

NEWSLETTER MONTHLY



Trip Reports:
Mt Solitary
NSW Speleo Council Meeting
Wombeyan Caves

Invitations:
OzCanyons Slide Night
New Years Eve

October 2009

In this issue

Quote of the Month	3
Announcements	3
From The President	3
Invitations	4
MSS Club Library	4
Trip Reports	4
Mt Solitary Bushwalk - 10th - 11th October, 2009	4
NSW Speleological Council Meeting – Wombeyan Caves - 24th - 25th October, 2009	5
Future Trips	7

Cover Shot:

The Iron Ladder Pitch – Bullio Cave, Wombeyan

Photo by Alan Pryke (S.U.S.S.)

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

Quote of the Month

“Well, you've had plenty of practice” - Johan, in response to Dave's assertion that he will become a cranky old bastard as he ages.

Announcements

This year's annual dinner and Xmas party have joined forces for an MSS celebration extravaganza! To be held at Bachus on the 21st of November. RSVP to Jim Crockett to book your place, before they all fill up!

Nullabor trip, August 2010!! Who wouldn't want to visit the caves of the Nullabor? At this stage all you have to do is let Rod Smith know that you're interested. If there's sufficient numbers then the trip will get organised. Not one to miss!

From The President

Dear Members,

I mentioned in October, via email, that we are nearing the end of the current term for our MSS office bearers. I also mentioned that I do not intend to stand for any executive positions in 2010. I have served as the club president for 16 years, plus terms as Secretary and Treasurer. It is time to nominate someone, whom you consider, would bring new energy and ideas to the club. I ask that you take the time to give this matter some thought. Perhaps, even contact that person to encourage their acceptance of the role. May be that you consider yourself to step up?

The decision to retire has not been taken lightly and in some ways, has generated quite a bit of sadness. However, it is my belief that to move forward, the club needs some fresh enthusiasm and innovation out front. I will not be retiring from outdoor activities though! I'll still be participating in the wonderful trips which the club runs and look forward to climbing, caving and walking with you all in the fabulous "Great Outdoors".

During my term at the front, we have seen significant changes:

The club celebrated its 30th anniversary in grand style at Trunkey Creek, with over 95 friends from the club's past and the wider caving fraternity attending. We paused to reflect on the passing of one of the club's foundation members: Ken Keck. There have been caving and mountaineering expeditions to the far corners of the world, Europe and South America. We went 'online' firstly with our website followed by the monthly publishing of our electronic newsletter. Constitutionally, we became incorporated to comply with the Associations Incorporation Act and the insurance requirements. Our meeting venue changed several times from Parramatta Leagues Club, Parramatta Masonic Club to Baden Powell Scout Training Centre. Lighting has moved also. There was a time when the only lamp considered was a tough miners lamp with a heavy lead acid battery. Now-a-days, there are very few cavers indeed who have a belt mounted battery pack. Nearly everyone is utilising LED technology as their primary source of illumination. Changes to areas too. Camping restrictions introduced at Bungonia. Cavers cottage introduced at Jenolan. Re-opening of Caves House at Yarrangobilly.

So now, it's time for the club to change. Whilst trips are proceeding and we have a core of enthusiastic members, we need to infuse new energy. The incoming committee will need to explore ways of increasing participation and membership. New trips are always welcome too.

Please consider carefully whom you wish to take over. Talk to them, ensure that they are willing. Come forward with your ideas too. It is a very old and well used adage "you get out what you put in". I do hope that you now "put in".

Thank you everyone for all the assistance which you have afforded me over the years. It has been wonderful ride.

“Rope free!”.

David Stuckey

Invitations

OzCanyons Slide Night

The annual OzCanyons Slide Night will be held this year on the 28th of November at the Mt Wilson Village Hall (across the road from the RFS carpark). The event will start at 6:30pm and includes dinner, lucky door prizes, and, of course, slides and presentations. And all this for \$10 a head! Talk about great value for money!!

Details can be found at

<http://www.emeraldimages.com.au/EI-PHOTOS/EI-CANYONS/OzC/SlideNight2009.htm> or contact Cathi Humphrey-Hood at cathi@emeraldimages.com.au.

If you have anything you wish to present please let Cathi know.

New Years Eve

As most of you are aware, Rod Smith has a great view of the Harbour including the Harbour Bridge from his unit. There can be no better place to spend New Years Eve, and you are all cordially invited join the festivities for the final night of the year. The party will begin sometime in the afternoon, it's advisable to get there early to get a park. If you wish to attend, please let Rod know by the 29th December on 0438 444 262 or roderick_smith@hotmail.com.

MSS Club Library

There have two recent additions to the MSS club library. The first is entitled Tuglow Caves and is written by Ian Cooper, Martin Scott and Keir Vaughan-Taylor for The Sydney University Speleological Society. This book contains details and maps not only for Tuglow Cave but also the other caves in the area.

The second addition is a DVD entitled SUSS Map Library – May 2008. This will make a great addition to the cave maps already within the club library.

Thanks goes to Dave Stuckey and Rod Smith for arranging purchase of these items on the clubs behalf.

If you wish to borrow anything from the library, or know of any publications that you believe would make a great addition to the library, please contact the club librarian Rod Smith on roderick_smith@hotmail.com.

Trip Reports

Mt Solitary Bushwalk - 10th - 11th October, 2009

Attending: David, Johan (T.L).

The weather was perfect for walking in the mountains – not too hot and not too cold, with scattered clouds across an almost-clear blue sky.

We commenced with a quick descent of the Furber steps, stopping briefly to chat to four other walkers also heading to Mt Solitary.

