

NEWSLETTER MONTHLY

AUGUST 2010



MSS NEWSLETTER

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Cover Shot:
Mullamullang Cave
Photo by Cathi Humphrey-Hood

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

Society News

Surveying Course:

On the weekend of the 13th and 14th of November there will be a cave surveying course held at Bungonia. Invitations are open to each club to send up to 2 people to do the course. The cost is \$35 per person. If you are interested in participating in this course please let both Jim Crockett (0407 284 256, jim.crockett@reach.com) and Rod Smith (0438 444 262, roderick__smith@hotmail.com) know ASAP. If more than 2 people are interested we will attempt to get extra people on the course but we make no guarantees.

Next Meeting:

To be hosted by Beth Little on the 14th October. An agenda will be circulated prior to the meeting. Please RSVP Beth Little (0405 226 811, littlebeth78@hotmail.com) if you will be attending or with your apology.

Trip Reports

Things Can Go Wrong - Phillipines Adventure

End July – Early August 2010

Report and photos by: Jim Crockett

Participants: Jim Crockett

I am up nice and early big smile on my face this is the day I leave for another trip planned full of adventure including my first overseas caving expedition and lots of other adventures planned. I say goodbye to Sydney as the plane rises to 25,000 feet heading North West.

After 8 hours we finally land in Manila Philippines and then I have to get a domestic flight to go Cagayan De Oro Mindanao but it's a long wait of 12 hours for the first flight of the morning. I settle down on a seat to try and get some sleep. Finally it's time to go as I board the first flight at 4.45 am, it's only a short flight of 1.5 hours and I am met at the airport by my friend Fedz. The first thing I want to do is to get some good sleep and the rest of the morning is spent at Fedz's pad doing just that.



The next day we are planning the first adventure to go to Dahilayan Adventure Park to ride Asia's longest dual Zip line. We have a van and driver organised and a group of friends to share the experience with.

We all wake up early the next day full of excitement to go Zip lining. A picnic lunch is prepared and we board the Van for an early breakfast at Jollibee. We are soon back on the road again picking up other friends along the way before the van heads away from the coast towards the mountain ranges. We gradually gain more altitude and the road becomes rougher before sighting the mountain range of Mt Kitinglad. The driver is forced to take it very slowly because of the large potholes and rocky surface of the road. We finally arrive at Dahilayan Adventure Park at the foot of Mt Kitinglad Range after driving for 1.5 hours and it is noticeably cooler here being at an altitude of 1370m. I am surprised that there are already many keen Zip liners that have arrived before us even though it is 8am on a Sunday morning. We are lucky enough to secure a picnic hut before filling out all the disclaimer forms and join the queue as group number 13. We settle back to do some eating and drinking while waiting for our number to be called. Finally our number is called and we all line up to put on harnesses and helmets and are excited to do our first zip line on



the warm up course of 250m. The good thing is that this is a dual zip line and so you can share the thrills with a partner. We soon reach the front of the line and Fedz and I are clipped onto the wire line and then ready set go we are airborne enjoying spectacular scenery while I am trying to get it on movie, for some reason my speed is a lot faster and I lose contact with Fedz. It probably only takes about 20 seconds but it's worth every second before you

finally reach the landing zone and come to a stop. We are both quickly unhooked from the line and ready for another shorter zip course of about 150m this time it is only a single line. This ends in an area where there is a rock climbing wall but we have not paid for this option so we make the short walk back to the base station.

As the others in our group return we are greeted by wide smiles at the sheer excitement of our first zip line experience and again we wait while catching our breath for the next part of the zip line journey, “THE BIG ONE” 840m of pure adrenalin starting halfway up the mountain. The truck arrives to ferry us all to the start and it is worth just going on the truck ride as we slither up the rough and rocky track to the top station. Now this is totally different to the other rides as we have to harness up in a pod



and then are suspended at the back to the line. The pod even includes a small parachute. Checks are done and we are given instructions on how to make a safe landing. Ready set go and we are soon flying like a bird above the trees at an elevation of about 50m, WOW what an experience. At the landing zone we were told to tuck our arms in and head down and we come to an abrupt stop with the aid of the parachute, springs and a stopper line. The landing zone sounds a bit like an airport with aircraft coming into land and I guess in a way that is exactly what it is. We are both unharnessed and safe on the ground and still full of emotion at the thrill of this ride.

With the adventure all over we settle down for lunch and watch as others come into land from the BIG Zip line all have big smiles on their face. We all pack up and are soon back in the van for the return trip as some friends have come a long way and are concerned that because this is the middle of the rainy season it is likely to rain in the afternoon and the roads become slippery on their trip home on the bus so we need to get them to the bus station soon.

The next few days are spent getting over our Zip line experience plus organising the transport arrangements for the next adventure which was going to be the caving trips. Because there are no direct flights to Samar from our current location our plan consisted of a flight to Manila and spend 4 days there with a bit of retail therapy and touring before flying off to the Island of

Samar where all the caving action would happen.



The morning arrived for our flight to Manila and we were up early to get the first flight of the day. While waiting in the lounge I started to feel some mild pain in the lower abdomen but thought nothing of it. We boarded for the

1.5 hour flight, I still had the pain but it seemed manageable and we landed and found a motel for the first night and soon after very heavy rain set in so we all rested while we waited for this rain to clear. Mid afternoon the sun came out again and we made a plan to go to the Mall of Asia shopping centre, which is the largest mall in Asia and the 3rd largest in the world. At the shopping mall my pain seemed to worsen and I had to sit it out while the others continued the shopping spree. By the time they got back to collect me I was in severe pain and we made the trip back to the Motel. I made a few attempts to alleviate the pain but none seemed to work and it seemed to be getting worse. Eventually I made the decision that I urgently needed to go to a hospital and we got a Taxi to the nearest hospital emergency department. Luckily there was no waiting required and I was soon seen to by nurses and doctors for what looked like a blood clot. There was nothing more the emergency department could do for me except to admit me under the care of a specialist.

Of course being a foreigner with plenty of money the only room they had available was a private suite but this turned out to be godsend in the end. I was put on a drip and administered painkillers which made me more comfortable but they were not yet able to fix the problem I was admitted for.

At least I had company in my room as the private suite had a bed for a companion, a kitchenette a sunny balcony and cable TV. I could not complain too much about the care that was given as the nurses were checking all the vital signs at least every 2 hours and were always available quickly whenever I needed more painkillers or other attention.

The next day I was sent for an operation which was to flush the blood clot and I don't remember too much except for vomiting a few times due to the anesthetic. The operation was successful but I was still in some pain and had other issues as a result of the blood clot so would need to stay until these were sorted out.

I spent the next 2 ½ days in the hospital, I still had pain but it was easing slowly but on the 5th day I had had enough of the hospital stay and needed to get out and there was not much the hospital could do for me except to give pain relief. So I left after paying up all my bills and was so glad that I had travel insurance otherwise I would have been out of pocket for a lot of money. My travel insurance provider Cover-More was very helpful contacting me a number of times to make sure I was all right and if I needed any help. After leaving hospital with a handful of pain relievers we checked into another Motel as I was nowhere near ready or comfortable to travel.

Of course this event had put paid to any chance of going on the Caving trips as well as the canyoning, which saddened me lot but I know the caves and canyons will still be there next time I make more plans.

After spending another 4 days mostly holed up in a motel room fighting pain we left to go back to Cagayan De Oro to spend the rest of my time for recovery and eventually the pain did recede before my scheduled return to Australia.

I have seen a specialist soon after my return to Australia and confirmed that this event has caused some permanent damage which I will have to follow up on in the next few months.

I guess the one good thing I have learnt is to make sure you have travel insurance when travelling overseas even if you think you have perfect health because you never know what might happen.

Jim Crockett

Nullarbor Caves

August 2010

Report by: Rod Smith

Photos by: Rod Smith, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Michael Sliwka

Participants: Rod Smith, Michael Sliwka, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Jodie Rutledge (NHVSS), Brian Reeves (NHVSS)

Gather round as I tell you a tale of five intrepid adventurers who braved the unknown of one of the most inhospitable corners of this wide brown land of ours. It is a tale of hope, adversity, ingenuity, courage, howling winds, bitter cold, mystical wonders and terrible pain.

Our story begins on a wet and windy winters afternoon when Rod and Michael met and begun consolidating the necessary equipment. The next day, with more favourable weather, they journeyed north to rendezvous with Cathi. There at Toukley the final preparations were made and the travelling began in earnest.

After a night in Dubbo these three companions entered unfamiliar territory as they continued west. Messages had been relayed between them and the other two adventurers, Jodie and Brian, so they knew that the meeting of all five would happen that day, as planned.

At Cobar disaster struck. The tow bar on Rods vehicle, having sustained some damage previously, was not up to the heavy load it was now being subjected to and was hanging by a thread. Continuing was not an option until it was fixed. Thankfully KML Industries came to their aid. In less than two hours they had the tow bar removed, repaired and re-attached. While waiting, Jodie and Brian joined Rod, Cathi and Michael for an impromptu walking tour of Cobar and its antique establishments.

With the problem rectified the eager crew was soon heading west again, only a couple of hours behind schedule. They pushed through to Broken Hill, the intended rest spot for the night, to keep their plans intact.

The following day went according to plan with our five heroes ensconced that night in Ceduna, the last significant bastion of civilisation before the Nullarbor.

Rod had crossed the Nullarbor some ten years earlier and none of the others had been there before, so this was going to be a whole new experience. There was a nervous excitement within the group as they drove further west. A planned stop at a lookout didn't go according to plan as each car went to a different lookout. Determined to fix the communication problems before it got out of hand they arrived at Mundrabilla to meet Bree and Colin who ran the Homestead there. Acquiring some local knowledge from these friendly, yet hard-working, people, the adventurers made their way up the escarpment heading for Witches Cave and their first nights camp site.

Following the good directions given by Colin, the group found themselves in the vicinity of Witches Cave as dusk descended, so a sheltered spot was chosen for camp. Still not too far from the coast, there were sufficient trees to not only provide shelter but also for firewood. Soon the campfire was blazing, meals were prepared and eaten, and beds were sought.

Brian awoke before the others and set off for a walk to familiarise himself with the area. He returned none-the-wiser as to the exact location of Witches Cave. Thinking they may have slightly overshot the cave the previous night, Michael, Brian and Rod conducted a second search back the way they had come, still to no avail.

Spirits were dropping. Would finding all the caves prove this difficult? Were they going to stumble that badly before they'd even really begun? Michael set off on another search further down the track while Rod perused what information he had. Using that information Rod soon located a faint track heading off to the right not far from the camp site. Feeling confident that this would indeed lead to the cave, our heroes suited up, packed bags, and set off.

Rod's intuition proved correct; soon they approached a series of three dolines as described in the notes. The entrance is in the southern most doline and the tag matched the expected number. Helmets and lights were put on and they went in.

They were utterly amazed by what they found inside. Not expecting the sheer amount of decoration that met the eye, although most of it was now inactive, the cavers were left agog. Further into the cave the decorations kept coming, but that wasn't all. There were a number of bones from various animals, and fossils galore! And there was dust. Every move stirred up the dust leaving it hanging in the air and being breathed into lungs. Eventually this proved the factor stopping people from continued and eventually they turned around and headed for the exit. Only a couple of wrong turns and they were above ground again.



The next day was Webb's Cave, and this proved to be very similar to Witches. Brian only just entered the cave before turning for the exit; the dust was too much for him two days in a row. But like Witches, the decorations, bones and fossils proved well worth the effort for those that entered.



Moving camp to be closer to Thylacine Hole, the planned third cave, found the adventurers with a problem. They were journeying further from the coast, and this meant there were less trees. Although still enough trees to provide sufficient firewood, finding a sheltered camp site proved difficult. As the light was fading a camp site was secured a few kilometres from the cave.

Thylacine Hole involves an abseil to enter and Brian didn't feel up to it. The rope was secured to the newly fixed tow bar and the other four descended into the darkness. From the bottom of the hole they were immediately greeted with crawling which, compared to the previous caves, seemed to go on forever. It wasn't actually that far, and soon they were able to stand again. Seemingly less decorated, our heroes were initially disappointed, until they descended a rock pile and found another abundance of inactive stalagmites, stalactites, straws, shawls and other decoration. Like the other caves there is some active decoration, but this is mostly salt rather than calcite.



On the ascent Rod set himself the challenge of climbing rather than using his ascenders, being attached to the croll for safety. Although not easy, Rod completed the climb without too much difficulty.



Before returning to camp a decision was made to attempt to locate Kelly's Cave which was in the area. They drove to the rough location of the cave and proceeded on foot. Brian, following his GPS, walked directly to where they believed the cave to be and found ... nothing. They spread out, covering an area up to two square kilometres over a couple of hours, all to no avail. Returning to the cars one at a time soon saw four there, Michael was still out. Using the radios directions were given to allow him to at least find the road and they

would be able to find him from there. While waiting for Michael to inform them that he'd indeed found the road, Brian wandered briefly away and found a blowhole. Michael found his way back to the cars, and the adventurers made their way back to camp, disappointed by the lack of discovery. What appeared to be a detour some three kilometres further along was investigated and, lo and behold, there was Kelly's Cave! It showed the information the adventurers had was not entirely reliable!

That night, other than the howling dingoes, some unusual sounds were heard by Jodie. She wanted to investigate but didn't feel confident without at least one other member of the party to back her up. To this day they are unsure what Jodie had heard.

Thampanna was next on the list. Brian had recovered sufficiently to enter the cave; however Cathi decided to sit it out. Another abseil, this time the bottom belled out into a large chamber at least five metres high and twenty round. To one side of the chamber the floor dropped and then the roof dropped to create a crawl. Rod went in first, nimbly avoiding the dead shingle-back lizard. Brian followed and took the option of moving the lizard out of the way. The disturbed smell wafted back to Jodie and Michael making them gag. Soon they entered The Drain, followed markers through a rock-pile and found another magnificently decorated chamber beyond. They left Thampanna continuing amazed at the quality of the decorations in the caves.

