



FUSSI

Newsletter

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DESCENDING INTO HELL

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**Front Cover Photo: Hells Hole.
Mt Gambier**

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BLOCKING THE GATE BYPASS IN CLARA ST DORA

Neville Skinner

People on the Trip: Clare Buswell, Heiko Maurer, Neville Skinner, Bronya Alexander, Lilly Ellis-Gibbings, Thomas Varga and joined for a short time by Ian Lewis.

Okay, it has taken me a while to get onto writing this report, but there have been good reasons... since the caving trip to the Lower Flinders, I have done 3 trips to Mt Gambier (2 cave-diving and 1 CDAA AGM & 40th Anniversary weekend), 1 trip to Naracoorte caves and a 1-day caving trip to Corra Lynn! That left just one weekend for gear maintenance, washing, cooking & housework.

The drive to Clara St Dora was uneventful and I was very thankful for that, as it was on this trip that I discovered the limitations of the ageing Prelude that struggled with the trailer load of cement, tools, generator & caving equipment. I had to keep the pedal to the metal just to reach the speed limit, and then only when travelling downhill!

It had been during the previous visit that we had examined an alternate entrance to the cave, some 3m to the left and up the slope from the locked gate, which meant the gate had become somewhat redundant. This was of some concern to the land-owner, since it suggested unauthorised entry to the site by people unknown, and almost certainly devoid of liability insurance. The importance of this is that should an accident have occurred, the landowner could have been found liable for damages because they had obviously failed in their duty of care to prevent people from entering the site and causing injuring to themselves. Therefore, having received a request from the landowner for help for fix the problem, we needed to make the second trip to fix the problem.

Armed with three 20kg bags of cement and several containers of water, Heiko and I clambered up the slope and moved into our pre-arranged and agreed positions – Heiko was to mix the cement because he was taller than I and had just enough room to move around in the mixing area, while I had the job of placing the cement, in an area about 1/2m high. As small batches of cement were mixed, Heiko would place it on the end of my spade, which I would then rotate through 180 degrees before crawling it up the slope and placing down in an area adjacent to where it was required.

The entrance we were blocking was just slightly downhill from the top of a small sloping tunnel, so the key to blocking this entrance was a large rock that we had installed on the first trip, held in place by gravity. The task now was to ensure this rock could never be moved. We decided that the best plan of attack was to meter the cement out by using one bag of cement to secure the first row of rocks in place, a second bag to fix the chicken wire in place over the first layer(s) of rocks, then use the third bag of cement to fill all gaps so there was nowhere a person could get a jimmy bar in to force the rocks out.



The Finished Cement Work

BLOCKING THE GATE BYPASS IN CLARA ST DORA

Neville Skinner

Each of the first layer of rocks was thus selected according to its size and ability to lock adjacent rocks into place, cleaned with brush and water, and then cemented into place.

It worked – we had just enough cement (funny about that) to complete the task, and there is no way that anyone is going to move that plug from the alternate entrance.

Thank you, to Heiko and Thomas for their help, to Clare for making it happen, and to the others for providing moral and equipment hauling support.

CAVING FOR A FIRST TIMER (TOURS DON'T COUNT)

Lily Ellis-Gibbings

“I just need to finish this book and say goodbye” - or something to that effect - are the first words Clare hears from me while a naked 3 year old follows me to the doorway. Once we know The Places We Will Go I trek out my milk crate, backpack and sleeping gear and meet Heiko.

Within 10 minutes we're talking about the best ways to get rid of vermin and how genetic probabilities work, so we're off to a good start. A short four hour drive, plus pizza, later gets us to our dusty destination. An hour later and two others arrive, so tea and cake are consumed and everyone falls to bed.



Scratchings on a Wall in
Mt Simms Cave. Photos: N Skinner

of way. Cementing starts, my helmet is pressing in odd places, and we are posted into the cave surrounded by spikes and shiny things. Trying not to touch features consumes my mind for a minute: 'Wait. Everything is a feature!'. Snacks are consumed in the second large chamber (“you’re always eating, Lily!”) and thoughts about water tables, solubility, teeth and why-is-it-so-warm-down-here-all-the-other-caves-I’ve-been-in-are-cold roll around in my bulky, light emanating head.

Our second cave adventure is off to a slow start when it is discovered that the keys are back at the house.

