

Quarterly NEWSLETTER

Winter 2012 Edition
Issued August 2012



MSS NEWSLETTER

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Cover Shot: Thomas Cunningham of SUSS exiting from Shaft Cave (A13,14) at Abercrombie
Photo by Rob Clyne

Society News

2013 ASF Conference

The ASF Conference planning committee has finalised most of the plans for the upcoming bi-ennial ASF conference.
Bookings are now being accepted.

Club EPIRB

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

MSS Officers list

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

Trip Reports

Capertee

2-3 June

Present: Rod Smith, Ray Etherton, Natalie Etherton, Fletcher Etherton, Joshua Little, Dearne Meissner, Vince Ilion, Keiran Stokes, Jed Nolan, Alan Caton (RSS), Brian Reeves, Andrew Perry (RSS)

The rain was thundering down, the lightning raining down around us, and the thunder not lighting anything up. It was as if the gods themselves were trying to keep us from our destiny. But being a polyatheist, there's hundreds of gods I don't believe in, so I pressed on.

I arrived at Capertee to find Ray, Nat and various children huddled around a fire that was making a feeble attempt to hold back the near cyclonic conditions. Despite the weather, everyone was in good spirits. There was a feeling that this would be the trip, we would finally find Neville's Hangar and the Dungeon of Doris.

During the night Brian, Alan and Andrew arrived. Over breakfast we made our plans. Neville had driven down from his residence and filled us in regarding the doline that had been dug out. The causeway into the National Park had been in need of repair, and while the heavy machinery was on site they dug the rubbish out of one of the dolines. Apparently what came out was impressive, but no longer on site. The semi-trailer they dug out had started first go and they'd used that to transport the more valuable items to NPWS headquarters for sorting. Neville had managed to keep the chickens they found and had been enjoying eggs for breakfast since then.

So, first stop was the dug out doline. Thankfully Neville had warned us we'd need a rope, with the 60m only just being long enough. It was clear that some further digging was required. The problem was the water was soaking through mud that was like quicksand, only quick thinking kept Dearne from going under (Henry Jones Jr used his whip to lasso Dearne's outstretched wrist and haul him free).

The mud had convinced us to return to our standard dig site, so six hours after leaving camp we started removing more dirt from our ever-deepening hole. After four hours of pain-staking labour it all paid off! Jed yelled out from the dig wall "Eureka!!!!". There was a mad scramble to widen the breach so we could fit through, and what we found was incredible!

Although at first it was a crawl, this only lasted about 20m. From there the passage became large enough to walk through, and it wasn't long before the decoration started. At first it was just the odd shawl, straw, column, stalagmite or stalictite, but after a while the decoration became prolific, filling almost every square inch of bedrock. We didn't know where to look first. Straws up to 10m long. Shawls 20m across and 30m high. Columns that looked like they'd come from ancient Greece, complete with fresco. Aragonite flowers the size of Volkswagon Beetles. This cave had it all.

We wandered through in a daze, taking 3 hours to reach the pitch. We rigged the rope and tossed it over, watching it disappear into the inky blackness. This section of the cave seemed to suck up the light, but we weren't to be deterred. An hour later we were all at the bottom of the 140m pitch, with passageways going in seven different directions. Leaving a trail of breadcrumbs (Nat sacrificed her lunch as she wasn't feeling hungry), we set off to explore. This was truly a maze, every 20-30m we'd reach a junction with a minimum of 5 passageways

heading off in random directions, unless we encountered a dead-end. Two hours through the maze we were able to confirm we were in the Dungeon of Doris. We had come across a small chamber off one of the passages that contained ancient aboriginal shackles on two walls and a skeleton of a half man - half wombat (Womban) in the corner.

Six hours later we'd still only explored a small portion of the cave, it was clear the survey was going to be a large undertaking. We decided it was time to head back, but after a while we lost the trail of breadcrumbs, it appeared that someone, or something, was getting hungry. We wandered about, geographically embarrassed, for what seemed an eternity, but was in fact only 4 hours, before finally finding the trail again. Half an hour later we were at the bottom of the pitch. Although we made good time on the ascent it still took two and a half hours before we all reached the top. An hour later we were back out of The Dungeon of Doris and, with daylight fading, made our way back to camp.

After a hearty meal from the seafood buffet Andrew set up a slack-line for some evening entertainment. The 50m slack-line between two trees only half a metre above the ground proved to be too easy, so the challenge was set. Two trees on opposite sides of the valley were found and a 450m slack-line rigged between them. At the highest point it was a 70m dropped into the churning cauldron known as the Capertee River. There were many amazing feats on this slack-line but, for me, the most impressive was watching Vince cartwheel across after his slab of beer, bottle of port, two bottles of vodka and half a litre of rum.

The next day, while enjoying our continental breakfast, Neville arrived with some news. He had found a section of a tributary of the Capertee where the water was disappearing from the surface. Needless to say we were intrigued, but for some the lure of toast, pancakes, muesli, fruit, bacon, eggs, sausages, waffles, baked beans, hash browns, mushrooms, fried tomato, french toast, bacon and coffee proved too much. And so it was that Ray, Brian, Andrew and I went with Neville to hopefully solve the mystery of the disappearing creek.

What we saw when Neville stopped the Ute made our collective jaws drop. A veritable wall of water was pouring into a pool with the opposite side being completely dry. The pool was no more than 1 metre in diameter, but there was no obvious escape for this torrent. Where did the water go?

While standing around the edge of the pool I got a little close, slipped, and fell in. Ray, Brian and Andrew all reached out and grabbed me, but instead of hauling me out we were all sucked under. This was a ride to make any water-slide designer jealous, tossing us from side to side, up and down, through the spin cycle, rinse cycle and left us hanging out to dry. When we'd recovered our breathes we looked around to find ourselves in a tunnel large enough to drive a train through it. In fact, the tracks were still there. Ray had a radio so we were able to let the others know we were in Neville's Hangar, but couldn't get back out the way we'd come in. We went looking for an exit while the others we concentrate on the other dig to see if that would break through to us.

Neville hadn't lied, this was definitely large enough to fly a Cessna through it. Half an hour later we'd found the Cessna, in surprisingly good condition, but the runway could have used a little TLC, and the control tower was covered in decoration. We also found Neville's wine cellar, which confirmed he knew exactly where the cave was but had kept quiet about its location.

While we'd been looking around Neville's Hangar the rest of our group had found a way through. The only problem was the entry had opened up in the roof of the tunnel, which was a looong way off the floor. Tying the ropes together wasn't enough, but they eventually got us

a lifeline made of ropes, vines, clothing, shoelaces, electrical cord and dental floss. We took it in turns to be raised out. We tied into one end with the other attached to a vehicle. The vehicle was then driven down the road until we reached the top and the system was then reset. The lift was a bit interesting as Fletcher had volunteered to drive and his a bit of a lead-foot. Still, we all made it out in one piece.

Another fantastic trip to Capertee National Park and I know I'm looking forward to the next one.

Rod.

This trip report was inspired by Neville.

Jenolan

30th Jun-1st July

Participants: Albert Hakvoort, Natalie Hurwitz, Katie Herbert, Mathew Bennett, David Stuckey, Rod Smith, Jude Phillips.

This was purely a beginners trip, we had 2 people who have never caved before and a few who had not been underground for some time. On Saturday most of them went to Hennings and Wiburds and caves and on Sunday to Mammoth cave visiting Horseshoe cavern, Railway tunnel, Lower river and Oolite chamber.

All Photos by Albert Hakvoort



Wyburds



Cave



Abercrombie Caves MSS-SUSS Joint Trip

4 -5th August

Participants:

MSS: Rod Smith, Beth Little, Jessica Swart, Rob Clyne and family, Jim Crockett.

SUSS : Tony Le, Ricky Harjanto, Thomas Cunningham, Rhonda Lum, Blake Churton, Denis Stojanovic, Flora Lin.

With Rod and myself fortunate enough to have a friday off we made plans to to get to Abercrombie early enough to see if we could have a look at “ The Sounder” area on the Abercrombie river. There is a cave located there which was last visited and surveyed by MSS in 1991. The cave is on private property so this plan was all dependent upon finding the owner of the property “Crowford” at home and obtaining their permission. With a bit of local information from Stuart at the guides office at Abercrombie we located the property and attempted to make contact, but unfortunately could not find anyone home. With this plan off the rails all we could do was have a look around the Tuena area at a number of small limestone

outcrops most of which are on private property and so we were not able to access for a detailed look. After I got home from this trip and knowing the address of the Crowford property I was able to find contact details for the owner so next time we have a greater chance of getting to see the cave. According to the MSS map this cave is at least 150m long which is a significant size for a cave at Abercrombie.

Back to the Abercrombie caves tourist area we set up camp in the area furthest after the Grove creek crossing. I was surprised that this area has been greatly improved with a new amenities block. Rod commenced to empty his trailer of a large collection of wood offcuts which came in handy for the weekend to create some warmth and ambience. We both had an early night. I woke up to the sweet sounds of bird calls but no sign of any other caving types. But remembering that I did tell everyone that we should camp at the area to the left after the creek crossing I wandered down there to find a number of tents. I apologised to them for changing my the plans but suggested to them that the area where Rod and myself were camping was much bigger and better plus we had lots of wood for the campfire. It did not take long to convince them and before long many tents were relocated. We all had breakfast together and started to plan for the activities for the day while waiting for others to turn up. Soon after Rob Clyne and his family turned up and a little later the remainder of the SUSS members appeared.

Keys were obtained from the guides and we made our way through the Arch somehow avoiding to be seen by the CCTV camera located at the gate. The signs of the water level from the recent flooding in February/March this year were clearly visible and one of the aims of this trip was to check to see if these floods have damaged or changed the caves in any way. After passing through the arch we turned right into Bushranger cave and we spend a lot of time having a good look around including some people going to the coal face of the Bushie dig. We came out of the top entrance and then up the steps to Shaft cave, (Most people know this as A13,14). Many cavers entered and just as many returned from the furthest reaches of this cave, all the time we were checking with the map I had of this cave which is a little incomplete as the projected long section states "Regard as sketch only – elevations measured with make shift instrument". At this point everyone was getting little hungry so it was back to camp for lunch.



We said goodbye to Rob and his family as they had to leave as he was due to work tomorrow. The rest headed back towards the arch again stopping to have a look at Grove cave (A9) and then into the Arch to Cathedral/King-Solomons Temple where we found a few bats in the Belfry area. Back out into the daylight to have look at Mother In-Law's Breath (A37) and Trickett's hole (A34) where some went in via A37 and out via A34 but a bit of climbing skill was required. That was enough for the day and back to camp to burn some more of Rod's wood. We found Rod was already back at camp after he had spent the afternoon searching and geo-tagging as many caves as he could find.

The night was spent keeping warm by the fire and assisting Ricky with questions to prepare him for his exams in his studies for a degree in medicine. We all learn't a lot about human eyes, ears, face and lots more human organs that night.



The plan on Sunday was to make a visit to Stable cave so we got going early. We entered via the lower entrance (A27) with the team separating some going via the flattener and rest exploring any crevices where huams could fit. We eventually got everyone back together and then made our way to the top of the pitch to setup the ladder. Five people went down the pitch and there we found a lot more passage than is indicated on the MSS map I had brought with me. All got safely back up again and we found and exited the top entrance (A26). It is apparent that the MSS map of this cave is missing quite a lot of the cave, the flattener is missing as well as the passage beyond the bottom of the pitch and so MSS should consider a re-survey of this cave in the future. There not not any signs of the flooding causing changes or damage to the cave.

Back via the arch we all had quick look at the Kohinoor and Eastern galleries sections of the arch.

Everyone was very happy with the weekend as we said goodbye.

We may have more joint trips with SUSS in the future as this one was very successful.

Jim

Help required for SpeleoSports

Help is required in organising the Speleo sports for next years ASF conference.