Breaking camp the next morning the quintet ventured even further from the coast in search of Old Homestead Cave. Soon the trees dwindled in number until only one or two could be seen in the whole range of view. The camping options were starting to look bleak when something was spotted. Maybe it was the old homestead after which the cave was named. Before they reached the vision a doline revealed itself before them, old Homestead Cave.





One look at the doline convinced Cathi she didn't want to enter the cave; Brian didn't feel much better about it himself. Leaving the doline they went to investigate the old homestead, hoping it would provide some shelter. What they found was actually a cavers hut, complete with outhouse. Feeling better they opted for a lazy afternoon with a full day of caving the next day.

The next morning Cathi joined the other four at the doline. She collected some fossil samples while the others went in, Brian would only go as far as he was comfortable. Cathi hadn't been back at the caver's cottage long before Brian emerged. She became concerned when he started collecting gear and asking for a first aid kit, but wouldn't tell her why. Jodie then emerged to tell her Rod had taken a fall and may have broken his arm, and yes, she should join them.

Cathi entered the cave she hadn't intended to go in to find out what was happening. There she found Rod at the bottom of a shaft, clearly in pain. He had trusted an old ladder that, in hindsight, he clearly shouldn't have trusted. It had held to get Rod and Michael down the shaft where they briefly explored, but after Michael had ascended Rod had started when they rope snapped. He fell about a metre and a half, landing on his pack on a pile of rocks. Rod blamed no-one but himself for his error in judgment, and was extremely grateful for the help of the others to get him out of his predicament.

A caving ladder was set up and Michael descended to check on his friend. It appeared that somehow Rod had escaped any major injuries with only a few scrapes and a couple of tender spots. With a belay in place, Rod ascended the ladder only barely using the belay, and completed the exit of the cave without any assistance. It was a very close call that not only shook Rod but also the rest of the group.



Deciding not to go back underground that day the adventurers instead decided to journey to Forrest, a small settlement on the Indian Pacific railway over one hundred kilometres from the highway. They were surprised to find sealed roads and a sealed airport, fuel, meat pies and beers. On the return journey to the cavers hut, camels were spotted in the setting sun.

The next day was the long drive back to Mundrabilla Homestead, but Bree and Colin were out. Further down the road they found accommodation at the Madura Pass Oasis Motel, which included the first shower in about a week. Luxury!

The following day saw the cavers enter Madura Cave, the only one they did on the Roe Plain. Although this cave didn't have much decoration, they still enjoyed their outing immensely.

From there it was back up the escarpment to set up camp near Mullamullang Cave. That night a change came through bringing rain, a drop in temperature and a worsening of the wind. Their shelter held, but only just. Enthusiasm was down in the morning. It was decided to go caving, mainly to get out of the wind.

The entry was difficult, climbing down a rock pile. Once the stream passage was reached the going became easier, and the cavers forgot about the conditions above ground as they marveled in the magnitude of the cave. They followed a meandering stream passage over piles of rocks and sand, around a massive sand dune, and eventually found a couple of small lakes. Time flew by as they soaked in the magnificence of the cave. Returning to the surface they found their shelter had suffered, and Brian's tent had obviously had enough and was trying to escape. Fixing their shelter as best they could the heroes settled in for another miserable evening.

The next morning they decided to continue west, visiting caves and marking their locations on the various GPS's in the group. Their progress was slowed in further due to the now wet conditions. Losing traction and sliding can be interesting, doing it while towing a heavy trailer





makes it much more difficult. A number of caves were located that day before the adventurers settled in at the Cocklebiddy Roadhouse.

The next morning they visited Cocklebiddy Cave itself. They didn't enter as that would have required jumping the fence and ignoring the "Do Not Enter" signs. Physically easy to do, but not worth the risk. This was the furthest west they travelled, time to turn east again.

That night they stayed at Eucla and in the morning visited the old telegraph station and the dunes by the coast. By late morning the crew was once again locating caves on their way to Weebubbie. There are big signs saying Weebubbie is closed, but Rod had gained permission for the group to enter. When they arrived at the doline the

debate began, would they enter? With the access not being as easy as they anticipated, and with some people feeling rather unwell, eventually the decision was made to continue locating caves and save Weebubbie for a future trip.

The journey east continued with another mix up about which lookout to visit. They all met up again that night at the Nullarbor Roadhouse. The next morning they ventured north to the only caves in South Australia where permission to access can be easily gained. Getting directions from a cleaning lady then following the signs saw the cavers arrive at Murrawijinie 1. A tricky downclimb saw only Rod and Michael enter the cave. Murrawijinie 2 was even more difficult and no one entered, but Murrawijinie 3 was just a walk in. Leaving there they passed through Ceduna to Streaky Bay for the night, allowing Brian the chance to catch up with a long lost relative.

Another long day of driving saw our heroes arrive in Broken Hill just after dark. Jodie's headlights stopped working, only the high beams would come on. There were probably a few annoyed locals after that! The next morning Jodie and Brian had to leave early, Rod, Cathi and Michael stuck around to do a mine tour. It's a real eye-opener to see how the miners used to live!