It's hot in the Flinders Ranges, and breakfast is drawn out as long as possible. The first cave is Clara St Dora, a short walk away, and it is partially damaged in a caved in sort



CAVING FOR A FIRST TIMER (TOURS DON'T COUNT)

This delay means emerging from a cave under the light of the full moon, a plus for not breaking an ankle, a minus for anyone yearning for the milky-way.

Dinner is at 11pm, and strange scratch marks fill my dreams.

A long ladder down to avoid the flies on the Sunday, a wander through a cavern, past the post office and through some warren style renovations leads us to examine the interior decorations of the festive season. We head back to the drop, model for the photo shoot, snack some more, and pack up for the journey home.

By the time I'm home; stinky, tired and aching, all I can do is shower and rest.

Spending the weekend testing your strength, flexibility, and ability to control any hidden fears of crushing, suffocating, claustrophobia (fear of fear?), darkness and potentially bats doesn't seem to be a popular past-time, which I find out long after signing up for a caving trip on a whim. Excitedly talking about speleothems, bat poo and squeezing through holes after the fact is met with "you went what?", "not really my cup of tea" and "why on earth would you do that?". But all of these naysayers can stay above ground, because I know where it's at, and there is geology, five types of cheese, scrambling and coffee there. Would recommend!



Looking toward the Exit of Mairs Cave. Photo: Neville Skinner.

A BANDICOOT LEADS TO SKELETON CREVASSE IN CORRA LYNN CAVE

Neville Skinner

People on the Trip: Graham, Clare, Thomas, Neville, Aimee, Irina, Rebecca, Erin, Sarah and Michael. October 2013

The one thing I like about Corra Lynn is that it is an easy drive from Adelaide, but on this occasion for some reason, I thought it was 1½ hours drive from Adelaide instead of 2½ hours. This meant driving hard to get there in reasonable time, but having Aimee for company during the drive made it a much more pleasant experience.

When we arrived the others were holding a high-level (aka above ground) meeting outside of the Town Well entrance. Graham Pilkington had come along as the guardian of the key, and also I guess, to allay land-holder concerns about unknown people on the property at a time when the cave was completely surrounded by one of the best wheat crops I have seen for a



Aimee, Rebecca and Clare checking the map!
Photo: Irina Nazarova

long time, almost ready to be harvested. To this extent, we were asked to park in a small area of the car-park that was not covered with high grass.

To make it easier, everyone split into two groups of approx. five persons in each, and once ready headed off to rendezvous at Grand Central (GC), while Graham & myself locked the entrance door. Once we had done that we scooted off up one of the shortcuts in an attempt to race the others to GC, but failed miserably in this endeavour. Had we taken any longer they might have fallen asleep, but our pulse rates had increased and we were ready for some serious caving.

At GC, everyone was expected to find where they were on the map, and volunteers were appointed to lead the two groups in different directions, to rendezvous at Bushwalkers Chamber (BC). One group went via Rope Crevasse and the group I was with, which included Clare & Aimee (I forget who else was in our group, but that's okay, they know who they

were...), went via Bushwalkers Run.

Having arrived at BC before the others, we had a snack, then turned our lights out and proceeded to go to sleep. But alas, our sleep was short-lived as we were disturbed by the

A BANDICOOT LEADS TO SKELETON CREVASSE IN CORRA LYNN CAVE

sounds of the other group arriving. Excitement ensued as both groups exchanged stories of their adventures, and more food was eaten before we turned back.

This time our group went up via Rope Crevasse, where Clare & I held back to make sure the others in our group could successfully climb up the rope. They could... but I couldn't. I put it down to the 45 year old army boots I was wearing that didn't have soft enough rubber soles to stop slipping on the rock. Note to myself... don't wear those boots in Corra Lynn again. So, hoping no-one would notice, I raced back via the entrance stairs and met up with the others in the dark so I could pretend I had been with them all along.



Looking down Rope Crevasse. Photo: Irina, Nazarova.

We had some lunch and then headed off together to Bandicoots Pass, and then down into Skeleton Crevasse and Lower Woodside, where Graham explained about the fossil digs that had been conducted in that area. Everyone found this all very interesting and I sensed the excitement levels building again... but then everyone just wanted to turn their lights out and take a Nanna nap.

This would have been okay except we were rudely awoken again, this time by a member of the group who wanted to know what the thing was on the wall that was glowing in the dark... really! (I can't remember what it was, a survey marker from long ago perhaps?)

