



Metropolitan Speleological Society



Quarterly Newsletter

Summer

Issued March 2019

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Cover: Rod O’Brien at the entry to Thampana Cave, Nullarbor (Photo: Cathi Humphrey-Hood)

New Bank Account

Don’t forget that we’ve opened a new bank account with Bendigo Bank which will allow us to make electronic transfers, the new account details are:

Metropolitan Speleological Society Inc

BSB 633 000

Account Number: 163 131 451

So, if you have previously set up the details of the MSS Account (so that you can transfer trip fees and membership fees), please make sure that the above details replace the previous account. We will maintain the old account for the time being should there be any accidental deposits to it!



SOCIETY INFORMATION

Club PLB

Just a reminder to all trip leaders that the Club PLB should be taken on every remote trip. Our Equipment Officer, Beth (0450 226 811), equipment@mssadventure.org.au) has this, so please coordinate with her to collect it before you lead your next trip.

2018 Office Bearers

President	president@mssadventure.org.au	Jim Crockett
Secretary	secretary@mssadventure.org.au	Chris Johnstone
Treasurer	treasurer@mssadventure.org.au	Cathi Humphrey Hood
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Website Manager	webmaster@mssadventure.org.au	Rod Smith
Public Officer		John Gray

Membership Fee Details (2019)

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

Cheques or Cash accepted but **preferred method of payment** by Direct Debit - Account: Metropolitan Speleological Society; Bendigo Bank; BSB 633 000; Account Number: 163 131 451.



Breaking News!

Retailer Discounts

As you all know, MSS members are able to obtain a 10% discount at **Climbing Anchors** (both online and at their Alexandria store).

We are pleased to announce that there's a new on-line retailer in the market place, **Canyon Gear** and we've also obtained a **10% discount** from them. Visit their website www.canyongear.com.au where you can get your hands on



the very best gear available at affordable prices. Canyon Gear are particularly keen on items designed by active canyoneers from around the world, utilising their wealth of knowledge and years of experience and are keen to promote items that have been designed and made in Australia for our specific conditions.

Visit the MSS website www.mssadventure.org.au and log in to the Members pages (using your user name and password) and the Discount Codes for both retailers are listed on the landing page.



MSS formalises relationship with CSS & NHVSS

Exciting news for MSS members! As some of you may already be aware, some time ago, MSS entered into a reciprocal agreement with Newcastle Hunter Valley Speleos, and this month Canberra Speleological Society has also formalized a similar agreement. ASF clubs have always allowed other ASF club members to apply to go on their trips, so, nothing has changed there, however this arrangement will make MSS trips more visible to reciprocal club members, and vice versa. What this means to you:

- All MSS trips (unless designated MSS only) are advertised on the calendars of the reciprocal clubs above and vice versa. In addition, these reciprocal club trips will be listed in communications with MSS members such as the monthly email.
- MSS public website Calendar: Reciprocal club trips will not appear on the website calendar, however a reciprocal club can advertise MSS trips on its website if it wishes.
- Trip leaders have the final say on composition and group size of their trips.
- A reciprocal club can designate any trip as, “*** club only”.
- All participants pay trip fees to the trip leader as per the club running the trip, or in the case where the reciprocal club does not charge fees, then in accordance with the MSS trip fee structure (paid to the host club).
- Where there is a limited number of spaces available on a trip then priority is given to members of the club running the trip, within reason (ie people will not be kicked off a trip the night before because someone tries to get on a trip at the last minute).
- When a member of a reciprocal club cannot go on a trip because of number limits, then priority may be given to that club member on the next trip.

NOTE: This arrangement is between MSS and the reciprocal clubs. It should not be automatically assumed that this arrangement is extended between those clubs listed above, a separate agreement should be negotiated between the clubs listed above.



Focus on Summer

The newly incorporated NSW Canyoning Association will be holding it's first event **Focus on Summer** on Saturday, 23 March, 2019 at 7pm at the Mt Wilson Village Hall. Note: you don't have to be a member to attend, but you are able to join on the night if you wish.

These photo events (called Slide Shows back in the day), were a regular “thing” many years ago and it's now being resurrected.

The evening will show the entries in the photo competition (entries close March 2), plus canyoning films. Plus, there will be a BBQ fundraiser put on by the Mt Wilson Rural Fire Service.

So, if you're up at Mt Wilson for an end of season canyon, do consider dropping in for this social event, great opportunity to do some networking.

Gold coin donation to enter.

For up to date information, visit their website

https://nswcanyoning.org.au/focus_on_summer/ .



Bull Ants (aka Big-Arse Ants)

A bushwalker, on a recent trip, stopped to check his GPS and inadvertently stepped on a Bull Ant's nest. He sustained multiple bites (20 – 30) from a number of ants. Even when he flicked the ants off, they came back at him.

Endemic to Australia (as unique to our fauna as kangaroos and koalas!), bull ants are large, alert ants that can grow up to 40 mm. They have characteristic large eyes and long, slender mandibles and a potent venom-loaded sting. They have superior vision, able to track and even follow intruders from a distance of 1m. Many species of bull ants have bright red or orange colours on the head or abdomen. Nine bull ant species have been recorded in Sydney, but there may be more as yet undiscovered. Some of the smaller species are known as jumper ants after their habit of aggressively jumping toward intruders.

Bull ant nests are usually underground and often have hidden or small entrances. The nests can extend several metres below the ground. They attack intruders of any size that come too close to their nest. Bull ants also have well-developed vision and will follow an intruder a good distance from the nest. So,

1. Always check the ground around your feet if you stop, even if it's only for a few seconds
2. If you tread on a nest, immediately move 20+m away. The first ants, whilst biting you, mark you with formic acid and others rush to the danger signal.
3. If you do get attacked, stand on a rock, dislodge ants and crush them. If you just knock them off, they come back.
4. Beware of anaphylactic shock, even in people not previously bitten.
5. Download the *Australian Bites & Stings* app – non-medical, advises how to treat stings and when to panic.



Emergency Signals

On a recent canyoning trip, out near Bunglebore Creek, there was a search and rescue operation in the same area. We were in an open part of the canyon and the helicopter was constantly hovering around us. We wondered amongst ourselves what was the appropriate signal to let them know that we were ok and apart from a thumbs up, none of us were really sure what to do. So, when I got back, I did an internet search, well the jury was out there, so many signals! What was the preferred one here in NSW for helicopter crews? I contacted a couple of sources and here's what they say:

- Bush Search and Rescue New South Wales Inc:
We are good - thumbs up in the air
We need help - arms in the air **crossed at the forearm**
You can also mark out an X on the ground which means you **require medical assistance**
- Westpac Rescue Helicopters (one of the chief pilots):
No universal signals, particularly to give a "we're fine" signal!
- International Distress Signal <https://ablisfiles.business.gov.au/australiangovernment/resource/cop6806.pdf>
Slowly and repeatedly raising and lowering arms outstretched to each side

So, we are really no further ahead! I did however get confirmation of what we should have out in the bush for an emergency (other than medical). These are the items that we all know we should carry, but often set aside - the person who they were looking for does not appear to have carried any of these items!

Mirror or CD/DVD to signal with; space blanket to wave around in the air, plb, gps, first aid kit, snake bandage, matches, pea-less whistle and warm clothing.

Print this out for future Reference!



MSS leaders usually don't advertise a specific "end time" for activities, and often leave it open-ended, like "we'll finish Saturday evening". As a participant, you may return home later than planned due to a variety of reasons (e.g. bad weather, vehicle breakdown, injured party member, longer than expected trip) and often you won't have mobile reception to update those at home. So that you don't unduly worry your family, emphasise that they should give you a little leeway time-wise.

It's also good practice to let them know that in most cases leaders will have at least two (if not more) PLBs on MSS trips and so, if there is an emergency (accident or injury), the leader will set off the PLB, there's no need for your family to call the police because it's dark and you're not home.

However, if you haven't returned at a "reasonable time", and those at home want some reassurance, they can contact one of the following MSS S&R contacts:

- Beth Little 0450 226 811
- Roderick Smith 0438 444 262
- David Stuckey 0414 590 305

If you are in an overdue party, phone home as soon as you're in mobile range (or stop at the first available public phone). Please stress that if they have contacted one of the above S&R contacts, and they then hear from you, they MUST phone the S&R Contact immediately to let them know you're ok.

Print this out and put it somewhere handy for future reference!



Bulk order - Mini Corner Ruler



(Note, approximate size is shown)

Designed for 1:25,000 topo maps, this handy-dandy tool is used for pinpointing a grid reference, taking out all the guess-work. A number of MSS members use them, and on a recent trip, it was agreed to place a bulk order, thus saving on postage.

Sourced from the USA, the cost of the unit is US\$3.96 each, plus about US\$3 shipping for the whole order plus A\$1 for postage to your address in OZ.

Email marilyn_scott@bigpond.com if you want to order one.



Jenolan Cavers Hut

We've been advised (admittedly second hand) that the water at Cavers Hut failed the siltiness test for drinking water standards. There is still water to wash up and shower with, but until we hear otherwise, take your own drinking water if you're planning on a trip there in the near future.





TRIP REPORTS

Caving – Nullarbor, 29 September – 28 October, 2018

Report by: Rod Smith

Participants: Cathi Humphrey-Hood (Fearless Trip Leader), Aengus Porter (Side-Kick), Michael Sliwka (Shingle-Back Whisperer), Jim Crockett (Substitute Bulldozer), Roderick Smith (God's Gift), Brian Reeves (Navigator), Daniel Burt (Fly Boy), Dirk Stoffels (Pre-Radioactive Man), Rodney O'Brien (Hired Muscle), Alan Pryke (Comic Relief), Meagan Pryke (Exasperated Partner), Graham Pilkington (Wise Man)

The Nullarbor is a long way to go, especially if you're not doing anything on the way. The problem is that there isn't any significant caving areas en route. This leaves two options. Option 1: just drive straight there. Option 2: Take a detour to visit somewhere else. We took option 2 and went to Piccaninnie Ponds.

To go snorkelling at Piccaninnie Ponds requires a permit and then booking in a time, and only a maximum of four people are allowed at any one time. Fearless Trip Leader had organised a permit for herself, Shingle-Back Whisperer, Fly Boy and God's Gift. Navigator and Side-Kick were content to let the rest of us brave the cold water.



Snorkelling at Piccaninnie Ponds (Photo: Cathi H-H)

Our time eventually came around, so we got our gear together and went snorkelling. Fearless Trip Leader was the only one properly prepared, and it showed since she was the only one to last the full hour.

Fly Boy only had a short wetsuit, and it didn't take long for the cold to get to him. When he exited the water Shingle-Back Whisperer then borrowed his snorkel and mask and jumped in. God's Gift's wetsuit, although full length, is only 3mm and not really enough in that temperature water. God's Gift lasted most of the hour but eventually the cold got to me.

The water was beautiful and clear, except for the vegetation that had been kicked up by previous snorkellers earlier in the day. From where we entered the water it's straight over one of the sinkholes, which makes the water even colder. The water sinks to depths beyond what we could make out, and it's easy to see why divers were intrigued by what may lie beyond what's visible from the surface.

Beyond the sinkhole the water is quite shallow which makes it marginally warmer. It's possible to swim quite a distance, but God's Gift was unable to find any other sinkholes. I don't know if there are any others to find in the area.

This was a nice way to start our trip, but now it was time to make our way towards the Nullarbor. From Piccaninnie Ponds our route would take us through Mt Gambier and Naracoorte, and we had enough time for some sight-seeing, caver style. We started with Umpherston Sinkhole. For those that haven't been there it's a large sink hole in the middle of Mt Gambier. In 1886, it was converted from a natural sinkhole into a sunken garden by James Umpherston. After his death it fell into disrepair but has since been restored. There's a ramp followed by a set of steps that allows a viewer to enter the garden and walk around in the bottom of the sinkhole. It is apparently about 40m wide, but it felt bigger than that.

Next we visited Blue Lake. The lake is a large monomictic crater lake located in a dormant volcanic maar associated with the Mount Gambier maar complex. (God's Gift quoted that from Wikipedia, I don't

understand half of it!) Like the Blue Lake at Jenolan the colour is attributed to the limestone the water filters through.

There seemed to be a lack of available accommodation options at the time, but we found something on the way to Naracoorte.

In the morning we drove to the tourist cave area at Naracoorte. We couldn't pass through without going into at least one cave. The first tour was already fully booked, but we got onto an Alexandra Cave tour without having to wait too long. Our guide was good and knew his stuff, although one or two of our group decided to test him. He handled it very well. It was great to hear the history of the discovery of the cave and the digs that were conducted to turn it into what we know today.

As we left God's Gift decided to visit the Yulgilbar Wood Gallery just over the road. They have some beautiful pieces for sale. God's Gift couldn't help himself, he bought a fruit bowl, which somehow survived the rest of the trip.

With not much more limestone until the Nullarbor, we just drove. Except for toilet breaks, and meals, and sleeping, and getting fuel, and buying food, and checking directions, and showers, and filling water containers, and re-arranging gear, and fixing roof racks, and re-re-arranging gear, and taking photos, and

The weather was a bit patchy, so we had to wait for the sun to appear before heading out to the Bunda Cliffs for a look. Most of us had seen the view before, but it's still quite impressive and worth the stop.

Soon we crossed the border and arrived at Eucla. Fearless Trip Leader had some last-minute trip leader responsibilities that didn't go quite according to plan but were sorted in the end. We also found Hired Muscle. Or, more correctly, he found us.

Next stop, Weebubbie. There was a group of divers already there, they had been there for over a week already and were approaching the end of their trip. The good thing for us is that they'd put two ladders



Umpherston Kinkhole garden, established 1886 (Photo: Cathi H-H)

in place on the top two pitches and told us we were welcome to use them. This meant we could avoid two awkward climbs or rigging anything ourselves.

We found Pre-Radioactive Man plus Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner, but we were also expecting to find Wise Man. It was still mid-afternoon, so maybe he was on his way.

Since we'd been doing a lot of driving, we settled in for a relaxing afternoon. Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner



Swimming in the Weebubbie Lake (Photo: Cathi H-H)

decided to go into Weebubbie and have a look at the dig. Weebubbie is a collapsed entry with the cave heading off in one direction. However, collapses rarely happen at the end of a passage, so the assumption is there's cave heading off in the opposite direction. The way in just needs to be found/dug out.

When Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner returned, we were informed that they are basically gone round in circles and hadn't found the furthest extent of where it had been pushed. The next morning, we all went into Weebubbie. With the ladders the divers had put in place it was quite easy to get in. God's Gift could see how it could be free-climbed, but wouldn't recommend it. Having never been in Weebubbie before God's Gift was under the impression it was a very short distance to the lake at the bottom. It's not a long way, but it is further than expected. And, unlike a lot of cave "lakes", this is a decent sized body of water.

We arrived to find 7 divers in various states of preparing to begin their dive. Hired Muscle asked that we give them space to prepare, and we were quite happy to do so. While we waited some of us took some photos and a couple of us inflated the boat. First a pair of divers left, then a group of three, before the final two departed. As the final two began their swim to the far end of the lake God's Gift jumped in the boat.

Besides having a float around on the water, his job was to carry a couple of flashes and lights and point them in numerous directions for the benefit of the photographers. Based on some of the results God's Gift believes the effort was worth it. He made a point of paddling to the very end of the lake before heading back. God's Gift then got out to let Fearless Trip Leader have a paddle around.

