

F U S S I



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**The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Flinders University Speleological Society Incorporated**

WHO IS WHO IN FUSSI

PRESIDENT

Kitto, Kirsty
8234 0663
Physics Dep't.
Flinders Uni #12174

kirsty.kitto@flinders.edu.au

TREASURER

Bronwyn Turner
Townhouse 2 Flinders
University Bedford Pk. 5042
8291 6359
turn0246@flinders.edu.au
0428 815 635

SASC REP

Keven Cocks,
10 Sloan Road,
HAWTHORNDENE 5051
8278 3156

kevencoc@tafe.sa.edu.au

SECRETARY

Jan Schmorte,
International Students Unit,
Flinders Uni

8322 6374

jan.schmorte@flinders.edu.au

EQUIPMENT OFFICER

Kitto, Kirsty
8234 0663
Physics Dep't.
Flinders Uni #12174

kirsty.kitto@flinders.edu.au

ASF REP

Clare Buswell,
PO Box 325
MACCLESFIELD. 5251
8388 9512

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES REP

Kirsty Kitto,
Physics Dep't.
Flinders Uni #12174

kirsty.kitto@flinders.edu.au

SAFETY OFFICER

Clare Buswell,
PO Box 325
MACCLESFIELD. 5251
8388 9512
clare.buswell@flinders.edu.au

LIBRARIAN

Sam Davies
15 Helen St
CHRISTIE DOWNS.5164
8382 0767
davi0471@flinders.edu.au

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Front cover photo: Sharon finds a new cave on the Nullarbor. NXK 0838	
Photographer: Heiko Maurer	

NOT A LEECH IN SIGHT - CAVING IN TASI AGAIN

Clare Buswell

January 3 -14 2004

Those supposed to be present: Clare Buswell, Heiko Maurer, Ivan Riley, Robert Hunter and James. James got Chicken pox on the Overland Track at about the same time we were on the boat. Robert's back decided to give him hell so he was confined to barracks in Adelaide.

Those who were present at some time: Clare, Heiko, Ivan, Paul van Nynanten, Chris Reilly, Tony, (NCC), Paul Flood (NPWS), Louise and Tony from the UK plus two others from STC.

This was the second FUSSI trip to Tasi for the 03/04 summer period as those on it could not escape their respective salt mines for the earlier trip in December 03. (See Vol.16. No 1. 2004). Clare, Heiko and Ivan loaded the Subaru up to the gunnels with the caving gear, bush walking gear and the odd piece of street clothing on the 29th of Dec 03, drove to the edge of the world and hopped on the boat.

We arrived in Mole Ck, left most of the gear at the house and then disappeared into the bush to Reynolds Falls for a couple of days of great bush walking and New Years eve celebrations. Returned to Mole Creek organised ourselves for a trip into Kubla with a few extras from NCC for the next day.

So there we all were, standing at the gate to Kubla Khan all dressed up and surprise upon surprise the key to the cave worked! We had left Chris Reilly, his son Ariel, and Chris's girl friend in the parking area near the bottom entrance of Kubla Khan so that Chris could rig the exit pitch and put a rope down to the creek to help the freezing cold bods exit. Their plan after that was to leave and drive back to Launceston. Whilst they were doing the rigging, it appears that Mavis was lurking around in the form of the local farmer who owns the property at the end of the road into Kubla Khan reserve. He drove out locking the gate behind him leaving Chris and co stuck in the reserve until the caving crowd returned some eight hours later!

Meanwhile underground, the trip proceeded to the usual photographic spots and clicked away merrily. In this case wonders do never cease to inspire. We slowly made our way to the abseil down into the River Alph and on to the Pleasure Dome. (When are NPWS going to bolt the flowstone abseil down to the river?) Spent about an hour lining up shots whilst, Tony attempted to adjust his newly acquired digital camera to cave photography. Now there is a challenge. Reluctantly we left this beautiful place for the cold swim and the exit pitch. The Tasi bunch of cavers noted how low the river was, I noted that it was as freezing as ever as we wondered along and back tracked to the bird bath formation which marked the exit out of the river. The last time I was here I had been in and out of the water for about an hour and had the uncontrollable shakes. This time it all seemed a breeze despite the usual cold of the creek. Many thanks to Chris for the rigging and the hand line from the gate, which is why it all seemed easy. We exited to a bright late afternoon and returned home for the usual beer and caving talk.

The next day we began the Tasi caving trip routine: scrubbing ropes and other grotty caving gear. Ivan had constructed a new rope washer and it worked to perfection on the Blue Water ropes we took into Kubla Khan. We later discovered that the Edelrid is a millimetre narrower than Blue Water and this meant a bit more work. But hey, hook it up to a tap and life is far easier than sitting a creek with an adobe rope washer or a scrubbing brush and cleaning 100m of rope!

NOT A LEECH IN SIGHT - CAVING IN TASI AGAIN

On the Monday we collected a couple of lost English cavers and took them into Haille Salassie cave. We rigged up the abseil pitch and descended into the cavern below. This is a pretty little cave but has lots of mud, so walking around without spreading it further is a bit of a task. We spent about an hour looking around and decided to leave. Ivan poked his head out of the cave and gave a passing tourist a bit of a fright only to discover that the passing tourist was a friend from Adelaide!

We spent the rest of the day looking around above Maracoopa Cave, finding Devils Anastomosis, Devils Ear hole and other interesting looking holes. This gave the forlorn UK two an intimate taste of the good old Australian bush. I'm pretty sure that they did not appreciate it, as one was heard to mutter as she clambered down a steep hillside hanging onto trees for support, "is this what is called an epic'. We reassured her that it was not, that we were not as mad as a bag of cats or lost, just barking insane! To prove that we were not lost, Ivan managed to navigate all of us back to base coming out at the bridge behind the ticket kiosk! For the evenings entertainment we trundled off to Maracoopa cave to visit the tourist section and set up some photos. After about two hours this we called it quits for the day.

Being bright eyed and bushie tailed we collected Paul Flood from NPWS and took him with us into Lynds and later Croesus. He returned the favour by taking us into the back of Maracoopa via Short Ck. The night before I had talked with Paul about the state of his thermal underwear or the wet suit that would be needed for these two caves. As he did not have a wet suit he came along with a couple of changes of caving clothes so he would be warm, but only at the entrances of both Lynds and Croesus caves. The creek that flows through Lynds cave was not subject to turbidity this time as no thunderstorm and rain was happening around it as it was the last time we were here a couple of years ago. We trundled off past the gate and up the small waterfall to reach the main stream passage of Lynds Cave. Ivan and I then did a bit of navigation of the stream floor so as to find the way on. Paul took this second dunking very well and continued to be entranced by the beauty of the flow stone banks that are the hallmark of this cave. We took our time, looking at the formation and for life in the stream way, but alas could find no crayfish for the BBQ!



Croesus Cave: Heiko and Paul enjoying the view. Photo Ivan Riley

NOT A LEECH IN SIGHT - CAVING IN TASI AGAIN

Heiko, Ivan and Paul headed off to Croesus after Lynds with instructions not to freeze to death and to take lots of photos. They managed to leave some of the photography gear with the car but all came out safely with Paul reasonably chilled but cheerful and enthusiastic about where he had been and what he had seen. Croesus is a stream passage cave with a floor that consists of deep gour pools and lots of formation on the walls. It is however freezing as you have very limited opportunities to get out of the water, which is why I opted to remain on the surface and listen to the cricket.

The following evening Paul took us into the back of Maracoopa cave. This was a real treat. I had been here about ten years previous and had vague memories of it. We left the easy walking tracks of the tourist section and climbed down to the creek and up past the tank which supplies water to the gour pool of the tourist section of the cave. After this it was out past the sediment banks and through a gravelly crawl into the main parts of the cave. Paul took us into a classic stream passage via what is affectionately known as the Roll Along. Heiko watched as I took off my helmet and began to travel through the roll along, he decided that he could not fit and stayed behind. Big pity as the stream passage is beautiful with lots of white speleothems and aragonite. We returned and collected Heiko and climbed up to the Opium Den equivalent of Kubla. It was photography time! Half an hour or so later we packed up the flash bulbs and wondered our way out.

We packed up and headed down to Hobart and then Ida Bay. In Hobart we collected Louise and Tony the two UK cavers, and a couple of Tasi cavers who wanted to join us on the trip into Midnight Hole and Mystery Ck. By the time we got up to the entrance of Midnight Hole there was quite a collection of us. Heiko, Ivan and I would do this trip as a bounce trip so as to get some SRT practice up for the Mini Martin trip in a couple of days time. The remainder of the group would go through the Matchbox squeeze and out via Mystery Ck. Ivan lead with Heiko in the middle and I acted as tail end Charlie. All went well with the 5 pitches being easily negotiated. Heiko stayed at the bottom pitch for a bit and then headed back up its fifty metres whilst Ivan and I showed the other three members the way on down to the steam passage of Mystery Ck via the Laundry Chute. We then returned and began the long exit of 165m of SRT out. At the top we collected all the rope and headed out to a well earned beer and shower. A satisfying day of caving and fun. We spent the next day cleaning ropes and gear, creating quite an impression in the caravan park. We then repacked every thing for the Mini Martin trip the following day.

The Mini Martin gig goes something like this: get up early and be on the road out of Dover by eight in the morning. Start the walk in from the car park through the quarry by 9 and two hours later after losing the track and the cave a couple of times you dump your gear at the entrance. Cave for as long as you want and then exit. It's the exit that takes the real time!

This was the second time this crew had been in Mini Martin, (Ivan's third), so we had a good idea of the process. This time rather than mist and rainbows in the cave, we had rain on and off. Ivan descended first the first pitch of 110m and waited around on the muddy slope until I came down with the second lot of ropes. He had a choice here he could wait at the bottom of the rope itself and get rained on or he could move about three metres down slope and stand in the only available safe place next to a very smelly decomposing bird. He chose the rain. Heiko had to hang around and get wet until I yelled OFF ROPE! Ivan and I rigged and abseiled on to the next pitch of 30 metres by which time Heiko had arrived from the first pitch. The pitches in Mini Martin are free abseils down clean walls, and makes for one of the most satisfying pieces of caving around in OZ. It also gives one a daunting feeling on the way out. Heiko and I met up at the top of the third pitch and I told Heiko to go on as I had got an attack of the heevies jeevies that I couldn't seem to get rid of and that really pissed me off! As Ivan and Heiko got to the bottom of the last pitch and trundled off to the river that flows through Exit cave I began the long exit out.

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At least that would help with the time it takes to get out. So it was prusik, prusik, prusik and prusik some more, then cross the rebeley then prusik, prusik for 100m, cross rebeley and prusik the last 10 metres to the top. After about 2 hours we were all out and had derigged the cave. Then we began the long walk out to the car and the drive back to Dover which we reached by about 8pm.

Many thanks to Paul Flood for giving us his time at Mole Ck, to the NCC members whose generosity, knowledge and fun always make a trip to Tasi rewarding. Finally thanks for the bolting efforts of the late Jeff Butt and the rest of STC.



Heiko on the bottom pitch of Mini Martin. Photo Ivan Riley.

NOT A LEECH IN SIGHT - CAVING IN TASI AGAIN

Rigging details:

Kubla Khan: Ropes needed: 2 X 50 metres. A couple of 5 to 8 metre hand lines: Abseiling gear and SRT gear. We had two whailets, and three racks. SRT frog system used.

Pitch details: On all pitches use double rope or cordelette for pull down. Or re-rig into double rope for the last person down.

Top Entrance pitch. 15 metres: Rig from gate.

Second pitch. 15 metres: On the left hand side wall or floor, can't remember.

Third Pitch. 10 metres: rig from double tape and maillon around a large rock on the floor. Make sure you can pull down the rope before the last person abseils down. Be sure to follow the approved route through this section.

Sally's Folly: Abseil from 2 p hangers placed in the rift near the previously used choke stone.

Handline comes in handy for the descent into and out of the silk shop area and for the climb to the Forbidden City.

Fourth Pitch: The Flowstone wall abseil, anchor onto a stal in the floor. The rope likes to swing out to the left when on the abseil so make sure you stay to the right or you will end up landing in the freezing water.

Bottom Entrance. 30 metres. Rig before entering the cave if you are doing a through trip from the Top entrance. Rig from 2 p hangers as a "Y hang" on the pitch rebelay, just above the tree usually used: allows 2 climbs on the same rope.

Hand line from gate to River Alph. Rig before entering cave.

Midnight Hole

No permit is required for Midnight Hole. However, at the car park at the beginning of the walk into the cave there is an intentions book for walkers and cavers. Fill it in.

Midnight Hole. IB11. Rigging details:

The old eye bolts have been replaced with two stainless steel bolts on each pitch. The rope must be threaded through **both bolts**.

Pitch lengths:

Entrance pitch: 21metres

Second pitch: 39 metres.

Third pitch: 8 metres.

Fourth pitch: 34 metres.

Fifth pitch is around 50 metres.