A BANDICOOT LEADS TO SKELETON CREVASSE IN CORRALYNN CAVE

Now that everyone was awake, we decided it was time to head back, this time via the rope ladder out of Skeleton Crevasse, which I have to say I have never been particularly fond of. What sadist tied those knots 2 feet apart? At this point Graham complained about his ageing knees and proceeded to walk straight up the crevasse and across the top. This was too much for Aimee, who thought that, if an old fa... err, Graham could do it, then she could also, so she was up and out of sight in no time at all. I was very tempted to follow as this was my preferred option, but thinking about the previous shame suffered to my ego by the boots I was wearing, I thought better of this. One broken ankle in a lifetime is enough anyway, I thought.

Meanwhile, Thomas had been helping all the short-legged people up the rope ladder, and I made sure that I wasn't left behind by jumping onto the rope before he had a chance. I was pleased once I got to the top of the ladder (note to myself... don't forget decent climbing shoes next time). Everyone headed back to the exit and out.

I'm fairly sure everyone had a good time, and many thanks to Clare for organizing and to Graham Pilkington for facilitating the day.



A bunch of happy cavers! Photo: Irina Nazarova

SUNSETS, AIR-CONDITONING, ELEVATORS AND HELL

Aimee Leong

Sunsets, Air conditioned caves, freshwater ponds and being unable to move despite ridiculously tight wetsuits, followed by long abseils into and elevators out of Hell - an unforgettable weekend!

Mt Gambier 7-8th Dec

Attendees: Clare Buswell, Heiko Maurer, Thomas Varga, Neville Skinner, Aimee Leong

It all began on a cool summer's evening - a drive to Mt Gambier via the coastal route along the Coorong. Neville was nearly on time (strange!); and we then started making the drive down to Mt Gambier. We had an ETA in Mt Gambier of 10.45. However whilst driving along the Coorong we were held back by an amaaazing sunset. The colours, the clouds, the surroundings were absolutely stunning; and in the end we ended up arriving in Mt Gambier's 'Just a Bed' lodge at 11.30pm, after Clare and Heiko arrived, and whereby we shared the common room/kitchen with a few other cave divers from Victoria. Thomas made his grand entrance at 4.30am; unbeknown to me, who was fast asleep with earplugs and an eye mask to ensure I was able to get my beauty rest.

The next morning, we awoke fairly early to the sun shining, as well as to the bustling of the other cave divers (clearly a bunch of males, as there was pizza and a lot of beer in the fridge). The plan for the weekend was to do Amphitheatre Cave (along the Lower Glenelg River in Victoria), Hells Hole, Ewens Ponds and cave L322. The rough plan was to do Amphitheatre Cave and Hells Hole on Saturday, then Ewens ponds and L322 on Sunday. After a bit of a slow morning and lots of coffee, we were on our way to look for Amphitheatre cave, not really knowing where it was.



At Left:
The view of the
Glenelg River, from
Amphitheatre
Cave.
Photo: Neville
Skinner.

We eventually found it; after the help of google maps and a GPS - and whereby Thomas bounded out of the car and ran into the bush to locate the opening of the cave. After about 5 minutes of bush bashing; there was a "I FOUUUUND IT!!", and the rest of us cautiously made our way to where the voice was coming from. There was a wire fence, whereby a tree had grown (through the fence in the most awkward manner), and lots of overgrown bush. It was a

SUNSETS, AIR-CONDITONING, ELEVATORS AND HELL

little bit of a mission to clear the opening (which was an ex mine shaft - we later found out it was probably mined for Bat Guano) and later even more of a mission to ensure the rigging was set up properly as the only things around were not-so-hefty-looking trees, and we were unsure of just how deep the entrance was. After dropping a few things down into the entrance, we figured out that it was about 28 metres (it turned out to be 30). With the use of Neville's 'Paw', we finally got the tension right and it was all systems go for Amphitheatre cave!!

Thomas was the first one in, and it was smooth sailing, with a little bit of a crumbly entrance. Upon him touching down, he mentioned via walkie-talkie that there were a few bats in the cave - estimation of about 40 bats. (The Large-Footed Myotis is known to inhabit the cave.) There was a cool draft coming up from the cave - and Heiko mentioned that the cave could be airconditioned (he he!). Neville was next - "the eagle has landed. I repeat, the eagle has landed, over". Heiko was next - 'the falcon has landed', then myself 'the sparrow has landed', then last but not least, Clare (can't remember which type of bird (ha!) Clare was labeled). We then went for a wander, Neville noticing 'snake-like marks' on the sand (we then later discussed it and thought maybe they were roo tail marks). We discovered the two openings that were portals to the Lower Glenelg River, with a grand view.