After a short while Shingle-Back Whisperer and God's Gift headed for the surface with everyone else following when they were ready. It was quite warm in the sun and we were all happy to sit in the shade around camp for lunch.



Socialising around the campfire (photo: Cathi H-H)

Some options were thrown around for what to do in the afternoon. In the end we opted for a drive to have a look at one of the other large holes, Warbla Cave. We stopped at a couple of features on the way, including one big hole that had clearly been man-made. Arriving at Warbla it was exactly as expected, a big hole in the ground. Photos were taken, drones were flown, and general big hole admiring took place. We returned to camp to find it still rather

Wise Manless, which was a little concerning.

The original plan for the following day was to drive to Abrakurrie and then return to the same camp. The weather looked questionable, and there were concerns of getting stuck, so we decided to leave it til later in the trip. Instead we packed up and headed for Mundrabilla Station.

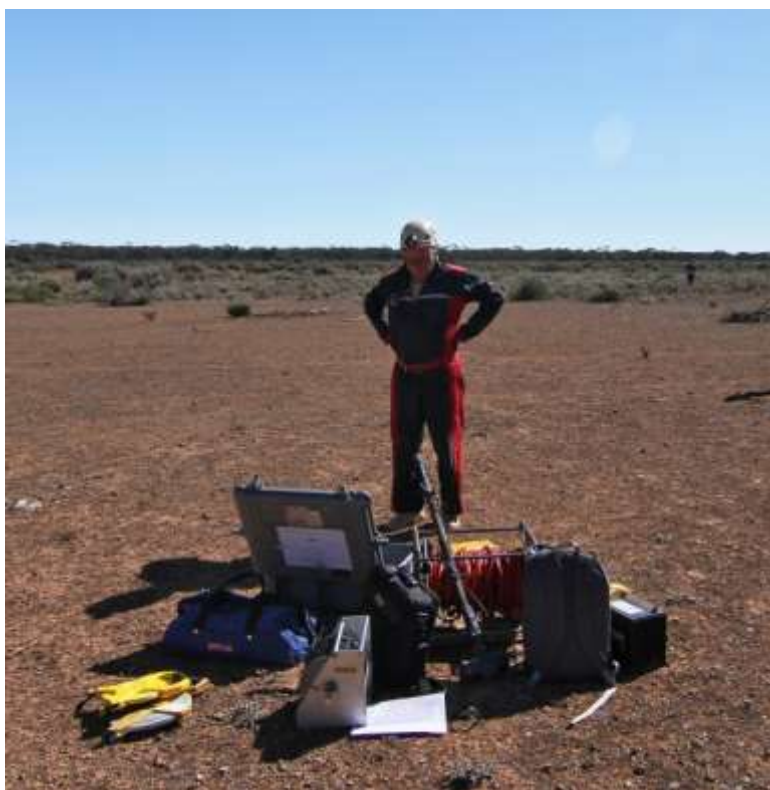
On the way we stopped at the quarry for a look around. We found a possible lead in the west wall, plus some fossils, before the rain drove us back into the vehicles. Next stop was the tip, where Navigator was reminded we were leaving stuff and not collecting anything.

After a quick stop at Mundrabilla Homestead to let them know we were there we drove to Witches. We were following Comic Relief because he knew the way, but he missed one of the turns, so we drove a bit extra. At one point God's Gift drove through a cloud of dust from the vehicles in front and when he emerged from the other side he couldn't see anyone! Since it's flat terrain with minimal vegetation and God's Gift wasn't far behind, this was rather disconcerting. Eventually Fearless Trip Leader, who was behind him, saw everyone had taken a sharp right-hand turn, and they were following once more.

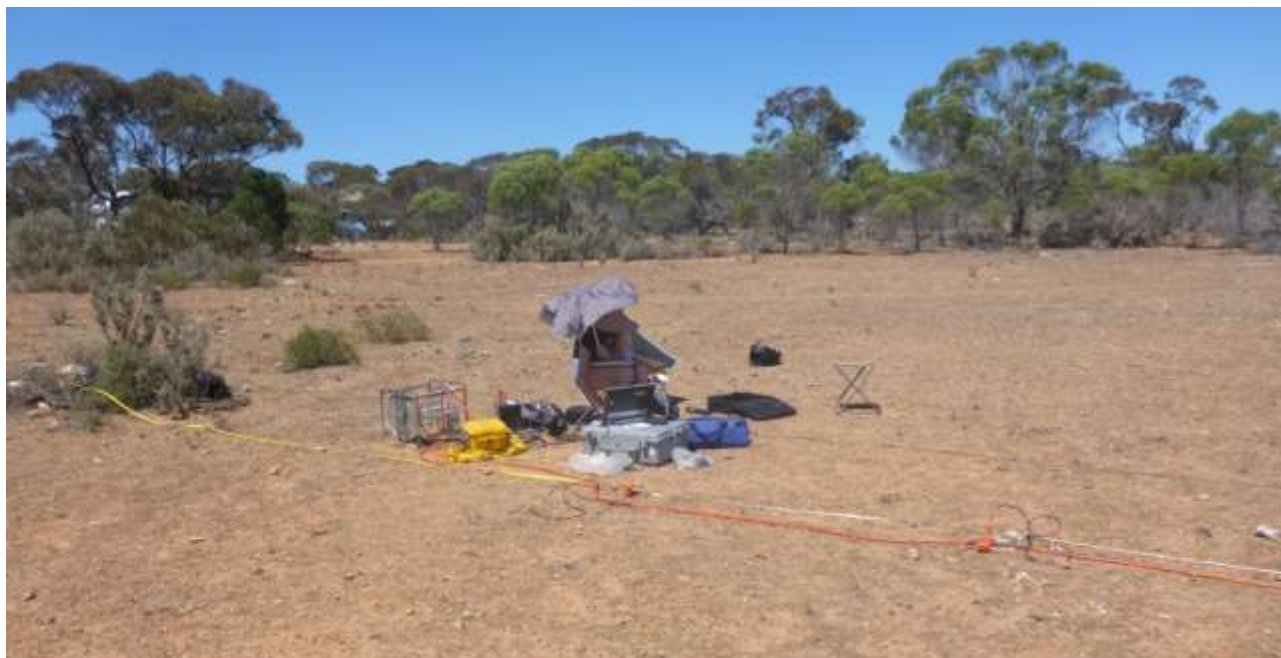
We made it to Witches with no further incidents and settled in for the next few days. With still no sign of Wise Man some messages were sent to try and determine his location.

The morning of the 6th saw the beginning of the seismic surveying which was one of the main objectives of the trip. God's Gift, along with Navigator and Side-Kick, volunteered to help Fearless Trip Leader while everyone else went underground. The seismic survey involved creating lines along which 26 specially designed microphones are equally spaced and (gently!) driven into the ground. Then, at pre-determined intervals, a metal plate was hit with a sledge hammer. This would send sound waves into the earth and their refraction or reflection (2 different survey types) would be picked up by the microphones. The volume and time taken for the sound waves to reach each microphone is recorded. The data is later analysed to attempt to determine the composition of the ground beneath the line. In our case we were trying to find cavities.

The first line was done over an area we expected there to be no cave, and the second over an area we knew there to be cave. These were to be our baselines. It took a while to get the first line done, but we quickly determined ways to improve our efficiency. Due to the heat we were



Some of the scientific gear taken on the trip (Photo: Cathi H-H)



Cathi surrounded by her seismic gear (photo: Rod)

happy with the two lines and returned to camp for lunch. The cavers also returned for lunch.

We finally received word from Wise Man. He was unwell and would be joining us on the 10th at Thampana. We all relaxed a bit now knowing why Wise Man wasn't with us.

After lunch Comic Relief wanted to push a lead in Witches but required the assistance of Hired Muscle. Unfortunately for Comic Relief, Hired Muscle decided to help Fearless Trip Leader with some more survey lines, along with Pre-Radioactive Man and Navigator. Meanwhile Fly Boy fired up his drone and did a photo

grammatic survey of the cave entrance and surrounding area. This meant he could, and did, create a contour map of the area down to 10cm contours.

Later in the afternoon Fly Boy and God's Gift went into Witches with Comic Relief so he could take a couple of photos. It's a great, well-decorated cave, even if most of the decoration is no longer active. The next day Comic Relief got his wish and went back into Witches with Hired Muscle and Fearless Trip Leader to push the lead. Unfortunately, equipment failure meant the lead would have to wait for another trip.



Possible theme for the trip, "do you think it goes?" (photo: Cathi H-H)

After lunch Comic Relief, Exasperated Partner, Pre-Radioactive Man, Navigator and God's Gift went for a walk to find the cave that shall not be named. Comic Relief wouldn't tell us the name, but he had a possible location. On the way we had locations for two other features to have a look at.

The first feature was a simple blowhole, although it may go with some minor renovations.

The next feature was

marked as a doline, but it was more than that. The hole was at least 5 metres square with passages going off. Comic Relief, Exasperated Partner and Pre-Radioactive Man tackled the "interesting" down-climb to explore the cave while Navigator and God's Gift waited above ground. Pre-Radioactive Man returned quickly but reported there was survey tape and the cave kept going. While we waited for Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner to return, we decided to radio camp and see if Fly Boy would fly his drone out to where we were. At over a kilometre it was well out of sight from camp, but Fly Boy was happy to oblige. A short while later we heard the unmistakeable sound of the drone. Fly Boy took some photos before turning the drone for home.

After Exasperated Partner and Comic Relief returned to the surface Pre-Radioactive Man opted to return to camp while the rest of us pushed on. Another km we crossed the road in and shortly after approached two dolines side by side. We had found the cave that shall not be named.

The southerly doline looked like the way in, except a rope or ladder was required. The northerly doline was easily accessible but was overgrown and didn't look promising. Comic Relief was not to be deterred and poked around in the northerly doline, finding a way through to the bottom of the southerly doline, and it was easy from there. Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner both went in but it wasn't long until Comic Relief came back tell God's Gift to go in as well, so he did.

The entrance is the hardest part, but not really hard. Once in it opens into a large chamber up to 5m high but stretching off in most directions. There was a marked path which we followed, and a sign which God's Gift was told not to read. We followed the path to the left marvelling at one of the best decorated caves on the Nullarbor. We took our time, this was impressive. We returned to the start to follow the right-hand path, and curiosity got the better of God's Gift and he read the sign. At that point he found out the name of the cave that shall not be named. God's Gift wasn't immediately struck by lightning, which was a relief.

The path to the right led into a stream passage and more decoration. Photos were taken, ooh's and aah's exclaimed, and a marvellous cave enjoyed.

We returned to the surface, found Navigator, and turned for camp. The walk back was described as a death march, and it did feel that way, but God's Gift is sure it was just in his head. We returned to camp in time to see the results of a different science experiment that some may judge as irresponsible.

The following morning Pre-Radioactive Man wanted to check out another feature in the opposite direction to the previous day. So, after getting some details of other features from Comic Relief, Pre-Radioactive Man, Navigator, Shingle-Back Whisperer and God's Gift went for another walk.

We first found two blowholes that we expected, nothing special. The next was a doline which we had minimal detail on. We were surprised to find a large metal construction sealing the cave with a padlocked entrance. There was also details about why it was locked on a laminated sheet on the inside of the trapdoor. After a look around we moved on.

We found the feature Pre-Radioactive Man wanted to look at, a blowhole with possibly more cave out of sight from the entrance. We didn't have any vertical gear to access the cave, but Pre-Radioactive Man had a short length of rope and proceeded to make a rope ladder. Once that was deployed, he and then Shingle-Back Whisperer, entered the cave. Although not extensive, they reported that it was definitely a cave, and a possible dig if someone was interested. Pre-Radioactive Man assisted Shingle-Back Whisperer in exiting the cave and then we rigged a simple haul system to assist Pre-Radioactive Man.

Back at camp we decided on an unusual activity for the afternoon. A fence had been constructed surrounding the cave approximately a square kilometre in size. This was an attempt to deter the camels from entering, however there was one already on the inside. So, we decided to try and get it out. After a couple of hours of running around like idiots chasing an animal much bigger than us, we realised it really didn't want to go anywhere near the corner where the gate was. Camel 1, cavers 0.

To finish the day Comic Relief convinced everyone that they really needed to have a look at the cave that shall not be named. Having already seen it God's Gift stayed at camp with Side-Kick (who wasn't interested) and everyone else fit into one vehicle rather than doing the walk. They returned just after dark.

The next day we packed up and moved camp. While the others headed straight out to Thampana, Fly Boy, Navigator and God's Gift went to Mundrabilla Roadhouse to find Substitute Bulldozer. He was already there waiting for us, so Fly Boy continued on his way home while Substitute Bulldozer, Navigator and God's Gift went to join the others. We found they had picked a good camp site near Thampana. Hired Muscle had also rigged the Thampana entrance but just wanted one of the MSS ladders to finish.

Once the rigging was complete Comic Relief, Exasperated Partner, Fearless Trip Leader and Hired Muscle went in and did quite a long trip, exiting after dark.

Comic Relief wanted to survey a new section of Thampana they had previously found, so the next day Substitute Bulldozer and

Exasperated Partner helped him with that while the rest of us went to Thylacine Hole to do some more seismic survey lines. We had plenty of helpers, so Shingle-Back Whisperer decided to walk back to camp and see what he could find on the way. The rest of us helped Fearless Trip Leader with the survey.

Wise Man arrived after lunch and did some weeding around the Thylacine Hole entrance. By the end of the day Fearless Trip Leader had run a number of parallel survey lines in the vicinity of Thylacine Hole, the entrance looked a lot less weedy, and Shingle-Back Whisperer had found a fascinating hole with a large cairn beside it.

The morning of the 11th Wise Man was ready to go underground, so he went into Thampana with Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner to continue the surveying. Fearless Trip Leader wanted to get into Thylacine Hole. Neither Shingle-Back Whisperer nor God's Gift felt like doing either cave, so they decided to go for a walk. We obtained some coordinates to go look at, and then we headed off in a south-westerly direction. One of the features we looked for we only had poor data for, so we didn't find that one, but we found all the rest. We found a couple of other features, but nothing substantial. The only interesting thing



At the top of the Thampana entrance (photo: Rod).

we found was the last one, which proved to be an overgrown doline with possible cave extending from it. Some gardening would be required to get into it.

That afternoon some of us wanted to retrace Shingle-Back Whisperer's steps and check out the cave with the large cairn beside it. We didn't have an exact location, but we had a track log that we could follow. It didn't take long to find it, and he wasn't lying. The cairn is about a metre high and more than a metre wide at the base. All the rocks used to create the cairn had been dug out of the entrance to open it up.

This cave is called Hurricane Hole, and, based on the airflow coming out, it's aptly named. The entrance is tight (for me) and some of the rocks are loose (God's Gift found that out the hard way). Meanwhile Substitute Bulldozer and Shingle-Back Whisperer explored the cave until Shingle-Back Whisperer had light problems and they returned to the surface.

Back at camp Pre-Radioactive Man was having problems with the solar panels on his camper. The implications of this meant he felt he should head back to civilisation, in the form of Madura Pass roadhouse.

The next day Wise Man was still feeling the effects of his illness, so Substitute Bulldozer once again helped Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner with the surveying in Thampana. With the plan to head to Madura Pass Roadhouse to do some clothes washing and related tasks it made sense to make a start on that.