If anyone would like to help or have any good ideas for obstacles suitable for a Speleo sports event than please contact Jim Crockett: 0407 284 256 or email: jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au

Upcoming Events

1st to 2nd September JENOLAN CAVES
 Trip Leader: Rod Smith, 0438 444 262 , roderick_smith@hotmail.com
 Contact by: 27th August
 Grade: Easy/Child friendly
 Stay in the decadent Caver's hut
 Top caves

15th to 16th September

CLIEFDEN CAVES

Trip Leader: Jim Crockett, 0407 284 256 ,jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au

Contact by: 13th September

Grade: Medium - Easy

General Caving – Suitable for beginners

Stay in the caver's hut.

13th -14th October 2012

WOMBELYAN CAVES

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

Contact by: ASAP

Joint Trip with SSS

Pleasant camping

Trip Calendar

Weekend 1st-2nd September

Caving - Jenolan

Jenolan

Trip Leader: Rod Smith

Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com

By: 27th August

Grade: Easy/Child friendly

8th - 9th September 2012

Jenolan Caves volunteer Weekend

See flyer insert

15th - 16th September 2012

Caving Cliefden - (Permit pending)

Cliefden

Trip leader: Jim Crockett

Contact: 0407 284 256

jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au

By: 13th September

Grade: Easy/Medium/Child friendly

Hut accommodation

13th - 14th October 2012

Caving at Wombeyan

Wombeyan - Joint trip with SSS

Trip Leader co-ordinator: Rod Smith

Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com

27th October 2012

Field Day

Field Day – Learn the ropes

Co-ordinator: Beth Little

Contact: 0450226811

littlebeth78@hotmail.com

27th October 2012

Caver's dinner

Caver's dinner hosted by HCG

See attached flyer

8th November 2012

MSS Annual General Meeting

At Rod Smith's Place

Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com

10th to 11th November 2012

Caving at Tuglow

Great River cave system with vertical entrance.

Trip leader: Beth Little

contact: 0450226811

littlebeth78@hotmail.com

17th - 18th November 2012

Jenolan Caves volunteer Weekend

See attached flyer

1st - 2nd December
Canyoning Glen Davis

January Date: TBA
Easy/kid friendly Canyoning Newnes

2013
Caving in New Zealand

6th- 11th January 2013
ASF Bi-annual Conference

21st to 28th July 2013
UIS – International Caving Congress
Brno – Czech Republic

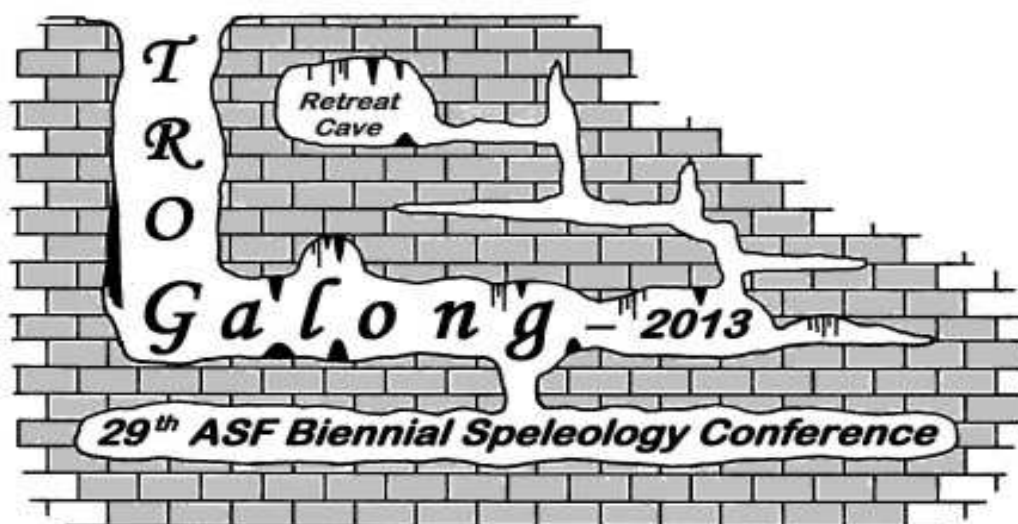
Trip Leader: Rod Smith
Contact: 0438 444 262, roderick_smith@hotmail.com
By: TBA
Grade: Medium/Hard

