



Metropolitan Speleological Society

Quarterly
Newsletter
Spring
Issued December 2017

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Cover Shot: New member Wei Wei Lee, Bushranger Cave, Abercrombie (Photo: Rod Smith)



SOCIETY INFORMATION

Club PLB	Just a reminder to all trip leaders that the Club PLB should be taken on every remote trip. Our Equipment Officer, Beth (0450 226 811), equipment@mssadventure.org.au has this, so please coordinate with her to collect it before you lead your next trip.		
2018 Office Bearers			
President	president@mssadventure.org.au	Jim Crockett	
Secretary	secretary@mssadventure.org.au	Rod Smith	
Treasurer	treasurer@mssadventure.org.au	Cathi Humphrey Hood	
Equipment Officer	equipment@mssadventure.org.au	Beth Little	
Librarian	library@mssadventure.org.au	Rod Smith	
Training Officer	training@mssadventure.org.au	Beth Little	
ASF Liaison		Jim Crockett & Rod Smith	
Newsletter Editor	newsletter@mssadventure.org.au	Marilyn Scott	
Website Manager	webmaster@mssadventure.org.au	Rod Smith	
Public Officer		John Gray	

Membership Fee Details (2018)

Full member	\$80	Prospective membership options (12 months)	
Family (2 adults + children)	\$160	Single Prospective	\$30
Family (1 adult + children)	\$120	Family (2 adults + children) Prospective	\$60
Social	\$45	Family (1 adult + children) Prospective	\$45
Already a member of an ASF Club?	\$30		

Cheques or Cash accepted but **preferred method of payment** by Direct Debit to: Account Name: MSS BSB: 062-021 (Commonwealth Bank): Account: 00901421

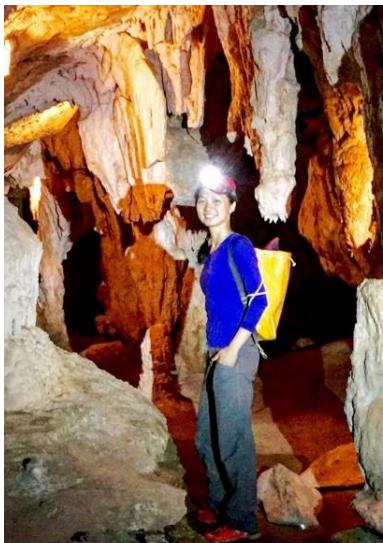


Welcome to New Members

This quarter, we're welcoming four new members, **Alan Green, Wei Wei Lee, Brendan Prideaux and Katryse Nicholls**.

Alan was a very active caver between 1984 and 1989, visiting most of the big cave systems across Australia and he's also done some cave diving at Mt Gambier. Whilst in WA back in 1987 he was also able to do quite a bit of mapping and surveying at Margaret River.

Like a lot of us, a wife and family interrupted his caving exploits but now that his kids are grown up, he's ready to get back into caving and has hit the ground running. Since joining MSS, Alan's been very busy, joining trips to Jenolan, Abercrombie and Fergies canyon.

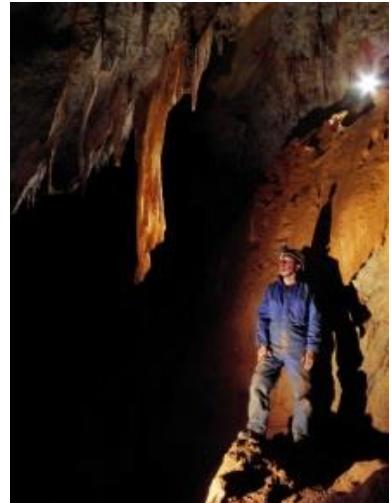


Wei Wei at Abercrombie

Wei Wei found MSS through another of our new members, Anna Ossig-Bonanno.

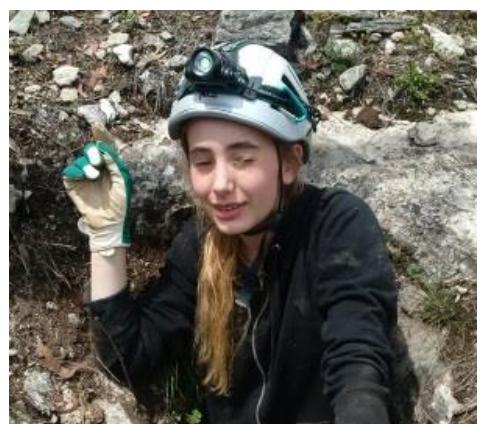
Wei Wei, an Ophthalmologist is in the final six months of a fellowship in Australia, returning to Malaysia at the end of June. A self-proclaimed "outdoor junkie", in the region where she lives they do trekking, mountain climbing or diving. She's climbed a few mountains back in Malaysia and few others in other countries, the highlights being Everest base camp and the Salkantay trek (Machu Picchu).

Wei Wei hadn't had the opportunity to do any abseiling or caving before now. Anna took her on her first canyon (and she loved it), and she went with Rod to Abercrombie in November, and loved that too. She's looking forward to some more of both!



Alan in Jenolan

Katryse (a defacto member of Cathi Humphrey-Hood's family) spent the weekend with Cathi at Abercrombie in November, it was her first caving experience! Katryse goes to Bass High School and enjoys agriculture, camping and collecting rocks. She has been friends with the Humphrey-Hood family from a very young age and is keen to get out and explore some caves



Brendan found MSS through the internet, he's a keen diver and bushwalker but hasn't done a great deal of caving. Once initial contact was made Brendan decided that getting into the thick of it as soon as possible was a good idea, so signed up to go to Rylstone for the Annual MSS get-together/Christmas Party. He arrived with most of us on Friday evening then was up bright and early for his introduction to the basics of abseiling with Ray and Rod on Saturday at Dunns Swamp. Brendan was unable to stay for the rest of the weekend, but is keen to go on his first bushwalk with us.





MSS Projects

Have you felt that you wanted to give something back to MSS, but didn't know how? Or maybe you didn't want to commit to anything due to time constraints? Well, here's your opportunity.

Over the last few years various members of MSS have taken on projects on behalf of MSS. In most cases assistance on these projects would be greatly appreciated. This can be as little as offering an opinion on a topic up to contributing as much time as you're willing to commit.

The following list details the projects, the type of assistance you could make, and who to contact to offer your help.



- **Abercrombie Book** (Contact: Beth Little) - We have decided it's time for MSS to produce an up-to-date book on the Abercrombie karst area. This project is still in the very early stages. There's going to be a lot to do in a lot of different areas, so any assistance will be greatly appreciated.
- **Abercrombie GPS Tag Location** (Contact: Rod Smith) - The aim of this project is to locate and GPS all the tags at Abercrombie. Over half have been located but there's still plenty to go.
- **Abercrombie Surface Survey** (Contact: Rod Smith) - A lot of the tags at Abercrombie are very close together, so the idea is to do an accurate survey between those tags to be able to see potential relationships between the caves. This project hasn't started yet as there's been a focus on having GPS waypoints for each tag location, but there's no reason why a surface survey can't start. Surveying skills are not required to help on this project.
- **Surveying - Cave Map Consistency** (Contact: Marilyn Scott) - ASF have a set of standards for cave maps, but they still leave a lot of scope for variation. We want to have a tighter standard within MSS so that cave maps we produce have consistent as to what is displayed (legend, compass point(s), colour etc).
- **Surveying - Resurvey Stable Cave** (Contact: Jim Crockett) - This project came about because we couldn't find a single map that covered the entirety of Stable Cave. This is likely to get rolled into a re-survey project of multiple caves at Abercrombie in preparation for the book.
- **Surveying - Resurvey Casuarina Cave** (Contact: Rod Smith) - With the threat of the dam that could flood Cleftden Caves OSS began a project to re-survey all the caves at Cleftden. We volunteered to re-survey Casuarina Cave. Although the threat seems to have passed the cave survey is still wanted. We're hoping to do the main bit of work on this over the June long weekend.
- **Website Look and Feel** (Contact: Marilyn Scott) - It's time for the MSS website to get a new look and feel. This is already underway and we're hoping to have it live within a couple of months. Needed some good recent photographs for the website!
- **Documentation** (Constitution) (Contact: Chris Johnstone) - This is mostly complete although there's still some debate regarding the membership types we should be offering.
- **Documentation** (Membership Application Form) (Contact: Chris Johnstone) - This should be now complete.
- **Catalogue MSS Library** (Contact: Rod Smith) - We have a lot of information in the MSS library, but it's not catalogued to enable us to find relevant information. The ultimate goal is to have the catalogue on the website so members can find any information we have with ease.
- **Bolting Course** (Contact: Rod Smith) - This hasn't progressed much passed the idea phase, but could be another useful skill members may be interested in.





President's Report – 2017

by Jim Crockett

As we get closer to closer to the end of 2017 I ponder what a busy and productive year it has been for both MSS members and me personally, starting with a caving trip overseas to Samar, Philippines (joined by Marilyn) and then a family trip to New Zealand in April, unfortunately no caves were explored on the trip.

Then in late July the big gee, the International Congress of Speleology hosted by ASF and held very close to home in Penrith, NSW. My involvement in this event had been very drawn out, over more than 6 years. As the starting date for the event got closer so did the pressure for ASF and the team of volunteers to perform. The heat was on but we all stood up and made it happen relatively smoothly, years of planning put to the ultimate test. Magically it all worked fairly well, there were a few minor hiccups but overall it was a fantastic conference.

I congratulate the MSS members involved in the Yarrangobilly pre-conference field trip. From what I understand from those who attended it was a highlight of their visit to Australia.

In between all these events there has been the usual array of MSS trips, to name a few, we had multiple Jenolan trips, Abercrombie, Cleftden, numerous canyon overnight and days trips, and some walking to special places. It's a shame I was not able to make it to any of them due to my heavy schedule.

We recently had some cave surveying training that was held at Wombeyan organised by MSS and facilitated by members of SUSS and from what I understand it was an outstanding success. This is going to lead to some valuable work that MSS will be involved in, more to come on that project next year but this is certainly going to bring MSS to the next level as a Speleological Society. This is an element that had been lacking for a long time, but we now have members trained in surveying and ready to take on projects both as MSS projects and helping out other societies. Stay tuned for more info on this one!

Along with all the positives for MSS this year we did suffer some sad news when long time member John Marshall passed away, only some of the older members would have known John but he was a keen caver in his younger days and always interested to discover a new cave area. Due to his ill health we had not seen him on a MSS trip for some time. He will be sadly missed by his family and the Kenthurst Rural Fire Brigade of which he was a former Captain.

So, to close off for the year, I can certainly say that MSS is in a much better position this year than any I can remember. We have a strong keen membership, we have gained respect amongst other Speleological Societies as well as the ASF Executive, we are running regular trips to various areas not just in NSW but to other areas in Australia and we have a positive mindset.

MSS now is in a strong position for the future, we are focused on expanding our knowledge and talents and we have a clear idea of where we want to be in the future. Bring on 2018!



Diary Alert

The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania

(31st ASF Conference 30 Dec 2018 - 4 Jan 2019)

ASF have a conference every second year and in 2019 it will be held in Devonport, Tasmania. This is an amazing opportunity for cavers as Devonport is a mere 60k as the crow flies from one of Tasmania's most renowned caving areas, **Mole Creek Karst Area** (massive caves such as Kubla Khan, Croesus and Genghis Kahn). Pre- and post-caving trips will be on offer, an opportunity not to be missed to cave with the "locals" and to see some highly restricted caves.

We've been told by the organisers that there'll be a range of accommodation available including cost effective camping available at the venue. The conference organisers are looking to make this an inclusive event, so, if you're a caver and your family isn't, they're encouraging the whole family to come as Devonport offers a range of outdoor activities and there are plans to organise activities for non-cavers to do during the conference!

So, mark your diary now and set the dates aside and, bookmark the [website](#) for further updates.





TRIP REPORTS

Canyoning – Southern Highlands - 30 Sept – 1 Oct, 2017

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: Marilyn Scott & Murray Newman (joint leaders), Emma Parnell & Anna Ossig-Bonanno

After seeing a Facebook post about the full length of Macquarie Rivulet, I contacted Murray and asked if he'd like to lead it (seeing he's from down that way) and to sure that the weather would be warm enough. So, six months ago, we put it on the calendar. The weather was terrible on the Saturday and so we opted to abseil some of the waterfalls in **Belmore Creek**, and figured we'd find a way back to the car "somehow".



Murray on Abseil #1 Belmore Creek, difficult to find an anchor with a good pull-down which wouldn't land us in the water.



Emma on Abseil #2 Belmore Creek



Emma on Abseil #1 Belmore Creek



The climb out – Belmore Creek

On Sunday the weather was much better, so we did the car shuffle and Emma, Murray and I (Anna had injured her eye the day before), were on our way by 8.30am. You must be careful when getting to the upper section of **Macquarie Rivulet** as crossing private land is an issue and it takes a lot of map reading to skirt around the land-owner's boundary. Once in public land though it's quite simple. We encountered a bit of a footpad from time to time, but my guess is that the upper section isn't all that popular. There are four abseils in the upper section, three at the beginning separated by 40min of creek walking, then another abseil and another 30min of creek walking. The creek walking isn't a problem though as you are able to walk up on the side of the creek bank in relatively scrub-free bush.

We put on our wetsuits at the beginning of the upper section but you really didn't need it, there were a few wades, and in warm weather you could have jumped into the creek straight away instead of doing a big step across after the first abseil. In the lower section Murray and I wore wetsuits but Emma decided to brave the cold pools, although the swims weren't very long. Whilst doing the Rivulet in Spring sounded a bit "iffy", in the lower section, you can walk around all of the abseils/jumps so if we did get too cold, we figured we'd just walk the rest of the trip.



Emma on the 2nd abseil



A deep wade that couldn't be avoided.



Murray and Emma on a climb down, there was a ring bolt, so you could have done one big abseil (into water) instead of a climb down and smaller abseil that we did



Emma (Brass Monkey) Parnell swimming after the abseil

The whole trip, car to car, was about 7 hours, but we walked around some of the jumps and 2 of the abseils. The lower section of Macquarie Rivulet is definitely a trip that I'd do again, in the summer months. You do need to start very early; at least be on the track by 8am to avoid the commercial groups (and others) as this is a very popular trip. The parking lot at the entry point is very, very small (another reason to get there early so you can park your vehicle at the beginning.).

A great weekend away, thanks so much to Murray, Emma and Anna for joining me.



Mares Forest Creek – 13 October 2017

Report by: Cathi Humphrey-Hood

Participants: Marilyn Scott and Cathi Humphrey-Hood

With an introductory surveying trip to Wombeyan scheduled, Marilyn raised the idea of a quick trip up Mares Forest Creek. For some strange reason none of the other potential surveyors had signed up for the canyon part - though perhaps the early Friday morning start presented too many logistical problems - even Marilyn and I, who were not working that day, struggled to have everything organised and be on the road south before 10am.

The forecast was also awful - it was not looking to be enticing canyon weather! And yet, come Friday, the sky was a bright blue - as it turned out, Marilyn had managed to pick the only sunny day for a week either side. We arrived at the Pheasants Nest Truck Stop within about 10 minutes of each other and were soon on our way out of Mittagong and down the fun, winding dirt of the Wombeyan Caves Road.

The canyon section of Mares Creek is a proper canyon, but it is fairly short, and we knew that as long as we got to Wombeyan by early afternoon we'd have time to reverse it and still be back at the cottage before the rest of the surveying team arrived. After a quick chat at the Ranger's Office we picked up the house key and dropped some of our gear, before grabbing our backpacks and heading up the hill next to the cottage.

There are two ways to do Mares Creek - reversed from the bottom or one way down from the top. As the track goes straight to the bottom and the top requires a tiny bit of navigation, we decided to do away with any potential chances of getting even slightly lost, and reverse it. It is only a short walk to the creek, though the last section is a little steep.

We stopped to put on our wetsuits and as we did so we heard people coming downstream - they turned out to be a nice young couple in bare feet; she was clad only in a bikini and he in swimmers. We

suddenly felt overdressed; however, the water was quite cold and they were glad to be out of it.

The sun threw shafts of green light into clear water as we tiptoed in, and yes - it was cold! We got used to it fairly quickly but were certainly glad to be wearing the wetsuits.

Our bikini-clad visitors mentioned a dead wombat and sure enough, in the next pool was a very young wombat that had most likely fallen -



*The route is well sign-posted
(Photo: Cathi H-H)*

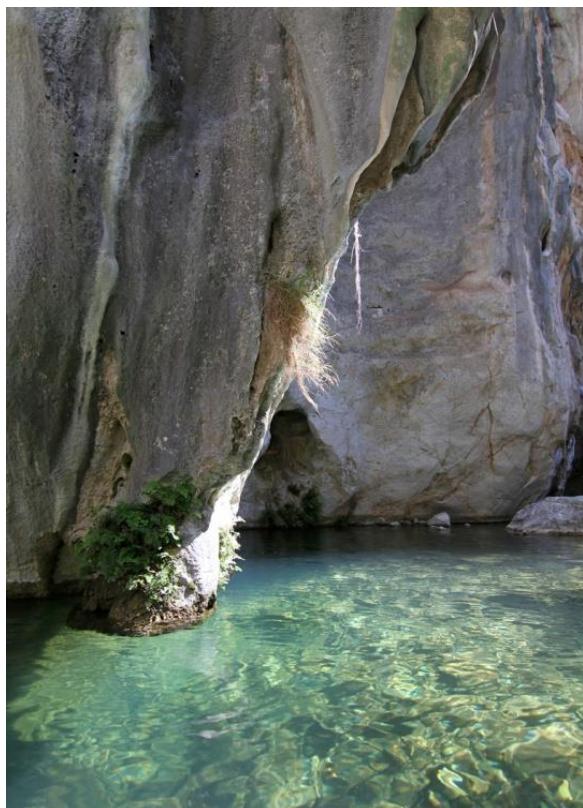


The clear water was spectacular - this is a beautiful canyon and the colour of the water is greatly enhanced by sunlight - had the weather been as grey as forecast, the view would not have been as good.

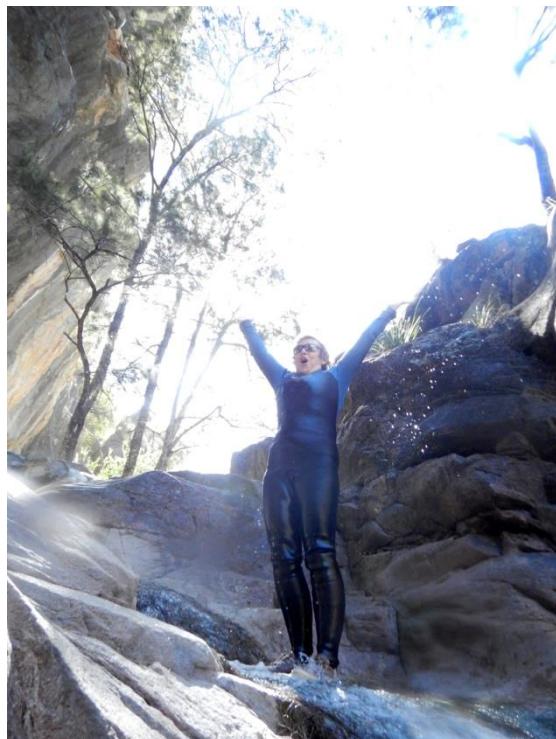
quite recently - from the cliffs above into the cold water. We walked around it and left it in peace, though it was hard not to feel sorry for these things.

The canyon consists of pool after pool, with gravel and boulder sections in between. The boulder sections were not difficult to navigate. The pools ranged from a paddle to a full swim, with one very long section where I longed for a lilo.

Toward the end of the canyon section there is a small waterfall. It is not very high, but because it is undercut with a bulge at the base and smooth with few footholds, I wasn't sure if we'd be able to climb up it



What sunlight in the right spot can do



Marilyn, once she'd climbed the small waterfall. We found an old handline that had been in place but was now floating in the water, so getting up without a handline was no mean feat.

(and I know of other people who have turned around at this point). But because the water level was very low, Marilyn was keen to give it a try - after some huffing and puffing and a few swear words (they always



help in these situations), she pulled herself up and stood triumphant at the top. The feasibility having been clearly demonstrated, I passed up the packs and worked my way up the small climb - and it was quite awkward, with very few places to put your feet and only a couple of small indentations for finger holds. The canyon opens out above the waterfall and the rock type changes slightly - there is less marble and more limey mud. After a few more minutes of walking the canyon flattens into a stream valley with high walls on each side, they just step back from the creek more and more as you travel upstream. There are caves in the walls: I climbed up a little way and found the tag for W286, which appears to be all of 2m long.

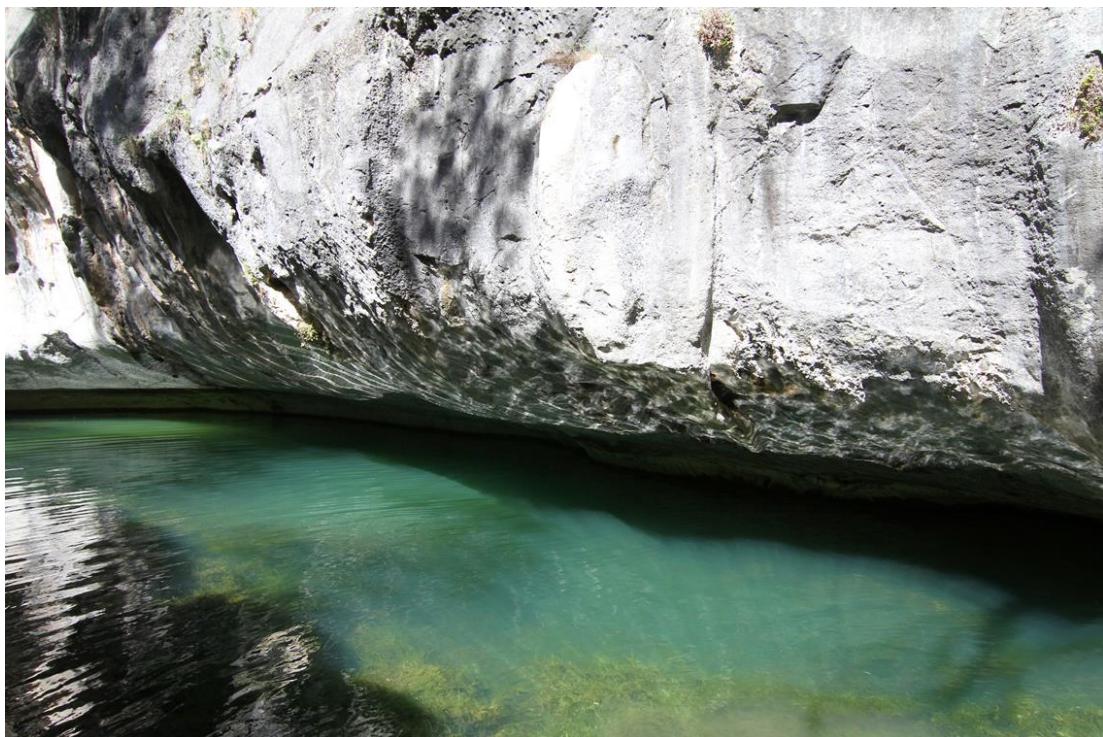
We had a snack and decided it was time to head back down toward the cottage and a warm shower. Even though it wasn't freezing, I had injured my finger a few weeks before and it wasn't dealing with the cold very well at all; by the time we started back I had not only lost all sensation of touch, but it was aching enough to be really annoying.