More Seismic surveying on the 13th (Photo: Rod)

We arrived around lunch time, got a couple of rooms, washed clothes (except we forgot the tea towels, so God's Gift just bought some more), and had a relaxing afternoon. Substitute Bulldozer, Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner joined us later in the day, Wise Man stayed at Thampana another night.

The 13th we drove to Mullamullang. Except for Pre-Radioactive Man who decided to head for home to sort out the issues with his camper, via a tour out to Woomera. After setting up camp Fearless Trip Leader

planned an ambitious seismic survey in the hopes of proving that the doline isn't at the end of the cave but rather in the middle, we just haven't found the way into the south side yet. We set to work, getting most of it done before running out of usable day.

Wise Man was still feeling under the weather, and Side-Kick wasn't keen on going underground, but the rest of us took the opportunity the next day to visit Mullamullang. The entry isn't too difficult, just some scrambling required, until reaching the main level of the cave. Almost immediately there's the "squeeze" known as the "Southerly Buster". The name comes from the wind blowing through. At one point it gets below half a metre high. This is followed by the sand dune, which most cavers will have seen photos of, if they haven't been there.

The rest of the cave involves walking through a massive passage onto a massive rock pile and down the other side of the massive rock pile before encountering the next massive rock pile. There is a recurrent theme with Mullamullang.



Nullabor Sunset (Photo: Rod Smith)



Mullamullang Cave (photo: Cath H-H)

Navigator's leg joints were giving him problems so he decided to stop and rest while the rest of us pushed on. God's Gift got past the 1 mile marker, further than he'd been previously, but was starting to struggle and opted to stop and wait. The rest disappeared into the distance, so God's Gift sat down as comfortably as possible and shut his eyes.

God's Gift didn't know how long he was there until he started seeing lights returning. It was long enough to cool down. Substitute Bulldozer and Shingle-Back Whisperer arrived first but seemed to be on a mission to get out, God's Gift thinks nature was calling. Fearless Trip Leader and Hired Muscle came next. Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner, judging by the flashes of light, had stopped to take some photos, so Fearless Trip Leader, Hired Muscle and God's Gift headed for the surface. We caught up to Navigator, Shingle-Back Whisperer and Substitute Bulldozer en route and emerged to find evidence that it had rained while we were underground.

Arriving at camp it became obvious that rain was an understatement. According to Wise Man a storm cell had come over. Although it had only lasted about twenty minutes, the wind had really picked up and the very heavy rain was coming in almost sideways. All beds were affected, some worse than others, and both gazebos were damaged. We spent the rest of the day drying gear and repairing, as best we could, the gazebos.

We still had a little more to go to finish the seismic survey, so the following morning we got out and finished it. Other than that, we had a reasonably relaxing day, except for Hired Muscle as he was leaving to get to a CDAA meeting in Mt Gambier.



Nullarbor panoramic (Photo: Cathi H-H)

So, on the 16th we packed up to head for Old Homestead. Comic Relief, Exasperated Partner and Wise Man took the longer, but better, option of going down to the highway, across to Mundrabilla Station, and back up the main Forest road. Fearless Trip Leader, Navigator, Substitute Bulldozer, Shingle-Back Whisperer, Side-Kick and God's Gift headed north to go past a couple of other caves and then follow a road marked on



*Kestrel 1 Cave, by-passed because it required either SRT or Ladder set up.
(photo Rod Smith)*

the map that should intersect the Forest road south of Old Homestead.

Wise Man had informed us we could get into Kestrel 2 with only a hand-line, but Spider Sink and Kestrel 1 required either ladders or SRT. We passed all three, but we didn't want to set up ladders or SRT, and the hand-line option into Kestrel 2 looked bad, so we gave that a miss as well. We then looked for a rock-hole marked on the map, but couldn't find it, so started for Old Homestead.

Madura Station had done a lot of work including new fences, water pipes and roads, and these new roads are not on the maps. We ran into one of the station hands who pointed us in the right direction. At one stage we disturbed a mob of kangaroos with

over 100 individuals all hopping in front of us, and occasionally trying to jump the new fence. Some managed to succeed by hitting the wire at the right angle and the tension would then fling them somersaulting into the air. Then they would turn around and try to come back for another go!

We got passed the kangaroo mob and the new fences and found the old road. The road obviously hadn't been used much, within a couple of kilometres it became indistinct, but we were able to pick it up again further on. This happen a couple of times until about 10km along the road we were not able to pick it up again, so we just kept going, unaware we were never to see that road again.

We'd been driving for a while with no track in sight when we happened to find an old car wreck. After a couple of photos, we had another look for the track, assuming it to be close. We still couldn't find it, but we pushed on regardless.

Substitute Bulldozer was in the lead with Navigator as navigator, and he was directing us to where the road "should" be, to no avail. This was slowing us down. God's Gift was at the back towing his trailer and with the least clearance of the three vehicles, so God's Gift tried to follow in the others wheel tracks, when God's Gift could see them. Sunset was approaching and we were still a long way from Old Homestead, and seemingly going in circles. After both Shingle-Back Whisperer and God's Gift remarked on this fact we stopped to see what was going on, and Navigator realised he was now aiming for the wrong feature. Thankfully it only was only for about 2 kilometres. Getting back on track we continued, but it wasn't long before the sun set. Fearless Trip Leader wanted to press on, but God's Gift put his foot down. It was bad enough as it was, after dark was just asking for trouble. So, we found a flat spot and stopped for the night.

The morning dawned nice and clear, and Fearless Trip Leader flew her drone up to look at the surroundings and saw nothing. God's Gift got the GPS coordinates of our camp, not that God's Gift expects to ever go there again, and we started driving again.

Substitute Bulldozer decided to test his vehicle's suspension by driving into a wombat warren, and then, the sight we all wanted to see, the Forest Road. We arrived at Old Homestead, with no busted tyres and vehicles seemingly intact, just as Wise Man, Comic Relief and Exasperated Partner were about to head underground.

In the end Comic Relief talked Substitute Bulldozer and God's Gift into going into the south side of Old Homestead for a look around. Comic Relief took us through to a nice section of the cave for us to spend some time in while he joined Wise Man and Exasperated Partner to survey another section. Substitute Bulldozer and God's Gift took their time, just enjoying being underground and the shapes of the passages through this section of cave. We returned to the surveyors to find Exasperated Partner had had enough so

Substitute Bulldozer volunteered to take her place and Exasperated Partner and God's Gift exited. The surveyors returned a little while later.



The Kestrel chicks in N683 (Photo: Rod)

Leader, Navigator, Side-Kick, Shingle-Back Whisperer and God's Gift on a drive up to Forest while the others went back into Old Homestead. God's Gift managed to find a rock hiding in the shrubs that crunched hard enough into the bottom of the car that it turned on the windscreen wipers (and God's Gift hit it again on the way back, just not as hard).

We did the touristy things at Forest, which is basically just the museum. The caretakers told us about another couple of holes close by, so we set off to have a look, but not before ordering our hamburgers with the lot for our return. The two holes were like a lot of other holes on the Nullarbor, but still worth a look. We returned to our hamburgers, which were awesome, and then back to Old Homestead.

On the morning of the 20th we went back out to N683 so Fearless Trip Leader could do a photogrammatic fly over with the drone. We then drove another loop looking for other features and found a few, all with tags on them. We then opted for a lazy afternoon.

The next day it was time to leave Old Homestead. We packed up and made ready to depart, except Substitute Bulldozer's car wouldn't start. God's Gift dug out his jumper cables while Substitute Bulldozer popped the bonnet and realised it was a slightly bigger problem than expected. The battery in Substitute Bulldozer's car had moved, our guess is it happen when he hit the wombat warren, and one of the belts had dug into and ruptured one of the cells. This battery was now useless.

Not surprisingly we had a few other batteries with us, we just had to get one to fit. Once the selected battery was in place Substitute Bulldozer attempted to start the car, and needed a jump start anyway. The replacement battery barely had enough power to kick over the engine, so any additional load or if the battery wasn't 100% charged and Substitute Bulldozer would need a jump start. This happened a few times.

Substitute Bulldozer was now mobile so he and Navigator headed off. Fearless Trip Leader and God's Gift followed a little while later and found Substitute Bulldozer down the road, with a flat tyre. This also

The next day we set out to find a blow hole Navigator and seen on his previous trip but didn't find the number for. We checked out a couple of other holes on the way, and then found Navigator's hole, his coordinates were quite accurate. Unfortunately for Navigator it wasn't a new discovery as we eventually found the tag, N683. Not much of a cave, with three kestrel chicks nesting in it, but quite a decent breeze blowing out of it. Fearless Trip Leader decided this might make a good option for another seismic survey, so we set to work.

By the time we'd done 2 lines we were over it, it seemed like a much hotter day than previous. Then someone found out it was 42 degrees, and that explained it. We went back to Old Homestead and did nothing for the rest of the day.

The next day was still quite hot, but not 42.

Exasperated Partner decided to join Fearless Trip



Checking out yet another cave (photo: Cathi H-H)

proved to be a bigger ordeal than it should have as Substitute Bulldozer didn't have all the tools to get the spare out from under the Hilux. He then tried twice to repair the tyre, but it wouldn't hold, and then Fearless Trip Leader realised she had a tool that would allow Substitute Bulldozer to get his spare. We were on our way again.

Our goal was to get to Abrakurrie, but we stopped to look at things on the way. It was another hot day so we didn't stop for long anywhere and made it to Abrakurrie in good time. Abrakurrie is an amazing cave that's worth a visit, just because of its size. It doesn't take long to see it, but it was cooler in there so God's Gift stayed for a while.

The plan was to then camp back at Weebubbie for the night, but since we were quite close to Eucla it didn't take much convincing to go for some civilisation for the night.

It was then time to head home. The Nullarbor is an amazing place and so big that no-one could see it all. I am already looking forward to the next time I get out there to see some more of it.



Abucurrie Cave - big enough to fit a 747 in it. (Photo: Cathi H-H)

Nullarbor by the Numbers:

Participants:	12	Emus:	5
Kilometres driven:	40,799	Flies:	41,654,156,384
Flat tires:	3	Flies inhaled:	16
Car batteries destroyed:	1	Flies up nose:	23
Number of jump starts:	5	Kangaroos:	3,798
Number of rocks hitting car undercarriage:	274	Kangaroos lucky to be alive:	35
Caves entered:	34	Kangaroos not so lucky:	1
Metres of passage surveyed:	>275	Kestrels:	88
Metres of new cave passage discovered:	100	Kestrel eggs:	10
Ladders descended/ascended:	13	Kestrel chicks:	15
Overalls destroyed:	2	Koalas:	0
DistoX's calibrated:	1.5	Shingleback lizards:	219
Echinoids:	27	Shingleback lizards lucky to be alive:	56
Drone flights:	20	Shingleback lizards not so lucky:	15
Sledge hammer blows:	829	Snakes:	13
Yuuup calls:	1,639	Stinkbugs:	83
Litres of alcohol drunk:	16.375	Stinkbugs in tea:	2
Showers taken:	30 (2.5 per person)	Stinkbug bites:	7
Looks of amazement:	18	Geocaches:	2
Gazebos taken:	2	Brian's Glenrock stories:	63
Gazebos survived:	0.5	Storms survived:	1
Flooded tents:	8	Really, really windy nights:	1
Solar panels fried:	2	Time zones:	4
Camp chairs destroyed:	2	Hours playing computer games (all but Aengus):	0
Ants:	5,4154	Hours playing computer games (Aengus):	288
Camels:	91	Number of puns (all except Jim and Brian):	10
Camels rounded up:	0	Number of puns (Jim):	57 (He was under Brian's influence)
Centipedes:	3	Number of puns (Brian):	4,752
Echidnas:	1		



Caving – Nullarbor Expedition, a series of underground experiences – 10 & 12 October, 2018

Part 1 - Thampana (N-206) Surveying

Report by: Jim Crockett

Participants: Megan and Alan Pryke, Jim Crockett

Well I had finally arrived on the Nullarbor, WA via a very roundabout way, but that story is too long to tell here. I was met by Rod Smith, Brian and Daniel at the Mundrabilla Roadhouse. Daniel was on his way home after a week of caving. Brian was to be our navigator and jumped in with me in the Ute that I was fortunate to have been able to borrow. We proceeded to Mundrabilla Station to check in with the owners, briefly chatted with them, then headed towards our destination, Thampana Cave. We arrived at the camp and I met the rest of the team members and proceeded setting up camp. Four of the team were preparing to enter Thampana, but I was still a little weary from the two days drive from Adelaide so decided it was best to rest and finish setting up camp with my camping equipment which Rod had kindly transported from Sydney for me.

Later that evening the Thampana crew of Alan, Megan, Cathi and Rod O'Brien returned after a very long and arduous trip to the extremities of this cave, they looked tired.

The first night was spent feasting and drinking around the campfire and hearing stories from the team of the first weeks of their adventures which I had missed.

The next day I was asked by Alan if I was keen to go into Thampana to help him and Megan continue surveying and exploring new passages they had discovered earlier this year on their April 2018 Expedition. I was very keen to get underground, so I readied myself for the adventure.

The entrance to Thampana is in a 30m diameter depression with a blowhole in the middle of about 3m diameter. The pitch drops down about 12m which at times has considerable airflow both entering and exiting. We had a choice of a ladder or abseil, I chose to abseil.

Once inside the 3 of us proceeded along a well-known and well trogged path that leads to most of the known parts of this cave. After a short while we veered off the normal path towards the newly discovered section of the cave. This new section had been discovered by making an upward path between soil and loose rocks. This led to an upper level of low tunnels, crawls and squeezes. Alan thought this new section was actually looking like a parallel tunnel to an existing part of the cave which was already surveyed but he needed to tie the new passage survey back to the known part of the cave and we also needed to complete a survey of a new chamber discovered during the April Expedition this year. This new passage is now known as *Cryptography*.

This exploration was now getting very exciting, but the way on was not easy. After about 2 hours of crawling, stooping, climbing and a bit of sweating, we were at a climb up to a large chamber. Once I hauled myself up and turned my head to the left, I was absolutely astonished! There was a large room full of straws and columns, and what's more interesting is that they are all pure white. It turns out they are all *halite* (natural salt) formations. Turning to the right there was also wall to wall formations, both halite straws and columns and also calcite and gypsum formations. There were a multitude of forms of this decoration, what a treasure trove!



Gypsum Flower in the Thampana Gypsum Flower Gallery



Thampana Cave Cryptography passage - Santa's Beard

Our task was to start surveying this new chamber as they had only surveyed to the entrance when this chamber was discovered in April. The chamber was not found until the last day of their trip and there was not time to finish the survey.

Starting just inside the chamber entrance we surveyed the large decorated area to the left of the entrance. This contained many long and delicate halite

straws which meant we had to take a lot of precautions, but we were fortunate that there was a clear unobstructed path. We soon finished this area and then moved on to the right side of this large chamber.

We made a line on the left-hand side of the chamber to avoid the masses of decoration on the right-hand side. Initially the way was easy walking height and then up over a large boulder at the end of the passage. I was up the front locating new survey points and deciding the way forward, Megan was operating the DistoX and Alan recorded the measurements and sketched the passage shapes.

