruments, drawing all those measurements up on graph paper, through to final production and placing this on ArcGIS generated maps ...

If we can deal with the ever-growing scrub on KI, we can do anything!

Clare Buswell.

End of year cavers gathering!

Who- cavers from SCG/FUSSI/CEGSA

What- an end of year get together and BBQ hosted by the SA Speleo Council Cave SAR team

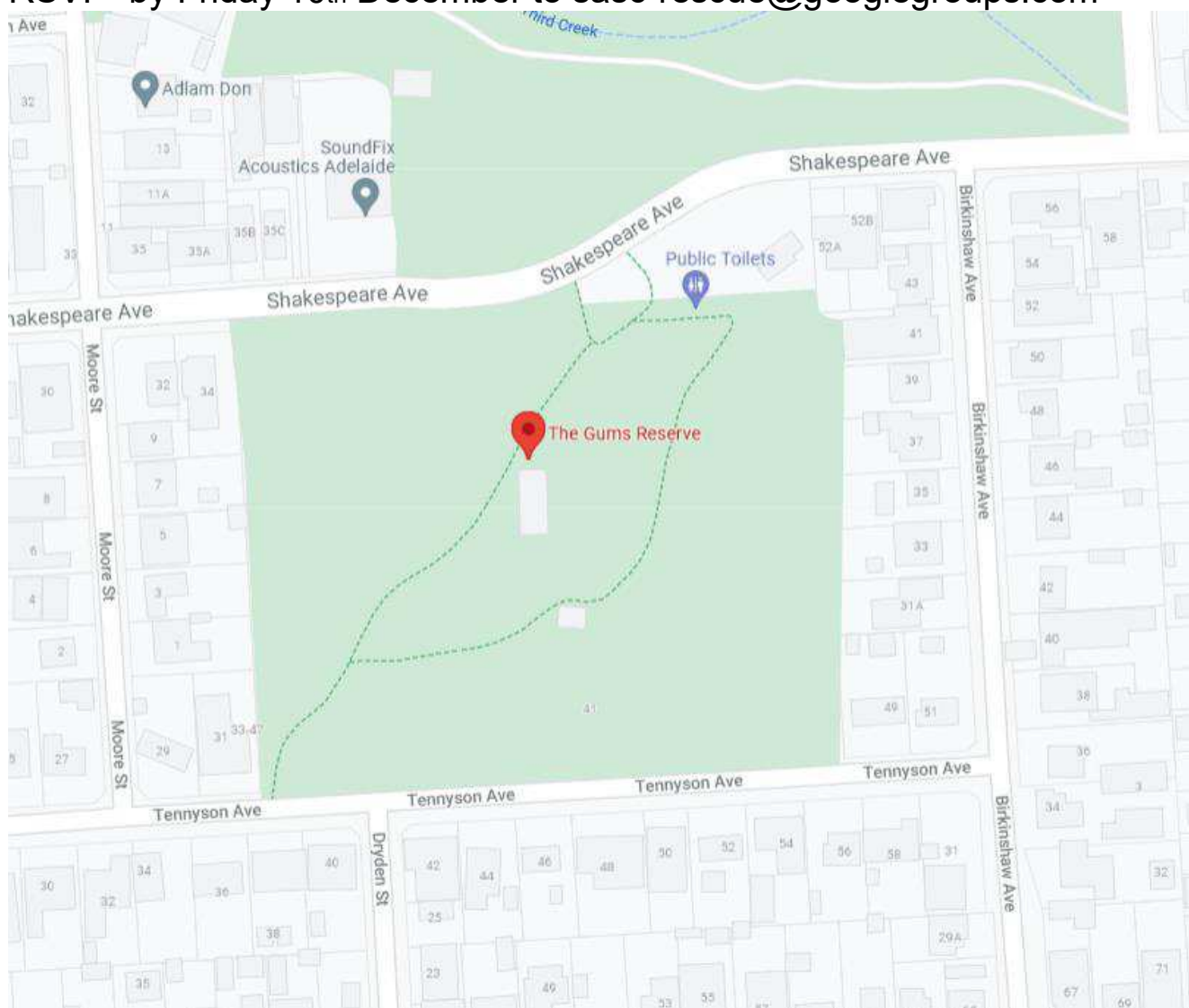
When- Sunday 12th December 1100-1500

Where- The Gums Reserve, Shakespeare Ave Tranmere

Why- networking with fellow cavers and practicing some rescue skills and vertical techniques plus getting excited about cave search and rescue activities for 2022!

What to bring- vertical gear (harness, SRT, helmet), chair, whatever you want to be cooked on the BBQ, BYO drinks, there will be salads/bread/sauces to share

RSVP- by Friday 10th December to sasc-rescue@googlegroups.com



Calendar of Events

	Type of Event	Description	Contact
24/11/21	General Meeting	Arkaba Hotel 7:30pm	Ian Lewis
??/12/21	Committee Meeting	TBA	Ian Lewis
22/12/21	No General Meeting	No General Meeting in December.	
26/01/22	General Meeting	SA Museum Royal Society Room 7:30pm	Ian Lewis
29/01/22	Annual Report	Articles Due	Athol Jackson
??/02/22	Committee Meeting	TBA	Ian Lewis
09/02/22	CEGSA NEWS	Articles due	Athol Jackson
12/02/22	Annual General Meeting and BBQ	143 Tyeka Drive, ONE TREE HILL SA 5114 BBQ 6:00pm AGM 7:30pm	Pam Payne
23/02/22	General Meeting	SA Museum Royal Society Room 7:30pm	
23/03/22	General Meeting	SA Museum Royal Society Room 7:30pm	
	Committee Meetings	Continuous email meetings between meets	
	Caving	Regular KI Restoration Trips See	Matt Smith
	Caving	Continuing Fleurieu Peninsula Exploration	Grant Gartrell

****Extra trips will be notified in the Calendar on the Website or at General Meetings****

To be covered by insurance it is mandatory that caving trips involving club members must be registered as CEGSA Trips. To do this, the nature and timing of the trip must be entered in the Calendar of events in CEGSA NEWS, minuted at a General Meeting of Members or entered in the Website Calendar. The member registering such a trip must be an accredited CEGSA Trip Coordinator and must agree to act in this capacity for the trip. There must also be an accredited trip leader with the appropriate skill endorsement to take a party caving.

Also, please ensure that a report of the trip is submitted to the Records Officer and Editor in a timely manner.

Notes: