

Quarterly NEWSLETTER

Summer 2012 Edition
Issued March 2012



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Cover Shot:

Rod Smith in South Bowens Canyon, upper section.

Photo by Julie Burton

Society News

ASF Conference

The ASF Conference planning committee has most positions filled, but there are still plenty of ways you could assist. Please contact
Jim Crockett (0407 284 256, jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au),
Rod Smith (0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com)
Chris Johnstone (0401 988 096, chris_johnstone@hotmail.com)
if you wish to assist in any way.

Club EPIRB

Just a reminder to all trip leaders that we have the new EPIRB and this should be taken on every trip. Our Equipment Officer, Jim (0407 284 256, jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au), has this, so please coordinate with him to collect it before your next trip.

Newsletter

At the last general meeting it was decided to change the frequency of the newsletter from Monthly to Quarterly due to the difficulty in getting enough articles for publication and the amount of work it requires to produce.

Newsletter Editor

We now have a new Editor for the now Quarterly Newsletter. Fedz Crockett has taken on this job.
We thank Roderick Smith for the fantastic job that he has put in over a number of years and welcome Fedz to her new job and hope that she carry on the good work that Rod has produced.

MSS Subscription Fees

Full member \$80
Prospective member \$30 (3 months)
Family membership \$160
Honorary membership \$45
Non- ASF (No Caving) \$30

ARE NOW DUE !

Preference is for payment by Direct Debit to MSS Bank
Account BSB 062-021 Account 00901421 (CBA)
Cheques or Cash also accepted.

MSS Officers list Updated

Position	Name
President	Jim Crockett
Secretary	Rod Smith
Treasurer	Jim Crockett
Equipment Officer	Jim Crockett
Librarian	Rod Smith
Training Officer	Beth Little
ASF Liaison	Jim Crockett, Rod Smith
Newsletter Editor(s)	Fedz Crockett
Website Manager	Rod Smith
Public Officer	John Gray

Trip Reports

Grand Canyon

17th December 2011

Participants: Ray Etherton, Natalie Etherton, Josh Little, Fletcher Etherton, Beth Little, Rod Smith (TL)

I had a thought of doing an easy canyon and follow it up with a bit of an MSS Christmas Party. So I stuck this trip on the calendar. Unfortunately I didn't get out until quite late, but we still had six starters.

I opted for a really early start, and then had to call Ray on the way to let him know that Beth and I would be about 15 minutes late. We arrive at 11:15am and made ready to descend into the depths of Grand Canyon.

The walk in through Nellies Glen was pleasant and it wasn't long before we arrived at the abseil point. There we found a group in the process of descending. When I asked one of the leaders (I assume he was) how many they had he said he didn't know, but around twenty. By the time we were ready there was only a couple left to abseil, so we didn't have to wait long.

Ray went first followed by Beth and Josh, one on each line. This was due to the fact it was Josh's first abseil and, from all reports, he did quite well.

Next it was my turn, with Fletcher attached to me. It was all going well until we got to the overhang. At that point Fletcher decided he didn't want to go any further as he was too scared. After trying to talk him into it I realised I wasn't going to be persuasive enough. Nat then decided she'd walk down the track with Fletcher and meet us at the end. I got Fletcher up to her then joined the others in the canyon.

The rope was packed, harnesses stowed, and backpacks shouldered. The only person with a camera, me, had a zipper break on the camera bag and couldn't get the camera out, so no photos were taken. As such, we kept moving and made it through the canyon with minimal fuss. The one thing I noted was the water temperature, definitely lower than I would expect for that time of year, but understandable due to the lack of warm weather up to that point.

We joined Natalie and Fletcher at the end for a quick bite before returning through Nellies Glen to the cars. There we had a slower bite and an enjoyable chat.

Ray and Natalie decided to head for home rather than stick around for dinner, which left just Beth and myself. So we decided to do the same thing and went home, checking out the progress of Beth's home construction on the way.