The passage gradually got smaller until it was basically a crawl between and around formations. It looked like the passage was going to end where we had a loop back to the previous section, but Alan found another way forward and Megan and myself waited while he went further. His voice could be heard getting further and further away indicating that this passage was longer than expected. He came back to report that the passage went



Megan and Alan in the Gypsum Flower Gallery

around in a long loop back to a point to the left of where we entered the new series of chambers and behind large areas of decoration that we had already surveyed. It seems these chambers were more interesting and extensive than any of us had imagined.

We finished that part of the survey there and made plans continue it later. We now wanted to get a better look at the obvious area to the right containing the masses of formations. Now we came upon a challenge as this area was wall to wall and floor to ceiling packed with formations much of it delicate halite straws. A way on of least resistance was found to a smaller upper chamber where we located a significant formation. We named this the "Cloud Burst". This was a large photogenic halite formation. This upper level continued in various directions all containing masses of delicate formation making progress tricky. We were now concentrating on photography and this consumed a lot of time and it was obvious we would have to make another trip as we had already had a long day and were getting weary knowing it was 3 to 4 hours to get back to the surface from here.

By the time we reached the cave exit my energy levels were low – I was not looking forward to the ladder climb out! We were soon back at camp reporting the story of this exciting find.

The next day I woke up quite weary and took the easier option of a visit to the nearby Thylacine Hole which is an excellent cave.



Cloud Burst halite formation

The now named *Cloud Burst* chamber was reached and we commenced our survey of this section of the cave with a very high concentration of beautiful and delicate formation. This area required great care and precise movement to prevent any damage, difficult to do when you are so excited about what you are seeing, and you are the first person on earth to see such things. Our surveying progressed well and we were following each possible lead to see what other secrets this cave had to offer.

At one point the way on seemed to be completely blocked but the cave had other ideas. There we found a hole underneath the formation allowing us access to continue this series, what a gem. At this point we were gob-smacked when this led to a small low chamber covered in gypsum flowers from wall to ceiling, this has been named *Gypsum Flower Gallery*.

We spent quite a lot of time that day checking every nook and cranny and surveying it as we went, this turned out to be another long day as Alan was very keen to complete the survey before the end of this trip. But, of course, this is never the case as there will always be loose ends and another good reason to come back, even though it's such an effort just to make it to the Nullarbor let alone to this part of this particular cave.

Alan has said that he is going to write an article (including maps etc) about this new discovery for an upcoming *Caves Australia* edition. I'm looking forward to seeing where the hell we ended up.

The following day Alan was keen for another assault on Thampana and so we were able to get a very early start. By now Alan had done some work on the survey of the *Cryptography* passage and it was now clear that this was not a passage parallel to a known passage in Thampana but was in fact leading off in a completely new direction to the rest of the cave. What a find!

We made our way into the cave and towards the new passages, at least this time I knew what I was in for, two hours of slog in narrow passageways and sore knees and legs afterwards.



Halite Straw in Cloud Burst chamber



Caving – Nullarbor Expedition, a series of underground experiences – 17 - 20 October, 2018

Part 2 - Old Homestead (6N-83) Surveying and exploration

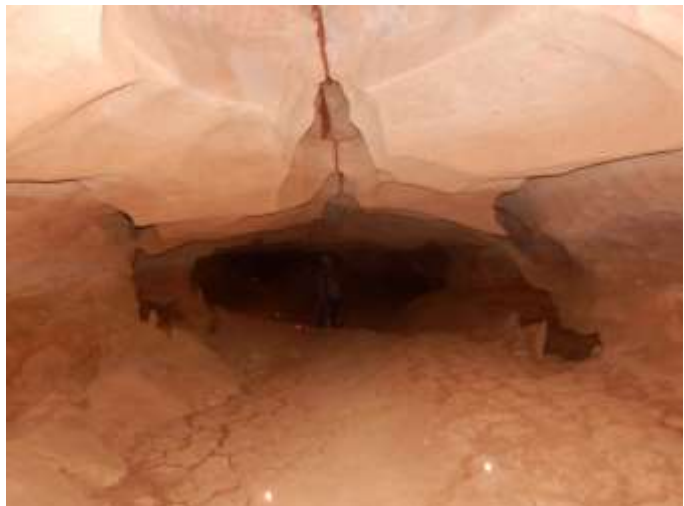
Report by: Jim Crockett

Participants: Alan Pryke and Graham Pilkington (Leaders); Minions: Megan Pryke, Rod Smith, Jim Crockett

To get from Thampana to Old Homestead was a very tortuous journey. I will not go into too much detail, but we ended up having to bivouac on a claypan overnight as we ran out of daylight (probably covered in another trip report elsewhere). But we did make it, a day later than anticipated (the other group who took the longer but easier route arrived the day before us). Not wasting too much time in setting up camp a trip to Old Homestead was organized to start later that day.

17th October 2018

With Alan and Megan showing the way in via the South doline entrance to Old Homestead we quickly made our way via the relatively easy entrance. It however does get steep at times but the way on leads to a large dome shaped chamber from where it goes down to a break down chamber filled with large slabs with many linear cracks. This leads to a short cut consisting of a dug out crawl which Alan tells us saves at least 20 minutes from the original path in. This crawl ends and we are now in a much wider ancient stream passage with numerous side leads and it is basically continuous easy walking for a long way. The “Bridge of Doom” is crossed and off to the left is an area called the “Mickey Mouse Holes” which has numerous low maze-like passages leading in many directions that cross over and interconnect at various levels. Alan advises this could provide hours of fun exploring the mouse holes but the fun part might be a bit of a misconception. Rod and myself were led to the junction to the mouse hole area and given brief instructions on where to go, while Alan went back to join Megan in some surveying. We both rested for a while before we went on a meander down the main stream path. The roof structure was quite interesting here with scalloping and a crack running along the roof line for probably 150m, not sure of how this crack formed and it appears this could be a result of a primary development, maybe the result of tectonic forces.



Old Homestead cave - roof crack (photo: Jim Crockett collection)

Eventually, Alan re-appeared and helped us to find our way out of the cave. Finding the tunnel for the short cut proved a little difficult but when we got through it we were on our way out.

18th October 2018

Another trip to the South branch of Old Homestead with Alan, Megan and Graham. The plan was to do some exploration in an area just beyond where Rod and I spent most of our time yesterday. We went beyond the “Mickey Mouse Holes” to an area called just “Mouse Holes”. Named because the holes are much smaller. This area requires extensive crawling with long stretches where there is very little space above your head. We got to a marked spot called “Hot and Sweaty” and true to the words that was exactly how I felt. There seems to be very little airflow in this confined area of mini passages and because of the great effort required to inch your way along you soon get up a sweat. We did eventually get to a larger spot where there was sufficient room to stand. It was here that I decided that this was as far as I was going to go, the heat had exhausted me. The other 3 though continued down more of the narrow tunnels and I can certainly say they were keener than me. As I sat there I could hear them grunting and groaning for some time. They seemed to be gone for quite a long time, although it was probably less than an hour. Even so I could still hear them and I would say they covered 60-100m of distance. They were looking for new leads but came back with nothing to report.



*Old Homestead Cave - Coyote in Henry Moore chamber.
(photo: Jim Crockett collection)*

Back at the main passage we continued down the stream like path to an area called the Henry Moore chamber famous for its profusion of what looks like semi abstract sculptures similar to the ones created by Henry. We were doing a little bit of exploring beyond this chamber and were able to follow a passage which was running parallel to the normal path for quite some time. Alan does not think this is on the cave map and will have to come back see whether this is correct.

With that done we all went back towards the entrance to the breakdown area to check closure for an earlier survey that was done. We quickly finished this job and headed out of the cave.

19th October 2018

Today is my first trip into the larger and longer North side of Old Homestead. The entrance on this side of the doline involves a steeper climb in, plus a 12m ladder climb down a shaft originally dug out by the early settlers to this area hoping to find a reliable source of water in the cave, but unfortunately this never eventuated and their hopes of survival in this area with no surface water was dashed. The upside of this was that it opened up this new section of cave and made it easier for future cave explorers to access.

After the ladder climb in the cave continues to descend until a former water course is met. Here we have to pass around a large boulder in the middle of the passage and from here there are several ways on. We are not heading too far in today with the plan to finish off surveying a section of cave not too far past the boulder. We follow a bypass route cutting off 20 minutes of hard core caving and crawling. We commence our surveying in a low section of the cave not too far away from the main trafficked path of the cave.

Here we spend 3 - 4 hours surveying an area which is rarely trogged going by the lack of foot prints. We have to tie this area back to the main passage (much higher up). We also survey another side passage where we found some unusual gypsum decoration. Alan is happy with the work we have done to add in more detail and close up a few dotted areas on the map.

At this point we have had enough for the day and made our way out with a feeling of achievement.



Old Homestead cave - gypsum formation (photo: Jim Crockett collection)

20th October 2018

Today Alan has more surveying plans in the North side of Old Homestead, he is not satisfied that an area on the map has been adequately surveyed. The previous night Alan and Graham had showed me the area of the map they were talking about. There were a number of dotted lines indicating unexplored leads. The map showed some interesting names for features in the area including "Hypodermic 1" & 2 and "Pissed Potters Passage". The other interesting thing was that none of us has ever been to this part of the cave including Graham who is considered the expert on this cave.

We quickly made our way in having been the same way only yesterday but when we passed the area we were in yesterday the territory was all new for me. The passage soon opens up and becomes "Underground Bushwalking" for a long way in this cave, the only obstructions being the occasional need to duck your head as roof line comes down to helmet height.

We make it to the junction of the main passage and the area we need to look at. In this area there are some very unusual formation under our feet. It looks like calcite has been deposited on top of an area of dried and cracked mud and then later the mud has been washed away leaving a criss cross skeleton of calcite

and hollow areas underneath. This is rather fragile and we take a lot of care to avoid damaging this unique decoration.



Old Homestead Cave - Needle-like formations (photo: Jim Crockett collection)

likely gypsum. The coverage of the needles is extensive from wall to wall and floor to roof but there is just enough room to get inside for a good look of this unusual formation. This appears to be what is marked on the map as Hypodermic 1. We continue surveying to the end of the low, flat and wide tunnel to where it ends overlooking a large hole in the floor with a serious drop of about 5 metres. It's at this point that Alan decides that we can stop surveying as he is happy that what we have surveyed so far is looking very much like what is on the map.

We are now in passage with much higher roof and so it is a bit of a relief that we don't have to crawl any longer. Off this

passage are numerous small side passages however there is one on the map which indicates dotted lines and unexplored so that is our next port of call. We follow this and it leads to a difficult squeeze with a small hole



Old Homestead Cave - patterns in pottery (photo: Jim Crockett collection)

looked more difficult from this side so I decided to take the smaller lower option, this turned out to be easier than it looked.

We soon pick ourselves up to start looking for the area of interest. We complete a detailed search of this area to try and match what we see on the map we have. We have a few false leads before I find a short climb up to the start of a horizontal tunnel. It starts as a low tunnel and then after a few metres in we find the unexpected as the trail is marked with tape and there is good quality formation on the side walls and floor. We start surveying from the initial entrance I found. The tunnels bears left and opens wider with a number of adjoining leads. However we continue on the marked trail surveying as we go. A larger cavity is spotted off to the left and this turns out to be a small chamber filled with needle like formation, most



Old Homestead - more needle-like formations (photo: Jim Crockett collection)

at floor level or a much larger hole higher up requiring a vertical squeeze and a tumble turn on your head to land on the other side. I chose the larger higher squeeze which landed in a low wide passage and again we were crawling. There were delicate formations on either side to avoid. We then came to another obstacle, a difficult airy squeeze through a slot. At this point we were starting run out of space to fit everyone. Myself and Graham waited here while Alan continued but the way on was getting smaller and he was able to achieve another 6m before it got too tight. We had however gone way past the dotted lines on the map and so would have added another 30m to the survey. This survey leg was completed and we all turned around to go back. At the squeeze the higher vertical squeeze

Once we were all back at the main passage we continued along it again. It started to open up more and we were now following a canyon section with dirt banks. What we next started to see was totally amazing! On top of the dirt banks was piles of what looked like broken pieces of pottery stacked evenly on



*Old Homestead Cave - needle-like formations growing in amongst pottery.
(photo: Jim Crockett collection)*

the dirt. These pieces of pottery covered a large area and notably there were many different patterns and colours on the pottery, many looked like leopard patterns. The floor level changed abruptly and we had to step up higher but we were still following a canyon with pieces of pottery either side almost neatly stacked. Then we again discovered another unusual part of this decoration, growing in between the pottery pieces were the same needle like formations we had seen earlier. So what we had were 2 very unusual formation formed side by side. Some of these needles were at least 20cm long. As we followed this canyon section along it ended in a small chamber again filled wall to wall and floor to roof with these needles. The needles here were

more extensive and much longer than the ones we had seen earlier. So this solves the mystery of Hypodermic 2.

We were all totally awestruck by these unique formations which were totally unexpected. The chances are this is totally unique not only in Australia but worldwide.

We think that the pottery pieces were created when cracking dried mud infused with calcite has fallen from the ceiling, not just in one event but several times over.

After our excitement we made our way back towards the main cave passage having to go back through the crawls. Megan was left in the area where the hole was in the floor to check this area over as we suspected this hole actually came down to the main cave passage. We were right as we could see Megan above us and were hoping that she could make it down with assistance but that was not possible and she ended up having to go the same way we went back through the crawls.

Back on the main track and doing our "Underground Bushwalking" we were soon back to the ladder climb and out of the cave all with smiles on our faces having seen such a fantastic section of cave.

What a way to end a trip as tomorrow we had to leave to start on the long journey home!



Old Homestead cave - pottery formations. (photo: Jim Crockett collection)

Caving – New Zealand, 3 – 11 November, 2018

Report by: David Stuckey

Participants: David Stuckey (TL), Rob Clyne, Johan Verhagen, Marilyn Scott, John Oxley, Heather Reid, Ed and Josette Squires.

This trip had been over 12 months in the planning ... that part was essential so that caving heavyweights, including some semi retirees (from caving) were able to fit it into their schedules. Having experienced the NZ way of doing things, and their excellent karst ... I knew this trip would be well

received...if only I could convince people to 'cross the ditch'.

Well, it happened. A group of 8 all landed at Auckland airport, where we proceeded to collect our hire cars, food and other provisions, before heading off to our accommodation on Puketiti Station. This is a large property owned by the Ingleby Group, who allow recreational caving. NZ has different liability laws to Australia where property owners / managers are protected from prosecution in the event of anyone injuring themselves. The upshot of all this is that exploration by cavers is welcomed at

some properties. There are a handful of caves which are still under the control of the Department of Conservation (DOC), the rest are privately owned and access is granted at the discretion of the property owner.

Over the past decade, the Trip Leader has participated in privately organised trips to these areas and gained a knowledge of the cave locations and routes. I was able to build on the goodwill of prior expeditions to book our own trip.

Our week-long adventure commenced with a traverse of **Pompeii Cave**. This is a massive river passage approximately 1.5kms long with 2 entrances, making for a wonderful introductory through trip. The approach march was through some muddy paddocks but eventually we arrived at the entry point. A slight stoop was all that was required to enter the cave, it only got bigger from there. There were a few speleothems, however the main attraction of this cave is the sheer size of the passageway, the roof frequently soaring out of sight. As one member put it, "... it just keeps going!". Caving which we're not used to in Australia ... more like underground bushwalking!

