



*Metropolitan
Speleological Society
50th Anniversary Edition
1965 - 2015*



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Cover Shot: Beautifully rippled shawl in Castle Cave, Yarrangobilly NSW (photo: David Stuckey)

Inside Cover: David Stuckey in Grand Canyon (photo: John Gray)

Back Cover: Gypsum formation in Puketiti Flower Cave, Mangaotaki, Waikato, NZ (photo: David Stuckey)

Inside Back Cover: Johan Verhagen in Black Hole of Calcutta (Castral) (photo: John Gray)

Metropolitan Speleological Society

P. O. Box 178, Thornleigh, NSW 2120



Gun Barrel - 1990 - (left - right) John Oxley, Dean Eastwood, Jeff Buwulda, Fran Rose, David Stuckey, Peter Shaw and Scott Macfarlane. (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)



From Humble Beginnings

by John Goulding

I suppose it's fitting that I should be the first contributor to the 50th anniversary publication, as I was around at the very beginning.

MSS started with a group of people that had met for the first time at Bungonia. We were caving at The Grill cave – no helmets, no ropes to speak of, and no idea except to have a fun weekend. We liked caving and met other cavers there – they told us they were from an established caving club in Sydney (which will not be named). When they found out we were not experienced members of a known ASF club they shunned us completely.

So, we decided then and there to form a club. For the first six weeks, we were known as the Cambrian Speleological Society, until we realised that the initials (CSS) were the same as Canberra Speleological Society, so the name Metropolitan

Speleological Club was proposed because we came from all around Sydney. Ken Keck as the founding member arranged for us to meet once a month in town at the NSW Masonic Club since we could all travel into town to meet.

I congratulate MSS on surviving the 50 years since that day in 1965.

John Goulding
A Founding Member
1965 – current



John, circa late 1960s



Tasmania - 1989 - Owl Pot (Junee Florentine) - l-r John Gray, David Stuckey, Fran Rose, Peter Shaw, Mike Nickolls, Jim Crockett, Grant Brennan (photo: John Gray)



President's Comments

by Jim Crockett

Metropolitan Speleological Society's first Club trip was held on the October long weekend in 1965 when they visited Wee Jasper. Amongst others, some of the founding members were Graham Palmer and his wife, Ken Keck, John Goulding and Derek Fry.

When I joined MSS in 1985, the club had a strong membership and was running at least 1 - 2 weekend trips per month to caving areas plus an annual week-long trip to Yarrangobilly. At the time I joined, MSS was also very active in canyoning in the Blue Mountains which, at that time, was in its infancy.

Not long after I joined, the trip schedule expanded to include trips further afield both to national and international destinations including South America, Tasmania and Europe. Within a few years I found myself on my first MSS trip to Tasmania, this was certainly one of the highlights of my MSS adventures.

By the mid-80s, the club was not the most active one at cave surveying, exploration of new caves, documentation and publishing the results. This was probably due to not having members who were in the necessary fields of science although many of the club's members had gained extensive knowledge of numerous caves in many of the well-known caving areas. However, we made a major discovery at Jenolan in the early 70s, Maiden Cave. We also we did the majority of surveying and mapping at Abercrombie, which at the time was not well known amongst other speleological groups including much larger and more experienced clubs.

During the 80s, we had expanded the club activities to include many other outdoor pursuits such as bushwalking, canoeing, cycling and mountaineering. This helped to increase club membership as there were some people who were not always keen to go caving. I guess it's just one of those aspects of caving, you have to be a certain type of person.

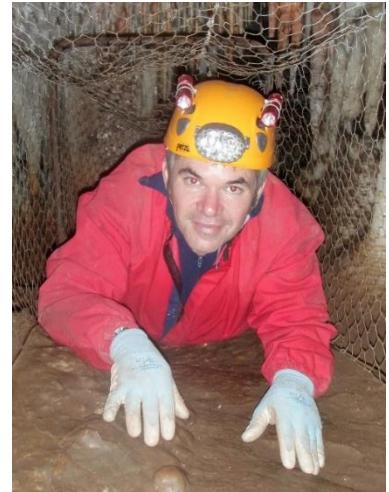
One thing is for sure, MSS members did not lack enthusiasm and a quest for adventure, many pushing their limits of endurance and technical prowess to meet the challenges that caves and canyons present. I probably fitted in that category; I learned many of my caving skills from fellow members both while caving and on scheduled field days. This included SRT, route finding, cave geology, hydro geology, speleomorphology, biology, history, conservation and much more, but even after caving for 30 years, I still have a lot to learn.

One of the many positive aspects of belonging to MSS is that new members are enthusiastically accepted into the clan and friendship is valued. From the time I joined I too was welcomed in and soon formed friendships, many of whom are still life-long friends. Although the focus of the club was to carry out all aspects in the study of caves, we had a heck of a lot of fun doing it and we were taught the skills necessary to become competent cavers. While we have fun on all the club's trips, they are conducted with the safety of the members as the number one priority and our club's safety record is proof of that.

Over the first 30 years of the club's existence, not much changed, we were still wearing woollen shirts, new billies were subjected to redesign by panel-beating techniques, the favourite activity at Yarrangobilly was firing oranges from a barrel made from PVC plumbing fittings, Volleys were still the #1 footwear for canyoning trips and the #1 rope was Bluewater 2, but in the last 20 years the changes have been quite dramatic.

One area of change has been in equipment for both camping and caving. Fabrics have become lighter, warmer, more breathable and more water resistant. Rucksacks are now much more comfortable and durable. Stoves are smaller, lighter and more efficient, shoes are more comfortable. Caving equipment has undergone similar changes; gone are the days of miner's lights with wet cell batteries, construction helmets and cotton overalls. These have been replaced by bright LED lights, comfortable helmets with high safety design, and Cordura overalls which are durable, breathable and don't stay wet. The technical side of caving has also been improved with innovations in design of SRT equipment together with new improved techniques. All these changes have made the caving experience to be less of a burden, with savings in weight, the modern caver to go further and harder.

I feel fortunate to be a part of MSS; we're poised to grow and develop and to be a source of knowledge and provide opportunities for those of us who are willing to get down and dirty.



MSS President: Jim Crockett (2010 – 15)



MSS – Past Committee Members

Year	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Members	Fees \$
1966	Graham Palmer	Roy Cope	Lena Palmer	15	2.00
1967	Graham Palmer	Roy Cope	Lena Palmer	33	3.00
1968	Graham Palmer	Ken Keck	Lena Palmer	35	3.50
1969	Graham Palmer	Ken Keck	Lena Palmer	50	3.50
1970	Graham Palmer	Elizabeth Jolly	Lena Palmer	29	3.50
1971	Bill Ritchie	Ken Keck	John Goulding	34	3.50
1972	Bill Ritchie	Ken Keck	Ed Boylan	32	4.00
1973	Lou Zamberlan	Ken Keck	Ed Boylan	47	4.00
1974	Ken Keck	Derek Peffer	Ed Boylan	45	4.00
1975	Peter Lacey	Derek Peffer	Ken Keck	47	6.00
1976	John Goulding	Derek Peffer	Ken Keck	35	6.00
1977	Derek Peffer	Ken Keck	Kerry Ann McManus	29	6.00
1978	Derek Peffer	Ken Keck	Bob Horn	32	8.00
1979	Derek Peffer	Ken Keck	Phil Niciak	25	9.00
1980	Derek Peffer	Ken Keck	Daryl Cummins	30	9.00
1981	Derek Peffer	Ken Keck	Daryl Cummins	32	12.00
1982	Chris Rush	David Stuckey	Bob Drummond	26	12.00
1983	Chris Rush	Scott Macfarlane	Paul Richards	26	12.00
1984	Chris Rush	Scott Macfarlane	Paul Richards	25	16.00
1985	Paul Richards	Scott Macfarlane	Greg Bruce	33	18.00
1986	Paul Richards	Scott Macfarlane	Greg Bruce	29	20.00
1987	Scott Macfarlane	Grant Brennan	Greg Bruce	36	20.00
1988	David Stuckey	Paul Richards	Scott Macfarlane	38	20.00
1989	David Stuckey	Paul Richards	Scott Macfarlane	36	20.00
1990	David Stuckey	Vacant	Scott Macfarlane	31	20.00
1991	David Stuckey	John Gray	Scott Macfarlane	33	25.00
1992	David Stuckey	John Gray	Scott Macfarlane	32	25.00
1993	David Stuckey	John Gray	Scott Macfarlane	37	25.00
1994	David Stuckey	John Gray	Greg Bruce	36	28.00
1995	David Stuckey	John Gray	Greg Bruce	33	28.00
1996	David Stuckey	Richard Neville	Scott Macfarlane	36	28.00
1997	David Stuckey	John Gray	Richard Neville	38	30.00
1998	John Gray	Fran Rose	Ellen Loois	41	30.00
1999	John Gray	Kylie Fairweather	Richard Neville	40	30.00
2000	John Gray	Greg Bruce	Richard Neville	43	30.00
2001	John Gray	Greg Bruce	Richard Neville	40	35.00
2002	Richard Neville	Greg Bruce	Shane Hoffman	39	35.00
2003	Richard Neville	Kathy Gray	Shane Hoffman	33	60.00
2004	Richard Neville	Kathy Gray	John Gray	35	60.00
2005	R Neville/D Stuckey	Robert Drummond	John Gray	28	60.00
2006	David Stuckey	Robert Drummond	John Gray	40	70.00
2007	David Stuckey	Rod Smith	John Gray	38	70.00
2008	David Stuckey	Rod Smith	Jim Crockett	27	70.00
2009	David Stuckey	Rod Smith	Jim Crockett	26	70.00
2010	Jim Crockett	Rod Smith	Jim Crockett	25	80.00
2011	Jim Crockett	Rod Smith	Jim Crockett	21	80.00
2012	Jim Crockett	Rod Smith	Jim Crockett	27	80.00
2013	Jim Crockett	Rod Smith	Jim Crockett	33	80.00
2014	Jim Crockett	Rod Smith	Jim Crockett	37	80.00
2015	Jim Crockett	Rod Smith	Cathi Humphrey-Hood	28	80.00



50th Anniversary Celebration

by Beth Little

On Saturday 5th September 2015, 40 MSS members, past and present, gathered in the art deco splendour of the Blue Mountains YHA function room to celebrate the Metropolitan Speleological Society's Golden Anniversary ... a celebration of our club lighting up the dark for over 50 years. It was an opportunity to catch up with many friends that had moved away from the Sydney area; many had travelled long distances to attend such as John Oxley from Tasmania and Scott Macfarlane from Queensland.

The evening opened with socialising and catching up, a welcome speech by our President Jim Crockett, followed by more socialising with a wonderful rolling PowerPoint presentation of some highlights of the past 50 years from a range of contributors. It was an opportunity for the newer members of the club to mingle with some of our founding

members as well as with members that haven't been so active over the past few years. It was lovely to see members attend that had such a big history with the club. We had club memorabilia on display from the library and Paul Richards generously brought a lot of additional material to share and display.

Some short movies were shown, thanks to Derek Fry, Rob Clyne, and David Stuckey. All agreed that Rob Clyne did a fantastic job coordinating the audio visuals for the evening.

Nominations for awards across a range of categories were taken during dinner, and the winners were announced following dinner. A few notables included Owen who won Energiser bunny, El Presidente winning caver most likely to get naked, and me winning Mama Bear. Throughout the evening the kids were kept entertained with the help of activity sheets of cave themed mazes, quizzes, and a find and seek.

No big event like this would be complete without a special gift to mark the occasion. Thanks to Rod who was the brains and executor behind a printed MSS bag which held a trove of goodies for our guests ... I can see

seen the engraved MSS polycarb wine glass accompanying many a MSS member around campfires and the embroidered MSS red explorer socks sported on a number of canyoning adventures. (We have a limited amount of 50th anniversary merchandise now available on the website.)

The catered buffet dinner was followed by coffee and a fabulous speleological cake selection, special thanks to Rod's mum for donating her creative effort and time to the cake and cupcakes for the evening.

So many people pulled together to make this evening a success and it is difficult to list them all, but our thanks go out to them for helping make this a tremendous night we will not forget.



The wonderful caving themed cake and cupcakes courtesy of Rod's Mum



Looking back to that night on the long weekend of 1965 at Bungonia when Ken Keck and Graham Palmer sat around a camp fire with their friends, did any one of them think of the possibility that fifty years later the Metropolitan Speleological Society would not only be still going, but thriving, active and one of the biggest societies in the ASF.

I authored a club history for the MSS 30th Anniversary Commemorative publication, writing about the first 21 years¹ and then the additional 9 years². It seemed only fitting to author the most recent twenty years of history to complete the trilogy. When this comprehensive history came together, it was 20 plus A4 pages! This would not do. So, we have decided to go about the history a bit differently. Rather than a chronological history of club activities I am going to attempt to summarise our history into main themes as a way of celebrating our activities over fifty years.

Range of Activities, Not just Caving

Over the fifty years the Society has varied the type of activities offered beyond caving to include activities such as canyoning, cycling, hiking, scuba diving, mountaineering, kayaking, bushwalking, skiing, rock climbing, car rally, kite flying and cake baking. Many MSS participants have travelled overseas undertaking adventure type activities, visiting places in America, South America, Europe, and Asia Pacific, trips which were reported in our Newsletters over the years to keep us all in touch and inspired.

However, it is Caving that we love!

Despite the variety of activities offered, caving is what we do best and over the last 50 years we have revisited many caves and visited some for the first time, here are some of the highlights:



Abercrombie: Rich History at Abercrombie from the club's very inception, with a number of years having significant trips to the area (for example 1974 saw five trips to Abercrombie, and 1986 saw 6 trips). Scott Macfarlane wrote an excellent summary of club activities at Abercrombie for the 30th Anniversary Publication³, and this is well worth a read. His article covered the majority of our projects at Abercrombie, including the notable achievements such as the time capsule and Southern limestone expeditions. MSS projects

at Abercrombie have also included some smaller projects such as; core sampling in Long tunnel (1974), recording and tagging cave entrances (1980+), and assistance to Cave superintendent to count and calculate all the globes and wattages for a planning and development proposal (1984).

The club has also hosted some big events at Abercrombie, including a Hayley's Comet Viewing weekend (1986), the Celebration of the club's 21st year at Billabong Tea House / Trunkey Creek, testimonial dinner for Ken Keck (1994), and the celebration of the club's 30th year (1995).

Since the club turned thirty we have returned often to Abercrombie, but not as frequently as during our initial thirty years. In 1996, there was an expedition to Abercrombie to visit Sounder, located on private property. A mammoth effort to reach this karst area, negotiating an hour (6km) drive up hill only slightly less steep than the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Five caves were found but of little major interest part. A more interesting area called West Abbers (also on private property), was explored with one cave found containing a number of lakes with calcite rafts. Jim Crockett and Roderick Smith have been geotagging the area over trips every year or two from 2009 to currently.



MSS Time Capsule – placed 12/8/1979 for opening 2079



Bungonia: This area is close to the hearts of many MSS members as it was the area where the inspiration for our club was sparked in 1965, and the club completed official trips as 'MSS' later that year. A number of years followed with regular Bungonia trips, including a dig at Scuttle Cave (that sadly amounted to nothing). 1974 in fact saw six separate trips to this area. MSS participated in Search & Rescue weekends at Bungonia in 1989 and 1997, with the 1997 trip seeing Moss and Chalk Cave being visited before the Grill Cave and its muddy crawls then Fossil-Hogans.



Capertee Valley: Between 2010 and 2014, there were yearly trips to the Capertee (and Coco Creek Cave) for exploration. Roderick Smith wanted to practice his cave map art, and a trip to Capertee Valley (2013) proved a perfect opportunity. Valley was visited in 2010 (Ilford) and there were some unsuccessful attempts at finding other caves. In 2011, some further exploration in Capertee National Park pocking around and some rubbish holes were found but nothing of interest.



Coco Creek Cave - Capertee Valley



Cliefden: ASF accepted MSS's application in 1968 which was a momentous achievement. The ASF Committee meeting was held at Orange at the time, so naturally a full weekend of caving followed, both at Walli and Cliefden (camping on the flats at the river's edge). Trips to this caving area have happened over the years with a winter trip in 1991 involving Main Cave and a blizzard! In 1994 we returned to Swansong, Gable, Trapdoor, Yarrawingah, Molongulli, Murder and Main Caves.

MSS held a training weekend with the Orange Caving club in 2011 (both Jim Crockett and Roderick Smith in attendance). Transmission and Murder Caves covered on a 2013 trip.



Cliefden – Main Cave, the magnificent main chamber



Hunter/Newcastle: MSS has had a number of joint trips with Hunter Valley Speleological Society to this region. In 2005 we went to Pilchers Mountain near Maitland to a reserve with a spectacular gorge and at least 13 caves, which although in sandstone are surprisingly extensive. A number were entered up to 60 metres in length.



Jenolan: The club has also had a rich history a Jenolan. Our first year as a MSS club in 1965 saw a trip to Jenolan and we have seen at least a trip a year ever since this time. So much activity in this area that we felt a separate article to celebrate our many activities was required (see *MSS at Jenolan*).



Nullarbor: This stunning part of Australia was visited by the club in 1978 including trips to Weebubbie, Abrakurrie, Murria 11, Cocklebiddy and Mullamullang. The Club visited this area again in September 2013, visiting caves such as Weebubbie, Abrakurrie, Mullamullang, Old Homestead, Murrawijinie, Thylacine, Thampana.



Tasmania: 1986 saw the club's first trip to Tasmania for caving and we were hooked both by the stunning landscape but also the sporting caves. Trips to Tasmania occurred in 1984, 1988/89, 1994, 1995 (month long trip), 2002 and 2011. Caves visited have included Kubla Khan, Exit Cave, Midnight Hole and Mystery Creek, Big Tree Pot, Wolf hole, Little Grunt, Hobbit hole, Mini Martin, Skyhook, King George V, Hastings, Croesus and Milk Run.



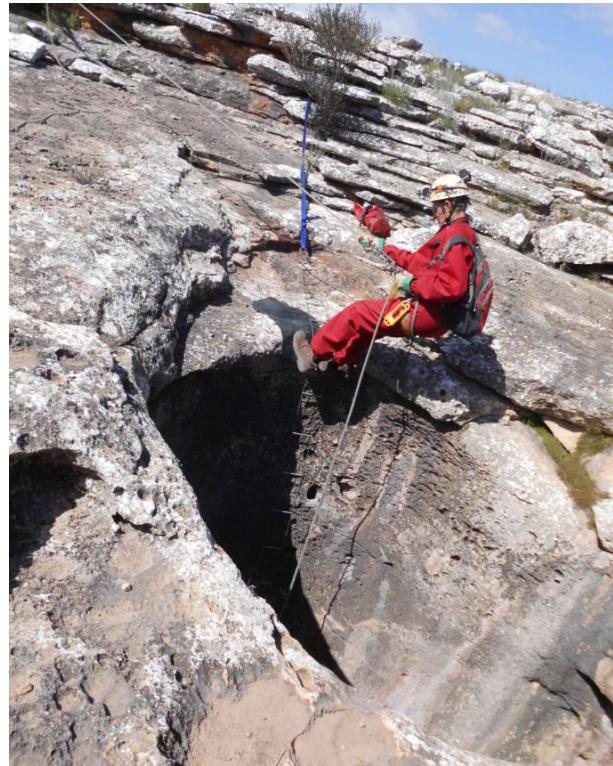
Tuglow: In our inaugural year as MSS (1965) we visited Tuglow. This is a limestone region in the Blue Mountains which has gorgeous river passages and underground waterfalls – what could be better? Although not frequented much in the seventies, trips occurred in 1986, and 2008 (this time the 50metre abseil option). Close to this area is Church Creek Caves, visited by the club in 2014.



Wee Jasper: MSS's first ever caving trip (as a club) was to Wee Jasper on the October long weekend 1965, a tradition followed for many years by the club. More recently the newer members revisited the area doing the Dip Series (2009) and Dog Leg, Signature & Carey's Caves (2014).



Wyanbene: In our first year as the club (1965) we ran a trip to Wyanbene, and many followed. Early in the club's history we engaged in a climatology study in Wyanbene cave. Many a trip into Wyanbene went on to Caesars Hall visiting the Gun Barrel (1990, 1993, 1997, 2014, 2015), with some pushing all the way to Frustration Lake (2003). The Big Hole, a nearby very impressive Karst feature, was abseiled and ascended 1993, 2003 and 2009.



Ken Harris abseiling into Thampana Rock Hole, Nullarbor



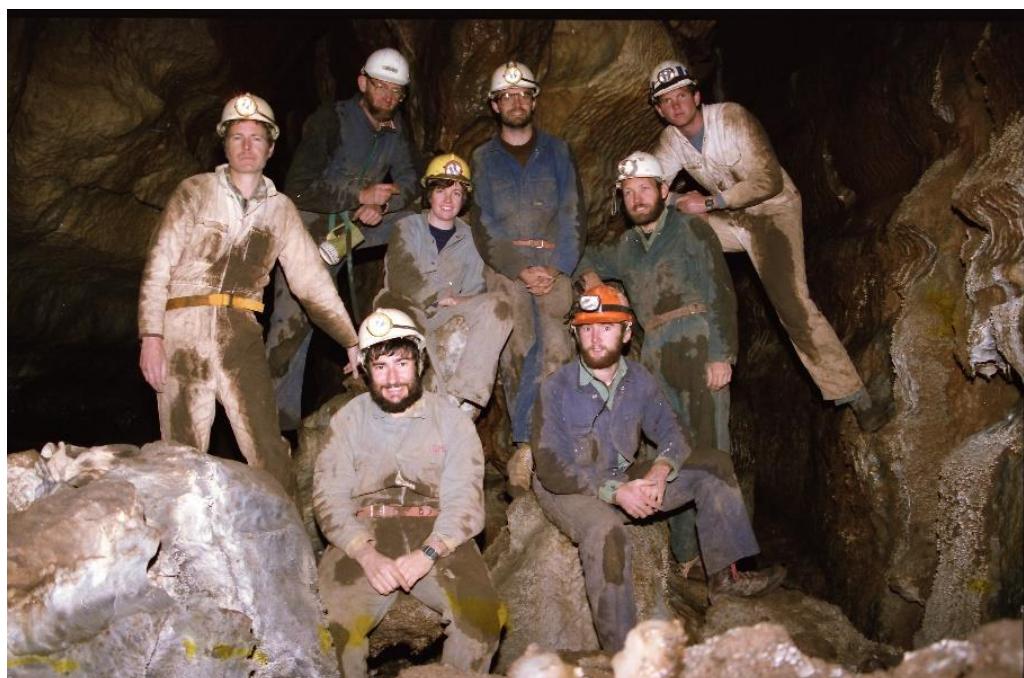
*Natalie coming through the keyhole at Wyanbene
(Photo: Marilyn Scott)*



Yarrangobilly: During our first year (1965), MSS visited Yarrangobilly and we have had a rich history in this area ever since visiting almost annually over the fifty year club history. David Stuckey wrote an excellent article about our activities in his article in the 30th Commemorative publication⁵ detailing our activities in cave cleaning in East Deep Creek (1976), removing construction material and rubble from Jersey (1990, 1994), removing Chicken wire and posts from Castle Cave (1989+).

Trips over the years have included all the tourist caves, Eagles Nest through trip (a repeated favourite), Mooroolbark, Helictite Hole, North/West/East Deep Creek, Restoration, Janus, Bath House, Coppermine, Old Inn, Bridle, Mill Creek, Clothes Cache, and The Tubes.

Cotterills Cottage became a favoured venue until 2009 when we moved over to the newly renovated Caves House with its hot showers, gas fires and ability to cook first class meals each night. MSS occasionally did running repairs (replacing light bulbs in the tourist caves etc) or volunteering around the caves precinct.



Eagles Nest 1986 - Clockwise from left: Lynton Goldsmith, Ken Harris, David Stuckey, John Gray, Peter Thomas, Min Neville, Middle: Scott Macfarlane, Fran Rose. (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)



Other: In our inaugural year (1965), MSS visited Cooleman. This beautiful area hasn't been visited many times since, but is well worth the trip. Colong is also an area that has had only a small handful of visits over the years, along with Timor Caves visited in 2011. MSS had two trips to Buchan (at Easter and Christmas) in 1978, including activities for projects with VSA such as surface trogging, a dig and surveying activities. There was then a long break until this area was visited again in 2014. Early in the club's history we did a surface mapping project at Wombeyan, with another trip in 1986. We haven't had a significant amount of history in this area. We have only had a few trips over the past five years or so to start building some relationships in the area.

Membership

Membership has fluctuated over the years from 15 when we first formed, reaching a high of 60 in 1999 (many of whom were active), to our current membership of 28 in 2015.

Club Meeting Venue

The venue for our meetings has varied over the years, from the Masonic Club in Sydney, Parramatta Masonic Club and Leagues Club before moving to the Pennant Hills Scout Camp. 1990 saw the beginning of slide shows being included following the monthly meetings. When the Scout Camp became unavailable in 2009 meetings were temporarily suspended until 2010 when the SES offices at Canada Bay became available and where we meet to this day. However, attendance in recent years has been challenging, reflecting the large area from which membership is drawn, from as far north as Newcastle west to the Central Tablelands and a

wide number of outer Sydney suburbs. The 50th year sees the club exploring options for our meetings to include video conference to mitigate this.

Cave conservation and politics

MSS has been involved in cave conservation and its supporting politics over the years such as the 1973 "Keep Bungonia Gorgeous" weekend, to bring public attention to proposed limestone mining in area (MSS helped set up and dismantle the public concert stage). 1988 unfortunately saw the majority of the club's surveying equipment stolen, but club members pitched in (with a chocolate drive) and finances were raised to resupply equipment. MSS are currently managing the grant for the Lithgow Mudgee speleo project.

After 50 years MSS is still caving and still going strong. It certainly dismisses the comment made by another club when we started, "They will peter out in six months" and we are still actively involved with ASF and the wider caving community. We have had 50 years of adventure, both underground and above – with many more years to come.

References

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4. Shaw, Peter & Nickolls, Mike (1995) Tasmania, Part I and II. Metropolitan Speleological Society Inc. 30th Anniversary Edition. Journal No. 35. MSS: Sydney
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*Meander Passage Eagles Nest, Yarrangobilly September 1990
(l-r) Scott Macfarlane, Andy Lawrence, John Oxley, Fran Rose, David Stuckey, unknown and Neil Kell*

Behind the names

Every MSS member, no matter what their contribution, is important to the club. As it is with any club, some names become more notable, for any number of reasons. Below is a list that, while not exhaustive, puts faces to some of those names.



Ken Keck, one of the founding members of MSS, although listening to some people it would seem he is considered **the** founding member! He always argued long and passionately that MSS was a speleological society and not a caving club. In fact, he refused to countenance any potential trips or cave visits unless the primary object was to further scientific goals. Sport caving was not in his lexicon - ever. He felt that any rope related activity other than handlines or ladder belays were akin to satanic practices.

Over the years, Ken's objection to recreational caving and non-cave related activities was diminished with the new breed of young cavers being attracted to the club. On trips, Ken encouraged members with their photography and was always ready to relate a scary or sometimes bawdy

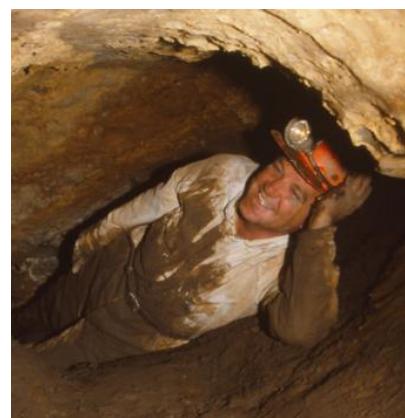
story to those gathered around the camp fire, particularly at Yarrangobilly. Ken maintained interactions with other clubs and regularly attended, or ensured that MSS was appropriately represented, at Australian Speleological Federation & NSW Speleological Council meetings.

Amongst Ken's projects were CO₂ gas analysis at Bungonia & Jenolan, earth and rock movement detection at Abercrombie, temperature gradients at Wyambene, bat surveys at Wee Jasper and the never ending dig in Bushranger's cave at Abercrombie. At Yarrangobilly, he was always mindful of conserving Cotterill's Cottage, performing some maintenance &/or repair task with every trip, whether it be replacing window panes, repairing the water supply, replacing floor boards or patching cracks in the chimney.

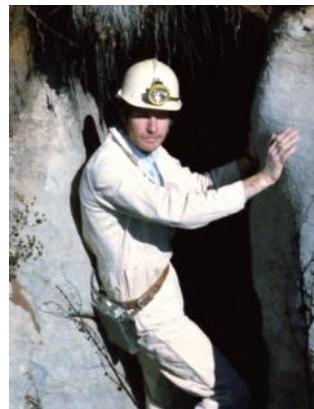
Ken's favourite area was Abercrombie where he mixed his love of caves with social interactions amongst the cave staff and participating club members. It was here that Ken really relaxed, indulged in a glass of chilled sherry and quoted lines from "The Hobbit". Interestingly, Ken's full name was Kenneth Edward Charles Keck which meant that his initials spelled his surname. Ken once confirmed this seeming coincidence as an intentional act of his parents.

Ken retired and moved to Trunkey Creek, mainly due to his connection with the caves and the guides whom he counted as personal friends. He was somewhat of an eccentric, a village elder and font of all knowledge in the local area. He was presented with a sign for his front gate which read "Grey Havens - Home of Ken Keck", which was written in rune language taken from "The Hobbit". Ken passed away on the 23rd August, 2001 and is remembered on a memorial plaque in the Holy Spirit Church burial ground at Trunkey Creek, NSW.

Paul Richards started caving after a trip to Jenolan which he said "blew me away", his first cave was Imperial. He started going down to Jenolan regularly on holidays for a few weeks and went through all the tourist caves. On one such trip he made enquiries at the guides office to see if he could become a casual guide and after the obligatory training, for the next 12 years he was a casual guide at Jenolan. In 1967, when he was guiding, he met up with Ken Keck and they got to talking and he decided to join MSS and as he is still a member it easily makes him the longest serving member of MSS. But he has always been more than just a member as he has served many different positions in the committee over the years. Paul's contributions to MSS continue to this day including assistance with this publication. Paul continues to venture underground and his all-time favourite cave is the Temple of Baal (Jenolan).



Lynton Goldsmith is the MSS quiet achiever. He is largely credited with pioneering canyoning within MSS (see Page 39 regarding Lynton's canyoning exploits), but he was equally adept at cave navigation and from the very early days, had an intricate knowledge of the Eagles Nest System at Yarrangobilly as well as many other caves and caving areas. He led many "through" trips in Eagles Nest, allowing members to learn the route when knowledge of that cave was particularly scarce. Lynton was especially meticulous with his photography, lugging a 2½" Mamiya double lens reflex camera through canyons and caves alike. He would not be rushed when composing his shots. Typically, when asked to present images at a club meeting, Lynton would bring 12 slides only. They would be whisked through the projector leaving the members begging for more. His expertise with handling low light conditions and his ability to artfully compose his images inspired many members to commence their own photographic efforts.



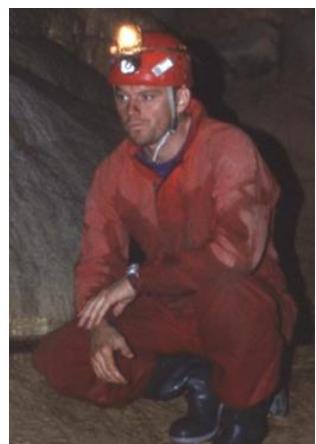
Lynton has served as club equipment officer and librarian. He enjoyed cooking jaffles and driving in the Yarrangobilly pine forest where he delighted in collecting the exceptionally large pine cones from the Douglas Fir trees. His contribution to the club has been immense with many club traditions and lore attributed to him, the most famous being the story of the "headless baby" which inhabits the "brown room" in Cottrills Cottage.



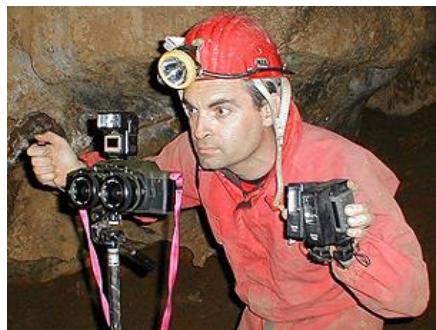
Greg Bruce's earliest memory of caving was a family camping weekend to Bungonia when he was around 13 years old. A descent of B1 was made using a hand held carbide lamp which caught him unawares and burnt a hole through his jeans. A hasty ascent was made hand over hand up the manila rope. Later, an invitation from his high school geology teacher saw him revisiting the area with his teacher's mates, and falling for this exciting sport, however, it wasn't until he was 18 that things really took off. Greg worked after school and weekends at a service station "pumping gas", where a chance meeting with 2 young customers in a car adorned with caving stickers took place. Dave and Johan were their names, and they talked him into joining MSS. His caving project to join the club was to help do a ground survey of the Abercrombie Caves. Many ales were consumed

during the survey which rendered the map useless. He was never asked to survey again. His favourite cave? Eventually suffering from claustrophobia it's a hard call, but he has some fond memories of Jenolan and Abercrombie; caving for Greg was more the weekend away, rather than a particular cave. Greg held various positions in the club over the 25 or so years he was active. Treasurer and equipment officer for a few years, but most enjoyable were his years working with Min et al as co-editor of the newsletter when they were credited with ushering in the new age of the MSS newsletter when it was established as entertaining as well as informative. It was a time of great fun and friendship.

Tony McGregor was the newsletter editor for a short (but notable) period, however he's best known as an erudite observer of the human condition. His humour was pervasive and not a trip would go by without numerous quotes, or "Tonysms", a lot of which were unprintable. If you ever hear an older MSS member say "that's nothing!" with a slightly exaggerated Australian accent, you can thank Tony for that. Tony participated in an epic NZ trip to Harwoods Hole/Starlight Cave (see article in *Memorable Trips*), and it was scrambling and stretching across pools to stay dry on the way through that led to Tony dubbing such moves to be "going the Jackie Chan". It was also on that NZ trip that Tony fell while boulder hopping up a creek to a cave, almost certainly cracking a rib or two. From then on he sang Moby's "Why does my heart feel so bad?" and declared the group had to be sympathetic because he had a broken heart. He kept caving regardless, typical Tony. That sort of hard core behaviour is why Greg and Min rated trips in the newsletter as Easy, Medium, Hard and McGregor.



David Stuckey has been the longest serving president of MSS, leading the club for 15 years over two tenures and has also served as secretary, treasurer, equipment officer and librarian. He has a remarkable memory for cave locations and routes. David first started caving on a family trip to Abercrombie when he was seven, Bushrangers Cave was quite a wild trip back then. Over time Abercrombie became a bit of a family favourite camping trip (David loves the Grand Arch). He eventually joined Scouts and when in Venturers, the unit scheduled a caving trip to Bungonia, his first truly wild caving trip. The trip was probably prompted by the SSS book "Bungonia Caves". After this trip he was well and truly hooked! When he joined MSS his Project was mapping Stable Cave at Abercrombie back in the late 1970s. David pushed the boundaries of low light and underground photography using fill and remote flash techniques. He has taken countless photographs of caves and canyons, many in 3-D format. His sound synchronised audio visual presentations set a new standard. He is also the only known club member to have a light battery turn into a fireworks display in a cave. He has been instrumental in introducing many activities that are still a tradition on the MSS calendar such as such as the annual *Boxing Day Wollangambe Creek trip*, *Decadence Walks* and *Car Observation Drives*. David remains active in caving, canyoning and alpine trekking.



John Gray has held various positions over a 16 year period ... president, secretary and treasurer. However, he is perhaps best known as the club's most accurate bush navigation device. He is also always happy to share his extensive knowledge of navigation and the wonderful places he has visited. John's first non-tourist cave was around 1980 when he was invested as a Venturer with Glenorie Venturers in Gong Cave at Wee Jasper. In 1982, he switched Venturer Units from Glenorie to Thornleigh where Chris Rush was the Venturer leader at Thornleigh (and President of MSS). MSS at the time had a membership category for associate memberships by groups such as Venturer Units. So, although he joined MSS as an individual member in 1986, he was technically a member since 1982. John's favourite cave is Harwoods Hole/Starlight Cave near Nelson, NZ (see article in *Memorable Trips*). "The 176m entrance abseil gets the heart rate up. About 40m down from the top there is a bolt that you have to cross by standing in a loop of rope while you transfer your descender from one rope to the next. From there it is a 130m free hang drop. The cave that follows is spectacular with more abseils before you emerge at the bottom of the valley. It's a bonus to not have to prusik back up as you simply walk back up the hill to retrieve the big rope from the entrance pitch. One person still has to abseil to the re-belay to de-rig at the bolt (and then prusik back up from there)". John has lead, and continues to lead, numerous canyoning trips for MSS. John's trips have taken members down countless, amazing slots. Some are quite obscure, but the trips are always worthwhile.

Richard Neville, or **Min** as everyone knows him, was joint newsletter editor with Greg Bruce as well as treasurer and then president for a number of years. Min got into caving when he was a member of 3rd Thornleigh Venturers, one of their Venturer leaders, Chris Rush was a member of MSS (and President for a couple of years). Min's first caving trip was to Bungonia in the early 80s with the Venturers, a few years later, when he was in Rovers, he and friend John Gray joined MSS. Min's favourite caves for decoration are at Yarrangobilly, particularly East Deep Creek but his favourite adventure cave is Harwoods Hole/Starlight Cave in NZ, the club did a trip there in 2000 (see article in *Memorable Trips*). . And why is he called Min? Turns out he was a slip of a thing and his mum called him *Minnie the Mip* and it's stuck with him ever since.



Scott Macfarlane is known for, among other things, doing a lot of behind the scenes work within MSS (he has been President, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor, Public Officer and Membership Secretary). He was a driving force for the incorporation of the club, instigating a number of changes to the constitution. Scott's first cave was on 1971 (Grill, followed by Fossil and Hogans Hole caves at Bungonia). In 1975, Scott, Johan, David and Stephen Meyer were all in Senior Scouts (now known as Venturers) and on the Oz Day weekend the four of them decided to go to Abercrombie caves to camp and look around. On the Saturday, they did a tourist trip to Bushranger Cave via the Arch. That night they did some "things" which shall remain unnamed but seems they were running on adrenalin and afraid of being caught to the extent that they thought the pilot light they saw in the dark in Bushranger Cave (for the lighting system) was a security camera and they freaked out! On the Sunday, they caught up with some older people who looked very official and got talking to them (the guys obviously not mentioning their nocturnal excursion). The "older people" turned out to be Ken Keck, Barry and Derek Peffer, MSS members. After chatting with them the MSS members took them for a trip through the Arch and the four of the Venturers decided to join MSS. And the rest is history as they say! Scott's favourite caving area is Yarrangobilly, any time from Autumn to Spring, sitting on the veranda at Cotterills Cottage having breakfast in the sun (with the temperature a balmy 5°). Favourite cave is Janus (for its beautiful formations), favourite adventure cave Wyanbene all the way to Frustration Lake.



Peter Shaw served as the MSS safety officer for a number of years. Peter got into caving in a roundabout way; he visited Wee Jasper on a family trip and shortly after that met up with some Venturers whilst caving. He then started teaching roping skills in the Scouting movement, eventually meeting up with some MSS members also in Scouting and one thing led to another and he became a member of MSS. Peter's passion was rope work and he was one of the main drivers for the introduction of SRT techniques into MSS and eventually he also became involved in cave rescue work. Peter lived in western Sydney and ran his own joinery business, which meant that any piece of club equipment was stored and transported in its very own custom made carry case. Peter's Toyota 4WD was heavily equipped with all sorts of gadgetry ranging from camping and caving kit to vehicle recovery gear. One caving trip to Bungonia saw a native rodent run along a wooden fence rail and disappear into the back of Peters truck which, reportedly, took several weeks before it could be trapped and removed. Peter planned and led 2 major Tasmania expeditions and was quite strict that participating members had the correct equipment and knew how to properly use it. He organised many training days for fine tuning our prusik rigs as well as our caving clothing and carbide lamps. Peter's son, Glen, also contributed greatly to the club, manufacturing custom battery boxes around the time that members migrated from using heavy miners wet cell batteries to a smaller and lighter gel cell set up. Peter has an infectious sense of humour and a seemingly endless repertoire of classic and sometimes bawdy anecdotes. He also had a no-nonsense attitude to safety and efficiency. Peter retired and moved to Hill Top in the southern highlands and has named his property, rather appropriately "Yarrangobilly". His all-time favourite cave is Croesus Cave in Tasmania.



David Stuckey - East Deep Creek - Yarrangobilly (Photo: M Scott)

Members are indeed fortunate that we have such an amazing caving destination within easy reach of Sydney. The guides and management are friendly and mostly supportive of our requests. The club has conducted several projects in the area over the decades however, the majority of club trips have been under the banner of recreational caving, photography and familiarisation.

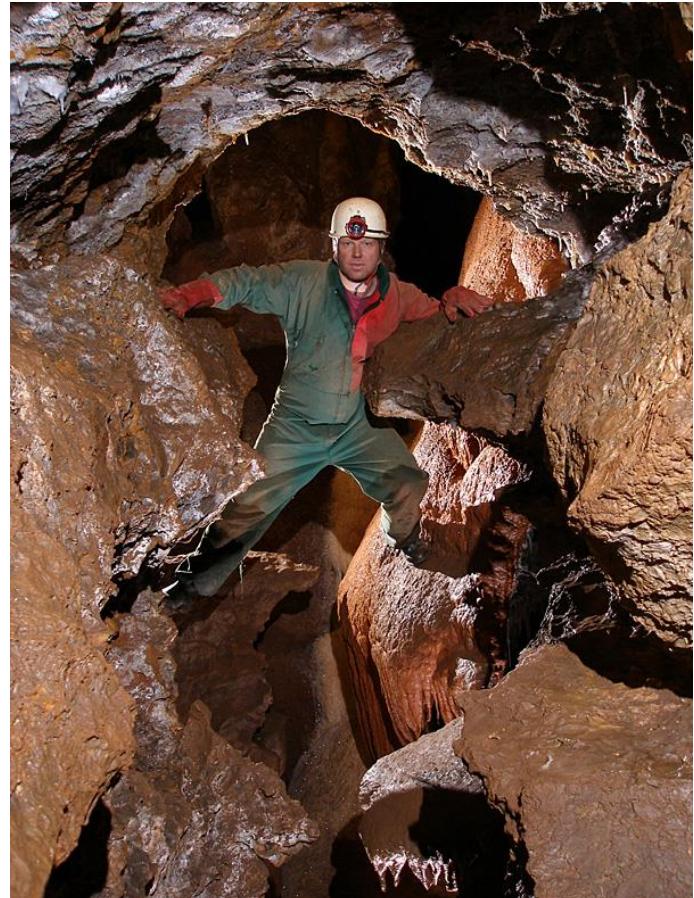
Early trips to Jenolan had mixed success. One Easter trip, the club did a number of CO₂ measurements in the tourist caves in an attempt to prove that increased tourist visitation over long weekends resulted with higher concentrations of the gas, which was making the guides ill. It is understood that the guides did negotiate a better pay deal as a direct result of the data collected and supplied by MSS.

On this same trip, a pound of fluorescent dye was tipped into a stream in the upper valley to try and prove a hydrological link with the main tourist caves. Unfortunately for the club, on the Easter Monday morning, the link was proven with spectacular results as the famous Blue Lake was now bright yellow. According to reports, the club was seen off the area with "indecent haste" and told not to come back. It took years for MSS to be allowed to return to Jenolan.

In 1975, attention was focussed on Maiden Cave, J79, when members identified the potential to extend the cave. Digging in the entrance passage eventually opened a 6 metre pitch on 26th July, 1975. As the cavers were literally digging the floor underneath themselves they were wise to be adequately belayed as

the soil soon started to subside beneath their feet. A rock which was dropped down the newly opened pitch was heard to bounce twice then produce a loud splash. After that, all previous excitement seemed minor.

Subsequent trips saw shoring up operations at the pitch head, surveying, photography and continued digging in the lower levels of the cave. The "lake" which was discovered on that first trip was noted to rise and disappear in sympathy with prevailing rainfall conditions, thereby giving hope to eventually connecting the cave with the underground river. Due to the narrow passages and constant battles with mud, the dig was eventually abandoned. A trip in 2015 found the



*Robert Clyne on the high traverse in Barralang Cave, Jenolan
(photo: David Stuckey)*



Roderick Smith in Barralang Cave, Jenolan (photo: David Stuckey)

shoring at the pitch head to be rotten and more dangerous than useful with some of the wooden components having fallen down the pitch.

Mammoth would be the cave most visited by the club with many great adventures enjoyed. Initially, the only access was via the 20 metre pitch in the Entrance Chamber. In the early days, the negotiation of this pitch usually added an hour or more to a Mammoth trip as cavers struggled with ladders or prusik rigs. In later years, a walk in entrance was opened by the guides to facilitate any potential rescue operations and to allow access by tourist adventure tours.

Some of the memorable trips were the circuits such as the North West Passage and Infinite Crawl loop as well as the Ice Pick Lake to Hell Hole round trip via the Naked Lady Chamber. The latter becoming a favourite of the club and is still regularly visited.

Other trips in Mammoth saw visits to the Pisa Chamber, Oolite Chamber, The Oval, Great North Cavern, Can't Get Lost, Slug Lake. One trip rigged a tyrolean traverse across Lower River whilst another particularly gruelling trip saw a small team do a complete traverse from Great North Cavern to Slug Lake.

Most of the other popular caves have been explored including: Spider Cave, Hennings, Wiburds Lake Cave, Bottomless Pit, Little Canyon, Serpentine, Foz Hole, Rho Hole, Aladdin, Glass, Ian Carpenter Cave, Frenchmans, Barralong Cave to name a few.

Once, a special beginners trip was organised to visit Hennings Cave. The trip leader carried a large roll of string on this occasion, anchored it to a rock in the entrance chamber and lay a trail as he proceeded. Cavers who have visited Hennings' Cave will be familiar with the maze of passages. Indeed, it is possible to do several figure 8 circuits in the cave where the same passage is traversed in the opposite direction. The trip leader continued to lay down the "lifeline", much to the satisfaction of the visiting newbies. Unbeknown to them, another member of the party was diligently rolling the string back up behind them so when that particular passage was re-entered from another direction, it would look like a previous un-entered passage. This ruse was perpetrated for quite some time until one of the beginners caught sight of the string being gathered. This was met with exclamations of "what are you doing?" and "how are we going to get out now?". It was a classic moment and my only wish was the I used bread crumbs instead of string.

Another project undertaken by MSS was the excavation of Winch Cave, J290. The club conducted digging trips to this cave for approximately 13 years with the chamber floor being significantly lowered. At first entry, there was barely enough room to kneel and fill a bucket with soil. By the time the dig was abandoned, the chamber required a ladder to safely access the cave, which now boasted sufficient room to admit the entire party. It was joked that we should hold a club meeting in there. Curiously, the dig was called off by the very people who proposed it in the first place, the Guides. It was thought that a breakthrough had the potential to alter airflows in the tourist caves beneath such as Temple of Baal etc.

Serious exploration continues at Jenolan, mostly by cave divers from other clubs and well beyond any real expertise of current MSS members, although we have assisted some of the diving push trips. It appears that the main impetus of MSS trips to Jenolan will continue to be recreational caving as digging trips are viewed unfavourably by the current management. It is sincerely hoped that recreational caving will remain a valid and acceptable trip objective.



*Rob Clyne traversing Lower River, Mammoth Cave, Jenolan
(photo: David Stuckey)*

In years gone by, it was part of the MSS membership criteria to undertake a caving Project (either individually or as part of a group). Anything cave or speleology related was acceptable, eg mapping, documentation, studies of cave environment, enhancement of a cave (cleaning formations or extending the cave by digging/expanding a possible route) or restoring it to its former glory. Over the years, MSS has been involved in many projects, too many to list here, however the following articles cover some of the projects undertaken. MSS currently has a couple of unfinished projects that we are working towards completing: the survey of Casuarina Cave (Cliefden), updating cave location data (Abercrombie); and assisting with documentation of karst in the Lithgow/Mudgee Region.

Yarrangobilly Project - Removal of Wire Netting

by David Stuckey

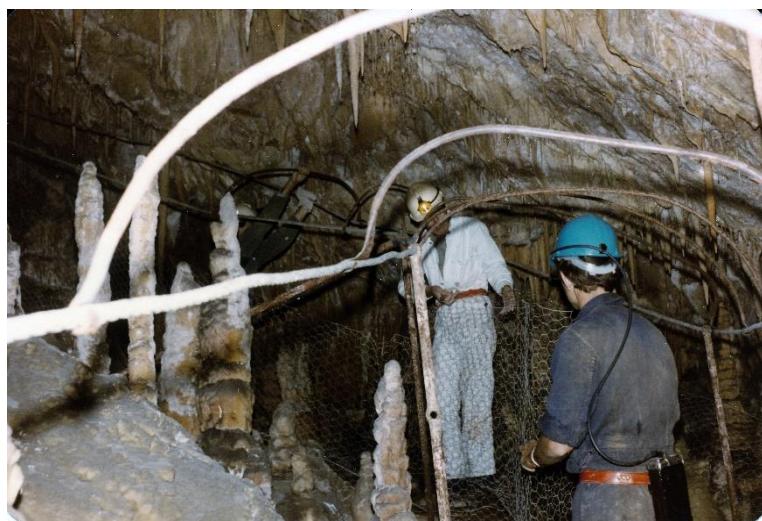
One project which involved MSS was to restore the tracks in Castle Cave & Harrie Wood.

Neil Kell, the Ranger at Yarrangobilly approached MSS and mentioned that he'd like to see the removal of wire netting around most of the tracks in Castle Cave & Harrie Wood. Virtually the whole of the route through Castle Cave was encased in a tunnel of wire netting with metal posts supporting the wire. The netting literally curled over one's head and in some places, necessitated stooping for the taller visitor. The cast iron supporting posts were sunk into holes which were drilled into the formations and in other places had been cemented into place. Whilst the wire netting offered absolute protection to the formations in the cave, it did have some drawbacks. It is worthwhile to mention that there is no lighting in this cave, so when it is shown as a wild tourist cave, all illumination is carried by the visitors themselves, ie: inside the wire "tunnel". It is amazing just how much light was reflected off the wire netting back into the eyes of the visitor. Once the wire netting was removed, it was equally amazing just how much of the cave was then "visible".

Over a number of years, during our annual trips to Yarrangobilly, a day or two was always set aside for this project. On our first couple of trips into the cave we removed the wire netting.



De-wiring Harrie Wood Cave May 1982, Robert Drummond (front), David Stuckey (back).
(Photo: Scott Macfarlane)



De-wiring Harrie Wood Cave May 1982, Lynton Goldsmith (left), Robert Drummond (right). (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)

We cut it into manageable sections with wire cutters or hand held side cutters, rolled it up and carried it up to the guide's office.

In some places, the wire netting was left in-situ. This was to protect speleothems which were very close to the track or in some cases, where calcification that had formed on the wire netting, thereby becoming part of the cave itself.

Subsequent trips saw us armed with heavy duty bolt cutters. These "weapons" enabled us to sever the big supporting cables that were strung from pole to pole. We snipped the cable and rolled it up in bundles which were jumped upon to flatten them into manageable bundles and were then carried to the cave entrance. We tied a loop of wire to the bundles and dragged them out like a horse pulling a cart. We dragged them all the way to the guides office, a distance of just over a kilometre.

Once all the wire was removed attention was directed to removal of the poles. The poles had been forged on site and had been made with a barbed section at the bottom. Some of these poles could simply be lifted out whilst others just didn't want to budge. Various methods to loosen and remove the poles were employed including rocking them back and forth, rotating them with huge Stilson's wrenches and jacking them out of the ground using a specially manufactured plate system with hydraulic jacks. The latter method had a very low success rate as the pushing effort of the jacks needed to be supported. Any rocks that were placed under the jacks were, unfortunately, pushed into the earth under the enormous pressure being created by the jacks.



Castle Cave - the Pendulite - the small chamber was previously surrounded by wire netting. (Photo: David Stuckey)

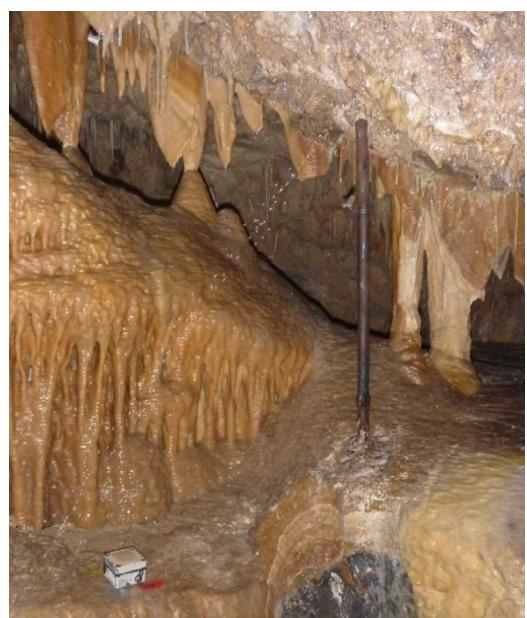
There were some posts we simply could not get out and they are still there along with those which were so close to cave formations that we had to leave them in place. Ever competitive, our members used to have competitions as to how many poles we could get out in a day, some days we'd remove 5, sometimes 8 or 9 or more. We stacked the poles up at the entrance and the rangers would come by on quad bikes and take them away.

Today the cave is transformed. If I wasn't there to show where the netting was, you'd never know it had existed at all. Of course, there are still a few holes from the posts in some of the formations and indeed, some of the poles remain, however, Castle Cave and Harrie Wood are beautiful caves and the removal of the wire netting has revealed the full glory of the formations. It is a project which I am very proud to have been a part of. It is a project that the club should be proud to have completed too.



*Formation Castle Cave - netting left in place due to calcification - October 1984.
(Photo: Scott Macfarlane)*

None-the-less, it certainly did remove several posts. Another method was to use a sledge hammer to bash the pole around its base whilst two other people attempted to rotate the pole by pushing against two very large Stilson's wrenches. This proved very successful with most of the poles succumbing. Sometimes, the pole simply sheared off under the enormous torsion being applied.



Harrie Wood cave 2016 - one of the steel posts left in place - imagine how this formation would look surrounded with wire netting! Note the drip monitor in place and you can just see the stream of water from a "Piddling Pete". (Photo: M Scott)

Jenolan Project - Winch Cave Dig

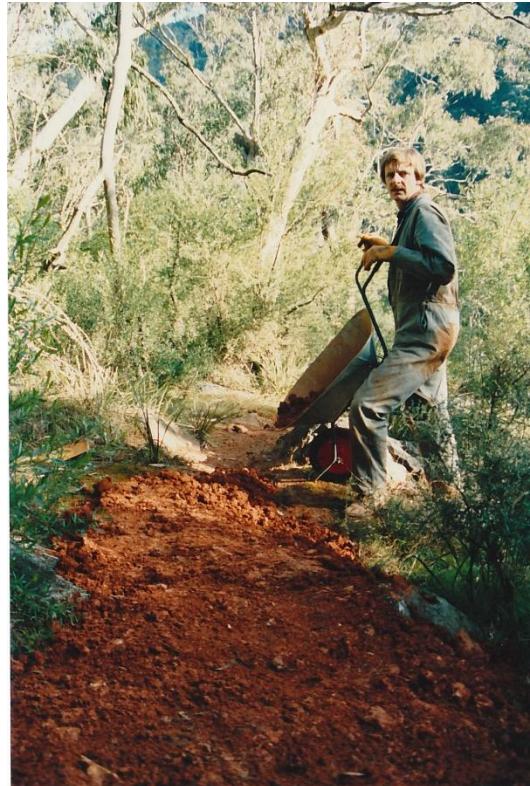
by Jim Crockett (assisted by Scott Macfarlane)

This was a major project undertaken by MSS in the late 80s. The cave was suggested as a project in 1987 by Jenolan Caves Manager Ernie Holland. The dig was located very close to the walking track on the Southern Limestone, close to a 180° bend on the path. It was identified as a potential dig when an inaccessible cavity underneath a large boulder (that was jammed between other larger rocks) was noticed. The immediate area around the proposed dig (for about 200m) did not contain any known caves and the dig site was high up on the Southern Limestone so it seemed promising.

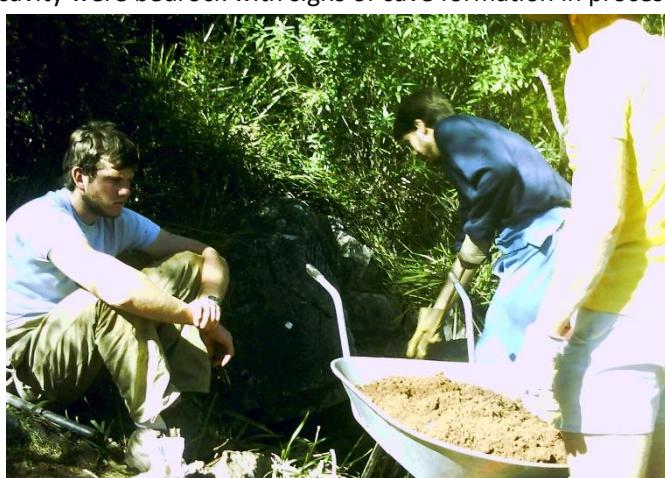


Peter Shaw hauling spoils (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)

Excavation activities: Permission was gained from the Jenolan Caves Manager, Ernie Holland, to remove the boulder blocking the cavity to see what was underneath it. A Tirfor winch was employed for this task, kindly supplied by Scott Macfarlane. The boulder was estimated to weigh up to 500kg and after it was removed there was a cavity of about 2m depth and just wide enough for one person to swing a pick. The walls of the cavity were bedrock with signs of cave formation in process.



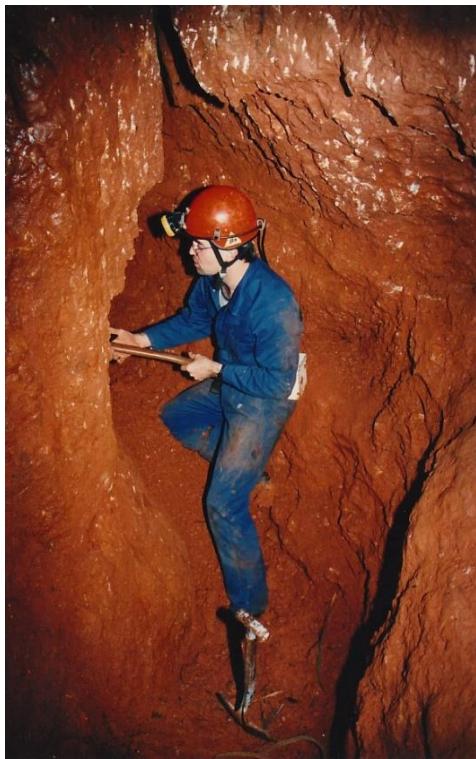
John Oxley spreading spoils on tourist track
(Photo: Scott Macfarlane)



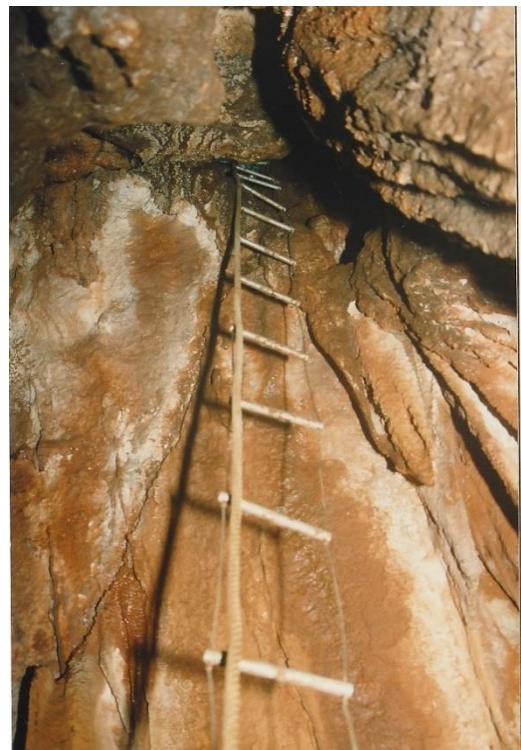
Bucket brigade hauling spoils from hole (L - R John Gray, Peter Chadwick, Mike Nickolls) (Photo: Jim Crockett)

The floor consisted of a dirt/clay sediment and the job of digging out the sediment commenced. The excavation was carried out over a number of years and generally trips to Jenolan over a weekend would consist of one day working on the dig and one day's caving. The Caves Manager suggested that the dirt and clay removed could be spread over the nearby tourist track and so this was done with the help of a wheelbarrow (kindly supplied by Scott Macfarlane). The soil was bucketed to the surface and placed in the wheelbarrow for spreading. At the start of the dig the hole could be easily free climbed but as the floor was lowered this became more difficult and eventually a ladder was required to gain access to the bottom of the dig.

The End of the Project: We called a halt in 1989 after it became apparent that the dig was going nowhere and it was unlikely we were going into break into any chambers. There were also concerns (expressed by the Cave Manager Ernie Holland) that the red clay spoils removed from the cave were very visible on the tourist track. Funnily enough it was Ernie who suggested we dump all the spoils on the tourist track in the first place! One of our last trips was in June 1989 and some photos of that trip are included here.



*David Stuckey at the dig face
(Photo: Scott Macfarlane)*



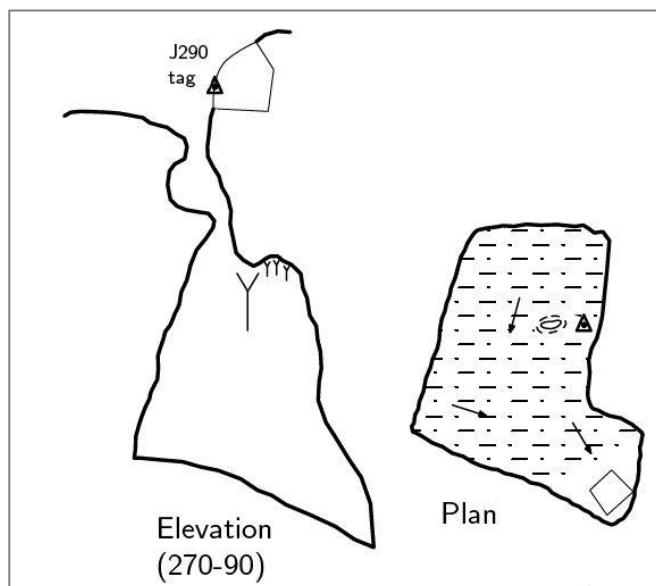
The floor was lowered enough that eventually a ladder was required to access the digging face. (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)

People Involved: It's highly likely there were others involved but not listed on the following trips, (apologies to anyone not listed):

- 4-5 July 1987: David Stuckey, Fran Rose, Robert Drummond, Peter Shaw, Paul Richards, Greg Bruce, Grant Brennan, John Sutherland (Scott's cousin), Jim Crockett & Scott Macfarlane.
- 20-21 Feb 1988: Peter Shaw, Paul Richards, David Stuckey and Fran Rose (and possibly others).
- 17-18 Sept 1988: John Gray, John Oxley, Leonie & Peter Chadwick, David Stuckey, Fran Rose, Jim Crockett & Scott Macfarlane
- 17-18 June 1989: David Stuckey, Jayne and Mike Nickolls, Glen Shaw, John Oxley, Ken Keck, Andy Lawrence, Robert Drummond and Scott Macfarlane.

Now: The dig is officially recognised as a cave (Winch Cave), and SUSS has surveyed and mapped it. The red clay on the tourist track (that was the obvious sign in the vicinity of the cave) has most likely faded, but it might be worth having a look at next time we are at Jenolan, and Scott Macfarlane's wheelbarrow is still in use today at his home!

Credit goes to Scott Macfarlane for assisting with some of the information for this article.



J290, Winch Cave, surveyed by Rowena Larkins, SUSS Oct 2012

Projects from the Early 1970s

by Lou Zamberlan (President 1973)

CO₂ Gas analysis

It was always known that there was “bad air” in Grill Cave (B44) at Bungonia due to the presence of high concentrations of CO₂. At Ken Keck’s behest, the company he worked for loaned us a gas analyser, which Ken asked us to use in Grill Cave. Seemed simple, well it wasn’t. When you added the car batteries, 12v – 240v inverter and a gas pump as well as a very long hose, getting all this gear into and out of the cave became a multi person and day epic.

There were several schools of thought as to how the CO₂ became present in the cave and whether or not the increasing concentration of the gas was additional to the usual concentration of oxygen or whether there was a depletion of oxygen due to the increase of CO₂.

Ed Boylan and I got the short straw to take the hose down to the bottom of the cave while my wife Ann operated the gas analyser. Being somewhat of a luddite when it came to using sophisticated equipment in such a harsh environment, I also carried half a dozen gas pipettes. These glass tubes were under vacuum and were fitted with an on/off tap. All you had to do was open the tap and the atmosphere would flow in. Once sealed, the pipettes could be taken back to the Lab for analysis.

We got to the bottom, knowing full well that we had very little time before the CO₂ rendered us unconscious. We dropped the hose and fled back up the cave. On arrival near the entrance it was discovered that apart from mumbling incoherently, both Ed and I had blue skin, lips and fingers. Not only were we suffering from excessive CO₂ (4.5% as measured later) but also Hypoxia due to oxygen starvation. The O₂ content of the atmosphere was measured at 12%, near fatal levels! A very quick trip to Goulburn hospital and hours under observation put an end to our weekend.

The Bungonia gas analysis proved that increased levels of CO₂ led to a corresponding drop on oxygen levels. This was the first time it had been confirmed in Grill cave and the results led to Ann and me presenting a scientific paper (refereed by Dr. Julia James of SUSS) at that year’s annual ASF Conference at UNSW.

Buoyed by these results, Ken’s next epic was to measure the CO₂ concentrations in the Jenolan Tourist Caves. Paul Richards, an MSS member, worked as a casual guide at Jenolan. Through him we were told that the guides were after higher pay rates for holiday weekends as they were convinced higher CO₂ levels in various caves caused by many paying visitors and tours were making them ill. Confirming the gas concentrations over a long weekend would help their cause considerably. So at Easter (1973 I believe) a group from MSS members set up camp in the small valley near the entrance to Mammoth Cave. We were given free reign of the whole cave system after hours so we roamed far and wide taking gas samples in all the dead ends and narrow places well into the early hours of the morning. During the day we were free to explore and roam the non tourist caves. It was a cavers and speleo’s heaven while it lasted.

I was led to believe that our gas analysis did eventually lead to a better pay deal.

Earth and Rock Movements at Abercrombie caves

Ken and others spent many weekends at a never ending dig at Abercrombie. They never seemed to get anywhere and their holes kept getting smaller between digs. So we used epoxy glue to fix glass microscope slides across many the cracks in the rock strata surrounding the dig to see if any earth movements cracked the slides. The slides did break, so movement was confirmed, but no one could work out what it all meant. It was a real bugger getting the bits of glass and epoxy cement off the rock.

Bat surveys at Wee Jasper Caves

MSS received permission to survey Church cave at Wee Jasper. This cave is usually off limits as it’s a bat maternity cave. On my first visit I learnt a very valuable lesson. Don’t look up when in a bat cave when the bats are disturbed and fly off en masse. An umbrella would be more useful than a helmet. The only thing Ann and I got from this cave was a dose of histoplasmosis from the spores in the guano.

Ken had a theory/idea that the ratio of body length to antenna length of the cave Wetas was directly proportional to the degrees south of the equator where the Wetas were found. Where this idea of antenna length of the cave Wetas came from, nobody knew. I don’t think this was ever proven as the little buggers were hard to catch and even harder to measure, especially when you’re up to your crotch in hot fermenting bat guano.



Part of a bigger (w)hole

by Roderick Smith

When documenting a cavern, at some point you need to include how it fits into the whole cave. Similarly, when documenting a caving club, we need to look at how it fits into the broader caving community. Throughout MSS's rich history are numerous examples of collaboration and cooperation with other clubs and individuals within the Australian caving community.

This collaboration and cooperation still continues today and would be expected to continue for as long as MSS exists.

MSS has been a member of ASF (the Australian Speleological Federation) since shortly after MSS formed in 1965. Although we haven't had as many MSS members on the ASF committee as other clubs, we do currently have our club president as a Vice President of ASF.

Since the late 1990s the main benefit of belonging to the ASF, as seen by most cavers, is the insurance cover which allows clubs to obtain permits to many karst areas we wouldn't otherwise get. Although this is important to clubs, it's not the only reason to belong to the ASF.



Joint Trip NHVSS & MSS - Honeycomb Cave, Buchan, Vic (photo: Gary K. Smith, NHVSS)

Over the years ASF has run a variety of training courses and workshops which MSS members have participated in. These include cave rescue exercises, SRT training, and cave surveying courses.

There are also numerous publications produced by the ASF. These include Caves Australia, which all members receive a copy of, Helictite, which is a more scientific based periodical, and numerous books. The MSS library contains copies of most of these publications.

Every two years on a rotational basis around Australia, the ASF holds a conference. The conference is open to all ASF members, lasts for five days, Monday to Friday, and includes pre and post conference trips. The conferences are a great opportunity to meet cavers from all over Australia as well as visit different caving areas.

In 2013, the conference was held in NSW at Galong. A number of MSS members put their hands up to assist in organising the conference, including running SpeleoSports, creating the website for capturing registrations, and IT support.

In 2017, Australia will be hosting the International Speleological Conference at Penrith Panthers, and again members of MSS are assisting with the running of the



Russell Howlett - on a joint OSS / MSS club trip to Coco Creek Cave, Capertee Valley

conference. This includes running a pre-conference trip to Yarrangobilly, in collaboration with CSS.

Members of MSS have also attended many of the conferences over the years and, among other things, always enjoy the opportunity to meet cavers and make connections all over Australia and the world.

A large portion of our interaction with other cavers and clubs happens directly and not through the ASF. Among these is the NSWSC (NSW Speleological Council), which is made up of all NSW based ASF clubs. The NSWSC was set up as a way of NSW based clubs to discuss issues specific to caving in NSW. Prior to its inception, MSS was part of the Central Regional Council of Speleological Societies for two years along with Highland Caving Group and Blue Mountains Speleological Club with similar objectives in mind.

Recently members from MSS have worked with members from CWCG on documenting the caves and karst of the Lithgow-Mudgee region.

When visiting caving areas not well known within MSS there are definite challenges finding caves and finding your way through caves. Probably the best way to overcome this challenge is to do a joint trip with a club that knows the caves and area well. This approach has allowed MSS to increase its knowledge of areas such as Wombeyan and Timor.

Similarly, we have used joint trips as a way of introducing other clubs to areas we know well, specifically Abercrombie. Joint trips are also a way to help ensure we get sufficient participants to run trips, especially in cases where timing (participants would need time off work) or cost would be prohibitive to many people. For those reasons above we find that MSS, over the years, has participated in joint trips with most, if not all, NSW based caving clubs as well as many interstate clubs.



The "workers" all set up and ready to go - Timor Caves, joint trip MSS & NHVSS. Photo: Garry K. Smith



Main stream way, Wiburd's Lake Cave - Jenolan (Photo: David Stuckey)



Member's Recollections

My Introduction to MSS

by Laura Clyne

Through the years, MSS has had many people come through its doors, and many have interesting stories to tell, from many years of experience. Unlike most people in this magnificent club, I am 16, and have only been part of this club for 5 years, so my perspective is very different to those around me.

When I first started caving with MSS I was only 11 years old, and turned up to my first trip, my long hair in plaits, and wearing a pair of white caving pants. White you may ask? Well, these pants, had been specially designed by my mother, made from the finest water resistant curtain fabric, left over from her last curtain-making job. Now as high tech as these pants may have been, they definitely made my first caving trip hell. Every comment, joke and remark was somehow, related back to my pants. As you may have guessed, these beautifully pristine white pants did not remain that way for very long, but unfortunately for me, the laughter did not perish along with their cleanliness. Of course, since that first trip, I got myself a proper pair of caving overalls, and my transformation into a real caver was underway. Five years later, getting ready for a caving trip, I uncovered these pants. "Unfortunately" they did not quite fit me anymore, but the end of those pants was not to be. Dad had the brilliant idea of saving them for my little brother, when his turn to join the club came. Thankfully for him, the time has not come, and hopefully he will never have to experience the embarrassment that those one and only white caving pants caused me.

Those white pants are only one of many memorable experiences of my time with MSS. Another one of these great, yet embarrassing times, was at the spectacular caving area of Cleifdon. The group set off in the early morning, on a quest for 'Murder Cave.' Of course, with a name like this, many questions arose as to how exactly the cave got this name. We were told that should we know the story, we would have to be killed. Now, the expert of the area, Bruce, who also was a bit of a joker, accompanied this caving group. Once in the cave, Bruce told me that in order to continue, I must climb up into a small opening at the top of the chamber, when the real route was behind Bruce, blocked from view. At first I was sceptical, and would not be fooled, but Bruce was persistent in this lie. After some amount of arguing, I was still unsure, so, as any girl would do, I asked my Dad, Rob. It seemed he was in agreement and with that the route, so I set off, through the tiny hole. With much struggling, and a leg up from my dad, I managed to get through. As my head came through, my eyes lay upon the rest of the caving group, lounging comfortably around, laughing like there was no tomorrow. As it dawned on me what had happened, I turned to tell Dad, but alas, I was too late. He was already making an attempt to squeeze through too. Once he realised what had happened, he was more determined than ever to prove everyone wrong, and make it through the small hole. With a large amount of swearing and grunting, he succeeded, wiping the smiles of everyone's face.

With the 50th anniversary this year, I am glad that I could share the point of view from someone so new to the group. I hope that I will be part of this club for years to come, make heaps of friends, and see many new people join and hopefully I will even see more anniversaries to come the 75th, 100th and beyond.



Laura, aged 11 in the white overalls (Aladdin Cave Jenolan, 2011)



Laura, aged 13 (Jenolan 2013)

My 20 years with MSS

by Beth Little

I feel so privileged to have had MSS as part of my life these past 20 years.