All-in-all an amazing trip, and a place that they all agreed they would like to visit again. They all learnt from the experience, so future trips should go a lot smoother.

Nullarbor Poem

August 2010

Poem by: Michael Sliwka, Jodie Rutledge

Photos by: Michael Sliwka

With the cars packed, and the roofs stacked,
the happy cavers headed west.
Destination Nullarbor, the cars pedal to the floor,
with Dubbo our first nights rest.

Heading to Cobar, we broke the tow bar,
it was enough to drive a man insane.
But with wealth, some tenacity and stealth,
we had it fixed and back on the road again.

Now the journey is long, and Brian's joke's are wrong,
will we survive this long trip ?
While entertaining at first, the puns just got worst,
and then there's the morning he let that big one rip !

We entered Thampana Cave, with formations to rave,
On a rope down we did abseil.
Fossils galore and a guano floor,
An experience to enrich this tale.

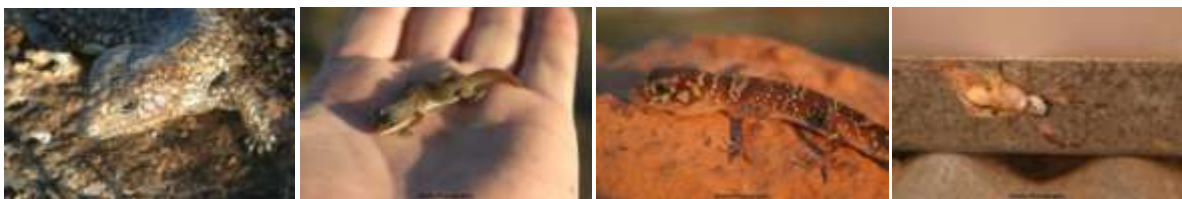
The dust was thick, causing Brian to get sick,
along the cave floor we crawled.
Jodie and Cathi would Photograph the interesting topograph,
fossils and bones that had been mauled.

Brian then said, "here's a lizard that is dead",
and flicked it to the side.
The decaying smell was hideous, with poor Mike and Jodie frivolous,
waves of nausea we did ride.

After some caving, and very little bathing,
it was Old Homestead that we did seek.
The road was rough and the going was tough,
with the hut in view, it made the journey less bleak.

Cathi did warn, that this cave was worn torn,
and decided not to enter.
Instead she had found, some comfort above ground,
and recovery from last night's bender !

Down the cave we climbed, on the rotten rope entwined,
it was the return journey when disaster struck.
the ladder failed, down Rod sailed,
onto head and shoulder, Oh Fuck !



With the bruises attended, and the bleeding amended,
Off to Forrest we went.
Imagine our surprise, beer and meat pies,
and petrol with money well spent.

With a Population of a few, in truth only Two !
one would question, where would you rather go ?
But with Eagles in the air and owls that would stare,
planes, trains and Museums on show.

On our return, there were no trees to burn,
the land was as flat as could be.
Camels were spotted, beside the car they trotted,
otherwise nothing else the eye could see.

The sunsets were amazing, like the skies were a blazing,
and the stars . . . wow, what more could be said.
Poor Cathi would get cold and would then become bold,
by saying Rod, "lets jump into bed" !

It was at Madura Pass, where we bathed at last,
and wined and dined like Kings.
The burgers there were beyond compare,
which stopped our stomach crav...ings.

After getting into form, our next campsite hit a big storm,
while watching Brian's tent fly away.
Mike stayed up all night, keeping the roof tied down and tight,
and dreaming of where he'd rather stay.

That next morning, Mike was storming,
having been deprived of a good night's sleep.
He was shortly rewarded by driving, slip slop and sliding,
in Jodie's car through puddles so deep.

Two weeks now together, which seemed like forever,
individual solitude became a prize.
With less food to eat, which included no fruit or meat,
Our jeans were reduced by one size !



Rod's car hit trouble again, this was becoming a pain,
his muffler had been squashed by rocks.
Before the car would fade, a new hole was made,
while Brian was chasing a two legged Fox !

Back on the road again, leaving the Nullarbor Plain,
heading towards Streaky Bay.
The esky on the roof, the lid had gone Poof,
and apparently had blown away.

But not to be out-done, in the drowning of the sun,
Jodie was 30 K's from Broken Hill.
When she fell upon, her lights would not come on,
with residents thinking . . . 'she's a dill'.

That night we had dinner, dessert was a sinner,
if only our holiday would go on for longer.
Goodbye's were said, it was now time for bed,
With thoughts of our adventure forever to ponder.

I'd like to finally say, to those that bestowed to this holiday,
this is one I'll never forget.
Memories are plentiful, beautiful and comical,
Thank you ! You're the best my friends ! Enough said !