Now for something completely different, the fabulous **Kuratahi Cave**. This cave is outstanding because of its extensive gypsum decoration. This mineral frequently appears in NZ caves because of the North Island's volcanic activity. Geologically speaking, in the not too distant past, the entire island was covered in volcanic ash from the Taupo eruptions. This means that water percolating its way into the caves is charged with different minerals, manifesting as gypsum needles, flowers, crusts and balls.



Single Men's quarters at Puketiti Station – 5 bedrooms plus kitchen, bathrooms and sitting room. (Photo: Johan)



Some of the gypsum formations, the sheer number couldn't be captured by the camera (Photo: M)



Grand Canyon (photo: David S)

These formations are extremely fragile and very, very photogenic. Again, nothing which we're used to in Australia. Apart from the decoration, Kuratahi also has a wonderful meandering streamway.

The **Grand Canyon Cave** was next. You thought the passages of Pompeii were big? That's nothing! Not a lot of skill required to wander through this cave, in fact, we didn't even wear cave suits. The locals often joke that they could drive a land cruiser through it and this would be possible except for a large boulder pile at each end. This is one of the few caves with access restrictions due to the large bat population, however, our permit request was granted by DOC without any trouble.

Leaving Puketiti Station for a day we drove northwards to explore **Boomerang, Dollar & Briar's Caves**. It could be argued that this is one long cave with passage collapses in between, however, it is referred to and mapped as 3 separate caves. The first two caves are so named due to their plan shape on the map. Briar's cave is another walkthrough river passage with a small rock-pile to enter. Once in the stream way, it's easy walking on a solid rock floor with no mud or silt at all! Bliss! Many, many glow worm threads are present. At various places on the trip, the caver is aware of sticks & leaf material on the floor. Looking upwards, there are several Tomo entrances to this system, all appearing to be in excess of 100 metres in height. There is lots of excellent decoration as well as an upper level abandoned streamway, also containing some nice "pretties". Presently, the lower entrance was reached where the party

could enjoy a break before tackling the lower section of the cave which starts here and is a return "bounce" journey. It's a bit of a Jekyll & Hyde type of cave, the lower section is definitely Jekyll! Traversing the cave is now quite strenuous with sharp rock and deep pools everywhere. Bridging is the only way here, several members found the water. Near the bottom of the cave there is a balcony window to the lower section, looking down a 4 metre climb. Most people opted for a small downwards tube carrying all the water as a means of descent and ascent. A whole lot less scary than the climb.

Another brilliant cave off the property is **Battley's Cave**. This cave also features a fantastic stream way with multiple entrances. Although smaller in dimensions to Pompeii cave, it is none-the-less, just as exciting and interesting. Although possible to do as a through trip, we reversed the cave on our return. It is a very popular cave with locals as the entrance is right beside one of the farm roads. A large chamber in the middle of the cave features a lot of graffiti on the ceiling, burned there in carbon from acetylene lamps. For the amount of traffic



Battley's cave - one of the traverses in the large passage-ways (Photo M)

which this cave obviously receives, the straws in the upper level chamber are intact and all the flowstone we saw was clean, which is quite surprising.

The final adventure was **Thunderer Cave**, one of the longest caves at Puketiti. This is a mixture of narrow and twisting entrance series rifts, leading to medium sized river passage with occasional low sections and crawl ways. Eventually, a 4 metre waterfall is encountered, requiring a handline or tape to safely pass. Unlike most of the other caves, there is no lower entrance, so the team had to retrace their steps. The cave water has been traced to an efflux via a cave named Thunderfall Cave, where the water is discharged into the Mangaotaki Stream. This connection is, however, not negotiable.

Back at our accommodation, a cleaning session took place so that our gear was spotlessly clean for inspection by Australian Customs.

An excellent trip made so by the cooperation of participants, thank you all!

Key learnings:

- NZ Caves are really excellent.
- Communal cooking eased kitchen congestion.
- Nearly everyone cooks with minced beef.
- It's never too late to reacquaint your love of caving.
- You can teach an old dog new tricks.



Rob Clyne on the waterfall in Thunderer Cave - there was very little passageway after this waterfall (Photo M)



The group in Briars Cave (Photo: Jox)



Bushwalking – Corang River – 8 – 9 December 2018

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: Marilyn Scott (TL) Heather Reid, Trish Neil, Louise Green, Michelle Smart & Julie Bacon

This was a trip that appeared on a number of bushwalking club calendars (for which I lead walks), so we had some new faces! The Legendary Louise (a bushwalking friend of mine), suggested that we walk into



In the lagoon at the campsite, Michelle in her pool ring. Louise had brought along pool rings and a blow-up peacock for us to use.



Looking down-stream in the gorge that creates the Cascades - amazing rock outcrops.



Trish & Heather on the Peacock - paddling a peacock is "difficult", a few different styles were tried, but this was probably the best way.

guacamole and tortilla chips, olives, beetroot dip and crackers, dehydrated cheese and sugar snap peas, red wine (in the bottle) and strawberries & mango soaked in Cointreau – life doesn't get much better than that. The peacock was useful as a table for the happy hour feast.

Next day we walked cross country to Corang Cascades, a veritable playground of deep pools, waterfalls, rock scrambling and views to die for! Spent a few hours there, then back to camp, had a quick swim and then walked out, getting back to the cars at 5pm. A great weekend away.

the Corang River (one of her special places) and float around on pool rings drinking margaritas! What we didn't factor in was 30C temperatures, really too hot to be bushwalking with a heavy pack, but perfect weather for floating around on the lagoon.

We set off from Wog Wog campground at 9am on Saturday morning and arrived at the proposed campsite at 1pm, we then headed off upstream for a few hours. We got back to the campsite at 5pm for happy hour ... we'd carried in 3L of Margaritas, fresh



Happy hour – peacock made a good table.

Canyoning – Bell & Ranon Brook – 15 & 16 December 2018

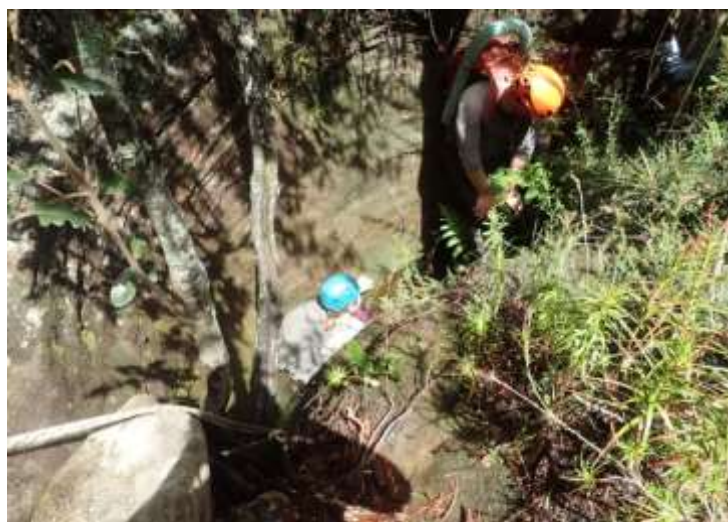
Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: Saturday – Marilyn Scott, Trish Morrow, Heather Reid, Jon Finch (plus BWOC members Jason Stafford, Steve Cooper and Alissa Martelli)

Sunday – Marilyn Scott, Jeff Boyd, Trish Morrow, Garth McLachlan, Cat McLachlan (plus BWOC member Jason Stafford)

I put this trip on the calendar for a couple of reasons – I'd heard about Little Bell and Belfry which give access to Bell canyon and I wanted to see what they were like, plus, none of the participants (other than Jeff) had done any of these canyons. Sounded like an "easy" weekend. I should have known something when Jeff (my wing-man) decided he wouldn't do Bell (he's got a dodgy ankle and he thought it was too big a day). I'd done it back in 1998 (as part of a 4 day full Bell/Wollangambe2 trip) and then again in 2009. I didn't remember it as being that long!

I was a little nervous about the wet weather that Sydney and surrounds had had for the week before. When I



The first of a few down-climbs to get into Little Bell

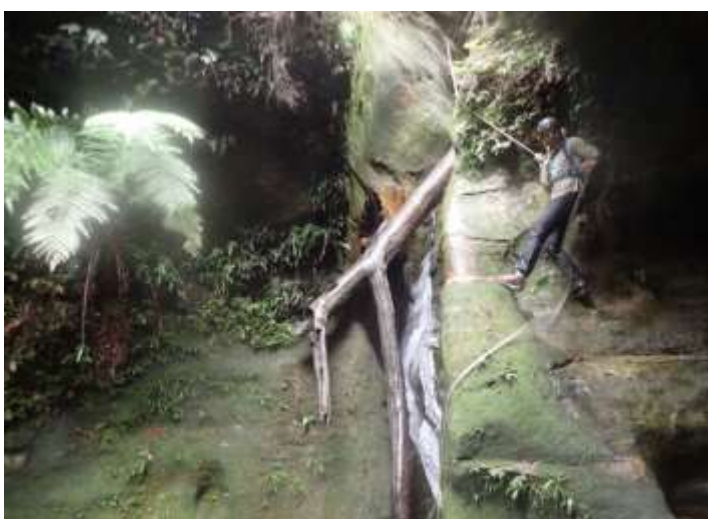
go" FB comments, I have to admit I was less than confident of the water levels, but with only 7mm on Thursday and 7mm on Friday and bugger all on Friday night, I started to think all would be ok. I did have a plan B though, if I got down to DuFours and it was a raging torrent then we'd retreat!

Saturday morning dawned; blue skies and everyone turned up on time, and we were off to DuFours to cross the creek (which had normal flow in it). Since 2009, the track to DuFours then up the other side is really well defined, plus there's a beaten path from the top all the way to Little Bell where we dropped in (it's always a relief for me when navigating to a canyon to actually get to the start of it – sort of like achieving a KPI). Little Bell was interesting insofar as



Part of the exit route out of DuFours Creek - quite exposed in places.

first started canyoning, 25 years ago, the weather forecast was, at best, synopsis charts in the daily newspaper, we just went out and did it. Of course, when we got to the track head if it was bucketing down, we didn't go, but a shower or two the day before for most canyons wasn't a deal breaker. These days though with the internet and everyone talking about high water, and "if you have to ask if it's been raining too much then don't



The very slippery log at a waterfall in Belfry, would have been easier if it hadn't been wet after the rain.



One of the climb-downs in Bell in the boulder field, three levels down, with sloping rocks and gaping chasms.

thunderstorm went over, making some of the group (new to canyoning) a little nervous. And then we were at the Wollangambe and the exit point. Car to car it took 10 hours for the young ones (under 40s) and 11 hours for the older ones – took my time on the walk out. It would have been an hour shorter if we hadn't had to set up so many hand lines through the boulders (for me).

What can you say about Ranon Brook –



Ranon Brook, Pitch #3 - done in two stages, from anchor on lh side (hard to see), down to a pool, swim across and then scramble out to the top of f the waterfall, great abseil.

none of us knew what we'd find and the climb-downs that others have photographed were a little more challenging than expected. Belfry is a lovely entry to Bell, made sporty by the climb down a small waterfall via a very slippery log.

Bell was indeed longer than I remembered, and had long stretches of boulders, many of which some of us (mostly me, needed assistance to get down the drops, good thing we had a hand-line) – I had better knees back in 1998! It is a lovely canyon, and the water wasn't as cold as expected, everyone was impressed by it (boulders excluded of course). It was a relief to finally get to DuFours at which point a massive



Ranon Brook, Pitch #1 – 10m from a log, with care you could avoid the swim at the bottom of this abseil!

it's a good canyon; four nice abseils, some swims and some lovely green sections. The entry track (which has become more defined over the years) down to the creek becomes very indistinct at the end of the spur, which makes it difficult to pick up on the other side of the creek, so we made our way down the creek for 100m before picking up the track again. Again, the water wasn't cold initially, but by the time we got to the 3rd abseil, a cool breeze was coming up the creek, thankfully at the junction we had some sun to sit in and warm up. The exit is quite sporty with three climbs, there are a couple of fixed hand-lines now in place (which weren't there when I did it last in 2012) and the upper section of Mistake Ravine (the upper section of Ranon Canyon) is very pretty. Car to car it took us 6 ½ hours, you could easily do it in 5.

Thanks everyone for joining me this weekend, great "official start" of the wet canyoning season.

Canyoning – Hat Hill, 21 December, 2018

Report by: Marcia Kaye

Participants: Marcia Kaye (TL), Marilyn Scott, Alan Green

The first trip for MSS led by me went ahead without incident 4 days before Christmas – not surprisingly we had the canyon to ourselves. Car to car (we set up a car shuffle), the trip took around 5 hours, but we weren't hurrying.

Hat Hill had a bad reputation as being polluted in the early days of canyoning, but these days it's no longer polluted and is a really pretty canyon, with a lovely



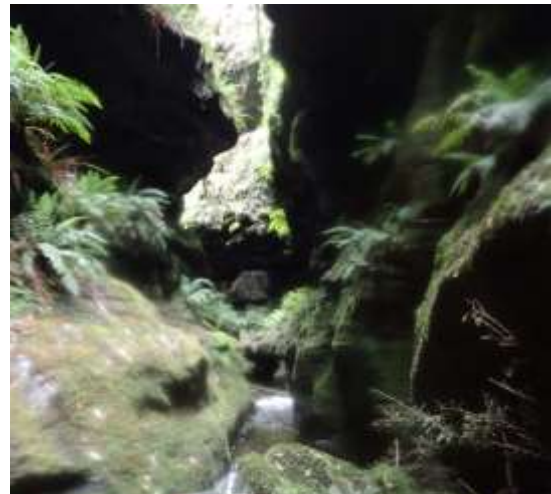
Marcia on one of the small climb-downs (Photo: Alan Green)

Coachwood forest section, some stunning canyon formations and a spa pool at the end rivaling Fortress.

Alan had a great time trying out his new Go-Pro set up, Marilyn and I just enjoyed the pools, climb-downs and swims. There are no abseils, and none of the climb-downs require a hand-line. A hail storm had hit Blackheath the night before, so there were a lot of fresh leaves in the pools, and quite a few new fallen trees (some wind storms recently).

On the exit route that we chose, there are a couple of small climbs but again no rope assistance needed.

All in all a great day out.



Some really nice green canyon formations (Photo M Scott)



The end of the non-abseil canyon overlooking the Grose Valley (Photo M Scott)



The end of the canyon, there's a big spa pool at the top of this waterfall and below it, would be perfect on a hot day. Photo Alan Green



Caving – Tasmania, 29 December – 4 January 2019

Trip Report: Rod Smith

Participants: MSS - Rod Smith, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Alan Green, Marilyn Scott, David Stuckey, Anna Ossig-Bonanno

Unless you've been living under a rock (although most cavers do!) you would know that there was recently an ASF conference held in Tasmania, named *The Darkness Beneath*. And you may be wondering why you should go to one of these events in the future. Well, I went, and this is what I can tell you

The conference is held every second year and is rotated around the states of Australia. The conference itself is 5 days but there is also pre-conference and post-conference trips which could be up to a week each, depending on the organising committee.

For the Tasmanian conference the pre-conference trips only lasted two or three days, but there were plenty of options on offer. I chose to stay in the Mole Creek area. After driving, with Cathi as passenger, from Sydney to Melbourne in a day, and then meeting up with Alan to journey on the Spirit of Tasmania overnight, I drove to Mole Creek and found out that the cave I'd been put on included a squeeze I probably wouldn't fit through. In the end I was happy to have a rest day, and instead walked up the road to Marakoopa Cave and did the guided tour.

The next day I did Diamond and Koh-I-Nor caves. Most of the people on the trip I'd never met before, so it was a great chance to meet other cavers from around the country. A couple of easy caves for the day.

Cathi and Alan had done different caves, there were about six different caves on offer each day, and that was just in the Mole Creek area. There were other pre-conference trips on offer as well, so much choice.

The next day we drove back up to Devonport to the conference venue and set up camp for the duration of the conference. As with all conferences there was a range of accommodation options, from camping to more luxurious choices. We choose the cheaper camping option, but since I'd driven I had enough to make it reasonably comfortable. More like glamping.

That afternoon/evening, being the day before the official start of the conference is when participants check-in, get their goody bags, and attend the welcome BBQ. Always well catered, *The Darkness Beneath* stuck to that high standard.

Monday morning the conference officially kicks off with a guest presenter talking about their field of expertise, always a great way to start the week. The rest of the week is jam packed with a multitude of presentations and activities. Although it's not mandatory to attend anything, it's all enjoyable and most participants have little or no down-time during the week. Some of the options on offer included:

- Numerous presentations, generally about 30 minutes in length. These range from very scientific studies involving caves and karst to information on different areas.
- Workshops, which give participants the opportunity to get more involved in what's happening, and can often be very educational.
- Field trips, which are often something you may not necessarily get the opportunity to do otherwise, but very enjoyable.
- ASF council meeting, for those interested in how the ASF is run. Usually split over two half days, it's also a great opportunity, if you're not involved, to do a bit of socialising.
- Speleosports, a cave-themed obstacle course for teams of four. A lot of fun, no matter how fast, flexible and capable you are.
- Prussik Challenge. A race to prussik 30m.
- Trivia night, also with a cave theme, but could also cover general trivia.
- Photo competition voted by participants - included some very impressive photos by various cavers.
- Raffles - Interesting cave-related paraphernalia raffled to raise money for the Karst Conservation Fund.
- Silent auction - Interesting cave related paraphernalia on auction to raise money for the Karst Conservation Fund.
- Official dinner at the end of the week during which the various prize winners are announced, the raffle is drawn, and any other presentations are made.

The Darkness Beneath had all off the above done to an exceptionally high standard. There were multiple field trips, a few short ones to fit in before or after most of the days' activities, plus the whole of

Wednesday set aside for a choice of field trips. I, along with nearly 40 participants, chose to do the Machinery Creek canyoning trip, which was awesome. Especially since the car shuffle meant no uphill walking, and the first group rigged, the last group derigged, and I was in one of the middle groups.

After the canyon we all met up for dinner and then a tour through Gunns Plain cave accompanied by beautiful live music. A superb day.

Speleosports had a great range of obstacles including crawls, squeezes, a ladder climb, water and mud (like a real cave). The trivia night was challenging. The photo competition included some spectacular photos from around the country and other parts of the globe. Plus I "won" a couple of the silent auctions. But I didn't win anything in the raffle. After all that it would seem it couldn't get any better, but then the post-conference trips began.



Speleosports - crawling through "mud" - a pool of pick jelly-like stuff.

available as often as possible. This was an awesome opportunity, especially for anyone that hadn't been to Mole Creek before.

There were other types of trips on offer as well. One day I went into White Rabbit to help explore and survey the cave. The map only showed a simple little cave, but Bob Kershaw had been in there recently and knew there was more to it. We went in and followed a couple of leads he knew about and surveyed what we found. There's potential for it to go further.

On one of the days there was a trip of just walking on one of the private properties to see the circular ponds. By all accounts a great trip. Although there was

no caving, they were shown a hole that had opened up since the last floods and no-one had been in yet, plus a hole that had been used for dumping rubbish and needed to be cleaned out. By the end of the week there were a number of potential projects for the local cavers.

Another day there was a rescue exercise. I went there in the afternoon to see how it was progressing and found it fascinating. Even though it was conducted on a cliff face in an old quarry it showed the amount of rigging and people required to implement a successful rescue. It was also comforting to know that there are some very knowledgeable and competent people who can oversee a rescue if required.

This was only some of the highlights of *The Darkness Beneath*. I recommend you all pencil into your diary the next ASF Conference to be held in Ceduna SA around Easter 2021.

Again there were choices, including Junee-Florentine, Mt Cripps and Mole Creek. Cathi and I had both chosen Mole Creek. Each day there were up to 6 caves on offer, so plenty of choice for all involved.

Prior to the conference I was told I should definitely do Lynds and Croesus, so I made sure I could visit both those caves during the week. Both wet caves, and very well decorated. I could see why they were recommended and I thoroughly enjoyed both days. The organisers had gone out of their way to show off the area making sure the best caves, including Kubla Khan, Genghis Khan, Croesus and Lynds, were



Speleosports - a muddy pool duck-under.

Canyoning – Kanangra Main – 5 January 2019

Trip Report: Hugo Hornshaw

Participants: Murray Newman (TL), Emma Parnell, Hugo and Jarvis Hornshaw & Cat McLachlan

Our family had some unfinished business with Kanangra Main; we had set out to do it three years ago but ended up doing Kalang Falls instead. I was 11 back then. This time me, my dad Mark, my brother Jarvis, Murray, Emma and Cat camped the night before the canyon at the Boyd River camp ground. In the morning we packed down our tents and drove a little way down the road to the start of the trail, and at about 6:30am we set off on foot. The walk in to Kanangra Main is along a fairly distinct track and only takes about 30 minutes. When we came to an open space just before the first abseil we stopped to put on wet-suits and harnesses. Then we scrambled down a steep, slippery and exposed section to the first abseil. The plan was to leave a rope on the first abseil so we wouldn't have to waste time pulling it down and recoiling it, and Murray was going to come back the next day and retrieve it, but as it turned out he never had to.



Mark & Hugo at the start of the trip.



Classic Kanangra Main shot!

The first 3 abseils are more like one huge multi-pitch abseil, descending a total of about 150 meters. Sometimes you're next to the main flow of water and sometimes you're right in it. On the first 2 pitches you stay completely dry and I was getting really hot in my wet-suit and thermals so it was quite a relief to get into the cool water at the bottom. At the bottom of the 3rd abseil, as some of us were sitting on the ledge waiting for the others to come down, a small broad headed snake washed up out of the water we had just dropped into, and slithered onto the rock in the sun. After the 4th abseil my dad Mark was feeling sick and exhausted, he didn't feel as if he could make it through the rest of the canyon and especially not the grueling walkout up Manslaughter Ridge. Fortunately there was an optional exit gully on the right that led back up to near the start. So he stopped there to rest and regain his strength, then climbed back up the gully, picking up the rope we had left behind on his way. So the rest of us carried on as a party of five.

Kanangra Main is a truly remarkable canyon. There are a total of 11 abseils, plus one that some of us jumped, some scrambled and some abseiled. The most fun ones are those where you're right in the middle of the main rushing torrent of water. Once the rope got caught on the pull down and it took about 10 minutes to jiggle it free, but aside from that and Jarvis' soggy sandwiches, everything went smoothly.

When we came to the end of the lovely canyon we took a decent rest then started the not so lovely haul up Manslaughter ridge. Finally, finally, after the long steep climb, we found ourselves on the path at the top (which seemed like a highway compared to what we had been on) and arrived back at the cars where Dad was waiting. All up, the round trip took us just over 11 hours. Murray did a great job leading us and Emma was an excellent co-leader as well. Danae Brooke next, maybe.

Canyoning – Whungee-Wheengee & North Bowen, 12 & 13 January 2019

Report by: Trish Morrow

Participants: Saturday: Trish Morrow (TL) Jeff Boyd, Murray Newman, Emma Parnell (all MSS), Steve Cooper, Alissa Martelli, Brad Moore, Peter Foley (all BWOC)

Participants: Sunday: Trish Morrow (TL) Murray Newman, Emma Parnell (all MSS) and Steve Cooper (BWOC)

The forecast for a hot day meant this was a great day to do Whungee Wheengee. We were expecting a longer day, especially as I am always slow up hill, and this canyon has two climbs out of the Wollangambe.

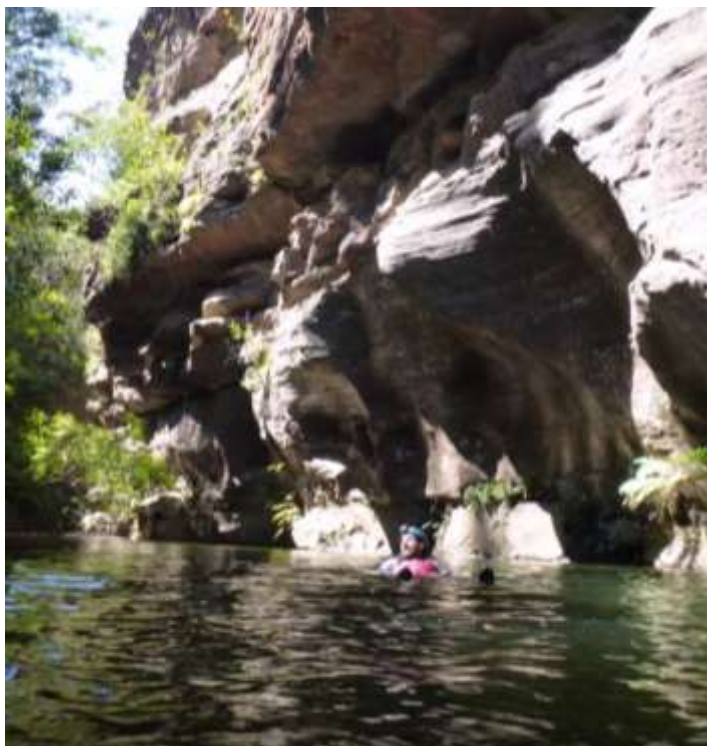
We had a group of 8 in front, and about the same number behind. So, we took our time and had lots of rest stops waiting for the group in front. For some of the abseils we were able to climb around (or rather climb down a hole and hope it came out the other side), so in a way we had a bit of “caving” as well.

This canyon is famous for duck-under, where the water may be so high that you have to swim under the rock overhead. But the water was not that high, even with all the recent rain, so, we were able to swim under most obstacles just bumping our heads along (thank goodness for helmets).

This is a long canyon and ends at the Wollangambe 2 section, where we floated downstream for about 500m to the exit. Here we ran into more groups who’d been liloing.



Trish in WW - perfect place to be on a hot day.



Murray floating down the Wollangambe

Kudos to one group who picked up 4 abandoned lilos at the start and were taking them downstream and walking them out. Two of our guys took a lilo each – they were in as new condition! The story we had heard was they were abandoned after a rescue, but it could just be a story. At the W2 exit there were about 15 people, so we all separated to get changed etc. And then it was the long walk up and out.

Timing: left Cathedral at 8.45 and back in camp between 5.15 and 5.45 (fast vs slow). We were delayed by up to an hour waiting for the group in front (about 15-20mins at each abseil/climb down section).

So, for North Bowen lower (aka Gobsmacker), all the old men went home, leaving three young and fit, and slow old me again. Unfortunately, not much sun today, so lighting not so great. Another group was ahead of us from the carpark, so we took our time and

enjoyed the forest walk in. Couldn't believe it when we caught up at the first abseil. Also, couldn't believe it when we pulled out the rope and found it had blown out on the sheath and the core was exposed. Luckily it was about halfway along and we could isolate it and still use the rope. We kept catching up to this group even though we weren't hurrying. Eventually we got to the last abseil, where it took me a while to realise we were at the "hole abseil". D'oh! So we rigged while the other group abseiled from the tree, and all had great fun going down the hole and then being swamped by the fast flowing water (the water level was perfect). Finished with lunch in the little bit of sun all day, and then had a lovely walk out. Lots of rope/handlines now on the climb out.

Timing: roughly 9.45 to 4ish. Again, some delay by a group in front, but we weren't in any great hurry. Thanks Peter, Brad, Jeff, Murray, Emma, Steve, Ali for being a great crew.



Emma abseiling down the hole.



Murray about to go down the hole in North Bowens.



Canyoning – Bjelke's Mind & Bubble Bath – 26 – 28 January 2019

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants MSS: Marilyn Scott (TL), Jeff Boyd, Heather Reid, Murray Newman, Emma Parnell, Trish Morrow & Melinda Turner. BWOC: Peter Terry; NHVSS: Andrew Baker & Dave Milligan; RSS: Alan Caton

Whilst it looks like a cast of thousands, people came and went during the three days. The weather forecast was for really hot days, and that's what we got, plus high humidity. Some of us walked in on Friday, in the heat, good thing we had plenty of water, if I'd been just ½ an hour quicker, we might have made it in with plenty of daylight, as it turned out, we spent about an hour in the dark, it's hard to find that entry gully from the saddle (good job spotting the track Emma)! I was surprised (but shouldn't have been) at how distinct a track to the Bridge/Bubble Bath/Bjelke's area there is nowadays, when I first walked in there in 2001 and then again in 2013, there was absolutely no track.

We had a base camp in Bubble Bath Creek in the overhang (which is only suitable for 6 people although there's one or two other spots further up the creek) which was handy during the thunderstorm on Sunday evening.

Bjelke's Mind was a nice canyon and lived up to its name, straight and narrow and very dark, the walk out should have been dead easy (up the spur onto the ridge and should only take an hour and a half) but we stuffed it up and doubled that time. We had a bonus abseil on the way in, and a bonus rock climb on the way out. Both Melinda and I are not climbers by any



Peter on one of the Bjelke's Mind abseils (Photo: Emma)



Heather on abseil #1 Bjelke's Mind (Photo: M)



*Emma on another Bjelke's mind abseil (not sure which one)
Photo: M*



Melinda on the climb out (photo: Emma).

stretch of the imagination, so on the second climb (the longest one), Murray set up a rope and Melinda and I put our chest prussic on and used it as a safety, made the climb up for me far less risky. Thanks Murray, Emma and Jeff for helping the non-climbers on the climb. Andrew and Dave, who were only there for one day and wanted to fit in 2 canyons, so left our group at the end of Bjelke's to go off and do Bridge (nice easy entry off the Bjelke's exit ridge), would be nice to be young and fit!

We were supposed to do Crikey on Sunday but given we'd had a big day on Saturday we opted for Bubble Bath, which was as great as I remembered it. I expected a track to the start but couldn't see it, mind you I was on a bearing so it could have been either side. The pools when we entered the creek were very welcome as the sun was beating down on us. If Bubble Bath wasn't a 3 hour walk from the car park, it would probably be one of the most popular canyons around, it's got something for everyone. After Bubble Bath, five of the group walked out, still too hot for me so four of us elected to stay at the overhang and enjoy a fire,



Murray on the jump (Photo: Emma)



Peter Terry and Alan Caton at the end of an abseil. (Photo: M)

happy hour and another night in the bush. The walk out on Monday was still humid but not half as hot.

Thank you to all the rope carriers (with a large group in Bjelke's we had extra ropes and leap-frogged the abseil set ups to save time), and big thanks to everyone who maintained their sense of humour on the stuffed up Bjelke's exit (my bad, have to go back to leadership school!).