Trip Leader: Rob Clyne
Contact: 0409 033 224,
caver@people.net.au
By: TBA
Grade: Medium/Hard

New Zealand
Trip Leader: David Stuckey
Contact: 0414590305,
stuckedl@cba.com.au
By: Expressions of interest

TROGALONG

<http://www.speleo2013.com/>
contact: Jim Crockett 0407 284 256
jmtcrockett@unwired.com.au
for more details



TROGalong 2013
29th Biennial Conference
of the Australian Speleological Federation Inc
Information Sheet

When: 6th January 2013 to 11th January 2013

Where: St Clements Retreat, Galong NSW. Location information on the website.

Program

6th January: Registration from noon until 7pm then the Welcome BBQ at 7.30pm

7th 9am sessions and opening. 2.30pm ASF Council meeting session 1, Trivia night

8th 9am Presentations and workshops followed by Speleosports and prussic challenge

9th Presentations and workshops and the Formal Dinner at 7pm

10th Presentations and workshops and the photographic competition at 7.30pm
11th Presentations and part 2 of the ASF council meeting at 1.30pm
Leave for Post conference recreational and caving activities

There are a variety of Pre and Post Conference trips being organized by Denis Marsh.
See the website for more details and contact Denis to get in early.

WAC Program- Wives and Children Program will be on an ad hoc basis but Anna Binnie is organising a workshop in some variety of patchwork or quilting and producing something small such as a pin cushion and/or a small block which could later become part of a community quilt or for the ASF auction for the Karst Fund.

Photographic Competition

this is being organized by Gary Smith and the rules and registration form are on the website.

First Aid

there will be qualified persons on the site to assist us if there is a need.

Financial assistance maybe available from ASF towards cost of attending this conference if you meet the following conditions:

1. if you are a new club and ASF member or and existing member who has not attended a conference in the last 10-15 years;
2. The grant is to assist with travel expenses and at the organising Committee's discretion may assist with registration fees; and
3. You present a session at the conference where possible & appropriate, other than in exceptional circumstances and provide a Paper / article for the Conference Proceedings.

Website: www.asfconference.org.au for more details regarding the conference

MSS 409th General Meeting, 9th August 2012
Held at Beth Little's place

Meeting Opened: 7:45pm

Present:

Roderick Smith, Jim Crockett, Beth Little, Jessica Swart

Apologies:

Rob Clyne, Chris Johnstone

Any Corrections to Previous Meetings Minutes: None

Correspondence:

Post –

Helictite – Special edition on Bullita Cave System

Committee Members Reports:

President: None

Treasurer: Some new LED lights have been purchased. Committed to buying Peter Shaws equipment.

Equipment Officer: None

Training Officer: None

Librarian: None

Web Manager: None

Status of Action Items:

Updating membership details: None

New Business:

Bolting Course: It's been proposed to organise a bolting course for anyone within MSS that is interested. After discussions with Joe Sydney and others to see if it could be organised at a NSWSC or ASF level, we've found it'll be easier for us to do it ourselves. We are looking for anyone with knowledge on bolting that would be happy to share their knowledge. Action plan, Jim to talk to Al Warild to see if he would be willing to share his knowledge. Please contact Rod Smith if you know of anyone else we should speak to.

Resurveying Stable Cave: On a recent trip to Abercrombie we found that the maps of Stable Cave that we could find didn't appear to be complete. NPWS also didn't appear to have a complete map. It's been proposed that we resurvey Stable Cave. Anyone interested in helping with this project please contact Jim Crockett.

Trip planning:

Field Day: 27 October (TL Beth)

Tuglow: 10-11 November (TL Beth)

Glen Davis Canyoning (inc. Freshwater): 1-2 December (TL Rod)

Kid friendly canyoning: January (TL tbc.)

Next Meeting:

Rod's Place – 8th November inc. AGM

Meeting Closed: 9:00pm