Rod

South Bowens - Upper Section

Participants: Chris Johnstone, Julie Burton, Rod Smith (TL by default)

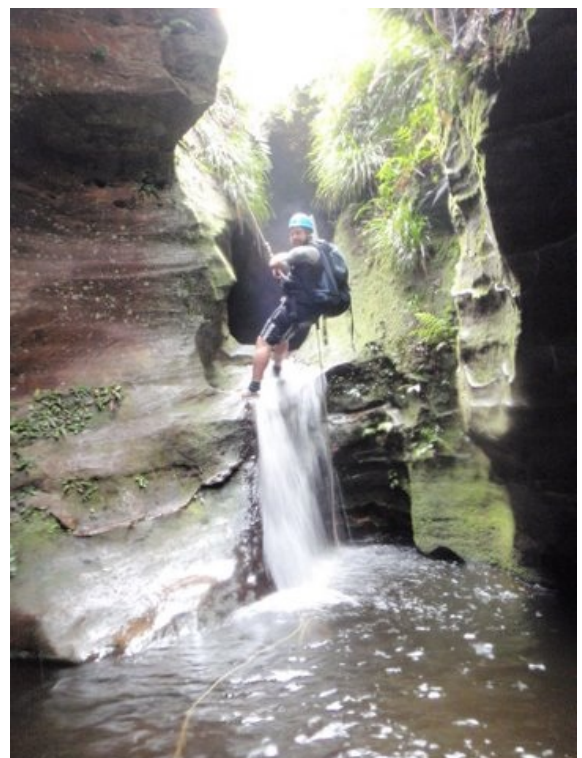
And then there were three! At one stage it looked like we were going to have eight or more people, but those numbers dwindled due to injuries, illness and other commitments. One casualty to illness was Jim Crockett, who was supposed to lead the trip, so that left me to take over.

And yes, they all missed out on a great day in a great canyon.

Chris and I met Julie at Pierces Pass at 9am. The car shuffle was set up and we were on the move by 9:15am. Although precipitation remained only a threat throughout the day, I was soon soaked from the moisture on all the scrub. That's only one drawback of leading the way. There's the incessant whinging, "we're too far from the creek", "it's wet", "do you know where you're going?", "I prefer the other way", "it's cold", "are we going to put on wetsuits before the swims?". But that was annoying Julie and Chris, so I stopped.

After the first wade that got shorts wet we donned our wetsuits and, since we were stopped, our harnesses. Soon after we arrived at the first abseil which can, apparently, be walked around. But where's the fun in that.

A short, but pretty, canyon section follows before it opens up for a bit of a creek walk. Thankfully this doesn't last long before descending into a spectacular slot canyon. Two abseils are needed to get down, the first can apparently be done as two jumps but, not knowing the water depth, we opted for using a rope. Under an arch we then arrived at the junction with Corkscrew Canyon coming in on the left. Corkscrew can be reversed, which is handy to know if you need to make an exit at this point, but we didn't.



The canyon opens again, but this time the creek walking is also beautiful, and not just because it's easy. We opted for an early lunch because, well, we could. I pulled out my lunch to an exclamation of "WTF!!" from Julie (although she used the full words which I will not repeat

here). A home-made herb and cheese damper, which didn't look too dissimilar from a rock, and nearly as solid. Quite tasty mind you.

You may have noticed that you always get the coldest when you stop. If you hadn't noticed, well, you do. We noticed it, and commented on it, then got moving to warm up.