Of course, the waterfall had to be navigated once again, but that was easy - the pool below was reasonably deep, just jump! But Marilyn was reluctant to go under the surface in the cold, so she inched her way down toward the water ... and ended up completely dunked anyway.

Because this canyon is visited fairly frequently, we were dismayed - but not surprised - to find rubbish in it. We carried out what we could: a bottle, some plastic, a piece of handline, and a muddy pair of men's boxer shorts ... which Marilyn was reluctant to carry, and there was no way I was stuffing them into my pack. I mean, really, who loses their boxer shorts in a canyon? I held them at arm's length pretty much the whole way back.

The angle of the sun had changed slightly for the swim back and the water took on a deeper, more bluish tone - we were well into the afternoon and the shafts of light were no longer penetrating straight down between the canyon walls. We took the time to admire the different colours and the sculpturing of the walls as we made our way downstream, but the lure of that warm shower was starting to override the joys by this time.

We returned to our starting point a little after 4pm and as we felt quite cool and knew it wasn't a long walk back, we stayed in our wetsuits and simply walked straight out of the canyon in the direction of the Wombeyan Post Office cottage. The warm shower turned out to be only just warm if you didn't turn the cold water on at all, but after the canyon it felt like a sauna!



Cave Surveying Course – Wombeyan - 14 – 15 October 2017

Report by: Beth Little

Participants: Teachers; Mike Lake, Phil Maynard and Jill Rowling. Students: Beth Little, Marilyn Scott, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Marcia Kaye and Heather Reid.

Surveying of Caves is a wonderful blend of science and art, of challenge and creativity. This weekend was the start of our journey with a comprehensive beginner's course run by Mike Lake, Phil Maynard and Jill Rowling (all from SUSS).

I have had a little experience with cave surveying, but this was almost two decades ago, so it was good to go back to being a beginner again. The technology has also moved along a significant amount, so it was fantastic to learn how to apply the newer techniques to the game. For the other pupils this was their first exposure to surveying caves and they flourished.



Post Office Cottage - plenty of room for presentations and after survey work



The entry to the cave we surveyed showing some of us on the climb up.

of French style slow cooked chicken and rice. I put on my trusty dessert of Merengue, cream and berries with choc top ice magic. Yum!

The course was fantastic, commencing us with the principles and practice of using clinometers, compasses and measuring tapes and then advancing us to using a laser device (DistoX) that combines all these measurements in one. For the type of caves I envisage surveying I think DistoX will be my tool of choice moving forward.

This weekend was also Marcia's first caving experience! So, when we'd finished on Sunday just after lunch, Phil took Marcia, Heather, myself and Marilyn through Figtree cave – through

Wombeyan Caves was a great venue for this course. The accommodation in the Post Office Cottage was comfortable and cosy for the lesson presentations via slideshows, and was a cruisy walk to the part of Figtree Cave we were surveying for our practical sessions. We were joined as students by a NPWS Ranger, Laurie, from Wombeyan Caves who was keen to see how it was all done. Multiple enjoyable breaks were had with cups of tea, delicious home roasted coffee (thanks Mike) and goodies. Marilyn provided a delicious communal meal

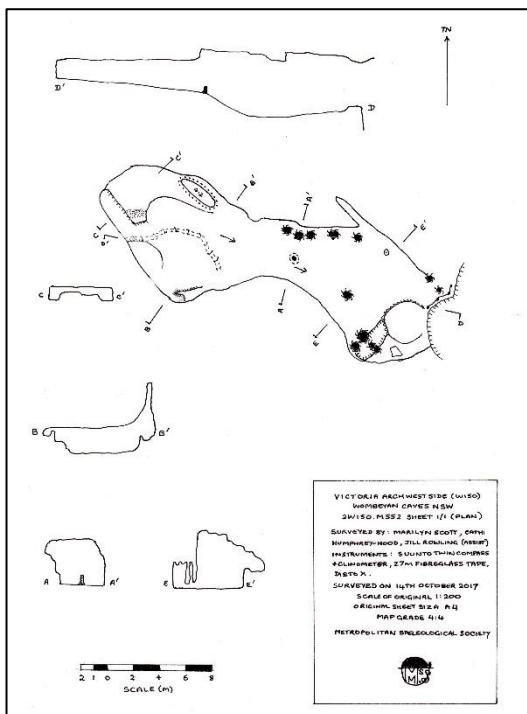


Phil giving a little instruction to Marcia & Beth



Heather & Laurie with Cathi (left hand corner) drawing

some “real” surveying. Over wine we came up with many grand schemes. Primarily though we’re thinking of resurveying some of the Abercrombie caves – a big project if we do. Anyone interested in joining in? A massive thanks to Mike, Jill and Phil. They were unbelievably generous in giving their weekend to us and sharing information. Thanks also go to M for coordinating this for us at MSS. Top weekend!



Bushwalking – Northern Wollemi - 20 - 22 October 2017

Report by: John Gray

Participants: John Gray (TL), Marilyn Scott, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Catherine McLachlan, Garth McLachlan, Jeff Boyd, Heather Reid and Rod Smith

The trip was originally Saturday and Sunday with two exploratory day walks planned. However, a few decided that no trip to Glen Davis was complete without Coinslot Canyon on the menu. Those lucky enough to get Friday off were meeting at the Coorongooba campground. Marilyn, Jeff and I arrived late Thursday night. Catherine, Garth and Anna drove in through the rain on Friday morning. The forecast was for rain all day so we decided to do a walk instead of braving the exposed climb up to Coinslot.

The bushes showered cold water over us as we trudged up the hill south west of the camp. Several small climbs were negotiated before we paused in the dry of an impressive rock arch. The rain continued down preventing me from taking photographs so a future trip will have to include this little known natural wonder of the area. A short distance further up the slope and we were on the half-way ledge which proved to be scrubby in places. The occasional dry overhang gave us shelter for morning tea and lunch. Eventually we reached a creek that drained down above the old refinery ruins. We tried our hardest by scrambling around but were unable to reach the



Scrambling up the route to the cliff-line on Day 1.



John on a finger of cliff high above the valley floor on Day 1.

enjoyed happy hour until the rain eased off. The rain held off long enough for a campfire that evening.

Saturday's weather was a vast improvement with the rest of the party arriving during the night or in the morning. The wombat who had clanged the metal steps of the caravan on Thursday night had settled down to the odd back scratch noises.

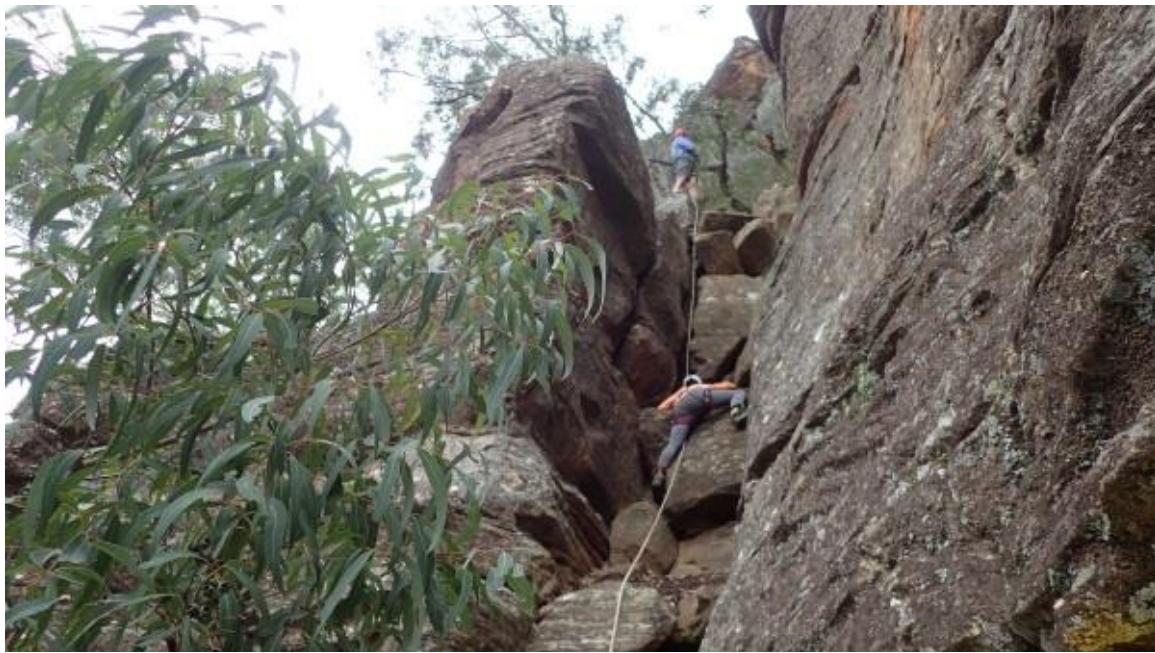
A log was found that enabled us to cross the Capertee River with dry feet. The usual trudge up the steep hill brought us to the cliff base where we walked left for a couple hundred metres. In my opinion, the left-hand route through the cliffs is the easiest. The route starts with some easy walking up vegetated ledges until you reach an overhang with a steep sandy floor. At the highest point at the rear of the overhang you step out onto a narrow ledge which is quite exposed. Above this is a short climb that we rigged a belay on. More scrambling upwards and a log gets us up a short rock step. This brings us to the crux climb which gets steadily steeper towards the top. With my long legs I found it easiest to chimney up and soon had a belay off

top of the falls at the end of a small canyon. (this creek appears to have a very big drop down the lower cliff-line when viewed from the campsite access road). Will be a future challenge to see if 60m ropes are long enough!

We retraced our steps, and as we reached the top of the steep slope above the camp, someone commented on how warm the rocks were. Someone's fingers were obviously very cold. Time to get the handline out for the slippery descent.

With the weather in mind, I had towed the caravan to Glen Davis. After changing into dry clothes, we all crowded in and

a solid gum tree. Some then chose to climb with a prussik loop for safety, others opted for a full prussik past the hard bit.



Day 2: The Crux climb, easier for some than others! John at the top and Cat making her way up

After a morning tea break we set off along the halfway ledge and walked into the creek a short way upstream of Coinslot Canyon. The heart-shaped rock abseil dropped us into shallow water before we reached the canyon proper.



The first "heart shaped rock" abseil in Coin Slot.

As we were a caving club, it was decided to squeeze down the first pitch in the dark cave (rather than going off a tree high on the right that avoided the dark bit). On the rope pulldown it became jammed. It had already cleared the sling at the top and no amount of pulling would free it. Luckily, we had a second 60m rope which got us through the canyon. At the top of the 2nd big abseil I put my pack down. A short while later I picked it up again to discover a Death Adder coiled up in the leaf litter directly underneath. Having a pack put on top of it didn't seem to upset it at all.



Cat at the bottom of the "cave" abseil

I was able to climb above this and set up a rope. I called out for the others to sit tight while I explored the way ahead. A few more small cliffs were scaled before I reached an exposed corner leading to the top. The others soon joined me at this point and the climb proved to be nerve-wracking but relatively easy with good hand and footholds.

After a well-earned break below the upper cliff we followed the half-way ledge into a nearby gully. This gully proved to be an easy walk up route to the top. A short walk across the tops brought us to a fantastic lookout point for lunch. A stone cairn indicated we were not the first. After we called out, the miniature figure of Jeff appeared in the campground below.

The descent was easy as two short abseils got us down next to the dry falls at the bottom end of our ascent gully. I was already down the 2nd drop before someone pointed out that the gum tree being used as the belay point was actually a dead tree branch that had speared into the soil. Fortunately, the drop was only several metres and the branch held.