As a teenager I looked for a crew to go caving and canyoning with and found no Venturer unit in my area. My science teacher (aka Rushie) suggested I check out MSS. He explained that even though it was an older crowd he figured that with my love of the outdoors, Monty Python, and The Young Ones, I'd fit right in. Dad was a bit nervous about letting his daughter join an adult outdoor club so joined me at the first meeting ... plus I needed a lift as didn't have my licence yet. You know how people say it's a small world? Well yep, it is. The president of the club at the time, Dave Stuckey, and my dad knew each other from a mountaineering adventure in their past. MSS got the green light from my dad, and I was lucky enough to have the MSS crew taking me under their wing from then on. I am so thankful. MSS have given me some of the best outdoor experiences in my life, and has been the source of lifelong friendships.

It has not just been outdoor experiences either, MSS has also been a source of my musical education. I have fond recollections of the many road trips with magnum stops, and pulling apart lyrics of rock classics such as Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd and being introduced to Frank Zappa.

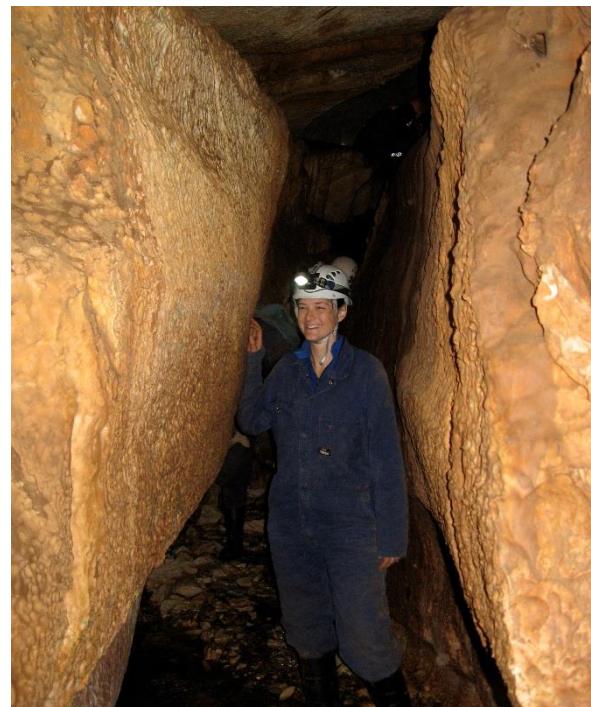
My first trip with MSS was in 1996 to the Wolgan Valley in Newnes. I got to do Starlight Canyon with Captain Starlight himself, Lynton. What a wonderful introduction to canyoning and this still remains one of my favourites of the 'classic canyons'. This was also my first time meeting a number of other club members. Tony

made an impression, he had chosen not to come canyoning that day, instead choosing to collect firewood all day for our bonfire. Seriously the biggest bonfire I've ever experienced. I'll never forget the time I went on one of John Gray's 'mystery canyons' for his birthday. I was told I wouldn't need a wetsuit. Joke was on me. It turned out to be Water Dragon Canyon, and me in only wetsuit shorts. Let's just say I didn't stop to admire the glory of the glow worms in the dark section (chest deep icy water) on that day!

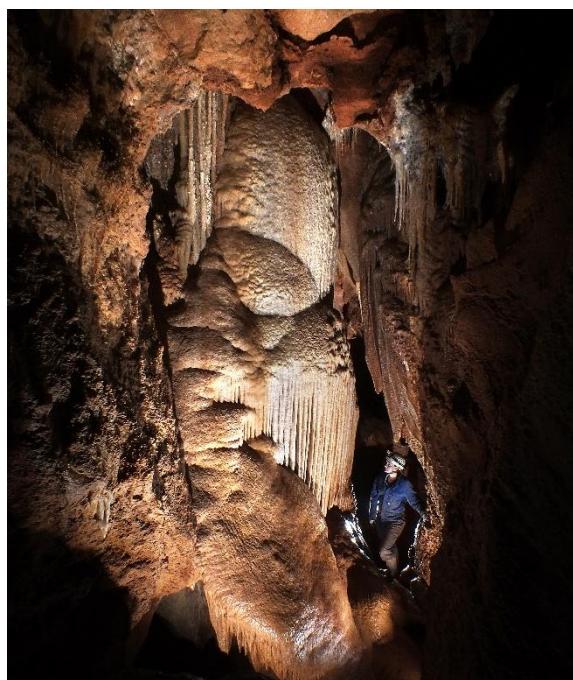
My most memorable MSS Caving trip would have to be the Expedition to Ida Bay Tasmania in 2002, with a through trip of Exit cave as the definite highlight led by Jeff Butt (in Valley Entrance and out Main Entrance). What a fantastic dynamic and epic cave system. Big big day. It was incredible!

I've also had some excellent trips to Jenolan with MSS with notable memories such as the German beer machine, or the mild excavation as a result of anthropometrically mismatched cavers to squeezes at Spider cave, or being the sacrifice up scaling poles on more than one occasion, and unexpectedly meeting the Great Owl in False Frenchman's (pretty frightening to say the least at close range eye to eye!). Yarrangobilly still remains for me my favourite mainland caving destination so far, with the Eagles Nest through trip my choice of trips.

With so many places to explore, and good company to keep, I foresee many more years to come with MSS.



Beth in Tuglow Cave 2012



Beth Little in Honeycomb Cave Buchan (photo: G K Smith)

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With so many places to explore, and good company to keep, I foresee many more years to come with MSS.

MSS Historical Anecdotes

by Scott Macfarlane

My 28 years with MSS (1975-2003) was filled with great adventures, memories and friendships. Here are some memories of my time with MSS.

Mixing with the “oldies”

When Johan Verhagen, Stephen Meyer, David Stuckey and I joined MSS in January 1975, we were the newbies trying to mix it with experienced and more mature members of the club. The Patriarch of the club and founding member was Ken Keck who found it somewhat difficult at times to assimilate with the “young folk”!

When you went on a Jenolan trip and you camped in McEwen’s (sic) Valley at Mammoth Flat (below the current cavers hut) it was expected of MSS members to act with due decorum given that sound echoed down towards the tourist area. Now in 1975, having a car was great but having huge speakers in the boot and the music system and appropriate amplifier was something you just had to have.

The problem was that both Johan and David had new music systems in their cars and camping in a valley meant great acoustics. So *Status Quo* sounded really good at full volume didn’t it? Well not according to the more mature members of the club who called for a special meeting to determine the consequences of such unruly action by these newbies. I think maybe Vivaldi may have cut it, but not *Status Quo*! Luckily all that ensued was a caution.

21st Anniversary & Halley’s Comet - Abercrombie April 1986 - largest trip MSS

The trip to Abercrombie in April 1986 saw over 80 MSS members and family and friends turn up with telescopes, binoculars and whatever else they could think of. The weekend was to be the best time to see Halley’s Comet which wanders past Earth once every 75 years. Whilst the skies were clear, Halley wasn’t so clear, and was generally a disappointment. However, this turned out to be MSS’ largest attended trip and probably still is.



Mammoth Flat Camping area Jenolan 28 May 1977.

Stephen Meyer, Lynton Goldsmith, Scott

Macfarlane, Derek Peffer.

(Photo: Scott Macfarlane)



MSS 21st Anniversary & Halley’s Comet Trip - April 1986 (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)

Yarrangobilly - Cotterills Cottage Renovation - May 1986

Our May 1986 trip to Yagby was a bit different in that we were asked by the rangers if we could fix Cotterills, particularly the kitchen area and back wall which was collapsing. With the expertise of our club builder Peter Shaw and Scott's Tirfor winch, we pulled the wall into place, fixed roof sheeting and painted the kitchen. All better!

Right: Cotterill's Renovations, May 1986 – note the winch attached to the fence in top photo and attached to the wall in the bottom photo

(Photos: Scott Macfarlane)



Veranda climb Cotterill's Cottage Yarangobilly May 1981

Well sometimes you didn't want to go caving. So, what could be better than climbing the fearsome veranda pitch at Cotterill's (for when one was bored).



*Johan and David veranda climbing – Cotterill's Cottage – May 1981
(Photos: Scott Macfarlane)*



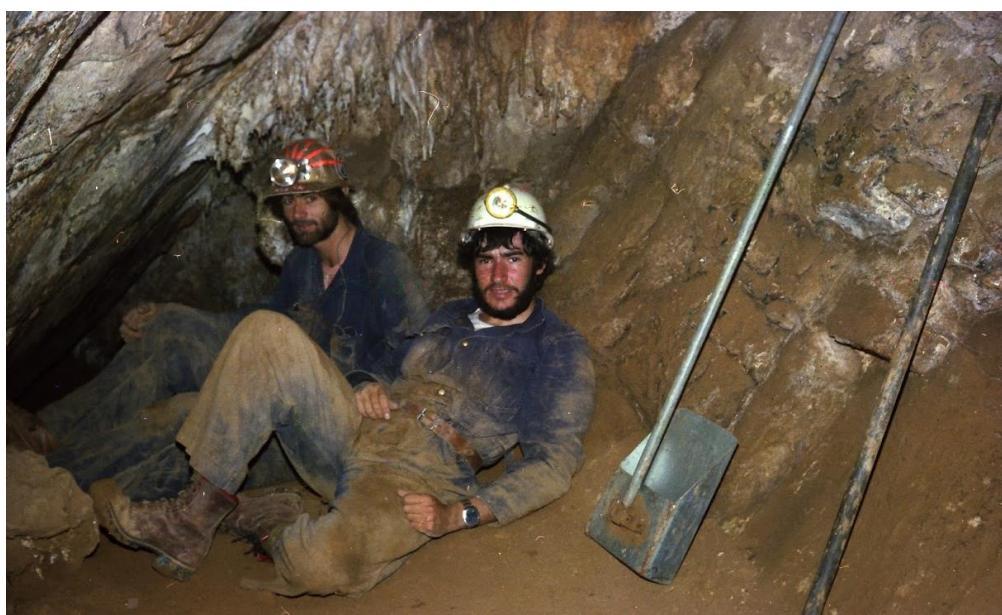
Bushie Dig - Abercrombie

The Bushie dig in Bushranger Cave at Abercrombie was a bit of an enigma. I am not sure who started it or when but my first experience was July 1977, and after 6 trips decided in August 1994 not to go back. The tunnel runs for about 50 metres.

If you can imagine a tunnel from a prison camp, crawling flat on your belly, then digging in front of you and passing dirt behind you in a bucket to a chain of people then, that is Bushie Dig. It still goes and is there for those who are feeling adventurous and want to experience escaping from a prison!



Johan Verhagen in Bushie Dig, A6 Abercrombie - February 1978. (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)



Bushie Dig - A6 Abercrombie. (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)



Shenanigans at Wyanbene Cave

by Lou Zamberlan (President 1973)

On the queen's Birthday Long Weekend in 1972, a party from MSS visited Wyanbene Cave (Deua NP). We were there to measure the temperature and humidity gradients through the main cave at various times of the day and night. Why? Only Ken knew, but his most favourite tool was a Sling Psychrometer!

It was bitterly cold. Damp overalls left lying on the ground overnight froze solid and looked like dirty muddy planks. The only highlight was the fireworks on Saturday evening - a stash of banned fireworks was produced and we all had a wonderful time until a wayward shooting star landed on Ken's tent and burnt it to the ground. The weekend went downhill from there with Garry Finnigan's VW Beetle being washed off the causeway and into the river. Luckily we were able to recover the vehicle (another use for club ropes!).

Red Socks

The origins of the MSS tradition of wearing RED Explorer socks is worthy of mention. We must go way back into the past. The Dunlop Volley was the only shoe to be worn. It was like a bushwalkers uniform. The rubber compound on the sole was very different to that found on today's shoes and offered excellent grip on wet and slippery rocks as well as reasonable padding. Hence, it became the shoe of choice for bushwalkers, canyoneers and even some low grade rock climbers. But we needed more padding inside the shoe, so people gravitated towards the humble "Explorer" sock. They were cheap, resilient and available in several colours. I recall a bushwalking trip where John Oxley was leading the way in a pair of red explorer socks. I asked him why he bought red socks and he replied that if you were unlucky enough to attract a leech, once you had removed it, the ensuing bleeding wouldn't be visible. Other people said that red socks were warmer! I guess people bought red socks because everyone else did, it was one of those 'organic' growth things.

I do recall one Boxing Day Canyoning trip to Wollangambe Creek Canyon, our group comprised around 16 people. We were assembled in the fire station car park at Mount Wilson, waiting for one late comer. Greg Bruce was absorbed patting down the sandy soil with his shoe into a flat area. This caused us all to look down. Someone gasped when it was noted that, by staggering coincidence, everybody was wearing red socks. Greg Bruce was heard to say "let's do this". So from that point onwards, certain trips on the calendar were designated as a "Red Sock Day". It became an unwritten rule that beginners' trips were assigned Red Sock status. John Oxley provided an update to the protocol in that the sock with the "Explorer" tag affixed (there was only one tag per pair) was to be worn on the right foot, thereby the tag would be displayed outwards and easily distinguished from a leech. A short time later, trips graded as "hard" or "McGregor" were designated as a "Blue Sock Day". This was because, at that time, the majority of trips were graded "hard" and we needed to differentiate ourselves.

Some years later, an online forum "OzCanyons" decided to produce a Canyoning calendar and sought photographs from its members for consideration. An image, captured by Min Neville, showing a MSS group walking towards Tiger Snake Canyon, resplendent in Volleys and Red Socks was featured with the caption "The Red Sock Canyoning Team". As of the present day, red Explorer socks are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain, however, those attending the MSS 50th Anniversary Dinner would have received a pair with a special MSS Logo tag affixed.

RSTC (Rosetta Stone Touchers Club)

Another crazy tradition steeped in mystery is the RSTC which has been described as a splinter faction within MSS. As usual, if you dig deep enough, the source of many such phenomena can be traced to one Gregory Bruce. Greg has an interest in Egyptology and had studied the topic at length including field trips to London and Egypt. It was during one of these trips that Greg visited the British Museum to view the famous "Rosetta Stone". Unable to contain his passion, Greg decided to enhance his experience by actually touching the stone. It isn't the great act of vandalism that you might think. The Stone has been on continuous display since 1802 and is the most visited object in the British Museum. It's huge and just sitting on an elevated base where people can walk right up to it. I'm certain that it has been touched on a regular basis.



*Red Socks Photo featured in Oz Canyon Calendar. L to R John Gray (hidden),
Johan Verhagen, Rod Smith, Warwick Blake, David Stuckey & Jim Crockett.
(Photo: Min Neville)*

A couple of years later, Johan Verhagen and I were touring Europe together when we visited British Museum. Upon sighting the Rosetta Stone, Johan was similarly rapt as was Greg, having studied the stone at school. He marched right up to the stone and touched it. Almost immediately a loud slow clapping was heard behind us. It was the attendant, eyes fixed on Johan, demanding, "Look with the eyes not with the fingers!". I decided not to touch the stone myself, lest I incur the wrath of the museum attendant.



David Stuckey models the famous RSTC Tee Shirt on a mountain in Switzerland from the MSS Summer Catalogue.
(Photo: David Stuckey collection)



Touching Things We Shouldn't, John Gray joins the RSTC.
(Photo: John Gray)

Within the next few years, several members of MSS had travelled to London and called by the Rosetta Stone. Often, the club mailbox would receive a Rosetta Stone postcard, some would return with actual photographs of them with their finger on the stone. My chance came around again in 1990 when I travelled extensively through Europe. I made sure that I gained my entry to this rather elite group, particularly as Greg Bruce had now produced a tee shirt whose design was based loosely upon Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam". Greg's addition to this masterpiece was the group motto: "Touching Things We Shouldn't".

Last recorded person to join the "cult" was Beth Little who reports that the Stone has now been encircled by a clear Perspex "fence" rendering it impossible for any further new members.

Exact records are as mysterious as the hieroglyphs engraved on the rock, but from memory, here are some of the members of the RSTC:

- Greg Bruce (founder)
- Johan Verhagen
- Grant Brennan
- David Stuckey
- John Gray
- Hugh Watts
- George Anderson
- Robert Clyne
- Bob Horn
- Beth Little
- Kathy Duffy
- Stuart Kane

Annual Decadence Walk

Bushwalkers are always trying to lighten their load. Ultra-lightweight is now the new black! However, some years ago, I proposed an annual bushwalk where participants took along as much paraphernalia as possible. This would operate like a "dutch auction" whereby participants would carry more and more stuff to try and out do the others, but no one knew how much stuff the other people were bringing. It had to be an overnight bushwalk, no car camping. I usually selected destinations which had some natural cover such as a camping cave. There were at least 5 such events:

- Dr Darke's Cave: Decadent items on this trip were an inflatable armchair, tablecloth with candelabra, tent peg puller tool (even though there were no tents), camp ovens, inflatable coat hanger and folding chairs. One team even brought a professional chef with them!

- Gooche's Crater, (visited twice): Decadent items on this trip were over 500 tea light candles which were distributed about the camping cave, rendering it unnecessary to use headlamps at night. A battery powered rotisserie, wine glasses, gourmet food and folding chairs. One member made 2 trips from their car to the campsite in order to bring all their food.



Gooches Crater camping cave illuminated by 500 tea light candles on a MSS Decadence Walk. (Photo: John Gray)

- Blue Gum Forest: A particularly notable Decadence walk. Probably the walk with the hardest and steepest approach. Decadent items were champagne and strawberries, Hibachi charcoal stove & charcoal beads. What made this trip so notable was that no one attended apart from the trip leader. A very decadent way indeed, to win the competition.
- Kanangra Coal Seam Cave: The last recorded Decadence walk was to the coal seam cave at the eastern end of the Kanangra Plateau. Decadent items were numerous dips and spreads, a cast iron griddle, 50 frenched lamb cutlets dusted with Moroccan spice, wines and spirits. One member even brought a folding hooded barbecue which totally failed to ignite the charcoal beads, resulting with a rather raw roast.

Annual “Inaugural” Car Observation Drive

I proposed a departure from our usual style of trip with a car observation drive, but with a twist. The plan was to establish an interesting drive route with clues to be collected along the way plus some scenic surprises. Clues were written in cryptic form and participants were also handed a sealed envelope containing details of the final destination in the event they got lost. The route was necessarily circuitous in order that the drivers wasted as much time as possible, whilst the organisers took a short cut to the lunch spot and prepared a BBQ lunch for everyone. Timing was everything!

I had a lot of fun organising the route. In some cases, the individual teams were actually given different instructions so that, hopefully, they'd pass each other on the same road, going in opposite directions.

Nothing like messing with people's minds!

The winner of the event won the right to host the event in the following year. There were many such drives organised over the years, mostly around the Southern Highlands and south coast. One extensive drive did a complete circumnavigation of the Wollemi National Park, another was centred around Mountain Lagoon in the Blue Mountains. On the inaugural trip, a wrecked car was found off the track in the bushland. We souvenired an old hubcap to use as a trophy. Another member also snaffled the dipstick which was presented to the team who came last.