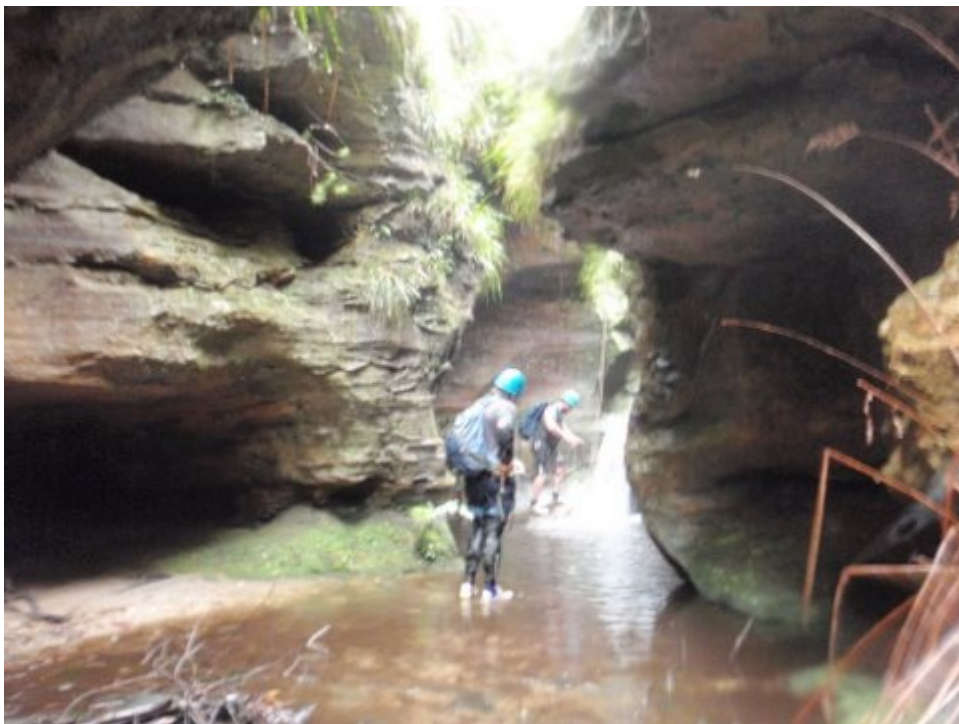
Julie started heading up Hand-Over-Hand Canyon until I pointed out it was the wrong way, but I'm nice like that, unlike some people who would have let her go. (If I say I'm nice often enough maybe someone will believe me).

The next abseil is optional as there is a down-climb through some boulders. This time we opted not to abseil, primarily because I couldn't be bothered getting the rope out. (Yes, I'm lazy). The canyon closes in again shortly after and includes a few interesting down-climbs. Arguably the most interesting involves sliding down a log, feet first on your stomach. Besides the obvious risk of falling, there's also the risk of too much friction on certain areas of the anatomy. Something I became aware of, but not to an extent that it became a problem.

First Hobnail on the right and then Ferny Cave Creek on the left are passed before arriving at the exit point. Since we'd done the canyon for the day we opted for a bit of caving on the exit.

Six hours, car to car, and we weren't rushing. A great day out.

Rod.



Newnes canyoning

14th-15th January

Participants: Natalie Etherton, Beth Little, Andre, Michael, Thu, Rod Smith (TL)

It's always a bit hit and miss trying to find people in the dark. Andre, Beth and I had arrived at Newnes around 11pm and were looking for Ray, Nat, Josh and Fletcher. Our chances would have been a bit better had we known that only Nat would be there, but that's what you get from not reading emails. Needless to say, we didn't find her, but didn't spend a lot of time looking. We were getting tired, so we pitched tents and went to sleep.

Finding people in daylight is a lot easier. Within a couple of minutes of getting up I'd found Nat (or she found me), and she joined us for breakfast. We were nearly ready to go when Michael and Thu arrived. Within fifteen minutes we'd departed. Our destination, Devils Pinch.

I was going to Devils Pinch for the fourth time, for everyone else it was their first. Thus, I was navigating. It starts easy, following the Pipeline track, then the turn-off for Starlight is also reasonably easy. There used to be a rock cairn which marked a good spot to leave the track, but it no longer exists. Instead of walking across the top of the ridge line we followed the track which paralleled it about 100 metres to the north. We arrived at a point where the track started to fade and I decided it was a good time to go over the ridge-line and drop into the canyon.

I'd passed the first test, we were in the right canyon!

It's only a short walk down the creek to the first abseil. There's an anchor point high on the right which I'd remembered, so I went straight for that. Andre decided to stay in the creek, the others hung back and waited. Everyone (except me) put on wetsuits as well as their harness.

I rigged the pitch with a single rope and descended first. Andre managed to downclimb in the creek and joined me. From here I was standing at the top of another drop which turned the corner out of sight. I had recollections of this being a long drop, so asked Beth to pull the rope up and rig it doubled. I then hooked on and continued my descent. I managed to stay out of the water, disconnected, yelled out "off rope!", and then realised there was yet another drop. Having already told everyone I was off the rope I decided to remain where I was and let everyone descend past me.