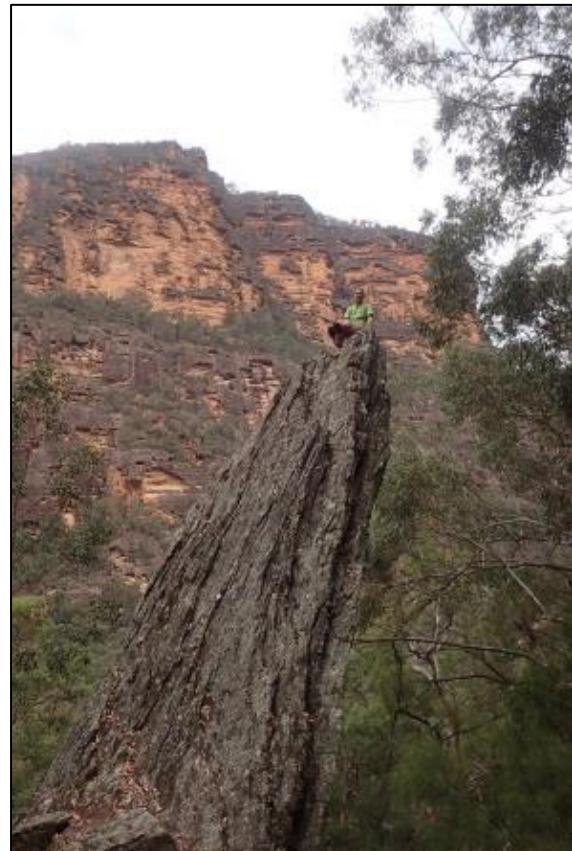
On the walk back we discovered an amazing pinnacle of rock that Anna couldn't resist. She was soon posing for photos on the top.

Back at camp we found that the hoards of campers had left and things seemed very quiet.

After we all completed the last abseil I called for volunteers for a rope retrieval mission. Cat answered the call and we combined everything we would need into one pack. With the small fast party we were back up the rock-climb in no time. At the canyon we discovered a small chock-stone in the dark bit that the end of the rope had decided to drop behind. Rope retrieved, we continued on and reached the campsite 2 1/4 hours after leaving the rest of the party. Once again, we had an enjoyable evening around the campfire.

On Sunday the objective was to reach the top of the cliff that was north of the campground. This mighty cliff has a lower and upper cliff-line. The upper cliff-line appeared to be cut by a gully high above Coorongooba Creek. All we had to do was push a way through the lower cliff. Jeff chose to stay behind as campground manager.

From the campground we crossed the Capertee River just upstream of the Coorongooba Creek junction. I was surprised that, even after the recent rain, the Capertee was not flowing and we were able to walk across with dry feet. The walk up to the lower cliff was through open forest with many Burrawangs at ground level. At the point of meeting the cliffs we immediately spotted a weakness that needed to be explored. Easy scrambles got us a fair way up before we struck a vertical section. By stepping out of a small overhang



Day 3: Anna on top of the pinnacle



Cave Surveying – Cliefden - 4 – 5 November 2017

Report by: Rod Smith

Participants: Beth Little, Heather Reid, Marilyn Scott, Bob Kershaw (ISS), Bruce Howlett (OSS), Phil Niciak (BMSC), Luke Buckingham (NHVSS), Rod Smith - Trip Leader

I picked up Beth Friday afternoon and we headed for Cliefden, grabbing some takeaway on the way, and solving all the world's caving problems during the drive. We arrived at the Cliefden hut to find Bob, Marilyn, Phil and Heather already there and with their own solutions to the world's caving problems. Beth and I settled into the social atmosphere like two peas settling into a bowl of gravy. Luke arrived approximately half an hour later and was introduced to all the people he didn't know. Plans were made for the morning and then we all started drifting off to find sleep for the night.

Saturday morning dawned bright and reasonably clear, which was a definite improvement on the intermittent downpours of the evening before. We had just finished our morning chores and were ready to start the day's activities when Bruce arrived.



The nifty tool used with calibrating the DistoX, plus some of Bob's gear on the table (a very small portion of it in fact)

immediately went in. He returned soon afterwards with an apology, the cave was not going to be as easy to survey as he thought. At least they had an already calibrated DistoX.

Luke, Marilyn, Bob and I arrived on the flat looking up at Stable cave and promptly prepared to walk up the hill. As we arrived at the cave I realised I didn't bring everything I needed. My DistoX2 needed to be calibrated, and to do so required a laptop or PDA. The battery for my laptop is stuffed and so wouldn't work anywhere without 240 volts. As such I had borrowed Beth's laptop, but had left it in the car. Luke kindly offered to go back down the hill and fetch the laptop, which was very generous of him.

As soon as Luke returned we realised the second problem, Beth had neglected to tell me the password for her laptop. Without equipment to calibrate the DistoX2 we would have to resort to the old style of surveying, except we didn't have that backup equipment (which Bob had told us that very morning you should always take). We were learning lessons the hard way.

The decision was made for Bob to go back to the hut to get his laptop, plus the backup compass and clinometer, just in case. Marilyn went with him to open the various gates. While they were gone Luke and I set up a couple of survey stations and also documented the tagged daylight hole.

We started at the hut with Bob giving us all a lot of advice on the equipment and some techniques he uses when surveying caves. He then showed us the principle of calibrating the DistoX and DistoX2. Meanwhile Bruce perused his notes and found a couple of likely victims for our survey practice.

Bruce took Beth, Heather and Phil to survey *Blowfly Cave* while Bob came with Marilyn, Luke and me on our attempt at *Stable Cave*. Both caves were chosen as they are relatively small, and we should be able to produce a complete map by the end of the weekend.

Bruce's party arrived at Blowfly and Bruce



Rod, Bob & Luke trying to sort out the computer to calibrate the DistoX

Bob and Marilyn returned with the gear and we were now ready to calibrate the DistoX2. Unfortunately, no-one told Bob's laptop which refused to communicate with my DistoX2. However, now we had a clinometer and compass, plus the DistoX2 for the distances, so we started the survey.

After surveying about 6 legs Marilyn's stomach decided it was time for lunch and so, leaving the gear, we all headed back down the hill where we'd left our food. (The plan had been to finish the survey before lunch which is why we hadn't taken it with us. So much for that idea!) We found a shady spot under a convenient tree and were just starting into our meal when the other group arrived. Despite having a more difficult cave, the fact they had a working DistoX meant they had finished the measurements and were now heading back to the hut to draw up their map. Jumping at the opportunity we borrowed their DistoX to complete our survey.



Just inside the cave looking out (Photo: Luke Buckingham)



At the back of the cave looking out ... not a very big cave thank goodness! (Photo: Luke Buckingham)

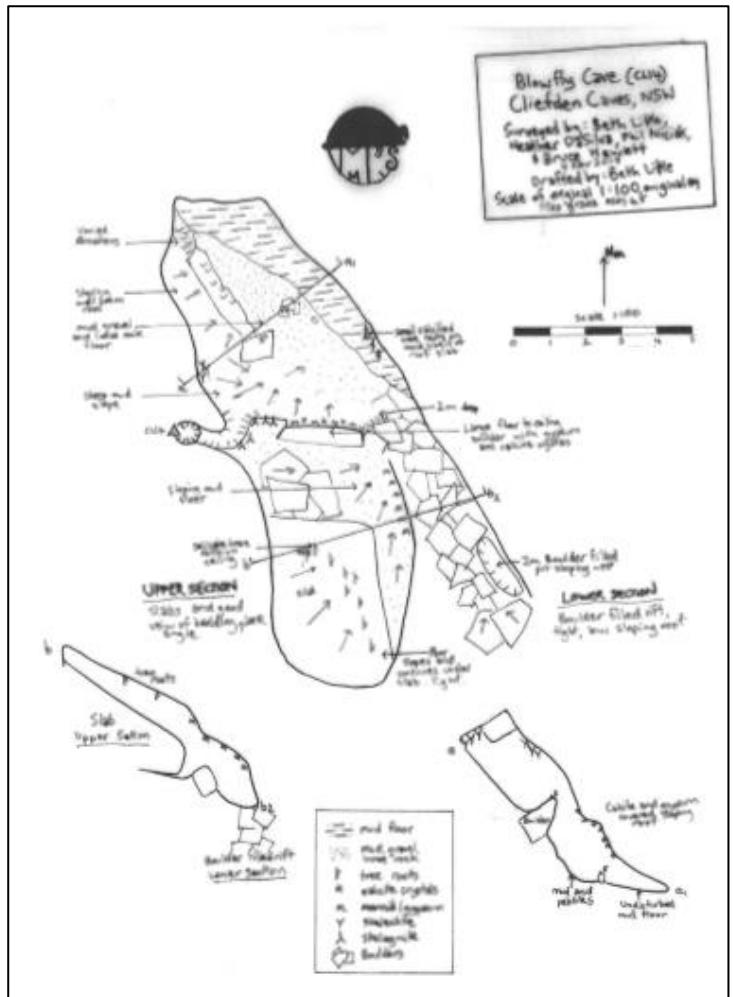
Even with resurveying the original legs with the DistoX we were still able to complete the main chamber in a short period of time. This then left the two side passages, neither of which went very far, but far enough we needed to get in there and take measurements.



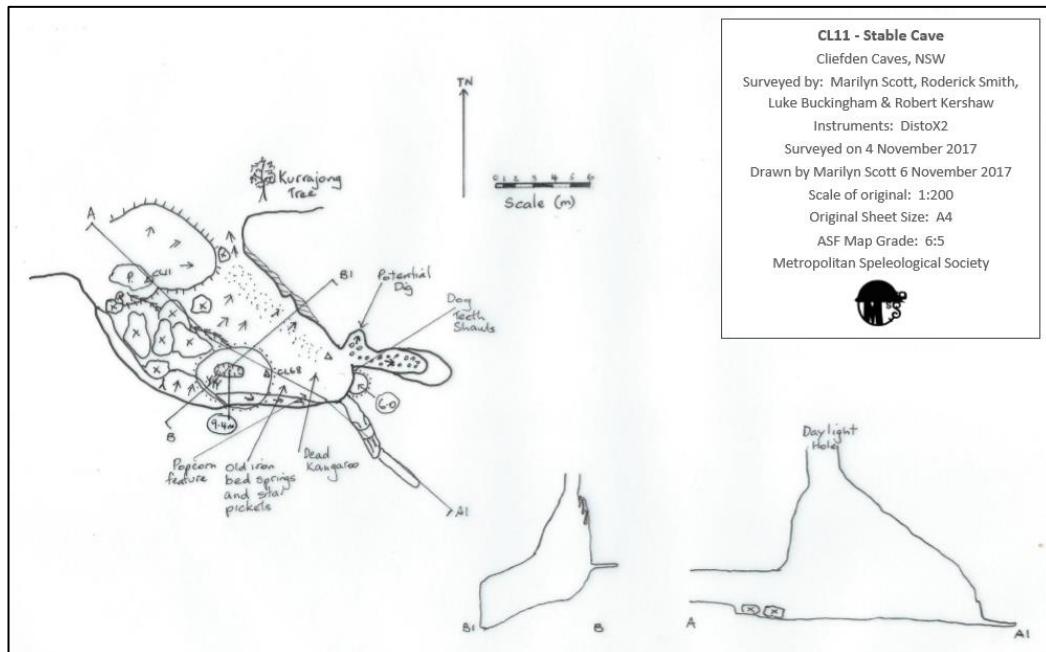
Rod on the bed of rocks trying to get one last measurement!

I went into the left passage while Bob and Marilyn prepared themselves for the right passage (neither Luke nor I would fit in the right passage). The left passage, while being more open, has a floor covered in rocks about half the size of a person's head (cue the jokes about people's head sizes). It was far from comfortable, but I persisted and got the measurements we needed.