The bolts in Midnight Hole have been replaced so the rigging length details in Bunton. S. & Eberhard. R., *Vertical Caves of Tasmania*. are **not** correct, as the new bolts are positioned differently. This is pertinent for the last pitch which has various stated pitch lengths. Some say it is 50m and some say 60m.

Mini Martin

Rig from bloody great tree at entrance to first bolt which is about 10m after the lip. Rope length 120m.

Second and third pitches 30m each: rig from eye bolts. Rope must go through both bolts. We took 2X50m ropes as we did not have short lengths of 35 metres.

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION

Guy Smith

Prelude

Another minute, another mile. Another minute, another mile. Another minute, another mile. Another minute, another mile. Are we nearly there yet? Another minute, another mile. Are we half way there yet? Another minute, another mile - have I told that one yet? There are thousands of trees on the Nullarbor. They're all autistic. They must be, they've got so much personal space.



The traditional Nullarbor photograph being taken by Jan of Sharon.

Few trees, but the Nullarbor roadhouse in the background.

We took all the essentials - wine, beer, coffee, cheese, olive tapenade, one fridge, two espresso makers, knee pads. We only missed a couple of things - tents that stay up, tyres that stay up.

Personally, life in Brisbane was busy. I needed a break. I flew away, lunched in Central Markets - a step in the right direction, but not enough. We drove out of phone range, and another 1000kms, just to be sure. Then I turned off the mobile, went down a hole in the ground, and turned out the light. That was enough.

The Trip

The 2004 FUSS Nullarbor trip preparations began, were frantic, and were pretty much finished when we left on Friday the 17th of September. We all gathered together around midday at Sharon's house (in the south of Adelaide, of course!). Heiko Maurer, Clare Buswell, Sharon Drabsch, Jan Schmorte, Debbie Callison, Paul Waclawik, Chris Wood, Guy Smith, two Toyota Corollas, one Land Cruiser with trailer and lots of gear. Like, lots of gear - we brought back spare wine, beer, food, gas and water.

The drive to Warbla was averagely eventful. Two of the three cars took their first pit stop in Port Wakefield, enjoyed a country bakery and waited for the other car, which took its first pit stop in Adelaide. We planned to have dinner in Iron Knob. It was shut. We drove on to Kimba, otherwise 'famous' for the Big Galah. There was an engagement party - we suspect that explains the closure of Iron Knob. Counter tea at the Kimba pub is recommended. We drove,

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION

slept at the caravan park in Wudinna (pre-booked and to avoid unpacking), and drove some more the next morning.

We all stopped in Ceduna for last minute supplies (feather Boas!) while Clare and Heiko visited Max Meth to get Ken Boland's GPS references for Nullarbor features he'd noted from the air and we were to check on the ground.

About 10kms before the turn off to Warbla, the two lead cars stopped to stretch their legs. A while later, the third car zoomed by. We caught them before the border.

We headed inland to Warbla as the first bush campsite, unpacked and checked out the gear while the designated (ten days, eight meals, eight people – the benefits of university maths training are unexpected and amazing) cook prepared the first feast. In the morning we discovered new economic principles and the devastating effects of deflationary pressures in airbeds and car tyres. Having recovered our equilibrium we headed off via the inland track.



Packing up camp after first night in tents.

It was hot, sticky and the last 40kms in to Eucla, quite bumpy. A sudden inflationary spike had us heading back out to our first cave. Weebubbie was great - it's years (not quite decades, plural) since I've been caving and the doline and the smell of cave breathing out the entrance was wonderful. The water was crystal clear and very inviting. We dived in with cries of "Aaargghh. Come on in, the water's fine!".

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION



Chris (centre of picture, near top of ladder) descending the Webubbie doline.

We saw the first of the Nullarbor wildlife. On the trip, we saw lots of stumpy tailed lizards, birds of prey, roos, emus, two horses, a feral dog, a couple of snakes, and one redback.

In the afternoon we drove on to camp at Abracurrie via (but avoiding!) the Chowilla landslip.



Entrance doline to Abracurrie cave. Cars on horizon at left

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION

Nightly attempt battling Mavis's deflationary efforts were proving more successful, but once again, it was nice to be down a cave the next morning- and Abracurrie has a warm cathedral atmosphere. Half way along, we found a dirt mound with a cross of rocks on it - hope it's a joke! Paul, as accredited trip photographer, took on the difficult task of capturing the vastness of the cave. We walked about, randomly painting the cave walls with light while he kept the shutter open at f4.5 for 15 minutes.



