



FUSSI Newsletter

Vol. 21 | No. 1 | 2009



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C O N T E N T S

The Return of the Underground	p. 3
In and around the Vercoors08 conference France	p. 7
News from the ASF Council Meeting	p. 9
FUSSI 2008 Membership List and Future Trips	p. 11

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Front Cover Photo Credit: Clare Buswell.
Front Cover Photo: Speleothems in Castle Cave.
Yarrangobilly. NSW.

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THE RETURN OF THE UNDERGROUND

Kevin Dixon

Yarrangobilly Caves NSW. Dec 28th 08 - Jan 4th 09.

After fourteen years absence, I really wasn't sure whether the desire to dive underground would be as strong as it once was. It was an 'adventure' caving experience into Castle Cave the previous summer that had planted the seed to suggest this trip to old colleagues. Clare leapt into the organisational side of things as soon as the suggestion was mooted and before I knew it, it was all systems go! I couldn't bail out now, even if I'd wanted to. If nothing else, it would be a delight to relax at Cotterill's Cottage with Clare and Heiko, and Eric, Kylea, Ruby, Bella and Jack, the latter whom I'd yet to be introduced to. A bonus turned out to be meeting the younger, more agile cavers, Michael and Vicki, the latter a first-timer.

I needn't have worried. **Helectite Hole** was a great reintroduction to going underground; Clare choosing somewhere requiring ropes and ladders to get one in the mood for the remaining 'holes in the ground'. Hitting the cave environment was a good feeling and Helectite Hole proved to be the perfect place to start all over again; the cool cave air; the mud slide down to the formations; with the bonus of cave life at the entrance, maggots galore. The new overalls had been broken in!

I've never taken an interest in the technicalities involved in this side of the caving caper, probably



Clare and Heiko at the Top of Helictite Hole



Kevin, Vicki, and Michael, being coool

because I wouldn't trust myself with *my own* safety, let alone that of other humans. But I have always felt safe in the hands of those who know their rope, knot and clip security. So when it was time to get on the rope, I had no qualms trusting those I had always trusted with my safety many years ago (even though their faculties might have deteriorated to the same extent that my own had).

The schedule that had been set us was quite harrowing, with two caves a day. The second cave for that first day was Y12-'**Coppermine**', which added another dimension to the caving experiences which were only vague memories, i.e., getting wet and freezing one's proverbials! Fortunately, a friend had loaned me a wetsuit and I had bought some wetsuit booties, which saved me from the worst of the cold. But the lack of neoprene below the knees and arms in the wetsuit didn't save me from experiencing the actual temperature when going under the 'duck under'. Michael showed his relative youth by stripping down for the partial submersion.

THE RETURN OF THE UNDERGROUND

Memories came back of having been to this cave on one of my other Yagby adventures, though I could have been confusing it with other caves done here or in Tassie. Whatever may be the reality, this has become one of my favourites (if it weren't already and I'd only forgotten that it had been, if you see what I mean!). So do get yourself cold and wet, and experience what is a cave with a wealth of pretties on offer.



Kevin escaping the pitch of Easter Cave.

That was the other thing about the gap in time between trips. My only vivid memories of the actual caves explored during other trips were of East Deep Creek, Bathhouse (the latter merely to discover if it had been aptly named. It had been!) and Easter Cave. But it was only the latter that I hadn't been inside, purely because we hadn't discovered its entrance on that trip many years ago. Clare, generously, placed it on the wish list and I was grateful that I was at last going to explore it. I now wish they'd never found it and seriously believe that the entrance should be forever hidden to save others the anguish of having to get out of the potential difficulties that awaits them! On the other hand, some 'masochists' might actually get off on this kind of challenge!

Though it was pretty in its own way, I didn't see the big deal, preferring other caves much more. Then again, I might not have been viewing it clearly because of my thoughts about just how I was going to get back up that 4m-dogleg tube that I'd just come down! Don't get me wrong, the experience will be forever etched in my memory, where other caves explored clearly hadn't. And I suppose this is the essence of caving, recalling those difficult experiences along with the spectacular pretties to be seen.