Bob went into the right passage first and found that he could get to the end. Considering it was rather straight meant the passage could be surveyed without Marilyn also going in. A few measurements from the start of the passage, plus the extra half a metre Bob added on, and it was all done.



CL14 Blowfly Cave - mapped by Beth, Heather and Phil



CL11 Stable Cave - mapped by Luke Buckingham, Rod Smith, Marilyn Scott & Bob Kershaw

There was only one thing left to do, pack up and go home. OK, so that's two things, but close enough. Beth and I once again solved all the world's caving problems on the drive home.

Although surveying isn't for everyone, we had a great weekend and are looking forward to doing more in the future.

Well, not quite. We had all the data for the plan, but we needed to do a couple of cross sections. More measurements and more sketching before we could pack up and head back to the hut.

We had plenty of time to enjoy a warm shower before sitting down with the data, chips and a bottle of wine, and turning it into a finished product. Beth and Marilyn both had problems with getting the data into SurVex, which they'd been trained on, but they got there in the end. While they were busy with that I decided to see if my laptop would talk to my DistoX2. I set everything up and it worked first go. I then had a practice go at calibrating, there was too much metal and electricity around for it to work properly. Despite all of that I got a variation of 0.82, the target is under 0.5, so it was reasonably good. By the time we all retired for the evening the cave maps were looking pretty good, but were not complete.

In the morning we finally made a decision. Bruce would take Heather, Phil and Luke into *Gable* and *Swansong*. Bob packed up and headed for home, Beth and Marilyn stayed at the hut to finish their cave maps and I also stayed at the hut because I'm lazy. It didn't take Beth and Marilyn long to finish their maps, so we spent the rest of the morning in a leisurely

fashion while waiting for the others to return.

Bruce had led the trip into the caves in the way any experienced caver would lead a cave the others are not familiar with. He sent them through small holes while he went 'round the easy way. He probably played other tricks on them, but that was the only one I was told about.

Bushwalking – Shoalhaven 10 – 12 November 2017

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: Marilyn Scott (TL), Jeff Boyd, Steve Rowse, Willem Knopper and Rahm Redipali

This was an MSS trip that I also put on the CMW program, mainly because it was looking like it would just be Jeff, Steve and me, and we've walked with each other so much that there's nothing new to talk about around the campfire (particularly as we've usually driven 3 hours together just to get to the start of the walk!). So, Willem and Rahm (both from CMW) put their hands up; none of us had walked with them before so it was going to be interesting, particularly as (even though it was my idea), I had absolutely no idea what was ahead of us apart from day 1.



Easy walking on the ridges in this area of Morton NP.



Going down the knife-edged spur to Little Horseshoe Bend (the sandy bank at the top of the section of river you can see).

the trips at the time. So, we decided to combine both trips into a three day trip; seemed like a good idea at the time!

We all met up on Friday and started the walk from Matodoro Ridge Trail across lovely open country, albeit very dry (who says I only like to walk in scrub, this was wonderful). After a half hour's walking we stopped at Monitor Mount for some lunch and then headed down a spur to Little Horseshoe Bend on the Shoalhaven. We'd all carried way too much food and our packs were heavy, as we knew it was just a 3 hour walk to our base camp for the

The Shoalhaven is one of my favourite rivers to visit, some of it can be dead easy, but in other spots it's quite challenging. Wineglass Tor (in bushwalking circles) is a well-known walk, it's usually done over two days but for me that's pushing it, I've been wanting to do it for the past 15 years. Washedaway Creek is a relatively little-known walk, in fact I've never seen it on other bushwalking club programs, but I've always wanted to do it after walking past the creek about six years ago. Jeff and I had planned on doing both walks in the past but for some unknown reason I wasn't able to go on



First river crossing for the weekend.



The spur up to Specimen Hill

left-hand bend and flattened out a bit all the way to Specimen Hill, again, nice open country, very easy to walk in. A few route changes soon brought us to a rocky outcrop and our first objective, Wineglass Tor. After wanting to do this walk for so long, I was finally here and it well and truly lived up to my expectations, I'd actually imagined it looked like a martini glass though, not a brandy balloon type glass!

Took heaps of photos and then headed to our next objective Touga West, a couple of k away and a cliff face that we could see from Wineglass Tor. Again, easy going in very open country and we were at the cliff top by lunchtime. The next objective was Backbender Buttress, our route down to the Shoalhaven. Two of the party went straight down the Buttress, and three of us, about 500m from the end took a short cut which was pretty much

weekend. The spur that goes down to Little Horseshoe Bend starts out broad but ends up being a knife edge rocky spur, there's no track but it's a lovely route to/from the Shoalhaven. Took us about 1 ¾ hours to descend, took lots of time for photos and eventually were at the river for our first crossing over to where we'd camp for the next 2 nights. Found a 5-star spot with grass, plenty of space for 5 tents, a spar in the rapids, good deep waterhole to swim in, heaps of fire wood and easy access to the river for water.

Next morning, we took off at 7.45 and started the climb up our spur to Specimen Hill. Initially nice open country, the spur soon turned into a bit of a knife edge, and then to an almost vertical climb to where the spur made a sharp



It got a bit steeper towards the top.

200m straight down a scree slope, we slid down the whole way, putting big holes in our shorts, but it was heaps of fun, and easier than walking down scree.

The tree of us headed upstream to our campsite, about 5k away, crossing over where convenient to allow for easier walking on the banks, we did about 5 river crossings, this was Rahm's first experience with river crossings and rapids (something he wont soon forget). We were back at the campsite by 4.30pm and the others arrived at 6pm. We all had a swim in the river, the water was really warm, then we settled in for popcorn followed by dinner and garlic bread (compliments of Jeff). It had been a full day, nothing difficult (apart from the scree up and down), but we were in bed by 9pm for an early start the next day.



Wineglass Tor

and started upstream. There was only one river crossing that we had to negotiate and it was pretty straight forward. We were at the end of Washedaway creek by 8.30am and started upstream. Some of the rivers in



Lots of river crossings returning from Backbender Buttress.

of water or (b) onto nasty sharp rocks.

By 11.30am we were at the end of the road so to speak, a 30m+ waterfall that was impassable. We stopped here to admire the waterfall, have lunch and figure out the best route up. Steve, Willem and Rahm went up what looked like a good route, but when it was my turn, I didn't like it at all, so Jeff and I back-tracked about 20m to what was an easier route and one he'd used before. I still didn't like it, but it was the only way out. Steve & Co then came to really dodgy scree and it took them a while to get through that, with Rahm holding on for dear life (he really thought he was going to die for a while there). Jeff and I were having our own issues with scree,

the Shoalhaven have large limestone slabs, worn smooth over time and this is what I expected from this creek, although the mass of small rocks at the beginning didn't look promising.

Before long though we started getting the smooth boulders, plus pools of water and small waterfalls. We gained 180m in elevation just in the creek, so you can imagine how many small waterfalls and cascades we climbed. We started out being delighted with yet another waterfall obstacle to negotiate, but by the end of the morning we were thinking "not another bloody waterfall" as they each became more challenging than the last. It was loads of fun though figuring out the best way up without falling (a) into a pool



Climbing one of the many waterfalls



Climbing another of the waterfalls, this one with less hand holds.

loose rocks, nothing to hold on to, poor foot holds and more scree. An hour later we regrouped, only about 75m out of the creek (vertically). It was then just a case of making our way up the next 125m to where it flattened out. In all, we gained 200+m of elevation over a very short distance (something like 250m). I've never been so glad to be at the top of anything in all my life (that I can remember, and that's the problem, I'll soon forget this experience).

Anyway, at the top we looked across the valley to the other-side and were grateful that we'd relied on Jeff's previous experience and chosen this route out. I'd looked at the map and thought that the opposite side of the creek might be doable (and would get us closer to the cars), thankfully I decided to go the known route.

Once out of the creek, it was a slight uphill route in very open country to an old fire trail, which (in the main) we followed all the way back to Matodoro Fire Trail, arriving back at the car by 3pm (as predicted).

In all, over the 3 days we walked 29.33k which is about what I'd expect from one of my trips. The scenery was spectacular and the company entertaining. Thanks for joining me on this adventure guys!



Caving – Abercrombie – 18 - 19 November 2017

Report by: Rod Smith

Participants: Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Elswyth Porter, Aengus Porter, Katryse Nicholls, Alan Green, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Wei Wei Lee, Brian Reeves (NJVSS), Colin Tyrrell (BMSC), Rod Smith (TL)

"What are the odds of being sick on a Sunday? A million to one" - Homer J. Simpson

At 4:30 Friday afternoon I realised the odds weren't in my favour as I could feel the beginnings of a cold coming on. It was too late now to cancel the trip, nor did I want to. So, I went home, packed, and hit the road. The road over the mountains was wet due to the rain; it stopped when I visited Lithgow Woolworths to buy the rest of my supplies, but started again on the way to Bathurst. More annoying than the rain was hitting the kangaroo, the only one I saw, on the Great Western Highway just out of Lithgow! Thankfully I'd managed to slow down before impact so there wasn't a lot of damage, and the kangaroo hopped away.

I arrived at Abercrombie to find Brian plus Cathi and children. It was already after 10:00pm so we didn't talk for too long before crawling into bed.



The Abers crowd (l-r) Wei Wei, Katryse, Cathi, Rod, Anna, Alan and Brian

We started with introductions and it didn't take Brian long to start regaling Anna and Wei Wei with his standard jokes such as:

"How do you fit an elephant into a Subway bag?"

"I don't know."

"You take the S out of Sub and the F out of Way."

"There's no F in Way!"

"Exactly."

and *"I'm blind in one eye and can't see out the other."*

and *"I suffer from craft disease. Can't Remember An F in Thing."*

Colin, Alan, Anna, Wei Wei and I went over to the guides office while Brian and Cathi rigged a tarp over the fire to improve the chances over it still burning that evening. Cathi wanted to christen her camp oven with a 3kg leg of lamb that evening, so she needed the fire going with a good bed of coals.

After talking to Stuart and acquiring the key for the weekend I sent the others to explore Stable Cave while Colin, Cathi and I started looking through the documentation the guides have stored at Abercrombie. Colin had his laptop and scanner so we set up in the BBQ shelter shed with a filing cabinet drawer and a

I awoke to hear rain falling, which is never what you want to hear when you need to get up and go to the toilet. I held out 'til the rain eased and then got up. The fire was going and the billy was on. Cathi soon had the hotplate over the flames and breakfast was cooking for the teenagers.

I noticed a hire car on the other side of the camp ground. Alan had said he would be driving a hire car, so I wandered over to see if it was him. Sure enough, it was. He soon wandered over to join us.

I had told Colin and Anna to arrive at 9:00am. Anna arrived with Wei Wei, and Colin arrived about a minute later. They had both timed it really well.



Brian and Anna checking location of a cave.

couple of other folders from the guides office. Stuart later added to our pile a box of rolls of paper. These were large maps, photos, posters and other bits and pieces.

By the time the others returned from Stable Cave it was definitely time for lunch. Colin, Anna and Wei Wei had their lunch in the shelter shed while the others went back to camp. The kids had kept the fire going, which was good news.

After lunch Brian decided that he would have a rest for the afternoon, but Cathi managed to get Aengus and Katryse to join Anna, Alan and Wei Wei, for the afternoon's caving. I sent them off to look at Grove Cave and then into the Arch to check out the Belfry and King Solomons.

Meanwhile Cathi, Colin and I had managed to go through all the



In the BBQ Shelter going through documentation (Photo: Cathi H-H)



More documentation to assess (Photo: Cathi H-H)

be expected of a camp oven roast. Eating then turned to drinking and some of the conversations started becoming more serious. So, I went to bed.