A couple of fishing boats were curious about people popping out of nowhere in the middle of the banks, and a few friendly exchanges were made. Thomas and myself decided to wander a bit further (as the map that we had showed that there may have been another cave further along the bank) and this entailed us to clamber up the steep banks (bush bashing all the way up). We discovered another little opening that led into a bigger chamber; sadly it didn't go anywhere else (and no bat inhabitants either).

We all then trooped back into the cave from where we all made our way up, one by one. It was a slow process up the ladder for me, a lot of sweating and maybe a few expletives as well. We finally all made it out, packed up all our gear and decided there wasn't enough time for Hells Hole. However, we were all hot and sweaty so we decided to go to Ewens ponds for a refreshing dip. Dinner plans were also on the cards so that was organized along the way to Ewens.

Arriving at Ewens Ponds, I discovered that even though my tank had tape on it, it actually had not been refilled. Cursing (again!), I was very fortunate to have a cave diving Instructor (who also happened to be a CEGSA member too) who was kind to bleed some air into my tank from a spare tank he had. Clare was also having difficulties - in moving in a ridiculously tight wetsuit (which belonged to me; but also a lot thicker and therefore would be much warmer than the one she had). After gearing up, we all jumped in and had a swim around and checked it all out. Neville led the way, playing with the bubbles from underground springs and sticking his fingers in the sand, pointing out the giant freshwater yabbies in the shallows and then finding a small

SUNSETS, AIR-CONDITONING, ELEVATORS AND HELL

yabbie and wanting to fight a larger one with the smaller one in the 3rd pond. I was completely blown away. Ewens Ponds is unlike anything else I have seen - meters and meters of clear freshwater and visibility; the algae and vegetation are spectacular!! Thomas joined in on free diving (as Neville and I were scuba-ing) and we had a poke around the cave like structures in the 3rd pond.

After our expedition to Ewens, it was dinnertime. We caught up with Kevin Mott and chatted about all things caving and water related in the LSE. We ate ridiculously large portions, had a beer to go with it, we were all happy campers!!

Sunday morning was a faster start - we all trooped down to Hells Hole. The main gate was locked, but Neville knew the back route so we all drove on in, stopping to watch the kangaroos lazing in our path before revving our engines which got them running. Neville decided to take on a little barking dragon (1/2000th the size of Neville), which was definitely one of the photos of the weekend! After sussing out where to go, we all trooped in with our gear and started setting up ropes, and since I hadn't been assessed for SRT, it was decided that I would be the crashtest dummy for the rigging up of a pulley system. There were also talks of potentially finding all sorts of things in the sinkhole - ranging from gas bottles to fridges to sawn-off shotguns ...

After much rigging up and discussions on how to rig things up (inclusive of 2 pulleys and 120 meters of rope), I was all geared up and ready to go. So being crashtest dummy I went abseiling first down into the sinkhole. It was decided not to have all of us in the sinkhole at once, for safety reasons. It was a slow process, as there was a lot of friction (unfortunately not mission impossible style!). Once I touched down into the water - (it was COLD! Luckily for me 10 mms of wetsuit around my chest cavity kept me relatively happy) it was all smiles. I was very much buoyant and just happily swam around, taking photos of the awesome rock



Aimee in Hells Hole. Photo: Clare Buswell

formations as well as taking photos of Neville abseiling down.

Once he touched "ground", he also went for a bit of an explore underwater. Heiko came next; there was a bit of a squeal when he touched down into the water (it was indeed very cold!). He was followed by Johannes who abseiled down and then SRTed back up as he had no wetsuit. Whilst being in the water Neville educated me on the water levels of the sinkhole, looked for the remnants of the boat in the sinkhole, as well as parts

of the sinkhole that were deeper, as he had cave dived the sinkhole previously. It was starting to get cold, so I conversed to Clare and Thomas who were at the top to get the elevator (aka pulley system) ready for me to be hauled out. After about 5 minutes, Heiko mentioned that he

SUNSETS, AIR-CONDITONING, ELEVATORS AND HELL

was also getting cold and therefore was ready to start SRTing up the rope; however I was still attached to the pulley system at the bottom, and unbeknown to me there were a few issues with the rigging at the top and I wasn't able to go anywhere (well, I moved about 2 inches, but that was about it). We then decided that Heiko should make a move to the top; so he began SRTing, whilst I was suspended just out of the water. When Heiko was about 1/3 of the way up, all of a sudden Clare, Thomas and Johannes had figured out the rigging and I was hoisted up in a jiffy. Tell you what, it's nice to have a 35metre elevator from Hells hole!!