The main chamber in Abracurrie cave. Ghost of caver present at right.

We then got back in the saddle and drove to Old Homestead. The view off the escarpment over the plains below was sudden, unexpected and breath-taking!



The Nullarbor isn't all flat. Admiring the view from the escarpment.

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION

There was a strong southerly in the evening, so we set up our tents accordingly. By morning, it was a strong northerly. I don't know what caused the 180 degree change, but there certainly isn't much to slow a wind down out there. The northerly wasn't gusty, but seriously strong. I wasn't sure the tent would still be there when we came out of the cave. They all were, but Paul and Deb swept a small sand dune out of their tent, Chris had a broken pole and there was some rationalization of accommodation.

Old Homestead is a great cave. After some rope work getting in, and some very pointy rocks to crawl on, there is some wonderful old formation, and myriad chambers to wander. The strangest formation looks like ruins of a sci-fi civilization - an irregular lattice of mud-coloured rock panes. But a close second was the hairy wall - one of the chamber walls has really fine 'hairs' growing out - they're nearly straight, but not quite, and not even nearly vertical. I swear I saw them swaying in the air-movements. At one stage we walked a long way through what was obviously a large chamber filled to nearly the top with silt - and so had been filled with water when it rained. Just slightly worrying!

The cave is well developed and protected - there are reflective markers designating paths throughout the cave. Someone's gone to a lot of trouble, and I guess it's right to protect the cave - but it does take away from the 'intrepid adventurer' feeling. :-(

The word "beer" rattled around someone's head and out their mouth. We turned around at RDF E. On the way out, we had a few minutes interesting discussion, concerning which particular pokey little passage was the way out. If we'd known we'd got it right first time, we wouldn't have had the opportunity to get it right the third time as well!

In the evening, we watched thunderstorms on the horizon. I woke during the night to the sound of rain on the tent. Well, the upside was that the Nullarbor was no longer dusty!

Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun. Cave enthusiasts with an ultra-light, however, fly over the Nullarbor looking for potential cave entrances and taking their GPS coordinates. Picture yourself - briefly - flying low across the desert, investigating a promising looking foot-wide black spot on the ground, controlling a light plane and taking coordinates exactly as you fly over it. Almost exactly. Nearish. And then describing the feature in writing.

We had a list of these coordinates. On Wednesday and Thursday, we went looking for them, in emu parades. Heiko would take us about a hundred metres from the coordinates, line us up and set us off, looking for appropriate holes in rock, and maybe the precursor depressions of dolines. It was surprisingly peaceful and relaxing. But, the problem was the compass in the GPS receiver only worked when you were moving. So Heiko would line us up and tell us which way to go. We'd start. Then we'd have to veer off a little to the left, or right. Not to be confused with someone investigating something interesting. All instructions had to be yelled over considerable distance.

Somehow or other, we found most of the listed coordinates in a few square kilometre area - including some promising, breathing pot-holes: Sharon's Hole (discovered by Sharon), Two Gecko Hole (Gecko found near to two holes in rock platform), Dead Cat Lair (there was a surprisingly well-preserved body of a feral cat in the bottom), and one pot-hole whose entrance was clearly intended for women only (Minute Grunt).

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION



Sharon emerging from Sharon's Hole (NXK 0838). Clare about to write up the discovery.

Back at the campsite, there was the hut. And there was a toilet. And there was a redback. Fortunately, it wasn't dark. Our final night at the Old Homestead Campsite saw the customary FUSSI Fancy dress party underway. Dusty cavers were transformed into gents with colourful bowties, flash dinner jackets, a bloke was seen in a turban and thanks to Sharon, a belly dance was performed. Lots of wine was consumed over a three course meal enabling the "state of the world theory" to be debated, tested, shown to be false, sent back to the ethics committee, printed in the Lancet, then found to be true in warped places only. It was finally dismissed after the intervention of some Haighs chocolate speckles wondering around the dusty space time continuum.

On Friday, we drove west to Mullamullang - a vast, long (5.5kms) cave with rock piles and rock piles and more rock piles - and some coffee-and-cream formation. We got there late and the others went down, as far as the 1 mile marker, after dark. I didn't go down. I was on cooking duty - perhaps the highlight of the trip.

We hit the road - well, OK, the dirt track - about mid-morning the next day. We stopped at the first service station to investigate the slow leak in Paul's tyre - his spare- and to change one tyre on Jan's car. It had a chunk taken out of it. Jan's spare had a nail right through the rubber - neatly cut off at the surface of the tyre! How it got there, we could only speculate. But I'm sure some people's ears were burning.