Google seemed to get it right as it dawned clear and dry Sunday morning. Cathi opted to pack as she had a lot of gear to get into her car around the teenagers. Katryse, Anna, Wei Wei, Brian, Alan and I went to look through Bushranger. The girls went around poking their heads, and the rest of their bodies if they'd fit, in any hole they could find while Brian, Alan and I were happy just wandering through the standard tourist track.

We followed Bushranger with a look at A13-A14. Again, the girls were happy to crawl through while the guys stayed above ground.

On the way back, we looked at numerous holes and found a lot of tags, but they were all ones I had GPSed before. There is one hole we could see but not get to as it would require ropes and harnesses, we'll have to do that one on a future trip.

Cathi headed for home while the rest of us went back to camp to have lunch and pack up, except for Alan who decided to take his drone for another fly, this time near the hole we couldn't get to. He didn't get close enough to see a tag.

By 2:00pm we'd all packed up and headed for home. Another top weekend.

documentation and had scanned a lot of documents and photos. It's going to take a while to go through everything to find what's relevant and how important it is.

Colin wasn't feeling well so he decided just to head home. The rest of us returned to camp as the rain that had been reasonably consistent all day started to clear. Anna informed us that this was exactly as Google had designed it, and the weather would continue to improve. This gave Alan and Cathi an opportunity to take out their drones and fly them around the camp ground.

Cathi's leg of lamb was delicious, as to



Rod carving the leg of lamb (Photo: Alan Green)



AGM / Christmas Party – Rylstone - 25, 2017

Report by: Ray Etherton

Participants: Rod Smith, Cathi Humphrey-Hood (+Aengus & Elswyth), Chris & Helena Johnstone (+ Ben & Owen), Beth Little, Marilyn Scott, Heather Reid, Paul Richards, Alan Green, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Jeff Boyd, and the Host - Ray Etherton (+ Fletcher)

This event was so big that it went over three days and a multitude of people will write up sections of it.

The crew started to trickle into the shed on Friday evening either setting up tents or finding a sleeping surface. Some chatting around the table before bed ready for the next days activities.

The suckers for punishment got up early and headed off canyoning at 7.30, due to arrive back at 6pm. The civilized contingent had a slow breakfast. This



The Meeting, before it got under way (clockwise l-r Paul Richards, Heath, Beth, the kids and Rod)



Master Chef Chris bbq-ing the snags.

outdoor feast that left everybody stuffed but good stuffed. Too stuffed to have the planned games night so we sat around and talked instead.

Sunday. The planned cooked breakfast never happened it was leftovers. The keen members headed off for a short canyon, Jeff, the smart one, hung at the shed to read and some left for their homes. The rest of us headed off to walk up Rocky. Rocky is a small rocky outcrop overlooking Kandos. Two thirds of the contingent pushed on and made it to the top and drank in the outstanding view. The other third, unnamed, "wuss bags" decided turn around about half way up.

consisted of French toast bacon and maple syrup. After this we headed off to Dunn's Swamp for a bit, with emphases on bit, of casual abseiling and water sports. Then back to the shed to prepare for the evening's feast.

Once the canyoning contingent returned, four minutes ahead of time they showered and the AGM began. Though I did start to take articles of clothing off and throw them at Rod. he would have none of it and the meeting continued to the bitter end. We also had long time member Paul turn up for the meeting and dinner.

Time for the feast. Everybody utterly failed to understand what a "small salad" was though they did fully understand "yummy salad". We sat down to an



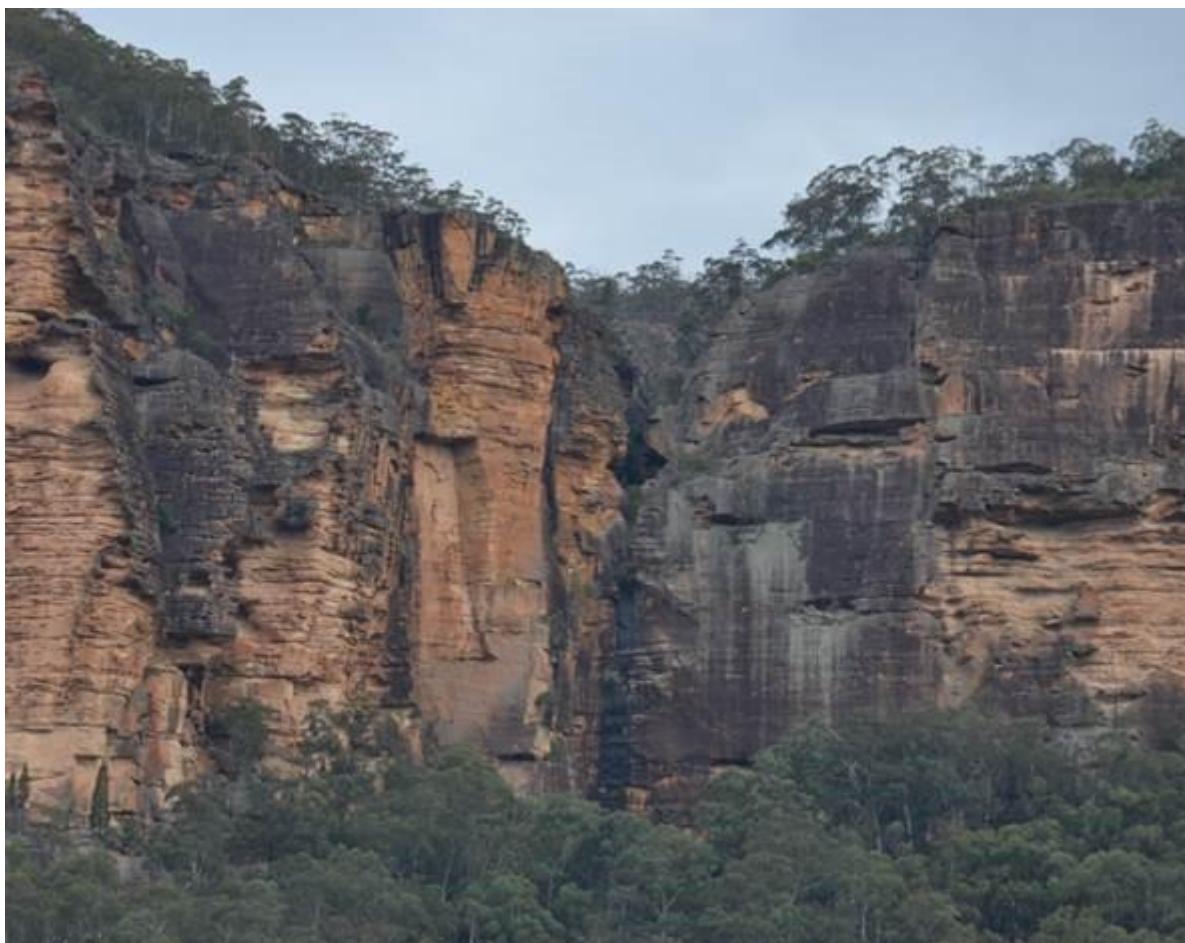
Dining under the stars!

Upon coming back from Rocky we had lunch and everybody left, except Jeff who was waiting for the early afternoon return of the canyoners.

Well the early return never happened. As it was getting dark Jeff and I discussed if we should sound the alert that night or first thing in the morning. Fortunately we got a call from the group around 8 to say they were on their way out. Some very hungry and dirty canyoners (one very bruised) arrived at the shed some time after nine. They showered, ate and headed off into the night, to their respective homes. Except for Rod he refused to leave till morning.

I found it to be a fun weekend and everybody made wonderful house guests, I barely had to do anything.

Thank you to the multitude of cooks, cleaners and food providers. You are welcome to darken my door at any time.



Diary Alert - this is the Big Drop at the end of a small canyon that we explored in 20th October (didn't go all the way to the end as needed ropes). John Gray will be exploring the canyon fully (hopefully including the Big Drop) on 12 – 13 May 2018! (photo: John Gray)



Cathi in Mares Forest Creek (Photo: M Scott)

Canyoning – Northern Wollemi - 25 – 26 November, 2017

Report by: Marilyn Scott

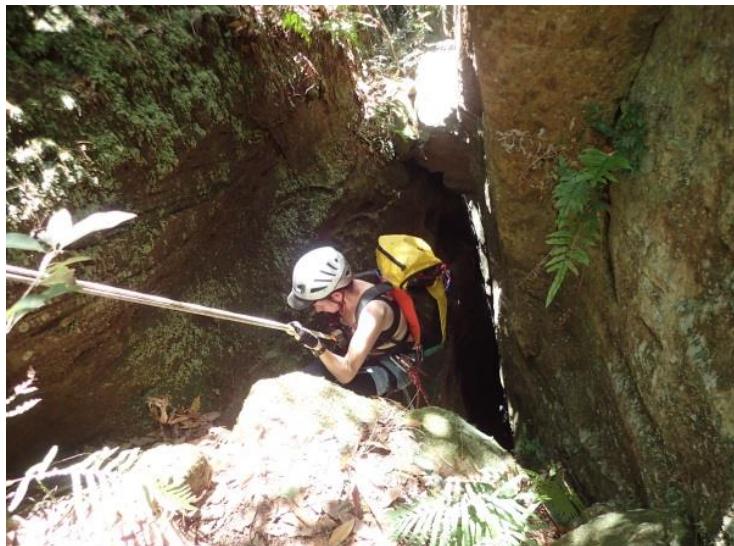
Participants: Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Heather Reid, Beth Little, Jeff Boyd, Cathi-Humphrey-Hood and Marilyn Scott – TL (Saturday). Rod Smith, Alan Green, Heather Reid and Marilyn Scott – TL (Sunday)

Saturday: Greenup/Midwinter Canyons

We set off from Ray's house at 7.30am with the intention of being back at 6pm (or before). We actually drove through Ray's gate right on 6pm, more luck than design!

Apart from a slight detour to Meads Hill, we were at the track-head more or less on schedule, ready for the 4k fire trail walk. The trip in the main was uneventful, apart from a blow-out of the heel of Jeff's canyoning shoes which he managed to fix with cable ties (and he thinks now that he's trashed his shoes that he'll get out of canyoning with me – highly unlikely!). We got through Greenup with its 2 or 3 abseils unscathed, and no-one fell off the tree-root traverse (a gaping chasm that you traverse using a tree root to walk on).

It's a nice canyon, but the reason that most people do it is to get to the end of Midwinter and reverse up that canyon, makes a good round trip.



Cathi abseiling Greenup



Anna on the Root Traverse

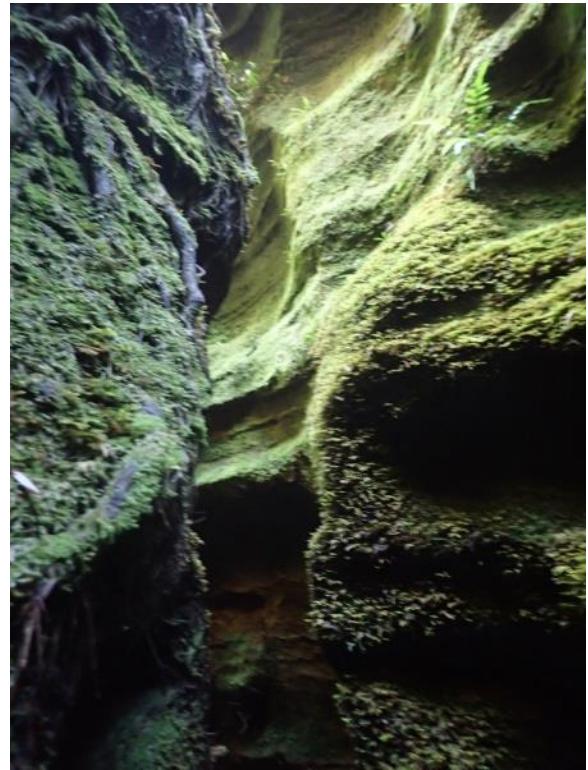


Jeff on the first climb up - handline put in for my benefit, sure was handy.