Wee Jasper Book Launch

August 2010

Report by: Rod Smith

Participants: Rod Smith

Recently I attended the launch of the new Wee Jasper book held at Careys Cave at Wee Jasper. I wasn't sure I was going to make it with some car troubles on the way, but I got there in plenty of time.

It was a bit of a miserable day with the occasional passing shower, but that didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm. People were happily enjoying the hot soup and fresh bread on offer. A little bit late in starting, we were soon ushered underground, greeted by the sound of music and seated in the entrance chamber.

The presentation began with a song by Geoff Kell, lessee and operator of Careys Cave. After welcoming everyone he handed over to Jodie Rutledge who MCed for the afternoon. First she introduced a video from Andy Spate who spoke about the significance of the Wee Jasper caves and karst. Roger Curtis of Canberra Speleological Society then spoke about the late Dr Joe Jennings, whose accounts and maps provided some of the basis for the book. This was followed by

Adrian Carey, former owner of Careys Cave, talking about how Careys Cave became a tourist cave.

After the speeches it was time for John Flarrey, of the Land & Property Management Authority, to launch the book. This involved attaching a copy of the book to a helium inflated bat (balloon) which was raised into the roof.

With the book launched an auction was held for the very first book, No. 1. This was sold for \$201 to Joe Sydney, the proceeds going to the ASF Karst Conservation Fund.

Geoff Kell then opened the cave for all participants to wander through and enjoy the sights. I wandered through, enjoying the many and varied decorations, plus the opportunity to chat to other cavers.

That evening Joe Sydney had organised a BBQ which the majority of cavers were able to attend. It was a good night with plenty of food, conversation and camaraderie.

The next morning I debated about just heading home or taking a walk around looking for caves and GPSing their locations. I took the second option for an hour and marked six locations. The first was WJ152, Fabrication Cave. The next four I couldn't find tag numbers for, although I believed there should have been. The last location I recorded would be a possible location for a dig, an obvious depression on a ridge.

A good weekend.

MSS Field Day

August 2010

Report by: Jim Crockett

Photos by: Cathi Humphrey-Hood

Participants: Jim Crockett, Rod Smith, Beth Little, Chris Johnstone, Danielle Lewin, Cathi Humphrey-Hood

Field days are very necessary exercises for a Speleological Club so that old and new members can learn new practices and skills in SRT work as well as practising and improving what they already know. We should hold them at least once a year as a minimum but preferably twice or more each year. It's always good to have one before undertaking a major caving trip and this one was a good lead up to the annual Yarrangobilly trip.

We had 6 people interested and we all met at the end of Wideview Road Berowra.

Nearly everyone who turned up was recovering from or still having health issues. This would make things interesting.



This was an area that none of us had been to before and so it was a bit of an unknown but is known as a rock climbing area and is reasonably popular being close to the north part of Sydney. It's only a short 2 minute walk to the cliff edge and that was about as far as we needed to go. It was decided to setup 2 ropes down the 18 m drop. So the first lesson was to learn and practice different attachment/belay selection techniques and learn the advantages or disadvantages of the different methods.

A single rope was placed down the uneven face using primary anchor with a backup anchor which also served as a safety line. The other rope was doubled but independently anchored over an overhanging section to give us two ropes in parallel.

This combination gave us enough variety to practice a few different techniques.

We discussed such points as choosing the anchor, and backup anchor, load sharing using a failsafe Y anchor and the types of knots to use and many other factors in anchor selection, rigging and usage.

The first exercise on the ropes was to change over from prussic to abseil and then abseil to prussic using both a single rope and 2 parallel ropes. This is probably the most useful and necessary of all SRT techniques and is used in many circumstances such as crossing a rebelay, crossing a rope join, recovery when gear or body parts gets jammed in the descending equipment and many other scenarios. Most of us had a try at this.

For the next challenge Beth rigged a redirection around a tree. Most had a go at this and when it came for my turn I prussicked up and past the redirection and then attempted to change to abseil above the redirection. This proved more difficult than it looked and my first attempt failed because the rack was not locked off well enough and the difficulty here was that the rope was making a 90 deg bend at my feet.

So I recovered and made a 2nd attempt but that also failed and by this time I was out of energy with all effort and somewhat dehydrated and uncomfortable sitting in the harness for so long. At this point I was becoming a bit stressed but rested a little and managed to transfer across to the other parallel rope. Lesson learnt here is to use a better technique for locking off my rack. It is also how surprising how your condition and confidence can deteriorate when on the rope and presented with a difficult challenge.

That was the end of the day for all of us and we made our way to the top of the cliff and derigged. I and all the others were dying for a drink and something to eat and we all met back at a café in Berowra, sharing Pizzas washed down with coffee, beer or whatever met our thirsts.

Thanks to those who participated.