At the start of one particular trip, the clues and emergency envelope were handed out. One participant, who was flying solo, ripped open the envelope with the destination details and promptly announced “see you at lunch”. He then drove straight off to the destination to wait for us.

For some reason, each year the drive came up on the calendar as “The 2nd Inaugural Car Trip” and “The 3rd Inaugural Car Trip” etc., etc. I think that Douglas Adams has a lot to answer for, or was it Greg Bruce the editor?



Escapees at Yarrangobilly Caves

by Lou Zamberlan (President 1973)

Over Xmas New Year 1974 a large group from MSS went down to Yarrangobilly caves to "survey and find new caves" and, as we were there at the invitation of the guides at the tourist caves we were also given a free reign of the other caves especially the Eagles Nest complex of caves.

We camped in the supposedly haunted old Yarrangobilly Post Office and commuted down to the caves each day. In the evenings we all sat around the fire in the main room and told ghost stories. We had a couple of Belgian visitors who had caved extensively in their own country and France. On the first evening after a long day underground they were feeling peckish and asked where the Bistro was as they wanted to eat. We all fell about laughing. In those days the road from Kiandra to Talbingo was a rough dirt track. The nearest Bistro or Café was many hours away in either Tumut or Cooma. A real wake up call for them. However, we fed them so they survived the trip, we never saw them again though, I suppose caving in the antipodes was too much for them.

One day while exploring the Pine Forest area well away from the caves reserve we discovered a small overhang stocked with food and civilian clothing. We reported this to the Prison Service Officers resident at Yarrangobilly Caves House. At that time, low risk prisoners were transferred to the caves from Cooma gaol to do renovation and construction works to upgrade the tourist caves. Apparently all they learnt was how to avoid work and how to use explosives, the officers reckoned the work program at the caves was turning out world class safe crackers.

A very wet evening after a day in the Eagles Nest caves we were having a Port or three around the fire in Caves House when the officer who was doing the bed checks discovered 4 prisoners were missing. Was there panic? No way. As the warden looked out on the pouring rain he said "It'll take them an hour or so to get up to the main road, so let them suffer." He asked us to remain a while longer. After about 4 hours he then said "They'll be cold and miserable if not hypothermic, and as you lot found their getaway stash they won't be able to go anywhere as there are few, if any, vehicles using the road at night, let alone in weather like this." He eventually sent a van up to collect the wet, cold and miserable escapees. That's how MSS foiled a prison break!



Head Lamps – Circa 1980s

by John Gray

When I first started caving, we used a type of light called a Good Luck light that comprised of a metal case with multiple D cells and a head lamp attached to a construction style helmet. It was considered exceptional good luck if the light was still working by the time you exited the cave. We learnt the hard way how important it was to have 3 forms of light with you at all times. When we got to a cavern that we wanted to explore we all got our candles out and lit them. All the headlamps were switched off to conserve the small amount of battery power we had left.



Who could forget Natalie Everton (1968 – 2016) - Tuglow Cave, 2012 Knights Knobbly Knob Chamber



Cauldron Pot JF2 a Classic Adventure

by Jim Crockett

It was 1989 and my first MSS trip to Tasmania - after lot of preparation for our four-week adventure exploring some of the classic Tasmanian caves. We had already been to Ida Bay in southern Tasmania and visited many caves there including Exit/Mystery Creek caves and Midnight Hole.

The next phase of the trip was to head north to the Junee Florentine Karst which is considered the prime vertical caving area in Australia and for good reason, the caves are remote, damp and very deep by Australian standards.

Among the caves we had decided to explore was Cauldron Pot which at one time was Australia's deepest cave and later held the position of Australia's 2nd deepest cave for a number of years. We sought advice from local cavers to help us out, which was very useful, but we were told that that this cave was not often visited and they said that no one had done the cave for about 10 years.

We were a team of four, Peter Shaw as the leader and main rigger, Grant Brennan, Mike Nickolls and myself. Funnily enough one of the original explorers of this cave was Peter Shaw but not our Peter, but a Tasmanian version.

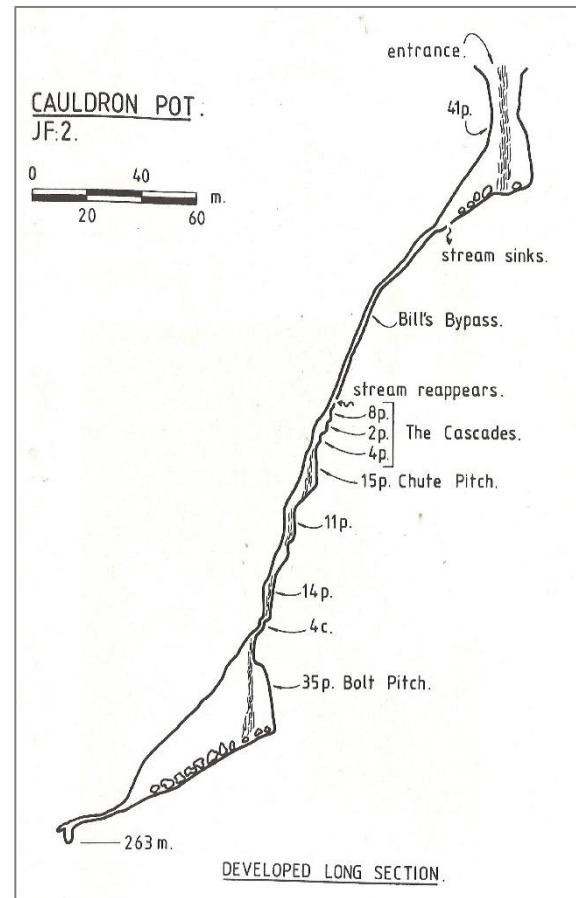
The first challenge was to actually find the cave which was hidden in the cool, dense rainforest. A track led off from the Junee quarry road and if the route hadn't been marked with ribbons tied to vegetation every 20-50m it would have been impossible to find, even with the ribbons it was very difficult to locate the path.

After about three hours of trudging through the rainforest we are finally came across an extremely impressive entrance; a large doline about 20m in diameter and over 40m deep with a creek dropping over the edge, the water crashing onto logs at the base of the doline before eventually being sucked down into the cave. The sound of the crashing water was deafening.

The rope for the first pitch was anchored to a tree back from the lip of the doline away from the crashing waterfall and spray. At this point we did notice a slight change in the weather; it had become quite dark and overcast and I vaguely remember hearing a distant crack of thunder.

We entered the cave right on midday. At the bottom of the doline the water entered the cave system through a very small hole amongst rocks and it was impossible to access the cave from there. But just to the right is the infamous Bill's Bypass which is a dry, narrow and steeply sloping entrance to the cave. Bill's Bypass seems to get steeper as you go down and eventually this leads to the first of a series of continuous pitches. The first pitch is 14m and it is at this point where the stream reappears and there are a number of cascades where only your feet get wet. This is followed by the chute pitch of 15m which was rigged as a continuation of the first pitch, this spirals down and mostly avoids the water. There are another 2 pitches of 11m and 14m and again we were still using the same rope rigged from the bottom of Bill's Bypass.

By this point it was getting difficult to avoid the water and I remember getting a dunking. We reached the final pitch called the Bolt Traverse Pitch; a 35m waterfall pitch. You start abseiling just next to the waterfall but traverse to the left on a tension traverse finishing on the wall before the final dry drop at the bottom of this chamber. I remember Peter telling us how difficult it was to rig the pitch and he had to put on his Spiderman outfit to achieve it. We all made it safely to the bottom of this chamber but we then noticed that the water flow had increased considerably, probably about double the flow of when we first entered. No doubt the thunderstorm outside was unleashing its fury.



The bottom of this pitch is not the deepest part of the cave as there is a further 5m climb, followed by the 15m Au Cheval pitch. It was decided at this point that we should not continue any further and we'd exit the cave as quickly as we could as we were unsure what was happening outside with the thunderstorm.

So we started to exit as quickly as we could muster. We noticed that the water flow was still increasing and the pitches were getting wetter. Of course you will always get wetter on the way up as while prusiking you're exposed to the water flow more than while abseiling.

We all made it safely to the bottom of Bill's Bypass and thought we were over the extended effort that we had just been through, but Bill wasn't going to let us off that easily. On the way down Bills Bypass had been relatively easy sliding down a chute but on the way up was a huge challenge as the chute was lined with sharp blades of bedrock pointing down and the slot was very narrow; the sharp blades catching on every bit of clothing combined with the narrowness of the passage made it doubly difficult. We were all relieved to make it back to the final prusik out of the entrance doline. I remember we made it out at around midnight and so we were 12 hours underground but still had a long walk in the dense forest and darkness to the car.

We made it back to camp in the very early hours and those at camp were quite concerned for us and said if we did not make it out by the morning were considering calling a rescue.

I know that the next day I was very tired and slept for a long time. But in the end this was quite an adventure what we had been through but at no time did I feel that we were in extreme danger. Our team of 4 worked together to ensure we were safely up the pitches and out of the cave, great team work. This trip goes down as one of my greatest adventures.

Note: 4 years after our trip the cave was extended by another 40m as that group found another shaft after the "Au Cheval" pitch and it now has a depth of 305m.



MSS New “Zullend” Caving October/November, 2000

by Min Neville

(A reprint of an article by Min Neville in the November 2001 MSS Newsletter, note that this article follows on from a previously published report which told of their hire car van back window being smashed and their rope being stolen out of the van.)

Participants: Min (*Go ahead Jump*) Neville, Tony (*Weather God*) McGregor, John (*I've been home for almost a week and it's too long*) Gray, John (*Can I borrow your cap Tony*) Oxley (TL).

By this stage of our most "Icksilint Idvinture", the intrepid quartet had bagged several cool caves (Summit Tomo, Gorge Creek, Simply Sumpless).

Caving, however, is not the only attraction offered by the northern part of New Zealand's South Island. It's a haven of sunshine in the Land of the Long White Cloud and attracts many local and overseas visitors to the delights of the Abel Tasman National Park on the coast. Nearby Takaka has numerous friendly alternate lifestyle residents and, of course, some rope stealing hippy scum who deserve a painful demise (but that's a story for after the revolution). We felt it would be a great shift in focus to explore some of these other scenic wonders. That and the fact that we couldn't do Harwood's Hole until the weekend when the people we were buddying up with arrived! So what else is there to do around Takaka? (pronounced Takakakakakakakakakakakakaka):

PuPu Springs ... They sound decidedly septic, but actually bear water with some of the best visibility imaginable. Millions of litres of mineral filled water break free from the limestone catacombs every second to well up and create an instant large river. The water is so clear at the springs that divers go there frequently and the Parks people have built a glass underwater viewing point.

Abel Tasman NP, Split Apple Rock ... Imagine a pristine section of coastline and a giant granite boulder split neatly in two. Would it take long to walk to such a place? Not when they've put a new housing development on the headland! A good thing too, because we took shifts to a) visit the rock and b) guard the holey van.

Mt Arthur ... Leaving all our valuables in the Speleo Hut on Takaka Hill, so we could abandon the van unlocked, we headed off to do some 'McGregor Grade' walking (Mt Arthur as a day trip). Southwest of Motueka, the Graham Valley Road leads steeply past hippy communes (no rope visible) up to Flora Saddle car park. Nothing like a little semi-vertical gravel road to get some 'hire vehicle' rally action. They say the only things that can go places a four-wheel drive can't go, are bulldozers and hire cars!

The walk from Flora Saddle to Mt Arthur is 'tops'. Clearing the tree-line at Mt Arthur Hut, the trail leads up an exposed spur amid alpine tussock grass and jagged rock outcrops. The area contains many dolines, several of which contained snowdrifts with 'blow holes' where cave air breathes in and out. JOx pointed out the valley containing a nice little "two to three day through trip" cave that, from memory holds the NZ depth record. Before reaching the relatively flat summit area we even had to negotiate a few hundred metres of very steep snow/ice culminating in a cornice. With Tony recovering well, we were assured of clear skies, but he could do little to control the wind! Nor could he do much about the gale blowing on the outside of his trousers! Of course, we had to lunch on top. The summit cairn exists for a very good reason. It's a wind break intended to stop you being blown from the mountain.

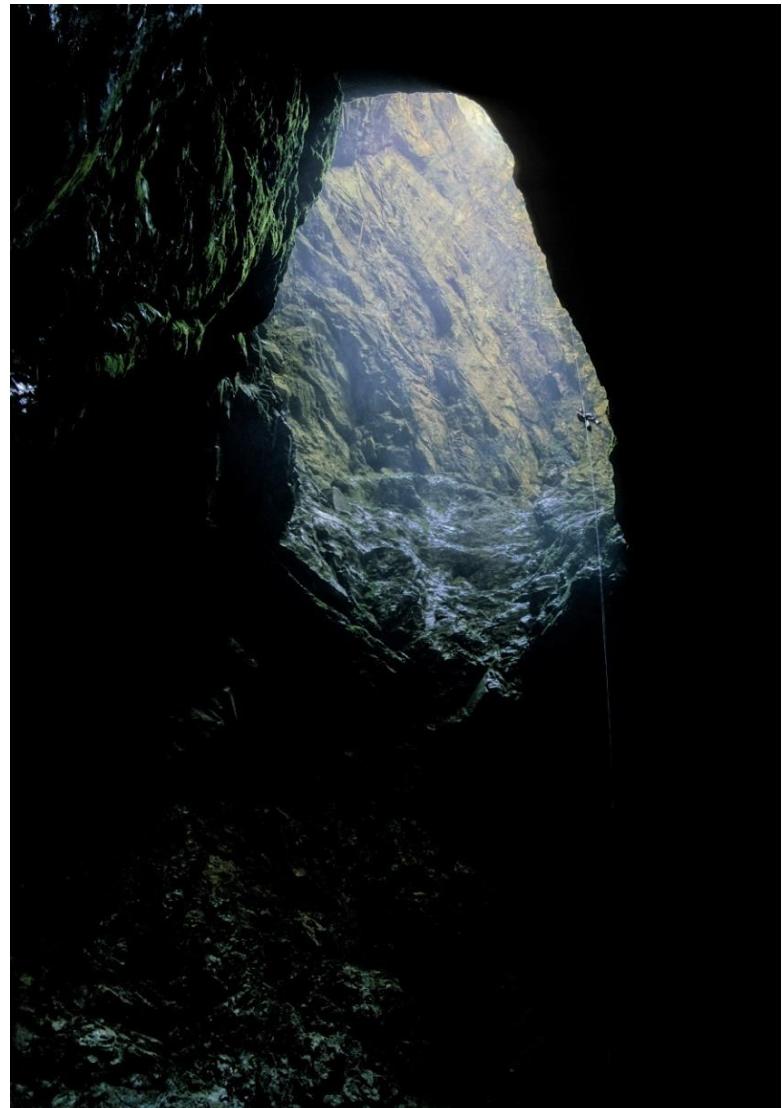
It's just big enough for three people. I was the fourth to sit down, bugger! In poor weather, this would not be a nice place to camp. Too rocky to get tent pegs in and a walk in any direction could plummet you into oblivion. Tony tried to "ball challenge" me into jumping off the cornice at a much steeper point than our ascent route. I chickened out, but then... I wasn't planning to do Harwood's Hole without a rope either. Carefully digging heels into the snow and occasionally breaking through to the thighs was too much for Tony, so he took off at a run down the slope. The rest of us surrendered claim to testicles in the face of such daring.

We made good time down the mountain and not far from the car encountered our caving hut 'flat mate', Travis, and a friend loaded to the gunwales with gear. "We're just popping up to Horseshoe Basin to look for new caves!" he declared. Horseshoe Basin is just below the top of Mt. Arthur, this guy was really keen.

At last the day of reckoning approached. Harwood's Hole! We popped in at the house of a local caver who was hosting the descent party we hoped to join and organised meeting points. At the car park we discovered the other people had brought mountain bikes. Was it that big a walk in? Not really. A relatively easy walk down a gully. At the end of the gully taking the last corner, one discovers cliffs in all directions. Instead of opening into a bigger valley, this gully disappears down a ruddy great hole in the ground. Think... twice as deep and twice as wide as 'Big Hole' and we're getting close to the right dimensions.

The rigging proceeded smoothly and we discussed early exploration in which people went down on a winch. A middle aged Kiwi woman thought this was hilarious. A winch in New Zullind spiek us of course a wontin womin who wull hev six wuth inywun. I had to explain, I meant a wunch! The rope owners had some inexperienced people (yeah, I was surprised too) so they said we could go first. Bargain.

Jox led the way and rigged the belay. A short secondary abseil to the main line bypasses the need for a dodgy rock climb start, but adds the need for another changeover. There is something decidedly bum



Harwoods Hole abseil - abseiler is roughly half way down the hole on far rh side, you can barely see him/her.

clenching about swapping ropes when you're that far above the bottom. Thirty metres further and it's time to cross the rebelay. What went through my mind at the time? Something like:

Where's the bottom?

I can't see it, but I can feel my bottom clenching. Keep that sphincter closed.

O.K., clip the cow's tail. Is it on?

I'll just check and I think I'll just check my harness again.

I might just check that cow's tail is clipped properly again.

O.K., clip ascenders. On?

I'll just check and I think I'll check that cow's tail and I might just check my harness again.

How far down from here? 140 metres. You wouldn't survive a drop like that.

Ascenders? Check! ... Cow's tail? Check! ... Harness? Check!

Sphincter? Sphincter? Check!

O.K., first weight transfer. Ooh look, I can do sewing machines with my legs!

Sphincter? Check!

Now to disconnect my descender.

Why am I disconnecting my descender 140 metres from the bottom? That's right, I have to.

Reconnect descender below rebelay. I prefer the sound of "reconnect".

I might just check that cow's tail... and the ascenders.... and my harness... and my sphincter... and the rigging!

No! Don't think about whether this flimsy 11mm piece of plastic is really capable of holding you. Hey if it breaks, can I think of a better last word than "S H H H I I I T!!"

O.K. descender is on and locked of! ... I'll just check that. etc. etc.

Disconnect cow's tail. "Disconnect!" Stop using the "D" word! You're 140 metres up!

Weight transfer, onto descender, "D" word on ascenders.

I'm away! Yeah that was sooo easy! Could've done it in my sleep! Sphincter? ... Sphincter? Check!

The actual abseil then becomes a weird mixture of adrenaline rush and taking in the quiet beauty of the majestic space in which you are now a tiny speck. Below, only black. Above, only sky. To the sides, mossy green rocks ... out of reach. Then another thought hits me with a giggle ... "This is a through trip! I don't have to prusik back up this! You beauty!"