Midwinter is usually the highlight with its constricted passages, challenging climb-ups (for short people and those with a lot of water and ropes in their packs), and the beauty of the moss-covered walls. We were on the fire trail by 4pm (and avoided the possible scrub bash suggested by Jeff), and back at the cars by 5pm. For those who haven't done any Northern Wollemi canyons, these two canyons definitely had them hooked!



*Cathi negotiating the difficult climb up;
Beth trying to chimney.*



*The best description of Midwinter, dark,
constricted and very green.*

We'd had a lovely day's canyoning and as leader it was great, trip went according to plan, hit all the milestones on time (places we should be and when) so kept to the schedule. Sadly, Fergies was a whole different ballgame!

Sunday: Fergies Canyons

I think Rod's words were "Fergies is not as big a day as Greenup/Midwinter"; so, we decided to leave at 9am, in hindsight this was a poor decision on my part, 7.30am would have been much better! After maybe an hour and a half we came across a tree on the road, so we broke out the chainsaw and cleared the way to the locked gate on the Army Road. We then walked down the fire trail for a k or so and peeled off into the scrub.

We were headed to Cirque Du Soleil Pass. We'd used this a couple of times before, and it got its name from the fact that to get up the pass, Min had to almost stand on John Gray's shoulders to get up. Or was it me that had to stand on his shoulders. We all struggled (except maybe John). Then when going down the pass the last time (using a handline), Rod seriously injured his shoulder. So, this time when we got to the small cliff, we set up an abseil. All down safely, although the walk to the pass took longer than expected.

Down in Coorongooba Creek (beautiful), we walked about 50m upstream and then headed up an unnamed creek (Middle Earth Canyon). This too is very pretty, beautiful rainforest sections. We came to a junction in the creek and assumed if we turned up the left junction we'd be in the gully we were looking for. Wrong, we'd walked for about 15 minutes when we came to an impassable waterfall (I recognized it



Heather and Alan clearing away the tree



Alan on the abseil down Cirque Du Soleil

extended section of dark constriction, with lots of wading. There are only two abseils, the first one straight forward (we did however change the anchor), the second one, down through a very tight key-hole. It was so tight that I had to take off my pack to get through.

And this is where things went hideously pear shaped. I'd walked/waded further on to set up the next abseil and then I heard the words no-one ever wants to hear "I'm stuck". Rod was in the key-hole with his legs dangling and wedged into the slot, caught up by either his harness or his prussic loops/carabineer, we couldn't figure out (or see) what was caught.



Alan on the second abseil just below the point where Rod was caught.

the water, hypothermia was becoming a very real possibility, we were all shivering despite having on thermals.

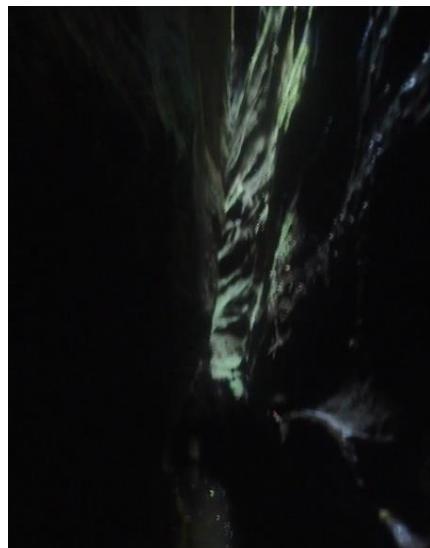
Almost at the moment I was about to make the Big Decision and start walking out, Rod dropped his helmet and it landed in a crevice and he was able to get his foot up onto it and wriggle himself around, dislodging the prussic loops/carabineer and he was on his way down to us at the bottom.

We quickly exited the canyon, fortunately, there were no more abseils, just some scrambling over rocks, and this is where I came to grief. I held onto a very dodgy piece of tree and it broke, and I fell a couple of metres. When you are tired that's when you make poor decisions, and this was certainly one of them. Fortunately, I fell on my backpack which had a 40m rope in it, so it "sort of" cushioned the fall. My

immediately, the final abseil in Middle Earth). So, we headed back downstream to the gully that Heather wanted to go up in the first place.

The going wasn't easy, all up hill and by now we're in the heat of the day. When we weren't going up hill, we were in scrub in the creek, head-high bracken fern or a forest of small saplings. We arrived at the canyon section around 2pm, way too late, but we were here now so I figured if we were through the canyon in an hour or so, we were still in a good position to get back to the car, maybe around 5 or 6pm.

The canyon itself is stunning, an



Badly photographed but an indication of the constriction of the first part.

Fortunately, he was in a spot that we could climb up a little way to maybe give him some assistance. We tried everything, but nothing worked or helped. At least with a stuck rope you can just leave it behind and cut your losses, but we weren't going to be able to do that with Rod.

At this stage I'm seriously considering using the PLB. I asked Rod if he was ready for me to set it off, "not just yet" was his answer, but I truly couldn't see how he'd be able to release himself from whatever was holding him in place.

The problem with setting off the PLB was that I'd have to walk out to the end of the canyon, find an open spot where it would get reception and set it off (probably high up on a cliff and for that I'd have to get to our exit route) and then walk back to the vehicles and call up emergency services to tell them that the problem wasn't where the PLB was, but over in the creek. All this would take hours, and Rod (and someone else) would be left in the canyon. For the three of us down in



Alan in another part of the dark constriction just after the second abseil.

remembered doing once. We opted for the walk-up ramp, further away but as we were all exhausted, less risky. Fortunately, a lot of the walk on the side of the creek was in good open forest.

We found the break in the cliff, Heather dropped into the creek and filled up all the water bottles and then everyone started up the ramp. It was short and sharp, that is, pretty much climbing the whole way through scrub, but with sections which were not scrubby. We were up the top by about 6.00pm. Alan had his phone with him, so we tried it for reception, but sadly he's with Optus, so, no reception.

As my GPS was stuffed and I'd left my compass back in the car (after all Rod was navigating! will never do that again), we had to get ourselves back to the fire trail by dead-reckoning, but it was straight forward, continue up hill to the high point and then drop down to the road. From this point on, it was uneventful. We were all back at the locked gate and cars at 8.30pm and fortunately Heather's mobile service provider is Telstra and so she had reception. We were able to call Ray (and Jeff) and let them know that we were out "safely". Then it was the 1.5 hour drive back to Ray's, mostly on dirt road, dodging wallabies.

I encouraged everyone to spend the night at Ray's (Jeff and I would drive home together but the others were all solo in their cars), but in the end only Rod decided to stay. Jeff and I didn't get back to the Coast until 2am.

Everyone seems to have gotten over the "trip from hell", Heather's provided us with some medical information on "harness hang syndrome" so we know now that this wouldn't have been a problem for Rod. We've suggested to Beth (the MSS Training Co-ordinator) that some practical rescue scenarios would be a good idea, and knot practice as I was the only one who could tie the alpine butterfly and I was too short to get it up high enough.

Alan has suggested that someone also carry a wire saw, we could have cut a log for Rod to stand on (maybe) ... he's asked for a more extreme canyon next time (lol)! Good to know that he'll be back for another one and I haven't "burned" him.

Thanks Rod, Heather and Alan for going with me, and for your support!

helmet should be replaced now (hit my head), have heaps of bruises and a swollen wrist, plus later on, in the evening it felt like I'd also torn a muscle! However, once I got over the shock, I was back up, avoiding that ledge! Then I discovered that my water-bottle was sporting a big dent and my GPS screen had been punctured, GPS working but wouldn't function when icons pressed ... not good! But at least I had a photocopy of the map, albeit a little damp and some running ink!

We arrived at the junction of Fergies and the Coorongooba and then had to make the decision about which exit to take, the one with the rock climb, the one up a non-abseil canyon or a walk-up ramp – that Rod



Looking down the pass/ramp that we walked up.



MSS TRIP CALENDAR

Dec 16 - 17 Canyoning Mt Wilson	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Marilyn Scott <i>Contact:</i> marilyn_scott@bigpond.com <i>Grade:</i> Exploratory / possibly hard <i>Details:</i> Exploring a side creek of the Wollangambe River. This will involve swimming/wading upstream on the Wollangambe upstream for 750m to Wollangambe Crater.</p>
Dec 26 Canyoning Wollangambe 3		<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Rod Smith <i>Contact:</i> roderick_smith@hotmail.com <i>Grade:</i> Easy <i>Details:</i> Wollangambe 3 - the traditional MSS Wollangambe lilo trip (don't be fooled by cheap imitations). Family orientated trip (kid-friendly).</p>
Dec 27 - 31 Canyoning Dumbano		<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Rod Smith <i>Contact:</i> roderick_smith@hotmail.com <i>Grade:</i> Hard <i>Details:</i> Tunnel Canyon and then exploring downstream slots, creeks and possible canyons</p>
Jan (first week) Canyoning Waratah Ridge	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Rod Smith <i>Contact:</i> roderick_smith@hotmail.com <i>Grade:</i> Hard <i>Details:</i> Will include canyons like Bridge, Bjelkes Mind and Bubble-bath.</p>
Jan TBA Canyoning Newnes	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Anna Ossig-Bonnano <i>Contact:</i> ossig@aapt.net.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy <i>Details:</i> A great day out for everyone, but particularly those new to canyoning ... Rocky Creek & Sheepdip (Twister) (helmet and wetsuit required)</p>
Feb 8 General Meeting		<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Rod <i>Contact:</i> roderick_smith@hotmail.com <i>Venue:</i> Canada Bay SES</p>
Feb 9 Canyoning Serendipity	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> John Gray <i>Contact:</i> JOHN.GRAY@sydneywater.com.au <i>Grade:</i> Medium <i>Details:</i> Serendipity Canyon – Grade 3 and lots of fun. Those doing Sidewinder on Feb 10 – 11, will car camp on Friday night, venue tba.</p>
Feb 10 – 11 Canyoning Yarramun area	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> John Gray <i>Contact:</i> JOHN.GRAY@sydneywater.com.au <i>Grade:</i> Medium <i>Details:</i> Dumbano Fire Trail to Sidewinder Ridge, drop into Yarramun cave, return to ridge with abseil gear and enter Sidewinder Canyon. Spend night in Yarramun Camp Cave and then exit on Sunday (route tba)</p>
Feb 17 – 18 Canyoning Glen Davis	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Rod Smith <i>Contact:</i> roderick_smith@hotmail.com <i>Grade:</i> Medium/Hard <i>Details:</i> Wowsers and Doomsday canyons</p>
Mar 3 – 4 Canyoning Bunglebori	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Marilyn Scott <i>Contact:</i> marilyn_scott@bigpond.com <i>Grade:</i> Medium/Hard <i>Details:</i> Waratah Ridge to Bunglebori then via unnamed ridges to campsite above Arthur's Canyon 1 or 2 abseils). Sunday Arthur's Canyon to Bunglebori and exit via Hailstorm Retreat Canyon.</p>

Mar 16 – 18 Caving Cooleman	NEW	<i>Trip Leader:</i> Beth Little <i>Contact:</i> littlebeth78@hotmail.com <i>Grade:</i> Easy <i>Details:</i> Three days car camp at Cooleman Plains checking out some of the caves. New area for MSS so don't miss out!
Mar 30 – Apr 2 (Easter) Bushwalking Ettrema	NEW	<i>Trip Leader:</i> Marilyn Scott / Jeff Boyd <i>Contact:</i> marilyn_scott@bigpond.com <i>Grade:</i> Hard <i>Details:</i> 4 – 5 days walking in the Ettrema Tops area, route tba but taking in highlights such as Hamlet's Crown, Cinch Creek, Possibility Point and Manning Saddle. Multi day experience necessary.
May 12 – 13 Canyoning Glen Davis	NEW	<i>Trip Leader:</i> John Gray <i>Contact:</i> JOHN.GRAY@sydneywater.com.au <i>Grade:</i> Medium <i>Details:</i> Checking out the small canyon we discovered in October with a large abseil. Day Two TBA
Mar or Apr 2018 Caving New Zealand		<i>Trip Leader:</i> David Stuckey <i>Contact:</i> stuckedl@cba.com.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy/Medium <i>Details:</i> Awesome! But be warned, after caving in NZ, you may never cave in Oz again. Numbers will be limited due to transport/accommodation logistics.
Sept 29 (4 weeks) Caving Nullarbor		<i>Trip Leader:</i> Cathi Humphrey-Hood <i>Contact:</i> cathi@emeraldimages.com.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy <i>Details:</i> Advance Notice of a Joint trip with NHVSS. Looking for new caves using drones and other techniques.
26 Dec 2018-4 Jan 2019	NEW	The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania (31st ASF Conference) pre- and post-conference trip dates to Mole Creek Karst area into some spectacular caves. See notice on Page 5.



