

# NEWSLETTER MONTHLY

MAY 2010





# MSS NEWSLETTER

In this issue:

Society News .....	1
Trip Reports	
<i>Wombeyan Caving</i> .....	2
<i>Tuglow Caving</i> .....	7
<i>Mountain Biking</i> .....	9
Upcoming events .....	11
Reviews	
<i>Floyd Collins the Musical</i> .....	12
<i>BANFF Mountain Film Festival</i> .....	13
Monthly Horrorskope .....	15
News from the Underground .....	17
Trip Calendar .....	19

Cover Shot:

Dave adding sun protection to his caving outfit at Wombeyan

Photo by Rod Smith

NEWSLETTER OF THE METROPOLITAN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY INC.  
P.O. Box 178, THORNLEIGH, NSW, 2120

---

## Society News

---

---

### NSWSC MEETING

The NSW Speleological Council held its 6 monthly meeting at Peter Dyke's property near Trickett's Arch, south of Oberon. Rod Smith attended on behalf of MSS and a number of items relevant to MSS are outlined below:

#### Kosciuszko NP Speleological Reference Group

The terms of a joint committee between the caving community and National parks have been finalised and NSWSC are calling for volunteers from the caving community to sit on the committee. The purpose of this committee is to advise National parks on issues of interest to cavers, such as land access, and establish a good working relationship between the two groups.

There are three positions on this committee open for cavers. There will be two meetings per year, probably in Tumut, and reasonable travel expenses will be covered. Applicants should have some caving experience and be passionate about the cave environment. If you are interested in taking part please contact Rod Smith: (0438 444262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com) ).

#### 2013 ASF Biennial Conference Planning Committee

The 2013 ASF Conference is in the planning stage. Talbingo has been chosen as the location and now ASF are looking for people to help with the planning. The more volunteers they get, the less each person has to do! If you are interested in helping out, please contact Rod Smith 0438 444262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com) or Jodie Rutledge [jodie@rutco.com.au](mailto:jodie@rutco.com.au)

#### Wee Jasper Publication

The launch of the new Wee Jasper book is slated for the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2010 at Carey's Cave, Wee Jasper. The book will be available for purchase at the launch. If anyone is able to attend the launch, could they please grab copies for Rod and the MSS library :-)

#### Cave Surveying Course

A cave surveying course is being scheduled for the 18th / 19th September 2010. There will be places for 2 members from each club. At this stage the course should be held at Wombeyan but this is not definite.

#### NSWSC Training Contact

NSWSC Training Coordinator Joe Sydney wants the contact details of each club's training officer with a view to running coordinated training activities. Since our safety officer has resigned we do not have a safety/training officer. If you are interested in the position, please contact Jim Crockett 0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com) .

---

<hr/> <p>Next NSWSC meeting date</p>	<p>The next NSWSC meeting will be held on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at Bankstown, starting at 10am.</p>
<p>MSS Newsletter Back issues</p>	<p>The MSS librarian is currently looking for back issues of the MSS Newsletter Monthly prior to 2006, as there are gaps in the library holdings. Please contact Rod Smith, the MSS librarian, if you have any backissues - from any time and date whatsoever.</p>
<p>June Long Weekend Walk Postponed</p>	<p>The June weekend walk has been postponed due to illness and will be rescheduled to a later date. MSS will not be running an alternative trip on this date, however NHVSS are running a caving trip to Glenrock and there may be spaces available for MSS members.</p>
<p>Erratum</p>	<p>The Editors apologise for any confusion caused regarding Johan's Castle Head abseiling trip which was incorrectly advertised in coming events as Boars Head. Somehow it slipped through the proof-reading process – twice.</p>
<p>NEXT MSS MEETING</p> <hr/>	<p>The next MSS meeting will be held on Thursday July 1, at Jim Crockett's residence. Please RSVP Jim, 0407 284 256, <a href="mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com">jim.crockett@reach.com</a> .</p>

## Trip Reports

### Wombeyan Caving

8th / 9th May 2010

Report & Photos by: Rod Smith

Participants: From MSS: Rod Smith, Dave Stuckey, Jim Crockett, Kan Harris and from NHVSS: Jodie Rutledge, Michael Rutledge, Geoff McDonnell, Luke 'Bucko', Andrew, Mandy, Laura



Some trips you look forward to more than others, and this Wombeyan trip was one of them. Although I enjoy all the trips I go on, my first trip to Wombeyan had to be memorable. It didn't start that well though ....



Jim picked me up Friday afternoon and by the time we'd loaded my gear into his car it was 4pm. 2hrs later we'd driven from Drummoyne to Cambelltown, it should take an hour at most. After a quick refreshment break we arrived at Wombeyan at about 8:30pm. We found Speleo's Corner easily enough, we were the first there. It wasn't long before one of our neighbours wondered over to invite over for a beer and to share their fire. We politely declined. It would have been nice if they'd politely turned down the volume of their music/talking/swearing, especially since it continued well past midnight.

At least the weather behaved itself and we awoke to a clear frosty morning. We had a big day in front of us, the plan was to start at 9am. We were a little late, but no-one was complaining. Geoff was looking at me with a critical eye, "I think you'll be able to get through the Key-Hole Squeeze".

"No worries", I replied. It's always interesting to see how small a hole I can squeeze through.

After turning right on top of the Arch we were soon splitting into two groups. Michael took Luke, Andrew, Laura and Mandy off to Bullio while Jodie led Geoff, Dave, Ken, Jim and myself off to Locksmith's Delight. Geoff led us directly to the top entrance. This consists of a small down-climb into the first chamber. The bottom of the chamber led to the first pitch. Geoff gave a small history lesson here, the top of the pitch had been dug out after a strong breeze had been felt coming through. It appeared they'd only dug out just enough as first jodie, then Dave and Geoff struggled through the small opening and onto the abseil. Then it was my turn.

Getting my legs over the lip was easier than I expected, but soon my waist was on the lip with various parts of my harness and gear pressing into my stomach. I managed a few adjustments to make it more comfortable and slid an inch or two further before my descender started digging into the bottom of my ribs. Adjusting that took longer and included coming back up a little bit, but eventually it was maneuvered into a less, potentially, damaging position. Another slide and my stomach was over the edge, then my ribs hit the lip. My back was rather firmly pressed against the ceiling, I couldn't see how I was do this next bit.

It then occurred to me that we hadn't got to the Key-Hole Squeeze. If I couldn't get through that then I'd have to prussik back up this pitch, and that would be a lot worse than going down. Maybe it's best to leave this

and save myself for the, hopefully, larger caves still to come. So, with a bit of brute force, I got back out of the hole and let Jim know my intention of waiting for them at the other end.

Before long I was above ground again and looking for a hole with a W325 tag on it. I walked around for quite some time finding W472, W514, W323, another hole I couldn't find a tag for, W332, W333 and W470, but no W325. I decided to find a nice place to sit and wait somewhere near where I believed the others would emerge. It was very peaceful, especially considering Geoff is one of the few people who can talk more than Dave. After a rest and a bite to eat I heard voices a lot closer than the occasional visitor on the tourist track on the opposite side of the valley. Following the voices I found W325, I'd managed to completely circle it without finding it.

Now re-united we made our way back to the track to meet the group coming out of Bullio. Here we had lunch and plans were made for the afternoon. Geoff decided he wanted to do Locksmiths Delight again, so he led Luke, Mandy, Andrew and Laura through that while Jodie took Dave, Jim, Ken and myself down to Bullio. Michael, meanwhile, headed back to camp to get the fire going.

To get into Bullio from the top entrance requires an abseil, but, thankfully, it's not as tight as Locksmiths so I was able to do it with a minimum of fuss. From there a short scramble led to a junction in which Jodie pointed out "the exit is that way". We went the other way to head towards the river passage. Next was a reasonably decorated chamber, then a down-climb, then a climb up with the aid of a knotted rope. Soon we were descending some old ladders towards a big pitch. Although there is a ladder there, which I would climb if necessary, a rope had been rigged for safety. It also made descending easier as we could just abseil, which we all did.

Once we were all at the bottom Dave decided he wanted to abseil further, which he'd done on a trip there the previous year. We watched him disappear down a hole then we went to find the ladder in a hole around the corner. The top of the ladder is awkward due to the lack of room, but not beyond any of us. From the bottom of the ladder is a succession of muddy slopes, on one section of which Jodie expected to find a sling rigged, but there was no sling to be found. It wouldn't make a difference getting down, but getting back up was going to be interesting.

The bottom of the muddy slopes was reached and we were in the river passage, with Dave waiting patiently for us. First we headed upstream as far as the sump. The water level was, apparently, lower than usual. We could make out the top of the water-filled passage continuing upstream. Since no-one wanted to get wet and we didn't have any dive gear we turned around at this point and went downstream. Past where we came down we reached a small climb which Jodie decided not to do. After watching Ken with his long legs make it look easy, I made it look as difficult as possible, but got there in the end. The climb down the other side back to the river passage was much easier and we continued as far as the water. It would have been possible to go





further as it was just a wade at that point, but again no-one felt like getting wet so we turned around.

We reversed our route, de-rigging our gear as we went. At the top of the ladder pitch Dave, Jim and Ken went ahead to de-rig the entry pitch and collect the gear left there while Jodie and I retrieved the rigging from inside the cave. The exit was further than I expected and the route included another, short, abseil, but it wasn't too long before we were once again above ground. The sun had set, time to get back for some dinner and enjoy a nice warm fire.



Delicate calcite rafts remain after a fall in the water level of the stream passage in Bullio Cave

We'd timed it well. As we walked back we could see the lights of the other group on the ridge coming out of Locksmiths Delight. We caught up to them on top of the Arch and we all made our way back to camp together. We arrived to find the fire was not going. Since Jodie had the car keys, Michael didn't have means to get firewood, there was nothing close to camp. Luke and Geoff to the rescue! While they were off collecting wood the rest of us had showers and pulled out the cheese and biscuits.

It wasn't long before we were all congregated around a lovely warm fire enjoying our respective dinners.

The next morning was a lazier start. Laura, Andrew and Mandy decided to leave early to get home, the rest of us got our gear together slowly. Our destination was Blackberry Hole. Those of us who hadn't been there before were hoping it wasn't as bad as the name suggested.

After leaving camp we were almost immediately walking uphill. Shortly after the steep bit we arrived at Bone Cave, the opening of which was a collapse. This had happened, according to Geoff, in 511 B.C., August to be precise.

Continuing on our merry way it wasn't long before we reached Blackberry Hole. There are two



caves in Blackberry Hole, we had a permit to enter Dutchman's Cave. People didn't seem as keen as yesterday, as only Jim, Ken and myself headed underground. Following the directions given to us by Jodie we easily found our way down to the various digs. Before going in Jodie had informed us that there was a gap in the knowledge of the areas hydrology, and Dutchman's was above that gap. As such, finding a way down to a river passage would be a significant find, and there certainly seemed to be potential in Dutchman's. However, this would require a lot more time and effort than we were prepared to put in that day so, after a brief look around, we aimed for the surface. Unfortunately Ken's aim was a little off as he started up a narrowing passage, sending numerous rocks tumbling down. Neither Jim nor I were in the target area and actually were laughing at the quantity of rubble descending from around Ken. Ken

backed out once Jim pointed out he was going the wrong way and Jim ascended the correct route. Ken followed and I emerged last.

Our next destination was Guineacor Cave, a short walk away. This was once used as a tourist cave and had installed an old ladder. This one didn't require a safety line, but it was prudent to descend one at a time due to the loose material near the top. This time everyone except Michael went underground. While not a long cave, it's reasonably well decorated, and those of us with cameras were using up plenty of film, or, more precisely, memory card.

It was already after midday at this point and no-one wanted to get home too late, so we headed start back to camp. Lunch was consumed, gear was packed and we were all heading our separate ways.

Thanks to everyone who made it along and made it a great trip. I'm looking forward to my next Wombeyan experience.

Rod.





## Tuglow Caving

15th May 2010

Report by: Jim Crockett

Photos by Jim Crockett, Julie Burton  
and Adam Matusz

Participants: Beth Little, Jessica Swart, Ken  
Harris, Julie Burton, Henryk Topolnicki,  
Adam Matusz, Jim Crockett ( TL)



Well, from what was looking like we were going to struggle to make numbers for this trip, it suddenly became a full trip with 7 people. In fact there was another person I had to knock back because of too many people to manage. So friday night, I picked up Beth and Jess from Oakville and we loaded up. Thanks to Beth for the kind offer of dinner. With a car full of gear it was an uneventful drive until we reached Kanangra walls road and it was time to dodge the Wallabies and Wombats. Wow, I was amazed at how fast Wombats can move.

We made the Boyd river Campsite at about 10.30pm and found Ken already there but sound asleep. While I erected my tent Beth and Jess opened up the box to a brand new tent and started reading the instructions in the dark. I had my tent up and was amazed they had the mansion with 2 large rooms erected very quickly. The weather was good, making for a clear cold night, but I felt warm and relaxed and had a good nights sleep.

While we were finishing breakfast Julie arrived right on time with 2 new members Henryk and Adam. We soon sorted out all our gear and took the 2 foresters down the Kowmung River fire trail. The water level at the Kowmung crossing was low making for an easy crossing, but not before checking the depth and for any deep holes. We made the other side but a little way up I had to make a second go at a steep rutted section. ( Yeh its a lot easier on the right side).



We were soon at the cave parking area and donning suits and gear. We made our way along the old fire trail and did lose the track at some point and found ourselves in the next gully from the cave. We backtracked a little and found the cave entrance.

Once inside the entrance we made the entrance series and rigged the first drop. Ahead on the left was the Pitch to Oblivion where we had abseiled from last time I was in the cave, but we were going to go through the boulder pile. So we turned right and started to negotiate the boulder pile which I had not been through in a long time. I had studied the map in detail but it really was not that much help in the boulder pile. Eventually we reached a squeeze

looking out over a drop. A rope was rigged for safety and this got us down to the Anvil room.

From here we continued down the slope and through an archway, then up again through another archway before we had a 3m down climb into a small chamber which leads to 2 pitches of about 30m. From here we decided to rig the pitch on the right side as there were good belays and a clear path to the streamway. Later looking at the map, it appears we have completely bypassed the normal vertical route via Wards Chimney. We all made the streamway and landed only a few metres below a series of rimstone pools. From here it was easy access to both the the upstream and downstream areas. At this time we were all feeling hungry and settled on a large flat area above the streamway.



After our refuelling session we continued upstream looking for the likely route to Knights Knobbly Knob Chamber, climbing up with the help of fixed lines and along a ledge and then up again. Adam continued and could see the top of the waterfall but was indicating that the way on was a little more difficult. Being not exactly sure which way to go, we all retreated back to the streamway and back to the lunch rock as Beth's light was running out. Some of us continued upstream as far as we could get without getting fully immersed but at that stage we decided we all had had enough exploring and decided to exit. So the 7 of us exited the same way we came, trying to be careful on the last pitch as there was a small rubpoint near the top. Beth and myself were derigging and the whole group made the surface just on dusk.



As Julie, Henryk and Adam were the first three out they wanted to make a quick getaway and so started on the walk out before the rest. They were not gone long as they seemed to lose the track very quickly. So back as a group again we located the fire trail which led back to the cars. We bid

farewell to Julie's group as they were going straight home while the rest were camping at Boyd River campsite.

On the way back we made a few stops to collect firewood and Jess nursed a massive log on her lap for some of the ride back. Back at camp we made a nice fire and enjoyed our dinner but it was not before long that most of us were tired and so sleeping was a good idea.

The next day was a non caving day but we made a trip out to the walls as Jess had never seen them before and we also had a quick look at Kalang falls. The trip home was via Oberon and we were looking for the the best Hamburger joint that Julie had mentioned, but instead we found the bakery where the pies were nice and hot.



## Mountain Biking

29th May 2010

Report by: Beth Little

Photos by: Rod Smith

Participants: Beth Little, Rod Smith, Jim Crockett, Michael Reifenstein and Andre



The dark and stormy forecast may have put off a few less hardy participants, but in the end four brave lads still joined me on the Oaks, one of the classic fire trails up in the blueie's. This track weaves its way down from Woodford to Glenbrook. A slow and easy day, with lots of lovely downhill sections where you just release the breaks and go! The weather added to today's atmosphere; misty tendrils flowing over our path at the plateau's, gently caressing our sweaty faces. Sadly the sensuous atmosphere



created by nature was ripped by poor Mike's need to heave and retch at a few hill tops. One look at his ashen white face was enough to let us know it was not the exertion, but potentially a suspect quiche he had had for breakie. Grose hey. A most impressive mention for the day goes to Jim for showing us that retro is indeed back, with his matching crochet bike gloves, bike pania and fully ridged frame bike that he skillfully handled down the single trail. Very cool. The skies today didn't drop a deluge as anticipated, but the single track with its large puddles still sported some extra fun, and left many of us a good deal more muddy and wet than the others. A lovely ride and a lovely finish, hot pies up at Glenbrook bakery. Yummy!



## Upcoming Events

Saturday: 5th June – Abseil at Castle Head

Trip Leader: Johan Verhagen

Contact by: ASAP

What's involved?

Descending a narrow ridge, great views, maybe visit the Ruined castle too....nice walk through the rainforest and returning via the Golden Stairs

You will need:

Abseiling gear, lunch, a sense of humour... and appropriate level of distrust for the trip leader as he *will* try to lead you astray :-).



Dave at Castle Head...Photo by Julie Burton

Sunday: 6th June – Training Day

Trip Leader: Rod Smith

Contact by: ASAP

What's involved?

For those who have abseiling and ascending skills but are either out of practice or would like to go to the next level of rigging and rebelay.

You will need:

Abseiling gear.



### **NON MSS TRIP** for the long weekend:

Sunday: 12th / 13th /14th June – Glenrock Caving

Trip Leader: **NHVSS**

Contact by: Contact Rod Smith ASAP (Newcastle Speleo Trip)

What's involved?

Glenrock Caves, Upper Hunter private property. Mostly small vertical caves, investigation of new caves found recently. Basic camping (NHVSS trip leader: Brian Reeves).

You will need:

Your usual abseiling, caving and camping gear.

Saturday (camp till Sunday) 26th June - Walk to Pages Pinnacle

Trip Leader: Johan Verhagen

Contact by: 22nd June

What's involved?

Day walk to Pages Pinnacle for lunch and birthday cake.. fantastic views out along the plateau, then camping with cars at Boyd River campsite for a lamb roast....or if too crowded there, camping at Timbergetters (if I can find it).

You will need:

Your stuff for a day walk. Camping gear (if camping).

**MSS Club Meeting 1st July**

**Jim Crockett's place**

**Please contact Jim for more details**

0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com)

## Reviews

### Floyd Collins, the Musical

Review by Rod Smith

This is a musical based on the true story of Floyd Collins. For anyone who doesn't know, Floyd Collins was a caver from 1920's Kentucky. While exploring Sand Cave he dislodged a rock that trapped his left foot. Due to the squeeze he was in he was unable to free himself. Over the next 2-3 weeks his predicament and rescue efforts resulted in one of, if not the first, media circus. He died after a second collapse prevented anyone reaching him through the cave and before a rescue shaft could reach him. His story has sparked books, documentaries, movies, songs, and a musical.

Certainly there have been some unusual topics for musicals, and this is no exception. Although Adam Guettel, writer of the music and lyrics, hasn't veered too far from the facts, he has focused more on the feelings and emotions of the situation. However, even along those lines, more could have been done. It seemed to more hint at feelings of the situation rather than fully explore them. There was also too much given to Floyd's relationship with his sister Nellie, even possibly implying it was incestuous.

One theme that was used was the idea of an echo when a caver reached a large enough chamber. This was a great idea considering Floyd was searching for large chambers for potentially commercial use. This was done by Floyd calling out "Yodel-laydee-hoo". Unfortunately this was overdone and I had to remind myself I was watching a serious musical and not a lot of nonsense singing.



Some of the other lyrics were also a bit odd. "I'll carry you through the mountain on a bug skin rug", stood out as one of the stranger. There was also the inclusion of "The Ballad of Floyd Collins", a song written in the '30s and the most commercially successful of the songs written about Floyd. This inclusion seemed to be just because of what the song was, rather than being a real part of the story.

Having said all that, the Australian cast and musicians did a great job with what they had. Considering it was a one-off performance, the cast could be forgiven for not putting in as much effort as usual. But, other than a couple of the cast carrying lyric sheets, there wasn't a single mistake. Amongst this great cast, Nick Simpson-Deeks as 'Skeets' Miller stood out with a magnificent performance.

Although I don't regret going, I wouldn't recommend this musical.



The caving community critics at Floyd Collins, the Musical

## BANFF Mountain Film Festival

Review by Cathi Humphrey-Hood

Once again it was time for the Banff Mountain Film Festival, presented in Australia by Paddy Pallin and sponsored by a number of well known adventure companies including Sea to Summit and Nat Geo Adventure. On offer this year were seven films, though one was very long and two were extremely short.

Debbie undertook the onerous task of pinning down those interested in attending to a particular night and then kindly purchased the tickets. So on May 4<sup>th</sup> it was off to wrestle with the parking peculiarities of the Seymour Centre in the city and then to grab brochures (Sea to Summit had produced one of phonebook proportions) before being ushered into the auditorium to the

characteristic gonging sound, the insistent urgency of which interrupts any conversation you might be trying to have before the movie starts.

After the introduction by a representative of Paddy Pallin, the festival opened with **Revolution One**, a 10 minute film directed and produced by Dan Heaton, unicyclist extraordinaire. The film described Heaton's discovery of self-expression through the sport of unicycling, which is still unusual enough and looks awkward enough to inspire curiosity. The adventure oriented audience, being well attuned to the theory that you aren't having fun if you aren't hurting yourself, produced much oohing and ahhing and wincing as the film showed bruising crashes on rails, stairs, gutters and logs. Nevertheless, jumping a unicycle flawlessly over rocks and logs on a beach or even up and down a street takes a lot of skill, and this film went some way to explaining the growing popularity of the sport.

Next up was the **Birdman of the Karakorum** by Alun Hughes. Alun had joined high-altitude paraglider John Silvester in his search for new routes over the Karakorum mountains and this hour long film documented the frustrations, successes and dangers of gliding thin air at 6000m. Alun was riding tandem as John jerked the glider around in ever tightening spirals just metres from huge rockfaces, eking out miniscule rises in elevation from the slightly warmer air close to the mountain. This was hard work requiring immense concentration, and if the thermals failed them, they faced the possibility of crashing into remote couloirs many days from help... where - as Alun kept nervously reminding us - they would probably freeze to death. John seemed unfazed by the whole experience, and it was the dynamic between these two, as well as the spectacular scenery and the technical descriptions of flying the paraglider, that helped keep the film aloft too. Also of interest was the good relationship John had built up with the people of the town in which he stayed, often for weeks at a time, waiting for the right weather. Sitting too close to the screen didn't help your reviewer all that much... intermission came mercifully after the film ended and I shuffled out green and in need of a motion sickness tablet.

After intermission and the handing out of the door prizes came the second half of the show and the first film up was **Kranked**... kind of like synchronised swimming for mountain bikes. Only eleven minutes long, this was an entertaining look at what you can do with four mountain bikes, some talented (and fearless) riders and a series of ramps and obstacles in forest settings.

Next up, **Rowing the Atlantic** showed an unusual resolution to a sort of mid life crisis when Roz Savage decided - with no prior rowing experience - to row across the Atlantic Ocean. Formerly a management consultant, every bit of this showed in the meticulous planning and organisation that this obsession launched her into, from buying a rowing machine and sticking to a strict training schedule, to raising money for the venture, having the boat designed and built and finally launching into the wild ocean for a 103 day journey. The film documents the difficulties she had during the voyage (such as broken oars and a failed satphone), and her agonising over such decisions as whether or not to cut the sea anchor loose (she did). It does somewhat misleadingly pass over her previous adventure experience (she has expedition experience in the Peruvian Andes and has run excellent times in marathons), so she didn't go straight from the office to the Atlantic, but it's no less interesting for all that.

A brief three minutes of music and rich evocative images of powder skiing followed in **Deep Shinsetsu** - quite relaxing with some great skiing... and damn, I wish we had snow like that in

the Southern Alps. This film allowed a breath to be taken, which was a good thing as it led into **First Ascent: Alone on the Wall**, where you were holding your breath for quite a lot of the time.

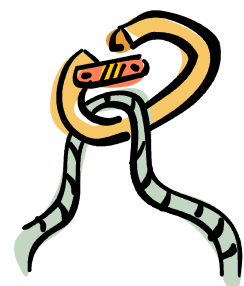
First Ascent showcases the talents of solo climber Alex Honnold, a 24 year-old who specialises in multipitch solo climbs. After a brief introduction to solo climbing, some of the people who do it and how they think, we follow Alex as he sets out to climb Moonlight Buttress in Zion – as a warm up to the Regular Northwest Face of Half Dome in Yosemite. There is no doubting this young man's obvious talents as a climber but it is his supreme confidence that allows him to scale these spectacular and daunting climbs with such apparent ease – and all without a rope. The high risk of the enterprise had most of the audience on the edge of their seats, no more so than when, three quarters of the way up Half Dome, he has an uncharacteristic moment of doubt that sees him standing on a line of rock no longer than his foot, back pressed against the granite, with over a thousand feet of air below, regaining his composure so that he could deal with the remainder of the climb. Of course he makes the ascent and as he scrambles over the top you could almost feel the relief ripple through the audience. With great scenery, fairly tight editing and a good dose of humour (often revolving around Alex's apparent lack of success with women), this is brilliant stuff and, for me at least, the highlight of the film festival.

Not to be outdone, however, was the final offering of the night: **Project Megawoosh**, an extended version of the internet video hit. This is a spoof set up as a documentary where Bruno Kammerl was said to be testing an almost frictionless suit that would allow him to build the world's tallest waterslide. The extended version shows him testing small slides and getting 'backing' to build the big one. This is hilarious, and was a great way to finish the festival. The original short video is available on [youtube](#).

While some of these films were certainly better than others, none of them failed in any way and BANFF 2010 was once again great value for a night out. While the organisers can't produce a DVD because they don't hold the rights to the films, most of them should be available, at least for purchase if not for viewing, over the internet.

## Monthly Horrorkope

Your adventure starts for June 2010 ... or for any other time period you care to apply them to.



Beal - 13/1 - 12/2

If you're reading this then you clearly have too much time on your hands. You'd be better off watching paint dry or grass grow. Watching static on the tv would be a better option. Stand still and watch the length of your shadow change.



#### Black Diamond - 13/2 - 12/3

It's going to be a dark month for you, especially if you're doing night shifts. You will get the urge to go caving, watch black comedies, eat black pudding, wear black volleys, change jobs to a coal miner, chimney sweep or boot polisher, or even become a goth. Avoid bright lights, fireworks, childrens finger painting, rainbows and anyone with a sunny disposition.

#### Bluewater - 13/3 - 12/4

Don't be surprised if you find yourself going round in circles and getting tied up in minor details. This can lead to frustration, which can lead to anger. Next thing you know you're walking into the local supermarket with enough high explosives to put a serious dint in the landscape. Try to resist these urges.

#### Kong - 13/4 - 12/5

For some reason people won't take you seriously this month, they'll just think your monkeying around. This can be very frustrating if you're a real estate agent, used car salesman, recruitment agent or neurosurgeon. Not wearing the gorilla suit may help.

#### Macpac - 13/5 - 12/6

Everyone will look up to you, whether you like it or not. Things will go right for you. You will successfully negotiate funding for your studies into the relationship between caving popularity, solar eclipses and African elephants. Enjoy those dizzying heights, while they last.

#### Mammut - 13/6 - 12/7

You will be a shining light for everyone in your life. A beacon for them to follow, a radiance of peace, hope and happiness. Your internal glow will outshine all others. But since we're trying to sleep, turn the bloody light off!!

#### North Face - 13/7 - 12/8

Try to have a bright and sunny outlook on life. Everyone will appreciate your smile and laughter, in fact, it will be infectious. Make a real effort to spread the cheer. Dress as a clown and visit emergency rooms, funerals and traffic accidents. The response will be overwhelming.

#### Paddy Pallin - 13/8 - 12/9

It's all going down hill for you. Be careful or you might lose everything. Your best bet is to try and convince people that you actually fall under the Macpac sign. If that works then your month will be great, otherwise, good luck!

#### Petzl - 13/9 - 12/10

Diversify! Try something completely different, spread yourself around. Take up a new hobby, like elephant polo, mountain unicycling, extreme ironing or knitting. Be a jack of all trades, master of none. You might as well, you'll never be any good at anything.

#### Sea to Summit - 13/10 - 12/11

This will be a month of extremes for you. You will be dumped numerous times, but have lots of incredible sex. Win the lotto, then lose it all on the pokies. Meet the world's tallest midget. And develop bipolar disorder.

SRTE - 13/11 - 12/12

You can achieve the impossible, give it a try. Think of something you never thought you'd achieve and go for it! Maybe count the number of occurrences of the word "the" on the internet. Find a politician that doesn't lie, or help England win the world cup.

Summit Gear - 13/12 - 12/1

Time to be on top of your game. Don't make mistakes, you must be perfect. Any mistake, no matter how trivial, could spell disaster. Get everything absolutely flawless and your dreams of world conquest can be realised.

## News from the Underground

News from the underground aims to provide snippets of what has been happening around the world, primarily in the areas of caving and canyoning, climbing, mountaineering...

May 2010

It's a sad way to start off, but May was a busy time for accidents in Australia and elsewhere and tragically some of these were fatal:

May 7 – Brian Ellis was killed while climbing the Sacramento route in Yosemite when a biner block failed on a single rope abseil. Details [here](#). The abseil was somehow rigged without a backup knot and a carabiner clipping the pull-down rope side with the live rope, and the knots on the pull-down side slipped through the abseil ring.

May 11 - A bungy-jumper in New Zealand was seriously injured when her feet came out of the bungy cord harness on her second bounce. Kirsty Moulder fell six metres into the shallow river and was rushed by rescue helicopter to Christchurch Hospital, where she had a shoulder operation. Thrillseekers Adventures, who took over the jump last October, suspended their operations immediately following the accident.

Also in the same [SMH article](#) was news of an Australian climber rescued from the Kelman Hut near the Tasman Glacier after he suffered a collapsed lung. He was stranded for two days and finally flown out by helicopter to Christchurch Hospital.

May 16 - Two men who were apparently base-jumping near Pierces Pass were winched out with ankle and chest injuries following an accident. The [SMH article](#) reported they were abseiling but a post to the [Chockstone forum](#) points to news footage suggesting they were base-jumpers.



May 23 – A base jumper died after an accident at Wallaman Falls near Ingham in North QLD in which his chute failed to open and he fell just over 300m into the pool at the bottom of the falls. Daryl Norris was said to have been an experienced skydiver and base-jumper who was undertaking the activity with three companions. The police have seized video footage of the accident. Source: articles from the Cairns Post [here](#) and [here](#).

Wallaman Falls QLD, photo from The Cairns Post

Also on May 23 – A 23 year-old man died when he fell while walking with friends in the closed area at the Grand Canyon at Blackheath. Brief report from [Nine MSN](#).

From the Mountains:

Australian Duncan Chessell set off with the Irvine expedition, looking for the remains of Andrew Irvine. Chessell, who put in a 'sea to summit' effort by cycling from the coast of India to base Camp, then going on to reach the summit of Everest on May 25, said earlier weather had provided good conditions for searching, with high winds stripping much of the snow from higher altitudes. Source: [SMH article](#), [ABC News](#) and [ExplorersWeb](#).

Between 22nd to 26th May more than two hundred people reached the summit of Everest, including Australian Duncan Chessell for the third time, American Dave Hahn for the 12th time and Italian Simone Moro for the fourth time. Amanda Ramsden became the first South African woman to reach the top of Everest and Edurne Pasaban became the second woman to climb all 14



8000m peaks after she summited Shishapangma. In spite of the high number of summiteers casualties were fortunately light – a Japanese climber died soon after summiting and there is an unconfirmed report another Japanese climber is also dead. Frostbite made up the bulk of injuries though a member of the Altitude Junkies team developed HACE at 8700m and had to be helped off the mountain. Report from [ExplorersWeb](#).

Shisha Pangma as seen from north side ABC, courtesy Al Filo de lo Imposible – TVE as shown on ExplorersWeb

With the end of the climbing season in Everest, also from [ExplorersWeb](#) comes the news that the total number of summits now exceeds 5000. Amongst those topping out this season was 13 year-old Jordan Romero, who became the youngest person to climb Everest (see article in The Australian) and Silvio Mondinelli who became only the second European to summit Everest from both sides without supplementary oxygen.

Earlier in the month a group of Chinese climbers did not fare so well, when three of them were killed descending from Dhaulagiri. Another 4 Chinese and 5 Sherpas from the same team were rescued from altitudes ranging up to 5900m by the Air Zermatt and Fishtail Air rescue group, who have been kept busy this season. More information [here](#).

In other adventure news from [ExplorersWeb](#), Erden Eruc is continuing his cycling circumnavigation having just crossed the Nullarbor Plain heading toward Perth; Ripley Davenport has just set off to cross Mongolia on foot while towing provisions for 90 days, and Naval officer Dilip Donde has become the first Indian national to solo the world in a yacht.

[Caverinfo.com](#), in addition to linking reports of caving expeditions (if you're up to speed with your European language skills) in [la Sala de la Verna](#), [Mchishta cave](#) (Caucasus mountains), [Grotta Davor](#) on the Italian-Slovenian border and [Grotta di Locoli](#) in Sardegna, links a [report](#) (in Italian) describing the use of avalanche transceivers (ARVAs) in picking wall thickness in caves while looking for, in this case, a second entrance. When used in conjunction with a cave survey, the transceiver allowed the most likely point on the ground to be located to minimise digging through 12m of rock.



Caverinfo also provide a link for [Festival Explos](#) (Festival de l'Image Sports Aventure) an image-fest/conference of sports adventure video and photography to be held at Ax-les-Thermes en Ariège in France between June 10 and 13. Caving and canyoning is featured, showcasing the work of some of Europe's finest video/photographers. Each film session costs 5 euro per person and there are buffets, photographic expeditions and discussions.

And on a light-hearted note, Steven Johnson on the NSS forum provides a list from James Tabor's book Blind Descent: The Quest to Discover the Deepest Place on Earth (due for release on [Amazon](#) on June 15th 2010) of [52 ways in which a cave can kill you](#). Other contributors to the discussion thread promptly came up with a few more...

---

## ***Trip Calendar***

---

Saturday 5th June  
Castle Head

Abseiling  
Trip Leader: Johan Verhagen  
Contact: 02 4758 9811,  
[johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au](mailto:johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au)  
By: 1st June  
Grade: Medium/Hard

Sunday 6th June  
MSS Field Day

SRT & Rigging – Training & Revision  
Trip Leader: Roderick Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
By: 3rd June

Saturday 26th June  
Kanangra Walls

Walk to Pages Pinnacle  
Trip leader: Johan Verhagen  
Contact: 02 4758 9811,  
[johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au](mailto:johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au)  
By: 22nd June  
Grade: Easy

Thursday 1st July  
**MSS MEETING**

Quarterly MSS Meeting  
To be held at: Jim Crockett's place  
Contact: 0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com)

Weekend 24th / 25th July  
Perisher Valley

Snow-shoeing / XC skiing  
Trip Leader: David Stuckey  
Contact: 0414 590305, [stuckedl@cba.com.au](mailto:stuckedl@cba.com.au)  
By: 20th June  
Grade: Medium

---

---

31st July – 15th August  
Nullarbor  
At planning stage  
Permits Pending

Caving  
Trip Leader: Roderick Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick__smith@hotmail.com)  
By: ASAP  
Grade: Medium/Hard  
Joint trip with NHVSS

Week 11th – 19th September  
Yarrangobilly  
Permits acquired

Caving  
Trip Leader: Beth Little  
Contact: 0405 226 811, [littlebeth78@hotmail.com](mailto:littlebeth78@hotmail.com)  
By: ASAP  
Grade: Medium

Weekend 16th / 17th October  
Coko Creek (if we can find it)  
and Ilford Cave

Cave exploration  
Trip Leader: Rod Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick__smith@hotmail.com)  
By: 11<sup>th</sup> October  
Grade: Medium...ish  
Joint trip with NHVSS

Weekend ? / ? October  
Myall Lakes

Kayaking (date TBA)  
Trip Leader: Bob Horn  
Contact: (02) 9639 3672, [randphorn@optusnet.com.au](mailto:randphorn@optusnet.com.au)  
By: End September  
Grade: Easy/Medium

Milford Track  
Mid-late January 2011

Hiking  
Trip Leader: Johan Verhagen  
Contact: 02 4758 9811,  
[johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au](mailto:johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au)  
By: 15th June 2010 (because bookings need to be made)  
Grade: Medium

Easter 2011  
Chillagoe QLD

Chillicon  
Trip Leader: Jim Crockett  
Contact: 0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com)  
By: expressions of interest by Oct 2010  
Grade: Conference with field Trips

May or June 2011  
Timor Caves

Caving  
TBA