Danielle, Cathi, Beth, Rod, Chris and myself.
Thanks to Rod who organised and co-ordinated the field day.

Upcoming Events

WEEK 12th – 19th SEPTEMBER – CAVING AT YARRANGOBILLY

Trip Leader: Beth Little

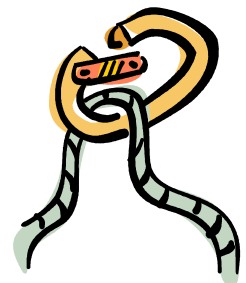
Contact by: **TRIP IS FULL**



MSS Club Meeting 14th October
Beth Little's Place
Please contact Beth for more details
0405 226 811, littlebeth78@hotmail.com

Monthly Horrorskope

Your adventure stars for May 2010 ... or for any other time period you care to apply them to.



SSS - January

Something so simple should show signs somewhat smaller. Several seemingly smart students suddenly said stupid sounding sentences. Show some standard street-smarts, savour strawberry sandwiches.

WASG - February

Um, yes, well ... Speaks for itself really.

NHVSS - March

Oh, wow, it's amazing!!! Let me tell you about the month you're going to have!!! It's going to blow your socks off!!! It'll make your head spin!!! You're going to sit there totally agape at the fascinating events that I know will unfold for you over the next month!!!

KSS - April

If you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change. Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Na na na, na na na, na na, na nah. Gonna feel real good now! Yeah yeah! Yeah yeah! Yeah yeah!

CASM - May

You may be small of stature but big of spirit. Like David and Goliath, stick to your guns. You'll probably get squashed but, if not, I'll take the credit for your success.

CEGSA - June

This is the month to eat, drink and be merry. But don't eat too much, you don't want to put on weight. Don't drink too much, you don't want to become an alcoholic. And not too much merriment, you don't want to disturb the neighbours.

HSG - July

If at first you don't succeed, then you are not Chuck Norris. If you are Chuck Norris then you would already know what's going to happen.

UTSSS - August

Go out and buy an iPhone, Wii, Andriod, Xbox, HD 3D Camcorder, Hello Kitty Keyboard, Anti-Paparazzi Sunglasses, Blackberry, Apple, Tomato, Strawberry, Rhubarb and the rest of the fruit salad. Don't let the technophobe in you stop you.

STC - September

This month it would be good to look after your harem. If you're not careful, dissent will grow amongst them, making your life miserable and, potentially, very painful (in a high-pitched voice). If, however, you have no sisters or female cousins, thus no harem, you have nothing to worry about.

CEGWA - October

Oh, Um, same as last month.

SUSS - November

You are susceptible to suspicious susurrations about susliks. Suspend sustainable suspicions about sushi eating sustren. Suspect suspensoids through a suspiral provide sustenance for suspenders. Suscite suspenseful sustaltic music to sustain suspired suslik suspension.

MSS - December

You are awesome, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise!

News from the Underground

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

August 2010

Flooding in Pakistan has caused havoc for climbers, but the impact on the local people is immense. Report by [ExplorersWeb](#).

July 27 – Jenolan Caves has started offering their self-guided tour in Klingon. This is possibly the first tourist attraction in the world to do so. Report by [ABC News](#)

July 30 – From [NazToday](#): Eight people were rescued from Antelope Canyon, Arizona, after a metre high flood swept through and trapped them on a ledge in the canyon. Tour group organisers and some local residents had already helped four of them out of the canyon by the time rescue teams arrived, leaving three Swiss and one French person to wait until the flood waters had gone down before they could be helped out. Approximately three quarters of an hour after the second group left the canyon, another wall of water came through – fortunately the canyon was empty by this time. Eleven people were killed in the lower section of Antelope Canyon in 1997 – this resulted in the canyon being closed for some time and now it can only be visited with a guide. Antelope Canyon is a popular tourist spot, with the Upper Canyon being an easily accessible walking canyon of sculptured red sandstone (that has been photographed to death), while the Lower Canyon is more challenging. The land owners charge a fee for access and there is also a permit fee.



Antelope Canyon, photo from:
http://www.americansouthwest.net/slot_canyons/antelope_canyon/

Earlier, on the 25th July, three canyoners had an extremely lucky escape when Spry Canyon in Zion National Park flashflooded. All three were seriously injured, all of them having been washed over a 40 foot waterfall with two of the three going over a 60 foot fall as well. Report from [National Parks Traveller](#).

High altitude skier Frederick Ericsson has been killed in a fall on K2, during his quest to ski from the summits of the world's highest mountains. He was climbing the Bottleneck when he slipped and fell more than 3,000 feet. Avalanche conditions prevented his body from being recovered. He was climbing with Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, who reported their ropes had been damaged by rockfall. Ericsson had ski descents of Shishapangma, Gasherbrum 2 and Dhaulagiri to his credit, but his previous attempt on K2 last summer was marred by the death of his climbing partner and fellow skier Michele Fati. Reports from [ExplorersWeb](#), and [BackCountry Magazine](#).