Vicki proved she was a natural at this type of adventure as she got back up the tube with minimum effort. I didn't have the same ease and took an age to get to the top, stopping for a breather and a look at how best to approach the next part. Michael found the narrow bend a bit more challenging. It was here that my other old caving comrades, Eric and Heiko took charge. Heiko, calm, cool and collected sat up the top and talked through possible exit strategies. Eric, donned his cape and mask, displayed his caving prowess, and helped from the bottom of climb to get us all out of this hellhole. He made the exit up look remarkably easy, viewed from my vantage point directly above him. I now know how to make this exit much easier if I should ever have the misfortune of finding myself down there again. This, however, would only be possible if the faculties disappeared entirely; and I guess I wouldn't be caving by that time anyway. This, sadly, was one of the only caves in which I spent some time with Eric on this trip. But methinks there may be other such opportunities in the future.

The other one was **Helectite Hole** where I got the chance to cave not only with Eric, but also with his two daughters, Ruby and Bella, both of who proved that children have no fear. Ruby in particular displayed a great instinct on the ladder. Cavers of the future, but probably not too distant! But that was later in the week. Other caves were explored prior to this revisitation.

THE RETURN OF THE UNDERGROUND

So now I've caved with two generations of this family, though I didn't get 'down and dirty' with Kylea and Jack. I'm certain Jack would have relished the opportunity to make his way through the rock piles we struggled through in other caves, although he would have had to be kept on a short rope lest he get away from us all! Hopefully, there will be other opportunities in the future to cave together with the whole of the Schulz family.

North Deep Creek was my 'revelation' where memories of rock piles came flooding back. Though Clare professed innocence as to the actual order of caves explored on the trip, it all seemed to be done in such a way as to ease one back into the experiences to be had in differing cave environments. I'd once again forgotten what it was like to manoeuvre through rock piles. I truly relished it, sick bastard that I am, though I did now have to admit that kneepads were a necessary caving accessory; elbow pads wouldn't go astray, as well. We saw some pretties, though not what had been promised. We had also just about given up on ever finding what had been promised, expressing exaggerated joy at what we had seen in an effort to convince each other that it was time to get out of there. Fortunately, we soldiered on and, reaching the Donkey's Tail extension, discovered the fantasyland at the end, which we got our gear off to gain a better view of. It seemed that the caves were progressively becoming more and more spectacularly decorated. By god I love caving! We all left that cave on a high, after wrangling the gate into submission. Vicki was getting a very special introduction to the crazy world of caving and was noticeably grateful for having come along for the journey.

Restoration was next, if my memory serves me correctly. My actual memory of entering this cave is vague. Another rock pile, though without the same maze that we had previously. There was again a lot



The 'Rabbit's Ears' of Restoration Cave.

of decoration and a huge chamber to wander around, guided as we were by a line along the path to keep us from straying too far into places we shouldn't be.

Janus was to be our final cave, and it promised to be a very special way to finish this re-entry in to the world of caving, with only one group allowed in each year. We visited the area earlier in the day in order to find the cave and allow ourselves more time to explore inside the cave, rather than the bush around it in the search (if that makes sense). We caved here with one of the rangers, whose name was Kathryn Sellars. Alas, the way to our 'holy grail' was nowhere to be found, though we had seen sufficient to

suggest that it would be pretty bloody good had we found the path. To be honest, I think the week of caving was catching up with me and I didn't have the same enthusiasm for 'the search' as I'd had earlier in the week. The other thing was the cave itself, it just didn't 'feel right', and something I can't explain adequately here. I can't speak for the others on this trip, Kathryn, Clare, Michael and Vicki, but it was

THE RETURN OF THE UNDERGROUND

with some relief to me that we collectively agreed to exit; I just wasn't up for it, one too many rock piles! That was it, bar the walk back to the highway in the twilight.