Once our four were safely down we headed off into the cave. The massive entrance cavity funnels into what can only be described as an underground canyon. Numerous abseils (all permanently rigged) following the creek down though the cave. Some of these abseils took us over giant flowstone walls beside swimming pool sized rim pools. At other times the cave narrows so you can "Jackie Chan" it. (A technical term for desperately stretched bridging). Even a few "via nylonica" sliding along ropes on your cow's tails. Gradually the cave narrows, even though it's further downstream, reaching several squeeze bits. One of these is the 'Blasted Squeeze', named, not for its difficulty, but for the means by which it was made passable (I love some of the caving techniques they use in NZ). When the cave sumps out, JOx informed us, we had to look for a climb to the right to lead to the exit. We got to a sump and Tony started climbing up to the right. It looked dodgy. Even Tony agreed it looked dodgy. Preferring the idea of a duck dive to a rock climb that Tony didn't like, I checked out the sump. Just where it appears to sump out... a squeeze above the water becomes visible (just around the corner). Thank God for that! All we had to do was leave Tony where he was, stuck up the wall. He complained about being left behind, so John rigged a handline to enact a McGregor retrieval. Minutes later, we found the real climb and were out of the cave shortly thereafter. What a cave!

Smiles all round. Mind you, a through trip like that isn't possible without a 'Murdering Gully' exit. Long and steep, but O.K. Kiwi Stinging Nettles, however, revealed themselves to be more potent than their trans-Tasman cousins. A brief encounter left my hand strangely numb for, quite literally, days. Of more interest on the walk out, was the discovery of a snail shell from the giant carnivorous land snail, *Powelliphanta hochstetteri obscura*, that is roughly the diameter of a tennis ball!

Somebody, in a foolish fit of generosity, volunteered to help de-rig and pulled the rope out of the Hole while perched atop a dodgy ledge above the precipice. They get really heavy after a while!

With fading light, we headed back towards the mighty van, offered our sincere thanks to the group who let us use their rope and headed back to the caver's hut.

It was officially decreed that completion of the Harwood's Hole epic returned all participants to their original quota of testicles. All that was left for the day was to get Tony back into his apron to cook us dinner!



An Ode to the Newsletter

by Beth Little

Guest contributors: Greg Bruce, Min Neville and Paul Richards

"Awesome pizza, Greg!"

"Yes, Min and very cheesy. It's almost like we're back in Belmonte at Pennant Hills".

"We are, Greg, we are!"

"Who's the babe in the corner?"

"You remember Beth!"

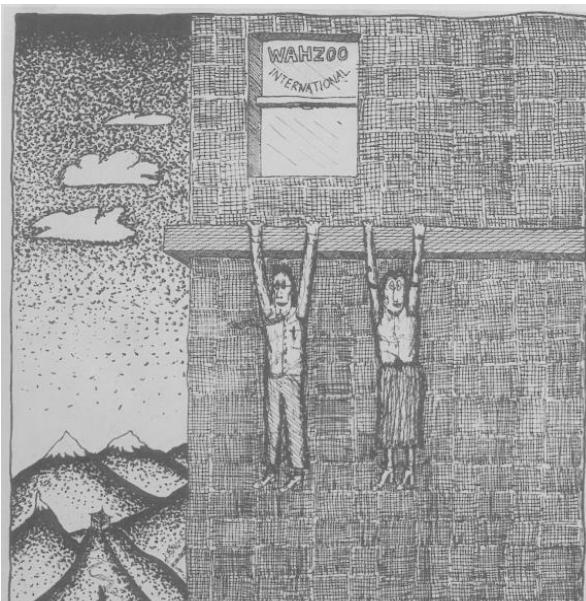
"Mmmm! Beth"

"Cut it out you two!!!!"

Thus began an evening of reminiscing a few months ago with Greg and Min – a fitting way to get some inspiration for my Ode to the Newsletter piece. My thanks also to Paul Richards who has contributed notes regarding the Newsletter that assisted in pulling this article together.

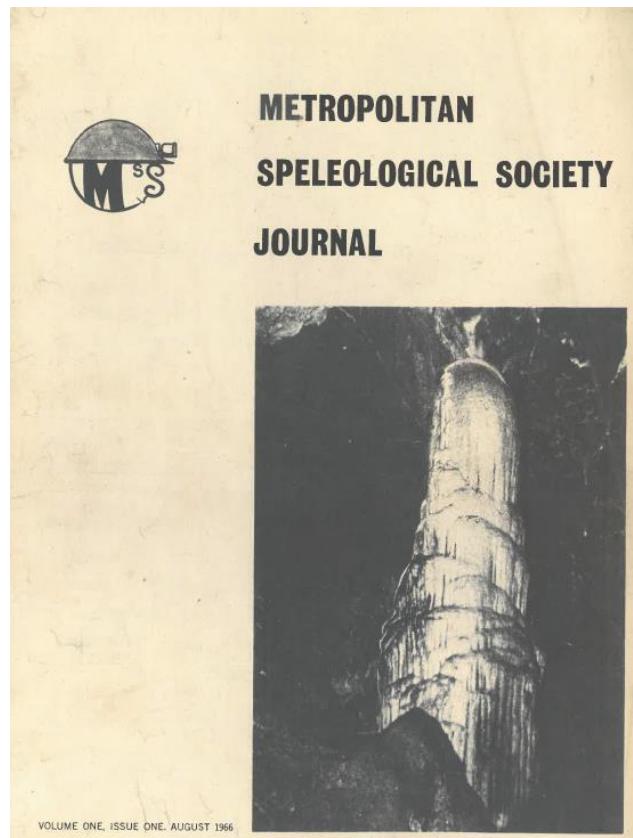
Praise is well deserved for the Newsletter, for it has been a constant companion during our years in MSS and should not be overlooked at this landmark 50-year anniversary of the club.

The Newsletter would not exist without our team of Editors, whose time and energy have brought it all together. There have been many over the years and I will no doubt miss some if I attempted to list them all. In the earlier years Newsletters were all typed, which would have been a considerable effort when you



meanwhile, back at HQ., Jeffrey and Miss Halloway were having their much awaited adrenalin break.

"Meanwhile, back at HQ, Jeffrey and Miss Halloway were having their much awaited adrenalin break"
–from the Grand Wahzoo, Greg Bruce



Volume One, Issue One, August 1966

review just how much information they contained. Ken Keck was our inaugural editor, with the likes of Keith Berry and Ted Harman assisting for many years. Scott Macfarlane and Paul Richards then held the position. Tony McGregor in the early 90s tweaked the formatting to a free-form introduction and some standardised categories, which became the template for the next decade. The longest tenure of Editors appears to be the 10 years that Greg Bruce and Min Neville co-edited the Newsletter from 1995 to 2005, followed by Roderick Smith's 6 years.

When Rod took over the editing he again reworked the format to include space for more photos and introduced some new themed articles (a good mixture of entertainment and fact). Cathi Humphrey-Hood's *News from the Underground* featured local and international information from the speleology community and was widely enjoyed. We moved back to quarterly newsletters in 2012, with Fedz & Jim Crockett taking on the position of co-editors for three years. Natalie Etherton then accepted the editor position in 2015, bringing her humour and joy of the outdoors into the Newsletters, and it was with a heavy

heart that Marilyn Scott took over editing in 2016 following Natalie's death. We welcome Marilyn as our current editor, who has a creative spark and organisational prowess, and whose efforts have been a driving force for pulling together this wonderful 50th production.

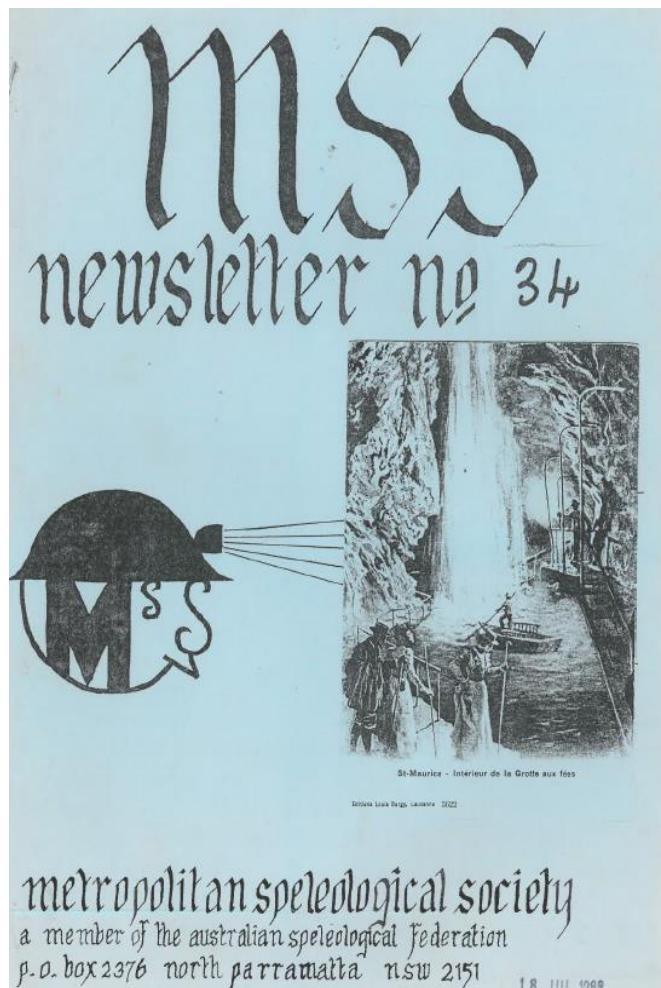
A lot behind the scenes in bringing the Newsletter together that should not be forgotten; compiling contributions, typing, printing, folding, addressing envelopes, and even licking the stamps. We didn't keep clear records of who did what in those earlier years however it was obviously quite a team effort at times. Scott Macfarlane printed, folded, stapled and mailed (with his wife Cheryl) for more years than I could figure out. Ellen, Fran and Dave also did much of this work at some stage. Min had access to stationery at work in the late nineties and took over from there. Rod Smith's efforts should be mentioned here too, Rod was instrumental in assisting the Newsletter's transition to electronic form and being accessed through the website.

I have such vivid memories of the Newsletter in the nineties when I first joined the club. I would eagerly await the post for the Newsletter each month, and on receiving it, unfold that crisp newsletter (I remember when it first went colour!), anticipating the delights within. Club members tended to have their favourite sections, or the bits they would read first. For me I would always go straight to the 'quote of the month' section to see if I had escaped embarrassment. Most often I would breathe a sigh of relief, however other times there was the cringe of embarrassment that I been caught saying something a bit stupid, or taken (as I'd like to believe) completely out of context. All in the name of fun. I enjoyed the Far Side comic's too, or the times Greg added a little hand drawing of his. The introductory banter between the editors would take me straight to Belmonte's so much so I could almost smell the garlic. With the Newsletter going electronic, there is the ability to include a lot more colour photos, something that I love as they complement the articles so well.

The Newsletter has been our chronical of activities over 50 years, and would not have been possible without all those wonderful submissions. Over the 50 years, common themes in the newsletters have ranged from a blend of technical and factual articles, to those that are a bit lighter or with a creative focus. Greg and Min at the helm as editors of the club in the late nineties and early noughties were great catalysts for the Newsletter's creativity. Who could forget Tony's article which featured the first emergence of the Grand Wahzoo, who for the nineties became the virtual spiritual leader of the club. So many of our favourite articles lent to the more fantastical; the mock travel journals, Johan's 'all for just \$1/\$2/\$3' themed articles, and those odd tales of creative genius that would birth from limited responses from members on "call for contributions". I still get goose bumps thinking of the time I read a piece Johan put in for us, reprinting Ibn Fadlan's journeys to Scandinavia (a 10th Century Islamic traveller and scribe who featured in Michael Crichton's 'Eaters of the Dead'). Also of worthy mention were all those fantasy sea voyages and excerpts from the expansion of the colony that had you smelling the salty water or swatting the flies. All very different to caving adventures, but adventures none the less.

On a more practical note, the Newsletter has also helped spread the travel stories of our overseas members, mine included when I lived outside Australia, helping us all stay connected over the changing times.

As a reader over the many years I would like to send out a massive thank you to all of the contributors. I couldn't possibly mention you all by name, but I thank you for each and every piece of input – and the time it would have taken to weave the tales of delight from the details of a trip. Your articles have captured us and captivated us for over 50 years, we're looking forward to the years to come.



Newsletter No. 34 - July 1988



MSS & Canyoning

by Marilyn Scott

I've been canyoning now for 20 years. When I first learned to abseil, I didn't know what a canyon was, the guys who taught me to abseil (all now in their 80s), had me abseiling all day once a month for a year before they said one day "about time you did a canyon". You might wonder what they had me doing for a year, well, pretty much everything, up to and including plucking an "unconscious" person off their rope and abseiling with them! I was hooked with the first canyons (Grand & Serendipity) that I did! But, I still feel like I'm the new kid on the block when I go canyoning with some of our MSS members, who take delight in keeping a low profile.

Some of you may be surprised to know that MSS members were out there canyoning almost from the beginning. Yes, In the 80s, they were "young guns", fit, adventurous and up for anything. Most of them were out there exploring almost every weekend, often with Rick Jamieson, when they just had a hunch that there'd be a canyon "down there".

As a club, from the first official trip in the late 80s until now, MSS members have pretty much done every canyon in Rick Jamieson's *Canyons Near Sydney*, and they were doing the canyons when there weren't track notes on the internet, they didn't have a GPS and there weren't any tracks to follow. Most of them are still canyoning, hanging out for the first hint of spring and warm weather. So, who are these canyoneers, who've been joined by others who are just as passionate about canyoning as they are? And what are their favourite canyons? I couldn't list them all, and some still like to keep a low profile but I did track down some of our past intrepid canyoneers and some of the present ones for this article:

Lynton Goldsmith is largely credited with pioneering canyoning within MSS, leading trips to canyons well before there were any guidebooks or any established access tracks. Lynton was diligent with his navigation and frequently did solo trips to devise and memorise an easy access route. He had a knack of finding obscure passes and avoiding unnecessary abseils. Once he had the access "wired", he would take members along. There were, inevitably, some hiccups to this system. One memorable trip into Bell Creek Canyon, the party battled thick bushes until they arrived at a small stream. Lynton announced that the canyon started just around the corner and that lilos should now be inflated. The party proceeded for another hour, pushing inflated lilos through the prickles and bushes, constantly fearing a puncture, all the while, the creek remained at ankle depth.

Lynton led so many trips to the Newnes Plateau canyons, that he became known as "Captain Starlight". Another of his favourite areas was Kanangra Walls where he completed multiple descents of Kalang Falls, Kanangra Main and Thurat Rift. It is reputed that Lynton has descended Danae Brook over 20 times, including a memorable mid-winter trip. He also did overnight trips in Clastral Canyon where he located a brilliant campsite.

John Gray's a legend amongst the caving community for his internal GPS, his long stride, and easy going, laid back nature. John's spectacular canyon photographs were used by Rick Jamieson in all of his editions of *Canyons Near Sydney*, some MSS members even made it on the front cover. John recalls that in the early days they used to light a fire at lunchtime and boil some yabbies, not a practice you see these days, in fact positively frowned upon! His all-time favourite canyon is Bell Creek, he's done the trip about 20 times since 1986 and on one memorable occasion his Volleys completely disintegrated half way through the canyon and he finished the canyon in bare feet (now that's tough!). John did a lot of his exploratory trips with John Oxley and Tony McGregor.



(l-r) Lynton Goldsmith, Beth Little, Shane Hofmann and Greg Bruce
(Bell Creek 1999)

David Stuckey (his name keeps popping up everywhere doesn't it), also known for his internal GPS.

David and his partner at the time (Fran Rose) did an extensive number of trips, mostly with Lynton Goldsmith, locating, exploring and photographing canyons on Newnes Plateau and Kanangra Walls. David also did a few trips with Peter Treseder where several canyons were linked together and competed within a day. David liked to extend existing canyons, going beyond the standard route descriptions, for example, the sections now known as Wollangambe II and Wollangambe III. David features in many of John Gray's canyon photographs which have been published in Rick Jamieson's *Canyons Near Sydney*. David also worked part time as a Canyon/Climbing/Caving Guide with Outland Expeditions and Blue Mountains Canyon Tours for a short time. Among David's favourite canyons are: Clastral, Rocky Creek, Whungee Wheengee and Grand Canyon.



Johan and David in Jerrara, 2006 (photo: Beth Little)

Johan Verhagen first started canyoning with David Stuckey as a Venturer. Johan then moved on to climbing and met up with Rick Jamieson who conducted Venturer/Rover climbing courses. He has fond memories of Rick's gentle nature, patience and his willingness to share his knowledge. Johan participated in a lot of the early canyon trips with MSS. For six years he worked part time as a professional Canyon/Climbing Guide with Outland Expeditions. We have it on good authority that he guided trips to Clastral on over 100 occasions! He doesn't canyon anymore which is a shame as I've been told that if the s*#t hit the fan, Johan's quiet confidence and innate ability was reassuring. His favourite canyon is Jerrara (Bungonia).

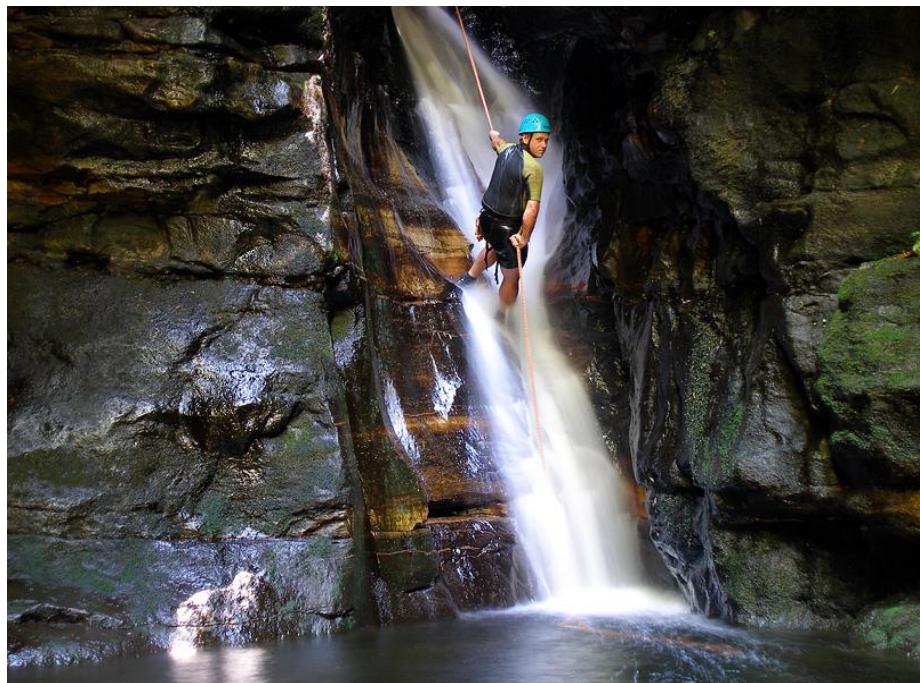
Min Neville is one of the few people who can keep up with John Gray, he's a ball of energy! He started canyoning with Thornleigh Venturers, that's got to be 40 years ago and he's still canyoning! A memorable story of him is when he and John Gray were entering Bell canyon from the Belfry canyon (originally the normal entrance for the trip). To get through the side canyon you have to do a water slide into a waist deep pool. On this there was a largish tiger snake swimming in the pool. They sent Min down first (who in their right mind would do that, had they not thought of going elsewhere?). He coaxed the snake out with a stick after first giving it the shock of its life when he hit the water with a huge splash.