[Caverinfo.com](http://caverinfo.com) reports on the breaking of the Canadian depth record, previously -536m, to -652m, with the linking of Heavy Breather and Pachidream Caves, in British Columbia. An unexplored inlet was noticed 3m off the floor by a small group of cavers, who pushed it to find 70m of passage followed by a 10m pitch. The pitch dropped into a large room with a rope hanging down the other side, and was found to be the bottom of the 13th pitch in Pachidream Cave. The surveyed length of the system now exceeds 4km.



Photo of the Enllac Bufona expedition from:
<http://espeleobloc.blogspot.com/2010/08/enllac-bufona-c9-escuin.html>

It appeared quite a few big caves were connected around the world this month – caverinfo.com reports successes from a British expedition connecting Culiembro with Xitu while some Spanish caving clubs teamed up in the region of Huesca to connect the -501m Sima Bufona to C9 (-830m) through a siphon. In other news, Hungarian cavers discovered 1.5km of new passage in the Lovcen National Park in Montenegro, including 2 new caves exceeding 100m.

August 11th - The Amazon has been walked – Ed Stafford and Gadiel Sanchez started at the source of the Amazon River and finished 28 months later at the sea on the east coast of Brazil. On their last day it was reported that they walked 85km in 21 hours. Report from [ExplorersWeb](http://ExplorersWeb.com).

August 8th - Two Dutch men drowned in an Italian canyon, Del Rio Variola, in the region of Domodossola. Eelco De vries (29) and Swen Eeftink (30) were caught on a waterfall abseil when one of them went down, became trapped, and the other came down in an attempt to help him. The remaining members of the group called for help. Report by ANSA.IT – there is also an [AIC canyoneering forum thread](#) discussing the accident. The newspaper article was posted by a contributor to the forum.



A note on why Arctic explorers should carry guns: On August 5th , a Danish archeologist was attacked by a polar bear in northeast Greenland. His companion quickly shot it. Fortunately for the researchers, the bear was a young male and the archeologist was spared serious injury. The

pair had initially tried scaring the bear away. Report from [ExplorersWeb](#). Arctic kayakers have been attacked by polar bears in the past.

The BMC (British Mountaineering Council) is holding a Climbing Injury Symposium on the weekend 13th – 14th November 2010 in Sheffield, UK. International experts will be discussing climbing specific injuries and prevention. For more information see the [BMC website](#).

August 17 – the first winter ascent of Torre Egger in Patagonia was made by Stephan Siegrist and Dani Arnold of Switzerland and German climber Thomas Senf. They started climbing on August 1 and reached the summit on the morning of the 3rd. Report from [The Alpinist](#). Photo by Thomas Senf.



From the ACA canyoneering forums comes a [thread](#) of importance to climbers who use the rubber Petzl Strings or Keepers on their gear, providing a reminder that they should not be used on open slings. A [report](#) from the New River Gorge National park explains an accident that happened on the 14th of June 2010, where a climber died. The photos below show how this happened, when one of the strands of the open sling got clipped through the gate, leaving only the rubber supporting the climber's weight:



August 9th - A Sydney man lost overnight in the Blue Mountains in the vicinity of the Ruined Castle was found by officers at Katoomba and taken to hospital – no details on his condition were released. Report by [SMH](#).

September – The September issue of National Geographic features a story on cave diving in the Bahamas. This can also be viewed online at [National Geographic](#) .

In the same issue the editor's note is devoted to the photographer Wes Skiles who died on July 21st at the age of 52. Wes was an accomplished cave diver and he took many of the photos for the aforementioned article. He was also one of the divers involved in the Pannikin Plains Cave diving expedition in 1989 when a storm caused a rockpile collapse. A tribute and link to a photo gallery can be found at [National Geographic](#) .

Trip Calendar

Week 11 – 19 September
Yarrangobilly

Caving
Trip Leader: Beth Little
Contact: 0405 226 811, littlebeth78@hotmail.com
By: Trip Full
Grade: Medium

Thursday 14 October
MSS MEETING

Quarterly MSS Meeting
To be held at: Beth Little's place
Contact: 0405 226 811, littlebeth78@hotmail.com

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

Cave exploration
Trip Leader: Rod Smith
Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick__smith@hotmail.com
By: 11th October
Grade: Medium..ish
Joint trip with NHVSS

Weekend 6th / 7th November
Myall Lakes

Kayaking
Trip Leader: Bob Horn
Contact: (02) 9639 3672, randphorn@optusnet.com.au
By: 1st November
Grade: Easy/Medium

Mid-late January 2011
Milford Track, New Zealand

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

Easter 2011
Cillagoe QLD

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

May or June 2011
Timor Caves

Caving
TBA