After safely getting up to the top, I was greeted by Heiko (who had battled it the hard way) also at the top, and whereby Clare and Thomas rushed to get ready (i.e squeeze into tight wetsuits and whatnot) to have their turn into Hells Hole. After gearing up complete with harnesses, wetsuits, socks, booties and hoods, many photos were taken at the top and whilst they descended into Hell. Again, many photos were taken of them whilst they had a turn of exploring the great sinkhole; and another photo of the weekend was one of Clare - "DEAD BODY POSE CLARE! DEAD BODY POSE CLARE! DEAAAAD BODY!!!!" was instructed by myself and Heiko from the top. Hehe ☺.

They both ascended without any dramas, and, after ascending, the packing of gear also began again. It was then decided that we really didn't have much time to go check out cave L322, so we all toddled off back into town in search for a coffee. However the doors were promptly closed in our faces at 3pm, so we headed back to Just a Bed Lodge where we had a bit of lunch and a cup of tea before setting off back to Adelaide on our merry way. Neville and I had decided that we were going to go back via the coastal route, and had bumped into Clare and Heiko whilst they were on the search for cave L322 (which turned out to be cave L975), and purely by chance we met up in Meningie. And of all places, Thomas also turned up on his motorbike, so us cavers got together and watched the giant fish feeding off the shoreline of Meningie, as well as another spectacular sunset from the Coorong. It was well past 8.30pm by the time the sun had set, time to head off home, for another week at work.

A fantastic weekend away: full of incredible scenery and photographic moments and great company - looking forward to the next trip!! Thank you to everyone for this weekend; bring on the caves, cold water, air conditioned caves and elevators in giant sinkholes again!! ☺

WHAT IS ON FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS

FEB 1 – FEB 8 2014. Yarrangobilly Caves NSW.

Come and join us for a week of caving in the northern end of Kosciuszko National Park. Leave Adelaide on the Saturday the 1st and return back into town on Sunday the 8th.

The caves, like the area, are very beautiful. The in-cave temperature is around 12 degrees, expect to get a bit wet in some of them. Thermals and a 4mm wet suit are mandatory. Beg borrow or get them for Xmas presents! Transport will be pooled from Adelaide. All food will be communal. BYO tent, etc as no facilities are available. Nearest town is 1.5 hrs away.

This is a trip not to be missed!
It is suitable for all members, new and experienced.

WHAT IS ON FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS

RSVP sooner rather than later, but the cut-off date is 15th Jan 2014 so as to get permits finalized. RSVP to: clare.buswell@flinders.edu.au

March: 7—10.

Wet and Wild Trip: Mt Gambier.

Clare, Thomas and Heiko co-ordinating.

RSVP 1st. March at the latest, or as soon as you can.

fussi@fussi.org.au

18th April, (Easter Friday) to Sunday the 27th of April.

Nullarbor. 10 days of expedition caving and exploration. Clare and Mark Sefton co-ordinating.

In the future...

Ningaloo Underground 30th ASF Conference
Exmouth, Western Australia
21-26 June 2015

Come West for your holiday in 2015!!

Escape the southern winter (or the northern hemisphere!) to enjoy a packed conference program and explore **Range**, **Reef** and **Gorges** with the benefit of local knowledge (always a plus).

- Learn why Ningaloo Reef and Cape Range were declared a World Heritage Area
- Snorkel straight off the beach and see coral on the land
- See blind gudgeon fish less than 50m from a road or encounter a *Draculoides brooksii*
- Swim and dive with a whale shark
- Camp on the top of the range for pre- and post-conference caving and have a real chance of finding a new cave
- Improve your SRT skills in the multi-pitch caves

Get ***Underground*** and ***Underwater*** with us in 2015.

Save the dates and spread the word.

Organizing Committee for the ASF Conference - Ningaloo Underground

FACE OFF – NEVILLE MEETS A BARKING GECKO