Canyoning – South Bowen Creek, 9 February 2019

Report by: Alissa Martelli

Participants MSS: Marilyn Scott (TL), Heather Reid, Alan Green, Trish Neil, Marcia Kaye, Jon Finch and Alissa Martelli

With a cooler day finally arriving a group of 7 of us embarked upon South Bowen Canyon after a quick car shuffle from Pierces Pass. A long log slide, short abseils, rock slides and some small swims filled our day whilst Alan meticulously recorded our many moments of our canyon with the refrain of “*whatever it takes*”. The canyon was relatively free of debris and logs making it most pleasant. We were greeted with incredible masses of white fungi flowering deep in the canyon which nestled and wrapped around the tall trees. With a fire trail awaiting us at the end, we ended our day with smiles and time to breathe.



Alissa making the climb down look easy, others abseiled it.



Jon on the 20m abseil



White fungus growing up the tree



Marcia on the first abseil



Alan on the log slide - and he "nailed it"

Canyoning – Upper, Upper North Bowen Creek, 10 February 2019

Report by: Trish Neil

Participants: Marilyn Scott (TL), Heather Reid, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Alan Green; Trish Neil and BWOC: Glen.

Dark, cool, water on rock, sunlight on ferns. Climbing down slippery logs, stretching across impossible gaps, plunging into cold pools. Must be a canyon!

We were only intending to do the first part of the creek, so we went to Wynnes Rock Lookout to suss out our exit, and it looked like quite a smooth climb up from the creek. Then off to the entry point and very shortly found ourselves at the beginning of the canyon. Though she had been told that there were no real abseils, just a few handline climbs, Marilyn wisely brought her harness; we ended up with three harnesses between six people, which was just as well because not all of us are long legged rock climbers! There were several 'interesting' climb downs, such as an old tree with the branches cut off to make steps, which ended, so then you had to stretch across to a rock hollow and wriggle down. I borrowed Marilyn's harness and learned about abseiling on a munter, something else new to me.

There was quite an extended middle section where the creek opened out a bit, which was very pretty, and then it was back into slot canyon territory with some more tricky bits to negotiate, and a nice slide (especially if you had the rope to get past the



Nice open forest for the walk in.



Tricky climb down - some of us abseiled it



Another tricky climb down that some of us abseiled.



Slippery Slide

bumpy bit at the beginning!)

The exit was found quite easily, just opposite the second creek on the right, and confirmed by GPS, and it was a good exit straight up with a bit of scrambling and back to Wynnes Rock. Beautiful day, good company, great little canyon, what more could you possibly want?



Field Day – Canyoning Self-Rescue Skills – 17 February 2019

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: David Stuckey, Heather Reid (assistants), Alan Green, Yunn Chin, Jon Finch and Marilyn Scott (Co-ordinator)

We met at 9am at Thornleigh, and headed off down into Lane Cove NP to a spot that David had used in the past for abseil/SRT practice and which would also give us some shade when the day heated up. We set up some ropes and did a few warm up abseils, then Chin and Jon, who have been canyoning using ATCs, tried out a number of descenders to see which one suited them best (PitStop, Hydrobot, 5-bar and 6-bar racks or Sqwirel). The venue offered a number of different types of abseils (easy to overhangs), but we chose to focus on the overhangs.

Once Jon and Chin had decided on what descender they liked the best, we then pulled out prusik cords and introduced different type of prusik knots and then sent them up the ropes. It was starting to get hot so I didn't send them all the way to the top (and they experienced the joys of going down the rope on prusik cords). However, Chin must have thought prusiking was his thing and he went all the way to the top of the overhang (well done!). They then learned a generic way of tying off and using a leg wrap as a "quick" tie



Chin prusiking up to the overhang (Photo: Alan Green)



Alan giving his Stop Descender a go.



Jon giving the PitStop a trial run (no-one liked the PitStop!)

off.

We ended around 1.30 and packed everything up for the day. There will probably be another practice day for intermediate canyoners in the not too distant future (maybe focus on changing ropes, passing a knot, and some handy hints for when you're the one pulling down the rope). If there's interest too, we may run a day for beginner canyoners in the winter months. Hope you all enjoyed the day.





MSS TRIP CALENDAR

2 Mar Canyoning Mt Tomah	NHVSS NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Andrew Baker Contact: Andrew.Baker@environment.nsw.gov.au Details: Claustral Canyon – weather permitting (or Ranon if Claustral looks too busy). Claustral is a classic trip. Proficient abseiling skills, fitness and a wetsuit are essential. We'll probably be out for 8-9 hours with a relatively early start (8-30am). Camping the night before is recommended for those travelling further afield. If you're interested contact Andrew asap as numbers limited.</p>
8 – 10 Mar Canyoning Blue Mountains		<p>Trip Leader: John Gray Contact: JOHN.GRAY@sydneywater.com.au Grade: Hard Details: Three days canyoning in Yarramun Creek area, Captains Canyon and one of the Up Ya Canyons (either Up Ya Crack or Up Ya Bum). Camping in either a camp cave on Yarramun or headwaters of Captains. Due to the exploratory nature of the trip numbers will be limited and experienced canyoners would be preferred. If the forecast is for hot weather, walk in will start at 6am (possibly necessitating car camp at end of Wollangambe Fire Trail for some).</p>
16–17 Mar Abercrombie Project – Caving Surveying & SRT Skills Development	REVISED	<p>Trip Leader: Beth Little Contact: littlebeth78@hotmail.com Grade: Easy Details: Abercrombie Caves. Come and work on the cave mapping and survey project. Exact details of activities for weekend to be confirmed closer to date.</p> <p>Co-ordinator: Marilyn Scott Contact: marilyn_scott@bigpond.com Details: On Saturday, once we finish our underground activities, we will take out the Scaling Poles and re-familiarise ourselves with these useful tools. Beth will show us how to put them together and how to use them to get to an inaccessible area (Beth has a particular cave in mind!)</p>
16-17 Mar Caving Colong	CSS NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Alan Silva Contact: 0402 730 983 Great area, rarely visited out in the Kanangra/Yerranderie area.</p>
22 – 23 March Canyoning TBA	NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Marilyn Scott Contact: marilyn_scott@bigpond.com Details: canyons to be decided depending on participants, am happy to do beginner canyons (possibly non-abseil) for anyone who wants to bring along friends/family to introduce them to canyoning (they'll need to join as temporary members). Contact me asap so that at least Saturday's canyon can be selected.</p>
7 pm 23 March Social Mt Wilson	NEW	<p>Canyoning Slide Night co-ordinated by the NSW Canyoning Association. Full details will appear in the next newsletter. There will be a BBQ fundraiser by the Mt Wilson RFS. Opportunity to run a MSS canyon trip on either Saturday or Sunday, Contact Rod if interested (roderick__smith@hotmail.com).</p>
24 March SRT Training Glenrock SC	NHVSS NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Daniel Burt Contact: daniel@danielburtphotos.com Details: Glenrock State Conservation area, Yuelarbah Trail Car park https://goo.gl/maps/ym9Vuk8Lm252 at 9am. The day will focus on trying out one of the small team assisted rescues as demonstrated at the Tasmanian Conference. The site also allows for plenty of abseil practice, rebelay crossing, moving past redirects and maybe some tyroleans. Book in with Daniel and Melissa Hadley melissa.hadley2@tafensw.edu.au</p>

29 - 31 March Caving Timor	NHVSS NEW	Trip Leader: Garry Smith Contact: gksmith29@icloud.com Details: Come along for some general caving, which may also include some digging and lots of relaxation if you're inclined. Accommodation in the hut.
6 – 7 April Abercrombie Project		Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: roderick_smith@hotmail.com Grade: Easy Details: Abercrombie Caves. Surface trog weekend, aim to locate and GPS reference cave tags. Other activities are likely but are yet to be determined.
6-7 April Caving Tuglow	CSS NEW	Trip Leader: Alan Silva Contact: 0402 730 983 Details: If you wish to book into this trip you need to contact Alan Silva asap as the permit will need to be amended before the trip.
13 - 14 April Navigation Training Capertee Valley		Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: roderick__smith@hotmail.com Grade: ungraded Details: learn navigation using map and compass.
13-16 April Caving Yarrangobilly	CSS NEW	Trip Leader: John Brush Contact: 6231 4294 or 0429 314 294 Details: probably best caving area in NSW for decoration.
19 – 22 April (Easter) Caving Ashford		Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: roderick__smith@hotmail.com Grade: Easy Details: This is a chance to explore a new area. Ashford is situated near the Queensland border. According to Google it's about 8 hours from Sydney. There are at least four known caves. More details to follow.
25 – 28 April Canyoning Glen Davis		Trip Leader: John Gray Contact: JOHN.GRAY@sydneywater.com.au Grade: Hard Details: Four days. First day walking up one of the tributaries of Freshwater Creek arriving at a camp cave by lunchtime and then exploring that branch in the afternoon. 2nd day we would be exploring the next branch of Freshwater which is completely unknown. 3rd and possibly 4th days would be exploring the next creek down (reputedly to be the REAL Doomsday). Due to the exploratory nature of the trip numbers will be limited and experienced canyoningers would be preferred.
25 - 28 April Caving Glenrock	NHVSS NEW	Trip Leader: Brian Reeves Contact: 4982 9905 or 0402 099 329 Grade: Easy Details: Bush camping and fun vertical caves. Lots of opportunities to find new caves. Bring your own drinking water, very basic bush camp site, no facilities.
2 May Social/Meeting	NEW	Join us at North Ryde RSL (Corner Pittwater & Magdala Roads, North Ryde) for our Quarterly General Meeting (starting at 7.30pm). Dinner beforehand - meet up at the Bistro at 6pm - great \$15 steak dinner on Thursday nights. Meeting follows (at 7.30pm), followed to discuss progress on projects and upcoming events.
4 – 5 May Abercrombie Project		Trip Leader: Roderick Smith Contact: roderick__smith@hotmail.com Grade: Easy Details: Abercrombie Caves. NSW Speleo Council Meeting at Abercrombie. Some associated activities to the project such as any remaining surface trog required for GPS referencing, or re-survey activities.

9 May Seymour Centre	NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Roderick Smith</p> <p>Contact: roderick__smith@hotmail.com</p> <p>Grade: Social</p> <p>Details: Banff Mountain Film Festival. Sydney Seymour Centre from 7:00pm to 10:00pm. Please RSVP by 31/03/2019 to purchase tickets.</p>
18-19 May Caving Jenolan	NHVSS NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Andrew Baker</p> <p>Contact: Andrew.Baker@environment.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Grade: TBA</p> <p>Details: Awesome caving in the Blue Mountains, staying at the hut at a small cost. Contact the trip leader Andrew for details. Be aware, due to accommodation limits and cave permits, numbers will be limited for this trip.</p>
1 – 2 June Abercrombie Project		<p>Trip Leader: Beth Little</p> <p>Contact: littlebeth78@hotmail.com</p> <p>Grade: Easy</p> <p>Details: Abercrombie Caves. Come and work on the cave mapping and survey project. Exact details of activities for weekend to be confirmed closer to date.</p>
7 - 10 June Caving Timor & Crawney	NHVSS NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Garry Smith</p> <p>Contact: gksmith29@icloud.com</p> <p>Details: General caving at Timor and a day trip to Crawney Pass caves. May include some digging, lots of relaxation. The fire place at the hut (our accommodation for the weekend) is now fixed and ok to use in the winter.</p>
8 - 10 June Caving Jenolan	NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Chris Johnstone</p> <p>Contact: Chris.Johnstone@transport.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Grade: TBA</p> <p>Details: TBA</p>
21 - 23 June X Country Skiing Snowy Mountains	NHVSS NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Garry Smith</p> <p>Contact: gksmith29@icloud.com</p> <p>Details: Beginner Cross Country Skiing weekend. (Camping at Island Bend) Day trips learning to ski. If you have never done this before then this is the perfect opportunity to earn. A suggested list of things to take will be sent out to participants prior to the trip. It will be lots of fun, so come along and join in the adventure.</p>
July date TBC SRT Skills Development Sydney or BM area	NEW	<p>Trip Leader: TBC</p> <p>Contact/Co-ordinator: Marilyn Scott</p> <p>Grade: Training</p> <p>Details: Refresher of SRT skills for those who wish to participate in the 4 August Cave Rescue training (and tweek their gear with an experienced person) and the Tuglow Caves trip in Mid September. Exact details of what skills will be practised will depend on participants</p>
4 August Training Sydney	NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Brian Evans</p> <p>Contact: be.somewhat.insane@gmail.com or 0409 443 415</p> <p>Details: Vertical Cave Rescue Training in the Sydney Region conducted by NSW Cave Rescue Squad (more details to come when event is locked in place). Weekend 1 of 2. To register or for further information contact Brian Evans (at least a week) before training date.</p>
23-25 August 2019 Caving Glenrock	NHVSS NEW	<p>Trip Leader: Brian Reeves</p> <p>Contact: 4982 9905 or 0402 099 329.</p> <p>Bush camping and fun vertical caves. Lots of opportunities to find new caves. Bring you own drinking water, very basic bush camp site, no facilities.</p>

13-15 Sept 2019 Caving Timor	NHVSS NEW	Trip Leader: Garry Smith Contact: gksmith29@icloud.com Details: Come along for some general caving, which may also include some digging and lots of relaxation if you're inclined. Accommodation in the hut.
14-15 Sept Caving Tuglow	NEW	Trip Leader: David Stuckey Contact/Co-ordinator: marilyn_scott@bigpond.com Grade: Medium Details: Tuglow Main is a classic vertical cave with an extensive stream way at the bottom of the entrance series of pitches. Some good decoration remains, despite the heavy use the cave receives from caving groups. Some wading is required and cavers may get wet up to the waist. Upstream reveals a noisy 10m waterfall which is avoided via a series of high-level passages. A good cave in which to practise your SRT. Participants need to be competent with all aspects of SRT, including abseiling, prusiking, passing redirections and rebelay etc. (Numbers will be limited) Opportunities for SRT practice will be scheduled in the months prior to the trip.
21-22 Sept Caving Jenolan	NHVSS NEW	Trip Leader: Andrew Baker Contact: Andrew.Baker@environment.nsw.gov.au Details: Awesome caving in the Blue Mountains, staying at the hut at a small cost. Contact the trip leader Andrew for details. Be aware, due to accommodation limits and cave permits, numbers will be limited for this trip.



Kanangra Main - Murray setting the rope(s). Photo: Mark Hornshaw.

Appendix 1 – MEETING MINUTES

MSS 428th General Meeting – 7 February 2019

Held at North Ryde RSL

Meeting Opened: 19:30

Present: Roderick Smith, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Chris Johnstone, Beth & Elliot Little, Marilyn Scott, David Stuckey, Bob & Pam Horn, and Bailey Scott (visitor)

Apologies: Jim Crockett, Helena Johnstone

Any Corrections to Previous Meetings Minutes: None

Correspondence: None

Committee Members Reports:

President: None

Treasurer: Account balance as at 7 February 2019:

Brought forward: \$3,969.21

Total Incoming: \$3,479.01

Total Outgoing: \$2,484.11

Closing Balance: \$4,964.11

MSS still has 3 accounts, Commonwealth Bank account to be closed. Anyone who wishes to look at the full report, please email secretary@mssadventure.org and it will be emailed to you.

Equipment Officer: the 57m rope is due for disposal, after which MSS will have 1 x 60m + 2 x 40m ropes. Question posed do we need another 60m rope? Agreed yes, resolved to get a quote for 60m rope.