Next on rope was Thu. First she passed Andre then posed for a photo for me while Andre released the water he'd dammed up so she was drenched. She abseiled passed me right to the bottom. This same routine was followed by Michael, Nat and then Beth. There was then a lot of plotting amongst them while Andre descended and tried, in vain, to convince them it was all my idea.

After I came down we pulled the ropes down to find that, with the stretch, one rope would have just sufficed. Better to be safe than sorry, as the saying goes.

The canyon soon opens up again and includes some scrub-bashing before starting to close and descend. From here it's possible to avoid getting overly wet in most cases, and we all enjoyed the challenge of staying out of the water as much as possible. Considering all of us climb, with the exception of Nat, I was impressed she kept up with us scrambled over tree roots and bridging over pools. There were, however, a couple of pools that none of us could avoid, but the water wasn't too cold.

The next abseil can be done with a single rope, and looks harder than it is. From the top we were expecting a nasty overhang, but the overhang is almost non-existent and the drop is mostly free-hanging, and very scenic.

The last section of the canyon slowly widens as it approaches the Wolgan Valley. With high, beautifully sculpted walls, it's a wonderful place to be.

The canyon ends at the Wolgan Valley, but there's two more (optional) abseils to go. Both can be done with a single 60m rope, but we weren't sure when we arrived so we rigged them double. The first is awkward, slippery rock trying to pull you into a hole. Beth got to the hole before it was pointed out to her that she hadn't taken her pack. Andre volunteered to take it for her and attached it to his pack. While Beth, then a couple of others descended, Andre went for a walk and found himself at the bottom of the abseil, without his or Beth's pack. I was coming down last, and considered abseiling with three packs, but changed my mind. I attached Andre's and Beth's packs to the join of the two ropes and abseiled. The pulldown became a packer lower, but it worked.

Everyone remembered their packs for the last abseil. Beth also caught a yabby in the pool at the bottom so we took some photos, and also got the yabby belaying for a while!

From here it's bush-bashing to the Wolgan and, since we didn't feel like climbing the slope opposite to find the fire trail, we walked upstream until the fire trail came back down to the riverside. Then the plod back to camp.

Michael, Thu and Andre then left us as they were only out for the day. Nat, Beth and I ate some dinner and went to bed.

The rain started during the night and continued into the morning. Although I doubt there would have been any danger doing Pipeline, it would have been unpleasant. No-one was keen to go canyoning, so we packed up and went home. A great time was had nonetheless.

Rod.

Sunnyside Ridge canyoning

5th February 2012

Participants: Rod Smith, Jim Crockett

Unfortunately John Gray's February birthday trip to Glen Davis had to get called off as John was sick. The weather was not that kind anyhow just like most of summer so far.

Rod and myself were the only people interested in John's trip as it was, so we suggested a plan to go canyoning on Sunday if the weather improved.

Lucky for us the weather did improve and the trip was on. Rod had just recently got information on 4 canyons accessed from Sunnyside Ridge which is off the Black Fellows Hand road at Newnes plateau.

So off we went in my car as Rod had officially purchased another Rav4 but was yet to accept delivery. We followed the Glow Worm tunnel road turning left at the Bungleboori camping area onto the Black Fellows Hand road. After a couple of kilometres we turned right onto the Sunnyside ridge fire trail while carefully observing Rod's sketch map as neither of us had been along here before. We turned off at SS8 and followed it to the end.

It was a short easy walk from here to start of Sunnyside canyon. The canyon is relatively flat and you might be lucky to get wet up to the waist. It's not particularly spectacular nor deep but there is a semi-dark section and a couple of climb downs amongst high pagodas and makes a pleasant walk. We reached the end after about half an hour and there are good views of the Wolgan valley from this high point. We then backtracked about 100m to a small waterfall and

were able to carefully climb beside it to make it out of the canyon. There could be easier ways out but we just used the first we found that looked likely.