Around dusk we rolled into Ceduna. The preferred caravan park was full - it was the first weekend of school holidays and locals had gathered to watch the AFL Grand Final. They were ecstatic because Port Adelaide had won its first AFL final, beating Brisbane convincingly. I smiled and nodded and didn't say I remembered how good it felt the first time. Fortunately,

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION

the town is geared up for grey nomads, so there were other caravan parks. We went to the pub, booked a bed with fading phone batteries, ordered beer and someone else's cooking. Those of us who like animals alive and dead sank our fangs into steak. The vegetarians nibbled away at something. That night some members of the group slept on mattresses that not only stayed up but had springs in them!

We again rose early for the final 780km leg of the trip. On the way we passed some cyclists. We're all part of life's rich tapestry.

By sunset we were back at Sharon's house had distributed the contents of the cars and trailer and shared the \$1,300 petrol cost for the three cars that had covered the approximately 3,400kms of another memorable FUSS Nullarbor trip. When's the next one?

PostScript

MAVIS' TALLY: Four air mattresses, three flat tyres, one tent pole and one party dress. BUT no wine glasses, coffee mugs or sunglasses have been reported missing.

Shameful events: we came home with two bottles of red wine and two long necks of beer!

Useful information: Petrol was cheap up until Ceduna and most expensive in Madura. After Ceduna, the cheapest petrol was at the SAFF at Mundrabilla. Showers could be had at Eucla fairly cheaply. Weather was warm when we were underground and cool (due to cloud) when we were doing surface exploration.

NXK 0838 Sharon's Cave

Cave Description:

Blowhole in rock pavement, pavement 4mX3.9m) strong breathing solution tube, depth 3.20m and 2.1 wide. Two leads off the south side of the solution tube. First lead is 72cm side and 57cm high, from which the second lead runs off. The second lead is 51 cm wide and 56cm high, length 2m. Some decoration is found in a side hole 25cm high in the side of this passage. Three Cave crickets found. All juveniles.

NXK0795. Two Gecko Blowhole.

Cave Description:

Blowhole in shallow doline. Two vertical entrances in a solution tube leading to water. Depth of solution tube: 2.46m and 1.20m wide. Water depth: 10cm at time of visit, 23.9.04. Three leads all at water level: First 60cm wide, and 20cm high. Second 46cm wide and 37cm high. Third lead muddy, needs digging.

NXK 0796 Minute Grunt Blowhole

Cave Description:

Two shallow depression with the western depression opening via a narrow solution tube into a small cave with numerous avens. Breathing. The entrance chamber is 3m deep and 2 m wide. The entrance is narrow and had to be excavated. Unstable.

NXK 0837 OR NXK 0797 Dead cat Blowhole

ECONOMICS 1001A – DEFLATION

Cave Description:

Blowhole. Solution tube entrance, 2.5m deep and 2m wide. Not breathing and no leads noticed. Used as a cat's lair, free climbable. The cave is found in a Depression 4m X 5m. Drainage is from the east into the cave.

NXK 0840 After Beer Blowhole

Cave Description:

Blowhole. Solution tube entrance in a large depression/shallow doline. (17m wide). Depth of solution tube 2.60m, 2m wide. Breathing at time of visit. 23/9/04

NXK 0791 Suck hole Blow hole.

Blowhole: 2.5 deep 1.5 wide. Narrow tubes going off at floor level. No real leads. Sucking hard.

NXK 0779 Rock platform.

Slabs of rock in a shallow depression with three Pittosporum trees. Depression is 10m X 10m, depth is 1m. No cave found.

WHAT'S ON

Bridge jump	15th Feb. Every second Tuesday after 5pm till 8pm until daylight saving ends.
Fair day. March 9 th 10.30 – 2.20	Mall level, Union building. We need people to promote the club and get some new members. Let us know if you can come for a couple of hours.
March 10 th 1pm	Show and tell. Come along and see what caving is about and find out about the gear you need. BYO lunch. Clubs and Societies Meeting rm.
Caving trip. 12/13 March.	Lower Southeast. Mt Gambier.
9th – 26th April Mid Semester Break	
Caving trip 8th-17 th April.	Nullarbor.
May 14-16	Flinders Ranges trip.

FOR SALE

FUSSI logo embossed wine glasses \$7.00ea
(Acts as a Mavis decoy device in times of coffee deprivation.)