Dedication – Six of us heading off with John Gray to explore some possible canyons, despite mist and rain – Coorongooba October 2017



APPENDIX 1 – MEETING MINUTES

MSS 52nd Annual General Meeting – 25 November 2017

Held at Rylstone, Casa del Ray

Meeting Opened: 18:45

Present: Rod Smith, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Chris Johnstone, Helena Johnstone, Beth Little, Marilyn Scott, Heather Reed, Paul Richards, Ray Etherton, Alan Green, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Jeff Boyd

Apologies: Jim Crockett, John Gray, Natalie Etherton, Brendan Prideaux

Any Corrections to Previous Meetings Minutes: None

Correspondence:

Fifty Years of the UIS

SUSS Newsletter

New cheque book

Committee Members Reports:

President: Attached (actually, see page 5 of Newsletter)

Treasurer: See Appendix 2

Motion to leave fees as is. Moved by Chris, seconded Marilyn. Carried

Full Member \$80; Prospective Member \$30; Family Membership (2 adults + children) \$160; Family membership (1 adult + children) \$120; Cavers already registered with ASF (other clubs) \$30; Honorary Membership: \$45

Equipment Officer: All the MSS equipment has now been handed over from Jim to Beth and a full audit of the gear has been conducted. Multiple items have been retired, as per the agreement from the previous meeting. A new spreadsheet is in the process of development which will allow the equipment officer to track the age of our equipment and thus when to replace it. This will be beneficial in helping to ensure all our gear is kept within the manufacturers specifications and also to properly budget for purchases in the future.

The gear audit is available from the equipment officer on request.

Training Officer: Two trips were conducted during the year. The first was a field day held at The Edge climbing gym. This was very well attended, and all feedback indicated everyone had a great time and learnt a lot. A great success.

The second training course was a cave surveying course run by Mike Lake (SUSS) with assistance from Phil Maynard (SUSS), held at Wombeyan. This was attended by 5 MSS members with all five enjoying the weekend and learning a lot. Three weeks later some of those who attended the course were able to visit Cleifden for a weekend of putting those newly acquired skills into practice. Two new MSS maps have been produced as a result, Stable Cave and Blowfly Cave. All participants are keen to do more surveying over the years to come. Another great success.

Librarian: None

Web Manager: We are currently working on a new look and feel for the website. The aim was to have it ready for the AGM, but technical issues meant this was not possible. We're now aiming for completion before the next meeting.

Elections:

President declared all positions vacant and called for nominations. Officers elected:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>
<u>President</u>	Jim Crockett
<u>Secretary</u>	Roderick Smith
<u>Treasurer</u>	Cathi Humphrey-Hood
<u>Equipment Officer</u>	Beth Little
<u>Librarian</u>	Roderick Smith
<u>Training Officer</u>	Beth Little
ASF Liaison	Jim Crockett, Roderick Smith

<u>Newsletter Editor(s)</u>	Marilyn Scott
<u>Website Manager</u>	Roderick Smith
<u>Public Officer</u>	John Gray

Status of Action Items:

Bolting Course – Rod Smith: None

Resurveying Stable Cave – Jim Crockett: None

Abercrombie surface survey – Rod Smith: None

Abercrombie documentation – Rod Smith: During the first of two Abercrombie trips this year we were able to locate three more tags and GPSed those. We also suspect where there are a couple more.

Documentation (constitution) – Chris Johnstone: Some brief discussion previously via email and further discussion this evening, Chris will continue working on this.

Documentation (membership application form) – Chris Johnstone: After the last meeting, there were several emails sent around with comments regarding this. Chris will review these and update the proposed form accordingly.

UIS Yarrangobilly Trip – Cathi Humphrey-Hood/Beth Little: This is now complete and will be removed from the list

Facebook – Helena Johnstone/Marilyn Scott: The Facebook page is now stable and nothing major is planned for it. As such we will take it off the list.

Website look and feel — Marilyn Scott: Under way, see Web Managers report for further detail.

Cave Surveying Course – Marilyn Scott: As per the Training Officers report, this was a great success. There were a number of people on the waiting list for this course, so Marilyn is in the preliminary stages of planning another course.

Membership: New members - Alan Green, Brendan Prideaux, Katryse Nicholls, Wei Wei Lee

New Business

1. Rod proposed renaming “Status of Action Items” to “MSS Projects” and to list them in the Newsletter. The hope is that some members may feel like contributing, but the thought of taking on a committee position or equivalent may be daunting. This way they may be able to assist with a project without feeling like they may be overcommitting themselves. Everyone agreed with this unanimously.
2. Cave Maps: We are going to set up some MSS standards for the cave maps that we produce. These will be documented and available for all club members. Marilyn has offered to take ownership of this for now. Anyone wishing to contribute should contact her.
3. ASF Fees: At the last NSWSC we were informed that a motion would be raised at the next ASF council meeting to reduce membership fees. This was so clubs had an opportunity to discuss this internally, so their representative would know how to vote at the council meeting. After a brief discussion we all agreed ASF fees should NOT be reduced.
4. A proposal has been raised to produce a new Abercrombie book. We all agreed that this proposal should be added to the list of projects. The list of projects includes a few at Abercrombie that may get incorporated into this one. If anyone is interested in contributing to the book, no matter how large or small a contribution, please contact Beth Little.
5. At the recent NSWSC meeting there were discussion regarding one or more clubs doing the wrong thing at Jenolan. The club(s) in question were contacted directly, and that didn’t include us. However, this is another reminder that we should continue to behave ourselves at Jenolan (and all other caving areas).
6. Rod Smith raised a suggestion that some people may like to do some bush navigation training, and he is now a qualified navigation trainer through the SES. Everyone agreed this was a good idea. No date has been set yet, keep an eye on the calendar if you are interested in this, or contact Rod to let him know you’re interested.
7. Cathi raised - following on from all Beth’s hard work in sorting the equipment, I think it might be a good idea if we had some sort of a plan for managing it and at least having some sort of policy about what we

need and how often we will replace/upgrade it (as this will reduce the financial shocks on the club). This item was added to the agenda before the meeting. The equipment officers report sufficiently covered this.

8. Cathi raised - setting up a Dropbox or server for the club - somewhere we can share/store files (including the accounts) that the committee can access. We agreed in principle to this. We will look at options and discuss further next meeting.
9. Cathi raised - inviting other clubs on trips - I suggest we do this as often as we can as a matter of course, as the contacts forged with others, and the expertise we can access is invaluable. This is already happening to some degree, but we agreed to continue pushing things in this regard with other clubs.
10. Marilyn raised Membership Renewals – get everyone to pay their MSS membership fees sooner rather than later as we are supposed to pay ASF by the end of January. Cathi – “we get no receipt or invoice from ASF”.
11. Heather – is putting together a comprehensive first-aid kit targeted specifically at the sorts of injuries we could be required to treat while canyoning and caving. This includes a pain whistle and epi-pen. She demonstrated how to use the pain whistle

Rod – Thank you to Ray for hosting the AGM, and keeping his pants on for the duration.

Trip planning:

Date	Leader	Activity	Location	Grade	Notes
16-17/12	Marilyn	Canyoning	Side creek of Wollangambe	Medium/Hard	Exploratory trip
26/12	Me	Canyoning	Wollongambe 3	Easy	
27/12 – 5 days	Rod	Canyoning	Dumbano	Hard	
First week of Jan	Rod	Canyoning	Warratah Ridge	Hard	Will include canyons like Bridge, Bjelkes Mind and Bubblebath
Jan – TBA	Anna	Canyoning	Sheep Dip & Rocky Creek	Easy	
8/2	Rod	Meeting	Canada Bay SES	Easy	
10-11/2	John G.	Canyoning	Sidewinder & Yarramun	Medium	Serendipity on the 9th (maybe at night)
17-18/2	Rod	Canyoning	Wowsers & Doomsday	Medium/Hard	
3-4/3	Marilyn	Canyoning	Arthurs and Hailstorm Retreat	Medium/Hard	
16-18/3	Beth	Caving	Cooleman	Easy	
30/3 – 2/4	Marilyn	Walking	Ettrema	Hard	Easter
12-13/5	John G.	Canyoning	Glen Davis	Medium	Checking out a small canyon with a large abseil
9-11/6	Rod	Cave surveying	Cleifden	Easy/Medium	Focussing on cave surveying
29/9 – 4 weeks	Cathi	Caving	Nullarbor	Easy	Focussing on scientific study, but with recreational caving included
26/12 – 9/1/2019		ASF Caving Conference	Northern Tasmania	Easy	Including pre and post conference trips into some spectacular caves

Next Meeting: Canada Bay SES 8th Feb

Meeting Closed: 20:00pm





APPENDIX 2: Treasurer's Report

Metropolitan Speleological Society Annual Accounts

01.11.2016 to 31.10-2017

Account opened 1st-Nov-2016	\$4657.84
INCOME	\$18160.79
EXPENDITURE	\$19543.45
Account closed 31st-Oct-2017	\$3275.18

This financial year saw a loss of \$1382.66, however, \$400 for purchase of 200m of 11mm rope was paid out to Jim Crockett after the end of this financial period, with the result being that the bank balance is actually worse and has fallen below \$3000.00. The greater loss was partly due to catching up with the payments due to the ASF this year, after falling behind with these during the period of 2015-16. The Yarrangobilly UIS Post Congress fieldtrip balanced exactly, with the exception of an extra \$100 donated by MSS for welcome drinks.

Opening Balance

Bank account	\$4657.84
Petty Cash	\$0.00
Total as at 01.11.2016	\$4657.84

Income

Membership Subscriptions	\$2910.00
Trip and hut Fees collected (incl. accommodation for surveying course)	\$827.00
Merchandising (50th Anniversary T-shirts, polo shirts and hoodies, books), rope	\$455.00
Bank Account Interest	\$0.04
YAGBY 2017 money collected	\$13968.75
Total income as at 31.10.2016	\$18160.79

Expenditure

ASF Subscription Fees	\$4313.00
Miscellaneous Costs: (Postal, Annual Statement & Equipment)	\$243.17
50th Anniversary Book printing costs	\$924.00
Hut fees paid	\$250.00
YAGBY 2017 money paid out	\$13813.28
Total Expenditure as at 31.10.2016	\$19543.45

Cash Balance

Petty Cash	\$0.00
Bank Account Balance	\$3275.18
Total Balance at 01.11.2017	\$3275.18

This is a true statement representing the accounts of the Metropolitan Speleological Society as at the end of the financial year of 31-10-17.

C. Humphrey-Hood

Cathi Humphrey-Hood
MSS Treasurer

The full report is available on request from the treasurer.