From there is was a short walk to find an old fire trail that used to go to the clifftops overlooking the Wolgan valley. We followed that fire trail and had some food overlooking the valley. It was then another short walk back to the car. All this took us only 3 hours from start to finish and we thought about doing another Sunnyside ridge canyon but decided against it and went home knowing we can come back and look at the other 3 canyons accessed from Sunnyside ridge at another time.



Jim.

Arethusa Canyon

25th February 2012

Participants: Rod Smith, Jim Crockett, Beth Little, Andre

This was the weekend set aside for the Deep pass camping and canyoning trip. There was not much interest for that particular trip but plenty for other canyons as this summer's weather had not been very kind to canyon trips and people were desperate to get out.

Beth and Rod were keen and we decided upon Arethusa canyon. Rod arrived at my place in his newly purchased black 4 door Rav4, wow impressive compared to what he had before. We loaded up and were on the way with a short stop at a new bakery at Lawson to snack up and then onto Leura to wait for Beth and Andre.

They soon arrived and off we went along the My Hay road and parked after the sharp right bend marked on the map.

We followed a ridge along towards Katoomba creek looking for an easy access point but every time it looked promising we were dissatisfied by looking down considerable drop to the creek. At that point we had no option but to harness up and start abseiling and after 3 drops we finally landed in the creek.

Wetsuits on and off we went. We probably followed the nice creek section for an hour and a half before finally getting to the real canyon section. There was no shortage of running water making for a fun and spectacular time. The abseil is reached soon after joining the canyon section, down through a hole on the left, followed by a cool dumping in the water below the waterfall. There was plenty more action to follow, jump ins, swims, climb downs all exciting stuff but we took the utmost care as the water levels were up and there was a good waterflow. We knew the end of Arethusa was near when we saw Alpheus canyon entering high on the right at the same time as the major waterfall heading down towards the Grose.



Time to go up as we had planned to make our exit via Alpheus canyon. Lucky we had some

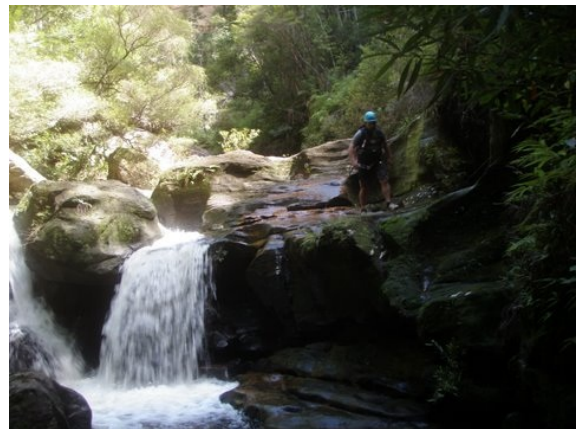
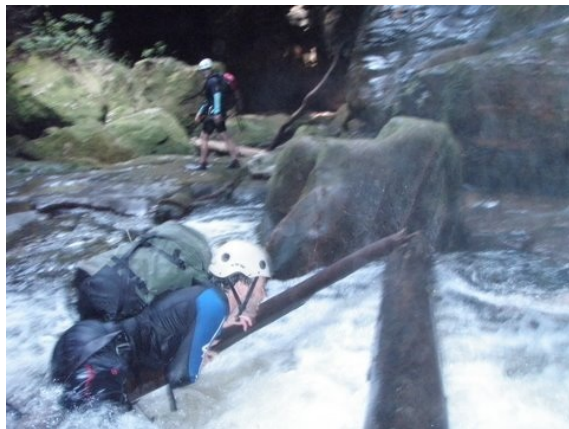
good climbers in Andre and Beth. Andre led both climbs on the exit route before belaying the rest of the party before we reached Alpheus canyon. At that point we thought the hard stuff was finished and would have been an easy exit through Alpheus from here. But that was not the case. There were a couple of difficult climbs using fixed ropes and then a waterfall was reached at the end of a swim. The waterfall was about 4m high, slippery and slightly overhung making for a difficult climb. There were 2 fixed ropes to assist but even that was not enough for me as I struggled for 5 minutes trying to make the first foothold. Finally I was able to make it after Rod allowed me to use his shoulder to stand on. Rod also sensed he was going to have difficulty and went straight for his prussick loops. We were all up but that was not the end. There were a number of difficult climbs to make all fortunately with fixed ropes or tapes on our way to the ridgeline at the junction between Arethusa and Alpheus. At that point the sun was rapidly setting as we started the walk back to the cars. We made it back very much on

faded light without the assistance of any torches so this can't be considered a night exit, although it was dam close.