Cotterill's had undergone renovations, of sorts, and my old bedroom wasn't as draughty as I recall, not that I'm complaining! There was rumour that the cottage would become a model of environmental sustainability in coming years, which would be marvellous, though I won't be holding my breathe. It was a hectic week and I only got to cave with my old comrade Heiko once, although we had plenty of time wandering about the bush together, this being another feature of a Yagby expedition. We feasted as FUSSI trips are renowned, refreshed ourselves with great wine and beer after long arduous days searching for and exploring caves. It seemed like only yesterday ...

This 'report' has been all about me and my experience of caving again after so long. But it was all that I remember caving with FUSS had always been; great camaraderie; new faces; a lot of laughs; political discussion; gourmet meals; New Year's Eve fancy dress and merriment; total faith in the competence and safety consciousness of your fellow cavers; getting dirty and bruised; hating it all some moments; and the awe of seeing this underground world.

I always tell those that respond that they'd be claustrophobic in this environment, "But haven't you ever wanted to visit another planet?" You have to put up with a little discomfort occasionally to earn such a reward!



The Crew on the front veranda of Cotterill's Cottage: L to R back row. Clare, Heiko, Michael. Front row: L-R. Kevin, Eric, Bella, Jack, Kylea, Ruby, and Vicki.

So, will I cave again? I hope so, though in future I think that I'll probably be accompanying comrade Heiko bushwalking more, with a bit of caving in between. I'm going to be campaigning for a visit to Jenolan (where I first discovered caves on a school excursion many moons ago) two years from now, and I hope that everyone that went on this trip will go and bring along a few new cavers as keen as Vicki turned out being. I look forward to seeing you all there.

SPELEO CLUB LOGOS ON CARS AT VERCOORS 08. FRANCE



SPELEO CLUB LOGOS ON CARS AT VERCOORS 08, FRANCE



Above left: A cargo container made into 60m of crawl space for the kids to 'go caving in'.
The kids loved it.
Above right: The exit of the speleo box via a pipe.

ASF COUNCIL MEETING RESULTS

As reported in the last issue of FUSI, the ASF was holding its annual council meeting in conjunction with the Karstaway Conference at Sale. Joe Sydney represented FUSI, and he ably put forward FUSI's concerns with regards insurance, keeping a national karst database, payment for the input of data into the new KID and the naming of the enviro fund.

Discussion on the implications of the caving accident at Wombeyan brought attention to the issue of double regulation concerning caving without a permit. Currently cavers can be prosecuted *twice* under separate sections of the Regulations and therefore are subject to twice the penalty. This situation does not apply to any other activity carried out in NSW NPs. ASF has in the past objected to this double regulation. The council resolved to make a submission to the draft review of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulations in NSW to voice our views on this issue. At the recent court case involving the Wombeyan Cave incident, the second charge was not followed up as it was recognised by the court as a double charge.

There was some discussion concerning the over-regulation of caving in National Parks and the inequality that ensues from it. Bushwalkers just go for a walk, cavers are required to fill out permits, write reports of their activities, etc. These issues were considered separate from the review of regulations.

The ASF is also going to host club web sites on its own site caves.org.au as sub-domains. A fee will be charged to cover incurred cost. FUSI may want to think about this when our current host arrangement finishes.

That long document known as the Caver Safety Guidelines is under review. It is expected that the new convenor will get the new drafted guidelines to the executive for a final stamp of approval soon.

The issues with the Karst Index Database known as KID for short were complex as the issue involves levels of access to data, be that club or public access, clubs wanting to restrict access to data for cultural reasons for example, as well as the amount of work that is going to be involved in making the KID GIS compatible.

The following proposal "Developing an ASF KID for the 21st Century" was submitted to the meeting and eventually accepted.

Because of the reluctance of cavers and clubs to input all current data on to the Web-based KID, it is proposed to have a uniform Localised (state) input KID database. Each Localised (state) KID database will be based on the existing KIDSA model which will be coordinated by the State Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinator and at a local level by the club responsible for documenting an individual area.

Information from the Localised (state) KID database will be transferred on a selected item (field) basis on to the Web-based KID through the State Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinator in cooperation with the Convener of the Database Commission.