Training Officer: Running abseil/canyoning training 17 Feb; SRT days to be added to calendar (SRT skills required for S&R course and Tuglow); To be added on to Abercrombie trip (March trip) (1) Scaling Poles and (2) SRT? Ladders?

Librarian: Conference in Tassie – a lot of newsletters were picked up for \$1 – to be sorted. Newsletters continue to be scanned.

Web Manager: Minor edits only on Website. Website hosting charges - Hostek – \$69 - to be reimbursed to Rod Smith (resolved).

Membership Report: As at 31/1/19

At end of year	1 adult family	Two adult family	Single	Intro Single	Intro 1 adult family	Member of another club	Total adults	Total kids
1/1/17 – 31/12/17	4	7	17	4	0	0	40	13
1/1/18 – 31/12/18	3	8	23	8	1	1	52	15
1/1/19 – 31/12/19	2	8	21	6	1	1	47	14

3 full members not renewing (Chris Johnstone to follow up with Ray Etherton)

2 Prospective members who did not opt to take full membership

No new members

No trips have been cancelled due lack of interest because of NHVSS joint trips

Expected that this will be even better with CSS reciprocations

Interesting stories from recent activities: David Stuckey told stories about New Zealand Trips (report sent to editor for MSS Trip)

Project Updates:

To do list have been provided to other trip leaders (see Attachment 2)

No leads on who will write Flora and Fauna chapters – call to anyone who knows who could be a good candidate to write (call to members to let Beth little know if they have ideas)

- Rod Smith to lead *tag location project*.
- Need to start applying for Grants (Beth Little to create financial plan for project). List of items that have been discussed to be included as part of the Grant:
 - Licence for Adobe
 - Cost of accommodation and travel
 - Publication costs
 - Advertising costs
 - Possibly costs to have a stall at the next conference
- Call to members to provide any other things that need to be included
- Marilyn to provide comparison quotes for some items

- Grants need to be submitted in the next couple of months in order to be processed in time
- General interest shown on the next Abercrombie trip (after ASG conference).

New Business

Updating ASF DB

- Noted an number of MSS members were still noted as un-financial on ASF DB whereas they were really up to date (DB was not up to date) - it was noted (David Stuckey) checked by National parks when going on trips and some members were told they could not participate on trips (it was sorted out before it really stopped anyone going).
- No action but member should be aware so that we make sure we are up to date before major events (especially at the end of the year)

Update provided from the ASF council meeting held during the conference (Rod Smith). Noted items discussed:

- ASF executive
 - Jim Crockett no longer on the Executive
 - Rod Smith is now on the Executive
 - Cathi Humphrey-Hood is now ASF librarian
- Watering down of Speleology focus for ASF affiliated clubs was discussed
 - No longer need to have Speleology as core reason for Club
- All of Caves Australia is going to be made publically available on the web
- ASF have a strategic plan (to become a Business Plan)
 - Changes around how ASF is run
 - Changes to how it relates to other bodies/Groups
 - Watch this space for further updates
- ‘CASM’ (sic) lost rights to be a ASF club
- KARST Conservation load to be spread across more people

Club Reciprocals/Cross overs (Marilyn Scott) - CSS

MSS will advertise CSS trips on our program but not on the MSS website. Resolved items from the CSS General meeting

- CSS will advertise MSS trips on our program but not on the CSS website
- CSS will allow MSS members on their trips.
- Trip leaders “shall have the final say on the composition and size of any trip”, (as per our constitution). A CSS trip leader can designate a “CSS only” trip.
- MSS members on CSS trips will pay trip fees in line with MSS fees on MSS trips. CSS members going on MSS trips will pay MSS trip fees. (CSS members do not pay trip fees on CSS trips, equipment costs are covered by CSS funds.)
- Where there are a limited number of spaces available on a trip then priority is given to members from the club running the trip, up to a designated time before the trip. (MSS people will not be kicked off a trip the night before because a CSS member tries to get on a trip at the last minute).
- CSS and MSS members who cannot go on a CSS trip because of number limits will be given priority on the next trip.

NHVSS will continue to advertise; Similar rules to the above continue

Discussed that when running trips MSS trip leaders can denote trips as MSS only.

Trip Leaders need to note minimum equipment/Skills requirements because other clubs do not always have the same rules.

Marilyn Scott to include an article in the Newsletter that we now have reciprocal rights with these clubs

S&R Contacts

David Stuckey details to remove Home number from PLB list (Jim Crockett to update); PLB list is currently

Name	Mobile	Home
Beth Little	0450 226 811	
Rode Smith	0438 444 262	
David Stuckey	0414 590 305	02 9484 9756

Beth Little is nominated as the contact for Caves Rescue

Resolved - ‘I’ll be home honey’ – (see below) message to be included in the newsletter (Marilyn Scott) (resolved to include on a semi regular basis to let newer members know)



Print this out for future Reference!

MSS leaders usually don't advertise a specific "end time" for activities, and often leave it open-ended, like "we'll finish Saturday evening". As a participant, you may return home later than planned due to a variety of reasons (e.g. bad weather, vehicle breakdown, injured party member, longer than expected trip) and often you won't have mobile reception to update those at home. So that you don't unduly worry your family, emphasise that they should give you a little leeway time-wise.

It's also good practice to let them know that in most cases leaders will have at least two (if not more) PLBs on MSS trips and so, if there is an emergency (accident or injury), the leader will set off the PLB, there's no need for your family to call the police because it's dark and you're not home.

However, if you haven't returned at a "reasonable time", and those at home want some reassurance, they can contact one the following MSS S&R contacts:

• Beth Little	0450 226 811
• Roderick Smith	0438 444 262
• David Stuckey	0414 590 305

If you are in an overdue party, phone home as soon as you're in mobile range (or stop at the first available public phone). Please stress that if they have contacted one of the above S&R contacts, and they then hear from you, they **MUST** phone the S&R Contact immediately to let them know you're ok.

Print this out and put it somewhere handy for future reference!

KNP Track strategy and Plan of Management (PoM) amendments

If members want to read this please contact Beth Little for copies.

- PoM has come out with Amendments
 - Camping at Yagby
 - New area (in the Precinct)
 - Area on exit road is no longer proposed
 - Cotterills to stay but more controlled and must be booked.
- Does MSS want to comment?
 - Needs to be done by 11 March
 - Resolved that MSS want to comment
 - Beth Little to respond on behalf of MSS - Members to send comments in the next week

Server – Owen is looking into an ftp storage space for MSS. He's got a server that he can make available (after some setup). We'll then try to "hang" it off the website.

- No action/updates (7/02/2018)
- Discussion on hosting MSS library on the FTP server

New trips – (refer to Calendar all new trips are denoted **NEW** – Drop Box link for Calendar editing

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/MSS%20Calendar>)

- Marilyn Scott) has had emails back and forth from Andrew Baker re Jenolan (he does the permits for there). He gave me a list of dates available this morning (for tonight's meeting). Not sure if you had anything in mind for Jenolan this winter, but the dates are filling up fast, according to Andrew Baker there are only 2 weekends left, otherwise booked out all the way through to November ... June 8-10 and 15/16. Chris Johnstone to see if we can do one of the weekends and advertise on Calendar.
- Discussion of flying drones at Abercrombie. We have permission to fly some drones for documentation purposes at Abercrombie.

Next Meeting: tbc 2nd May (not 9th May) – North Ryde RSL

Meeting Closed: 20:35pm

Appendix 2: Abercrombie Cave Book

MSS Project briefing to NSW Speleo Council Meeting 3 November 18

GOAL

MSS to produce a publication on Abercrombie Caves (Reserve) in time for the 32nd ASF Conference, 2021. Aim for book is to be more aimed at the speleo community; to include greater information about karst geology/hydrology and cave maps.

Basic timeline is all chapters written and projects related to publication completed by end of 2019. This would then allow ample time in 2020 for proof reading, graphic design/formatting, submission to Office Environment and Heritage for approval and then print/release related activities.

OVERVIEW

Abercrombie Caves has played a significant part in the 50 year history of MSS. MSS would like to gather and produce a publication about Abercrombie caves, in order to disseminate and share the caving community about the rich caving history of this area. This project would include multiple subprojects/stages, some occurring concurrently;-

1. Contact B Cubbit, author of a previous Abercrombie book for consent/support. Reviewing Digital library of Abercrombie NPWS Guides Museum and personal library of B Cubbit. Review of MSS Library.
 - *Thank you to Barry Cubbitt for provision of support and permission to utilise previous book content as needed with appropriate acknowledgements. Activity completed.*
2. Review and application for possible grants to assist funding.
 - *Grants to be applied for in early 2019.*
 - *B Little and C Hood have offered to write grant submissions.*
 - *Grants to considered for cover some of the project costs over 2019, as well as the actual graphic design/editing and printing costs.*
 - *Currently considering grants at; ASF, Karst management fund, and Education related.*
3. Contact key pers in NPWS, Abercrombie guides office, ASF representatives to flag our interest in this project and permission.
 - *D Smith has approved concept and we have permission for drone photography (to apply through permit system) if we require.*
 - *NPWS/Office Environment and Heritage have responded and will need to review book prior to publication – have sought additional clarification as to the timeframe that this would require.*
 - *Steven aware and keen to assist by supplying his photo library for review.*
 - *Email to Sue White (Publications) to inform of our project – no response to date; will follow up early 2019.*
 - *Liaison with Peter Dyke (ASF Indigenous Liaison Officer) for assistance – he has put me in touch with local Elder for assistance to include indigenous cultural connection to country in the publication and appropriate acknowledgements.*
4. More formal linking to assistance from the ASF community to tap into existing experience for things such as; further scope the details of this larger project, assistance with the goal setting, authoring chapters, tapping other experienced members regarding surveying aspect and advice regarding pulling together the publication.
 - *MSS has contacted BMSC for partnership in any aspect of project. BMSC also has significant history of contribution to the area.*
 - *Rod has liaised with Jodie and Garry from Newcastle about experiences doing Timor book. Further information about grant and publication details to be sought from Jodie.*
 - *Garry Smith interested in taking some key photos for Abers book, in particular for the Geology chapter.*
 - *Project idea raised at April/May Speleo council meeting – support offered for project. Beth to attend the Nov NSW Speleo council meeting to provide more details.*
 - *MSS members contacted for calls to contribute and historic information they may have in their private collections. David Stuckey has offered to assist with final editing and possibly photos.*
5. GPS referencing and photo recording of the known tagged caves on the reserve. Rod has commenced this project.
 - *GPS referencing would not be included in the actual publication however given to NPWS and available for request.*
 - *Photo of significant cave entrances may be included in publication.*
 - *This a large project and will require additional assistance for surface trogging. Joint MSS and BWOC members have already offered assistance for a surface trog weekend in early 2019.*
6. Surface survey between cave tags around and through Main cave/Arch, Warren and Grove bluff balcony caves to assist GIS mapping.
7. Digitally reproducing for visual consistency, the prominent caves for publication. Will require further review of existing cave maps, and consideration for whether a part of full re-survey is required. See below section for more details about caves identified to potentially include in the publication.
 - *Large project. Will require additional support and assistance from greater speleo community.*
8. Contact with land owner of Off Reserve caves to explore potential to include aspects of this information in book (in particular within the geology, karst and cave map section).

PROPOSED BOOK CONTENT

- Acknowledgements. *Authors, everyone that helped assist, Barry & Ken's book's, Bates book, and also grant sources*
- Indigenous Acknowledgement Assistance sought from ASF Indigenous liaison officer to guide us. *Peter Dykes and Elder for assistance.*
- Permissions (NPWS, Map authors)
- Dedications (Past NPWS guides and Ken Keck for example)
- Foreword by MSS president or perhaps Barry Cubbitt if he would accept.
- Introduction (To the overall book and Aber area in general), if required, – *Author still to be confirmed*

- History chapters
 - o Indigenous history – *Elder or Peter Dykes?*
 - o Exploration – *Already drafted by Marilyn Scott.*
 - o Bushrangers– *Already drafted by Marilyn Scott.*
 - o Development– *Already drafted by Marilyn Scott.*
- Geology and Hydrology of Area - *Author Cathi Humphry-Hood*
- Flora & Fauna. – *Author yet to be determined. There is existing wildlife survey's from Barry Cubbitt/NPWS. Chapter from Ken Kecks book was written by Unita Treehorn.*
- Cave Critters / Invertebrates. *Have contacted Spate, Eberhard, and Graham Smith. The state wide survey cave invertebrates 1994-1995 (Eberhard & Spate) was last thing done at Abercrombie. A Spate has offered to write the chapter if we do not find anyone else more interested.*
- Caves and Karst features, including list of all tagged caves and their general location (which bluff/area etc) – *Author Beth Little. Chapter preliminarily drafted – needs photos to supplement information. Also results of GPS/surface trog project to confirm locations and up-to-date descriptions.*
- Cave Maps. *See below list for intended cave maps to include*
- Cave Management Challenges in the modern Day (Optional) – *Author yet to be determined.*

MSS point of contact and coordinator for book project – Beth Little

MSS Editor/Proof reader – David Stuckey. *Additional proof reader to be sought.*

REVIEW OF EXISTING CAVE MAPS and RE-SURVEYING PROJECT

This will be the most extensive survey project MSS has engaged in in recent decades. MSS will aim to contact ASF Key pers for advice and assistance on the best ways to coordinate this project. Seeking support from interested experienced individuals from ASF will be essential. Aim will be to re-survey where required using DistoX or similar. MSS planning meeting held 17/18 June 18 at Abercrombie to scope this part of the project, we decided that only the more significant caves were to be included in the book. Many of the reserve caves are very small, and although there are existing cave maps, a written description was considered sufficient to include in publication rather than a map.

Caves to include in publication, review the need to resurvey and then possibly re-survey include;

- Stable Arch and Stable Cave A26-A27
- Grove A9
- Warren Cave A23
- Shaft Cave A13 and 14
- The Main Arch A1 (Review and redraw Franks map) incl;
 - Bushrangers A6
 - Koh-i-noor A5
 - Mother-In-Laws Breath A37
 - King Solomons A2
 - Cathedral A3
 - Long tunnel (pending Bat restricted access) A4
- Leaning away from a full resurvey Main Cave and surrounds, in preference of a tag to tag survey to redraw and correct many minor inaccuracies of Franks original and detailed map*
- Rabbit Trap A42
- Grove Bluff Balcony caves - surface survey between tags, realign/redraw with existing cave maps potentially.
- Off Reserve if owner gives permission (Apple tree A79, Homestead/Gin bottle A80)

SUMMARY

MSS currently seeking interest or support for;

- Applying for grants (assistance or advice, early 2019)
- Author for Chapter on Indigenous History (Currently in liaison with local Elder)
- Author for Cave critters chapter (Currently in liaison with A Spate)
- Author for Flora & Fauna chapter
- Author for Cave Management Challenges in modern Day (optional)
- Surface trog/GPS tagging of entrances project (trip to be scheduled for this in early April 19). Will be a coordinated project to avoid overlap or double up.
- Clubs or individuals interested in taking on any particular cave listed above in the 'Review of Existing Cave Map and re-surveying project'.
- Additional proof reader (early 2020)

For further information or to register interest please contact Beth Little 0450 226 811 or via email

littlebeth78@hotmail.com