It was now Beth and Andre heading east home and more work on Beth's house and Rod and myself heading west towards Newnes for more canyoning adventure tomorrow.

Jim.



Bell Minor canyon

26th February 2012

Participants: Rod Smith, John Gray, Jim Crockett,

Rod and myself arrived at the Newnes camping area around 10.30pm after having a long day in Arethusa canyon. We made a quick search looking for John's camp and I finally sighted a Subaru Forester (I thought he had a black one but this was a grey coloured vehicle) anyway it was John.

Both Rod and myself were extremely tired and all we wanted was to sleep. We quickly arranged with John our plans for tomorrow and hit the sack hard. It had started to rain lightly overnight and we all had a quick simple breakfast before packing up and heading on the road where I was left about a kilometre from the camping area and John and Rod continued for a car shuffle. They were soon back in one car and off we trudged up the hill. It got a lot steeper as we met the cliff line and John headed up a long steep gully full of loose rock where a lot of care was taken. We made a few small climbs before we made the top all sweating profusely. After a short break we made our way along the ridge where the vegetation

changed often sometimes the going was easy and other times we had to push through thick scrub. We eventually met a line of pagoda formations where we could see our intended destination. We continued along the line of pagodas as John wanted to enter the creek high up in the catchment. We were all impressed by the area as the pagodas were cut by deep gullies



which often stopped our progress along the ridge and we had to find a way around them. When we decided it was time to make our way down it took us a few goes before we finally found an easy way down from the ridgeline and then we found a dry overhang for lunch. From there we were soon into the creek and soon after the creek started to close in for the canyon section. It was relatively dry in the creek but we still had light rain from above. The canyon then starts to narrow down but never actually achieves much depth but it is very continuous and there are a couple of places where it narrows requiring packs off and sideways egress as well as some narrow climb downs. We all thought the canyon was much better than expected and were happy after all the effort that was required to get here.



The creek eventually opens out and we follow it until it steepens before meeting the cliff line. Here we traverse right at the base of the cliffs and on our way down towards the main Newnes road where there is a car conveniently placed.

We are tired and are glad we are on our way home. But happy we explored a new canyon.

Jim.

Other News

NZ Caving Expedition

February 2012

Participants: David Stuckey

David advises he had just returned from a very successful caving trip to NZ with other Sydney Cavers and has captured some action.

David is considering organising a trip to the same area next year.

Here is the result of my video work during my recent caving trip to NZ.

Captured with a GoPro Hero HD 2, lit with Scurion 1500.

Thanks to everyone who assisted me. Hope you like it.

<http://vimeo.com/davidstuckey/nzcaving2012>

Regards

David.

Upcoming Events

21st to 22nd April

JENOLAN CAVES

Trip Leader: Rod Smith, 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com

Contact by: 17th April

Grade: Easy

General Caving

Hut Accommodation

5th to 6th May

ABERCROMBIE CAVES

Trip Leader: Jim Crockett, 0407284256 or 02 98583991, jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au

Contact by: 3rd May

Grade: Easy - Suitable for beginners and children

General Caving

Nice and easy camping location with cabins available.

Trip Calendar

Weekend 21st-22nd April
Caving

Jenolan
Trip Leader: Rod Smith
Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com
By: 17th April
Grade: Easy

5th-6th May 2012
Caving

Abercrombie
Trip Leader: Jim Crockett
Contact: 0407 284 256, jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au
By: 3rd May
Grade: Easy

10th May

Jim's Place

Quarterly MSS meeting

19th May
NSWSC Meeting

2nd – 3rd June (pending permit)
Caving

23rd - 24th June 2012
Camping

TBA 2nd Half of 2012
Caving

Weekend 30th June-1st July
Caving
Beginners Trip

22nd-30th July 2012
Caving in Victoria

Date to be advised
Bolting Course

18th - 19th August 2012
Caving

Weekend 1st-2nd September
Caving

2013
Caving in New Zealand

Trip Leader: Jim Crockett

Contact: 0407 284 256, jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au

Bungonia

Its probably likely there will be some caving activities organised for this weekwnd