Information on the Web-based KID will in future not require a username and password for viewing (i.e. all information will be open access). This policy is based on the presumption that information uploaded/stored onto the Web-based KID (paragraph 2) will be only open access information.

A national GIS database will be developed and distributed in a low priced or public domain package GIS, holding area and outcrop information to be used in conjunction with the Localised (state) KID which will display feature information.

ASF COUNCIL MEETING RESULTS

The Localised (state) KID will be suitable for field use and/or desktop use with no required Internet connection.

The naming of the "The Australian Speleological Federation Gift Fund" was discussed and finally re-named the: **"The ASF Karst Conservation Fund"**. **FUSSI had placed a motion to rename the fund** "The Australian Speleological Federation Karst Conservation Fund". So that everybody would know whose fund it was as well as give the ASF a profile. Most delegates supported the motion. Apparently the Federal Minister has some say over the naming of such funds and likes to keep them short. So hence the end result. (It must be asked, has the minister's portfolio been so white-anted that this is all he is allowed to do?)

The ASF now has a national cave rescue commission known as the Australian Cave Rescue Commission and is convened by Ross Anderson. (Why it was not called the **ASF** Cave Rescue Commission, as the commission is legally part of the ASF, we will never know.) The commission has adopted Al Warild's "Vertical" as the standard training text.

The next ASF Council meeting will be held in Sydney with the next ASF Conference to be held in Chillagoe, Qld, in 2010.

So that is a brief run down on what the national caving body, its members and commissions have been doing. Importantly, our membership fees go towards supporting this work so it is good to see what is going on around the place.

We offer our thanks Joe Sydney for his work as our rep this year and to John Dunkley for his efforts in being the past FUSSI proxy at ASF Council meetings.

NEWS AND OTHER RUMOURS

Welcome to all those who signed up for fun underground on Fair-day. Come on as many trips as you can and don't be afraid to offer to help out.

The FUSSI library and gear is currently housed in what is known as the "Archive Room", next door the Geoff Harrison meeting room in the Union building at Flinders. The library contains a wealth of information on caves all over the world. It holds information on caving techniques; cave maps and caving area folders. It is the first place to look if you want to run a trip anywhere around the country. The club is holding a library and gear cleanup day on April the 22nd. Come along and help sort through things, or just come along for a quite read of the latest fantastic caving journals from around the world.

Public liability Insurance. The club is thinking of renewing its Public Liability Insurance with the Australian Speleological Federation. We are applying for a grant from Flinders One to enable this to happen. If it is funded, then membership costs will remain the same, if not then membership costs will double. Let's hope that our application meets with success. We are also hoping to gain a grant from Sport and Rec SA to help fund the cost of a trailer and GPS unit to help with the Nullarbor trip in the Uni September Holidays.

If anyone has any ideas on how the club can make money, then let the committee know.

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ZUIDERDUIN, Sylvia	Known to sometimes inhabit Flinders Uni.	

MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

STUDENTS: \$50.00
 NEW STUDENT MEMBERS: \$30.00 (valid 3 months)
 Individual Membership: \$65.00
 Family Membership: FUSSI \$20.00 ea, plus ASF of \$65.00



Jack, Eric, Bella and Ruby, modelling the “family group” photo in Coppermine Cave.

WHAT'S ON

Murray River (A visit to Gloop)	5 th April	Trip co-ordinator: Clare
Library clean up and other fun and frivolity.	Wed 22 nd April	Meet outside the Sports building 11am
Flinders Ranges	ANZAC weekend	Trip co-ordinator: Bronya
FUSSI AGM	May 7 th Kelly Morris Rm,	Union Building Flinders Uni.
Lower South East	May 23-24 th	Trip co-ordinator: Michael
Training days	TBA	Uni foot bridge and other sites
Search & Rescue weekend	TBA	Trip co-ordinator: Bronya
Suggested trips in the pipeline:		
Ten Day trip to the Nullarbor	September Uni Hols	Trip co-ordinators: everyone
15 th International Congress of Speleology.	Kerryville.Texas. USA.	July, 2009.