John Oxley (Jox) features in many of John Gray's photos in the Rick Jamieson's *Canyons Near Sydney* and along with Tony MacGregor did a lot of exploratory canyons with John. John's first canyon trip (before he even knew what a canyon was) was with SUSS to Kanangra Main. A little later, he was wondering what was down the hole at Grand Canyon, so he grabbed a caving rope and jumped over the fence, looked around then prusiked out. He returned later with a work friend who happened to know David Stuckey (who met up with them on that day), and he joined MSS soon after that trip. John's favourite canyons are those he's done solo or where no one else has done the canyon before, a true explorer! Whilst he's moved to Tasmania (God's State), he's still been known to come up for a weekend of canyoning.

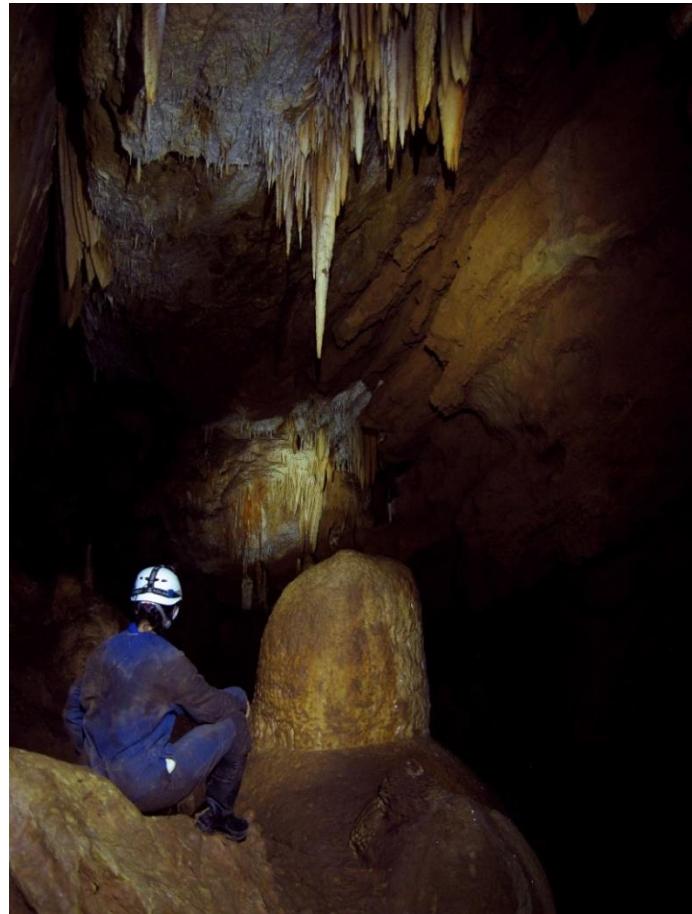
Like myself, **Rod Smith** wasn't around in the early years of canyoning in the 80s and early 90s. He started canyoning with MSS in 2003 and now has a reputation for liking the 'exploratory days', as he loves the thrill of finding something unpublished. When committing to one of his exploratory days you can never be sure if you're going to arrive at a rarely visited gem or bash through the bush for a piddling mud pool. When asked what was his favourite canyon, the answer was "the next one"!

Beth Little did loads of canyoning in the late 90s and early noughties before heading overseas for 7 years. She's been trying to catch up ever since her return. She certainly prefers the constricted or sporty type canyons and lists as some of her favourites Freshwater Canyon B Branch (one of the longest sustained slot canyon sections), the Midwinter/Greenup circuit in the Northern Wollemi, and a more recent favourite Arethusa for its sporty climbing exit.

And then there's me, still the new kid on the block. My favourites are the slotty canyons like Banks, Nosedive, Hole in the wall, the narrower the better. But I'm a bit like Rod, it's all about the exploration, so I've got Millenium, Stuntman and Wounded Knee in my sights, plus one I did 20 years ago, but can't remember Wheengee Whungee (at Kanangra)!



Roderick Smith - North Bowens Creek Canyon (photo: David Stuckey)



Beth Little at Knights Knobly Knob Chamber - Tuglow Cave (photo: Andre Munck)



There are many qualities that make a great member of MSS. One often overlooked quality is the ability to eat exceptionally well even when the usual conveniences, such as a kitchen, are not present. There are no secrets, as with everything in MSS, those of us who have developed these skills are always happy to share with all other members. The following are examples of some of these culinary delights that have been tried and tested over the years.

Spires Cheesecake

Required:

- Packet cheesecake
- Ingredients as required by the packet mix
- Bowl for mixing
- Spoon or similar apparatus for stirring
- Trangia® Pan to put cheesecake in
- Precarious ledge to allow cold airflow around cheesecake

Steps:

1. Pack an overnight pack with the required equipment
2. Join an overnight walk, the harder the better.
3. Arrive at the campsite (hah! You call that a campsite!)
4. Setup camp
5. Make up cheesecake according the instructions on packet
6. Place on precarious ledge to set
7. Eat dinner
8. Enjoy cheesecake
9. If there's enough left, share with the others on the walk



Camp Oven Roast

Required:

- Camp oven
- Leg of lamb
- Garlic cloves
- Onions
- Vegetables to roast
- Hearty appetite

Steps:

1. Join a weekend trip where you will be camping at/near the cars overnight
2. Enjoy a big day to work up your appetite (but not too big, you need time to cook)
3. Find a pyromaniac to get a fire going
4. Curb said pyromaniacs enthusiasm to get a fire not too big and with a good bed of coals
5. Slice onions into thirds

6. Create a layer of the onion thirds across the bottom of the camp oven
7. Peel garlic
8. Cut slits in leg of lamb and push garlic cloves into them
9. Place leg of lamb in camp oven
10. Put lid on camp oven
11. Place camp oven on a bed of coal in the fire (not the centre, on one side)
12. After 30 minutes rotate the camp oven 180°
13. Do not open the lid!
14. Prepare vegetables
15. After another 30 minutes rotate the camp oven 180°
16. Open lid just long enough to place vegetables into the oven, close the lid again as soon as you are finished
17. After another 30 minutes rotate the camp oven 180°
18. Do not open the lid!
19. After another 30 minutes take the camp oven off the fire
20. Take vegetables and lamb out of the oven
21. Cut off chunks of lamb and serve with vegetables, and your favourite alcoholic beverage
22. If there is still room on the plate you have not served up enough
23. Allow pyromaniac to build up fire
24. Enjoy!

Notes/Variations:

- Instead of onions you can use other methods to keep the lamb and vegetables, such as a cake rack, egg rings and use a BBQ tray, some random piece of chicken wire found in the middle of nowhere
- If the leg of lamb is frozen then allow an extra hour for cooking. This works especially well if you're sharing with a companion who can't wait that long. More for you!
- Herbs, such as rosemary, can be added
- Suitable condiments include gravy, mint sauce, port
- Remember that any peel, offcuts, and anything else inedible can be thrown on the fire

Jaffles

Required:

- Cheese
- Jaffle Iron
- Cheese
- Sliced Bread
- Cheese
- Butter/Margarine
- Cheese
- Fillings
- Cheese

Steps:

1. Join a weekend trip where there will be a camp fire at night, and the next morning
2. Enjoy a big day to work up your appetite
3. Find a pyromaniac to get a fire going
4. Remove two slices of bread from the pack
5. Apply butter/margarine to both slices of bread
6. Place one slice of bread, butter/margarine side down, in the jaffle iron
7. Add cheese; add fillings; add more cheese
8. Add the other slice of bread butter/margarine side up; Close jaffle iron
9. Find a suitable place in the fire for the jaffle iron
10. Once one side is done then turn the jaffle iron over
11. After cooked remove from the fire
12. Open jaffle iron over a plate
13. Prise jaffle out of the jaffle iron because you didn't use enough butter/margarine
14. Scrap off charcoal
15. Eat jaffle
16. Burn mouth on the fillings
17. Repeated steps 4 to 19 until full

Filling options:

- Ham and pineapple
- Spaghetti
- Baked Beans
- Bacon and eggs
- Chicken
- Left over leg of lamb and vegetables
- Asparagus
- Steak
- Jelly snakes

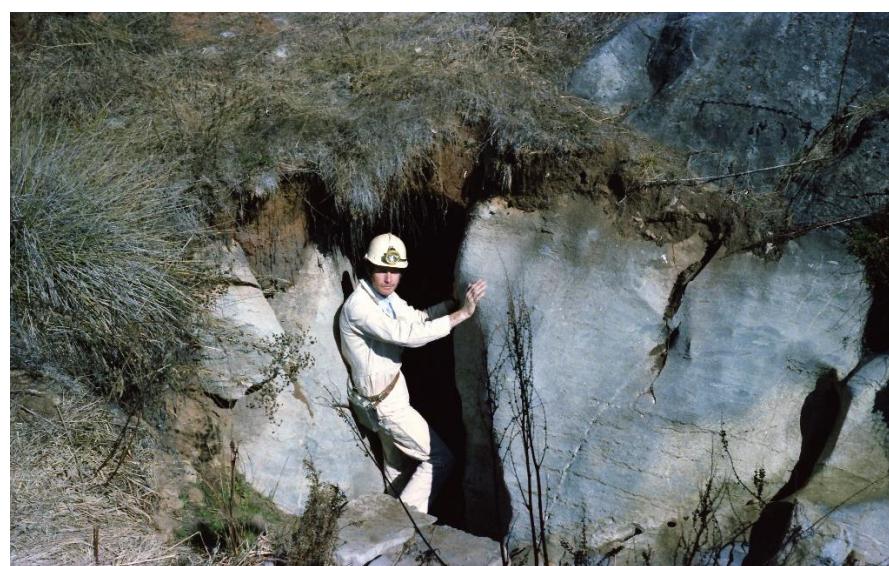
Jenolan Lamb Shanks

Required:

- Slow cooker
- Lamb shanks
- Vegetables
- Cavers Cottage
- Rice or pasta
- Sauce

Steps:

1. Go for a weekend of caving at Jenolan
2. Place lamb shanks, vegetables and sauce in slow cooker in the morning
3. Turn on slow cooker
4. Go caving, make sure the cottage is locked
5. Return from caving
6. Enjoy the aroma that's filled the cottage while you were underground
7. Have a Top Shower!
8. Try not to fill up on the chips, biscuits and cheeses, and other nibbles
9. Cook rice or pasta; serve shanks and vegetables with rice or pasta
10. After eating make sure you lick the plate clean



Lynton Goldsmith - Y112 Yarrangobilly, May 1981 (Photo: Scott Macfarlane)

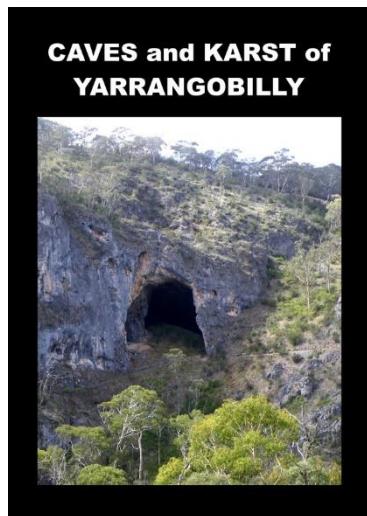
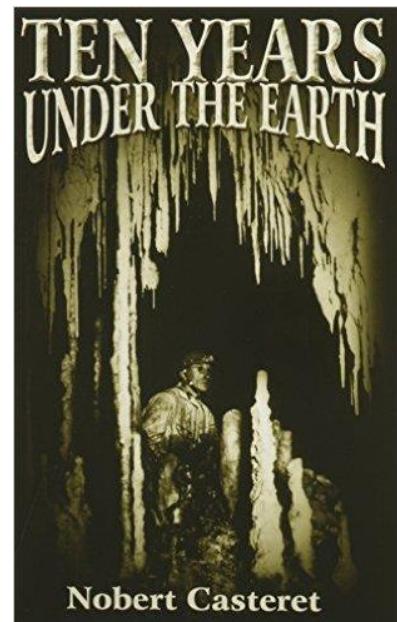
Book reviews

Ten Years Under the Earth – Norbert Casteret (1963)

This is by far my favourite and most re-read book about caving. For those not familiar with Norbert Casteret's work, he is perhaps one of the most famous speleologists and wrote prodigiously about his adventures and scientific discoveries.

As an author he writes with a wonderful mix of science and art, talking of the wonders of the caves as if you could smell the musty old earthy air he was describing, or hearing the distant water droplet or cringing and feeling his hypothermia set in on one of his underwater blind explores (with a candle and matches in bag he was tightly gripping together with his hand).

Casteret was undoubtedly an incredible adventurer and made significant archeological and geological discoveries in the Pyrenees (border of Spain and France). I particularly like "The story of a Raindrop" that features in this book, capturing a raindrop's journey and the growth of cave features. Definitely a 'must read' for all caving enthusiasts

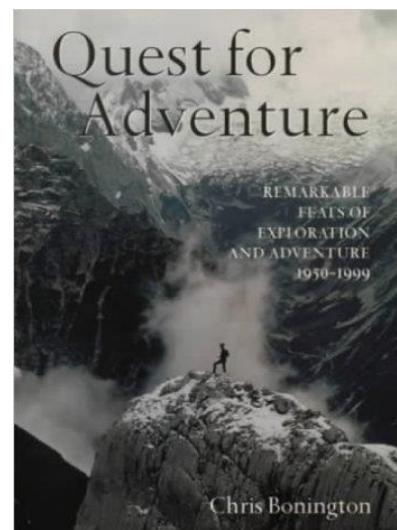


Caves and Karst of Yarrangobilly - The Sydney Speleology Society, 2015.
(Halbert, E. and Ennis, R. Eds)

This publication has been eagerly awaited and was released only relatively recently. Just over 400 pages of comprehensive information about the geology and history of this most beautiful region in the North of Kosciusko National Park (NSW).

MSS gets a number of mentions in the book where we have contributed to projects around in the area. It is not known at this time whether this book will be a limited print run, so be sure to organise a copy of one if you are interested.

Available directly from SSS using:
http://www.sss.org.au/Shop/Shop_Books_CKY.htm



Quest for Adventure - Chris Bonington

Chris Bonington is a renowned mountaineer and adventure writer. This book is Chris' selection of adventure's that have pushed the boundaries across the years, exploring their motivations and the impact of their achievements. He chose adventures from across a spectrum, from mountain high, hot deserts, wide oceans, sky, space and dark underground.

Underground themed poetry

Two English poets ...

Kubla Khan - Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1797)
A little too large a poem to reprint it all, so I have pulled a few of the cave inspiring verse.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

.....

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermittent burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:

.....

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

William Wordsworth (1819)

The story is said that this British poet wrote the following sonnet inspired by a Yorkshire artist's depiction of an underground river in the Yorkshire dales, UK.

PURE Element of Waters! Wheresoe'er
Thou dost forsake thy subterranean haunts,
Green herbs, bright flowers, and berry-bearing
plants,
Start into life and in thy train appear:
And, through the sunny portion of the year,
Swift insects shine thy hovering pursuivants:
And, if thy bounty fail, the forest pants;
And Hart and Hind and Hunter with his spear,
Languish and droop together! Nor unfelt
In Man's perturbed soul thy sway benign;
And haply far within the marble belt
Of central earth, where tortured spirits pine
For grace and goodness lost, thy murmurs melt
Their anguish, and they blend sweet songs with
thine!



German Beer Drinking Machine - Jenolan (Photo: Beth Little)

For a Society like MSS to survive in our modern world, we have to look to the future, if we don't, we'll be left behind, membership will decline and eventually the club would cease to exist.

So, looking into the future, there are some things that we're already doing and some challenges that we can address to strengthen the club.

One of the challenges we face as a club are the young people out there who are after a "quick fix" outdoor adventure, and they want to experience a wide variety of adventures. They will sign up to go caving, climbing, abseiling or canyoning do a few trips then leave to try another outdoor pursuit. These adventurous young people are who we could try and attract and hopefully retain them as long term members.

To achieve this the club needs to have something that sets us apart from the rest of the clubs that are competing for people to join them, not only caving or speleology clubs but any club or group that offers outdoor pursuits and that are trying to attract members. MSS is on the right path in this respect, we offer a wide range of activities for its members. Although the common theme that links us all is our love of caving, we all enjoy a variety of other outdoor pursuits such as canyoning, mountain biking, hiking and social activities. Our calendar caters for this variety of activities in addition to caving, and aims to keep appealing to the mixed interests of its members and potential new members.

Another feature that will assist MSS in its longevity is its comfort, openness and interest in engaging with other caving clubs. At various stages of its history MSS has done this to share knowledge, complete speleo related projects, and visit new areas. I envisage this as an ongoing feature of the club, and one that will keep it active and engaged in the wider speleo community.

MSS has already made another move in the right direction to set us apart from other competing clubs by becoming "family friendly". Many trips are family or children focused and these are identified on the calendar as such. Having these trips on the calendar has allowed us to tap into an existing resource of future members ... children of long term MSS members, plus we have attracted many other family groups into the club. This has not only kept the membership numbers healthy but also gives us the opportunity to ensure the club survives into the future as some of these younger members exposed to speleology early in life will still have some interest in caving later on.

Hopefully the club can also expand our capabilities to include many other areas of Speleology so that we have a balanced group with varied capabilities across all the areas of speleology. With this in mind, I encourage MSS members to suggest possible trips or projects related to Speleology that we can assess and potentially add to our calendar.

Looking to the future, I believe the club can grow naturally, relying on word of mouth, encounters in the bush or our website for new member recruitment. This is much the same as what has been happening for many years.

MSS members have always possessed a sense of adventure, a caring attitude towards the natural environment especially in caves, cultural and personal respect of others and a high degree of responsibility for safety. These attributes are some of the most important values that we need to pass on to current and future MSS members.

Ultimately this is your club, we all have a say in the future of MSS and we can all make it the club we want it to be, **NOTHING IS BEYOND THE LIMITS OF MSS AND ITS MEMBERS.**



The Sky's the Limit! – MSS - Australia Day Kites Over Kosci 2006 - with four kites going (photo: Beth Little)