Cliefden

Trip Leader: Jim Crockett

Contact: 0407 284 256, jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au

By: TBA

Grade: Easy-Medium

Kanangra: Camping with birthday celebrations

Presidents 50th

Trip Leader: Fedz Crockett

Contact: 0452576757, flyingcolors_30@yahoo.com

By: 21st June

Grade: Delicious

Wombeyen

Trip Leader: Rod Smith

Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com

Probably a joint trip

Jenolan

Trip Leader: Rod Smith

Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com

By: 26th June

Grade: Easy

Buchan: Pencilled in for 22-30 July (to be confirmed)

Contact Rod Smith: 0438 444 262,

roderick_smith@hotmail.com

To be held a Beth Little's in Woodford

Contact Rod Smith: 0438 444 262,

roderick_smith@hotmail.com

Instructor is Al Warild Austalia's most experinced Vertical Caver

Colong: Superb Horizontal maze system with a difficult walk in. Possible joint trip with CASM

Contact Rod Smith: 0438 444 262,

roderick_smith@hotmail.com

By: TBA

Grade: Medium

Jenolan

Trip Leader: Rod Smith

Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com

By: 27th August

Grade: Easy/Child friendly

New Zealand

Trip Leader: David Stuckey

Contact: 0414590305, stuckedl@cba.com.au

By: Expressions of interest

Appendix 1 – AGM Minutes

MSS 407th General Meeting, 9th February 2012

Held at Johan Verhagen's place – We thank him the last minute offer to host due to Beth's new house is not quite ready for occupation

Meeting Opened: 8:15pm

Present:

Roderick Smith, Jim Crockett, John Gray, Johan Verhagen, Beth Little

Apologies:

None

Any Corrections to Previous Meetings Minutes: None

Correspondence:

Post –

Jenolan Cottage bill

ASF Bill

Caves Australia – December 2011

Fair Trading Bill lodged by John

Email –

From Bob Kershaw – Request for a photo of Goldsmith, Horn, Marshall, Peffer and Profkre transporting a 12vt battery into Wyanbene Cave, 4th-6th October 1975.

From Bob Kershaw – Request for another photo from Wyanbene published in MSS Journal 1 issue 4, June 1967

Committee Members Reports:

President: None

Treasurer: Just a reminder that it is time to get membership fees for another year

Equipment Officer:

Ropes have been measured and marked with their lengths. We don't have much 11mm rope and should consider purchasing some more. We have also have been offered a cheap, second-hand children's harness which we know the history of. It was decided to make the purchase of the harness.

Training Officer: None

Librarian: None

Status of Action Items:

Constitution updating: None – Decision made to drop this item.

Web site hosting:

Remove action item and to include the Web Manager as a committee member to include a report.

Updating membership details: None

Back issues of Helictite magazine: None – Decision made to drop this item.

Other bank account options:

Looks like we're no longer paying fees and are actually getting interest instead. Jim going to verify that it's all legit.

ESRI GIS Software: None – Decision made to drop this item

New Business:

Newsletter: New editor – Fedz Crockett. The newsletter will now be quarterly, will come out after the meetings and will be aligned with the seasons.

Bolting Course: A bolting course is being planned for sometime in the second half of the year. Al Warild will be instructing in bolting in both sandstone and limestone, and it will be held at Beth Little's place in Woodford.

Photo Requests from Bob Kershaw: Rod Smith to find the photo from the old Journal. Jim will follow up with Bob Horn, etc., in regards to the other photo.

Trip planning:

Cave Surveying Course (not MSS trip): 13-14 October

Buchan: Pencilled in for 22-30 July (to be confirmed)

Abercrombie: 5-6 May (TL Jim)

Cliefden: 26-27 May (TL Jim)

Colong: 18-19 August (TL Rod)

Kanangra: 23-24 June (TL Fedz)

Next Meeting:

Jim's Place – 10th May

Meeting Closed: 9:15pm