On the Federal Pass, we soon passed Malaita Point, the Giant Landslide, the entry of the Narrownneck Tunnel, turn-off for the Golden Stairs and finally stopped for a short break at the Ruined Castle track.

The weather still perfect, we continued past the old Ruined Castle mines and commenced the ascent to the heights of Mt Solitary – the views getting better, the higher we climbed. Walking through the 'Casuarina forest', we decided on a lunch stop.

Onwards across the top of Mt Solitary to Chainman's Gully then another hour or so to one of the best campsite locations I have ever seen – protection from the weather, water at hand, shady location, plenty of firewood, and an absolute stunning view.



Johan enjoys a glass of red on the summit of Mt Solitary
Photo: Dave Stuckey

More on this view – we could see the whole escarpment stretching from Kings Tableland past National Pass at Wentworth Falls, onward past Sublime Point, Three Sisters, Malaita Point, Giant Landslide, Narrowneck and Castle Head. The massive expanse of sandstone standing above the valleys, was a giant panorama and was simply stunning in the afternoon sunshine. Even better with a glass of quality red wine in hand.



The last of the daylight from the summit of Mt Solitary
Photo: Dave Stuckey

Nothing like retiring to your tent for the evening, after a great walk, and listening to the patter of light rain.....

Next morning at breakfast, abundant sunshine and a clear blue sky!! More perfect walking weather.....

Retracing our steps from the previous day, we zoomed back across the summit of Mt Solitary, descended the ridge in quick time and enjoyed a fine walk back to Furber Steps, stopping to chat with numerous walkers and even providing directions to some 'almost-lost' Canadians looking for a second railway to the top!

What a great walk. This trip takes about 5 hours from Furber Steps to the perfect campsite on Mt Solitary.

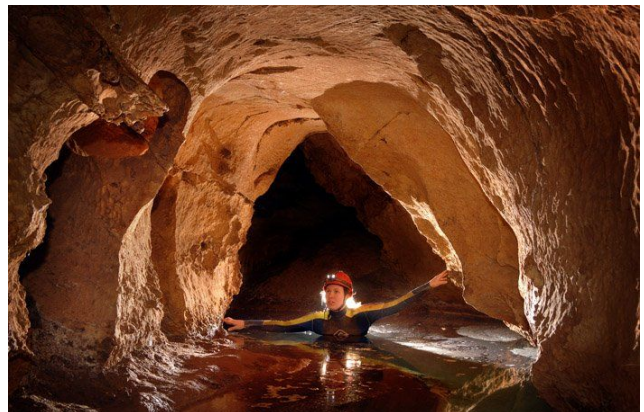
Johan

NSW Speleological Council Meeting – Wombeyan Caves - 24th - 25th October, 2009

The Speleo Council have hit on a successful method of ensuring that clubs are represented at council meetings. They hold them in caving areas where not many people have been. It's long been known that permits to cave at Wombeyan have been virtually impossible to obtain over the years and that only one or two clubs have any expertise in the area.

Therefore, I jumped at the opportunity to visit a new area. I drove down on Saturday morning to find the camping area buzzing with activity. Lots of familiar faces too! Joe Sydney (HCG, Cave Rescue) was waving his barbeque tongs around. My breakfast was ready!

There were a few teams getting ready. I had no idea where to go and what to do. I eventually gravitated to 3 other cavers and signed on to do Bullio Cave. It came highly recommended. So Phil Maynard & Kevin Moore(S.U.S.S.), plus Brian Evans (I.S.S.) and myself geared up for a good sporting cave. Apparently there was some vertical work, I was also advised to bring my wetsuit as there was some swimming! Well, that was one piece of equipment which I didn't even think to bring, so I thought I'd just wear my thermals and see how things went. All those years of canyoning should count for something surely?



The Underground River
Photo: Alan Pryke (S.U.S.S.)

A pleasant walk up the valley along a tourist track saw us at the lower entrance fairly quickly. We were doing a through trip, so we headed uphill to the top entrance and rigged the entrance pitch. We were doing this canyon style, meaning the rope was rigged double and pulled down once we were all down the pitch. I barely took any notice of the skeleton at the bottom of the entrance pitch. Phil advised me to look closer...it was then I realised the poor creature was wearing a collar. Apparently, a pet dog belonging to a tourist went missing some years ago and met a miserable fate.

We climbed past the remains and headed downwards. There are several iron ladders throughout the cave as it was a very exciting tourist cave at one point in its history. The longest pitch is about 17 metres and we abseiled this, admiring the helectites on the wall. Another couple of small pitches and climbs saw us arrive at river level. Here we explored upstream until a huge deep pool was encountered. An obvious passage led off just under the water level. The domain for divers. We headed back the other way, past some large gour pools. The water level started to rise, we were soon wading, then swimming. It was chilly alright, but no worse than any Blue Mountains Canyon. As I waded and swam along, I was constantly breaking calcite rafts in front of me. It was fascinating watching them glide to the bottom of the pools. I felt like a vandal, however, our guides from S.U.S.S. assured me that there was no problem. The minute the river started to flow again, the rafts would be destroyed. The only take about a week to form.



The Underground River
Photo: Brian Evans (I.S.S.)

We stopped for lunch, then headed up a couple of tricky climbs. I emptied the water out of my gumboots and instantly shed 4 kilos! The big pitch, we ascended the ladder using our chest ascenders as a running self belay. The ladder bucked and swayed a little, but more thrilling than scary. Rock 'n' Roll!

This time, we headed off in a different passage which wound around in typical meander fashion. We entered a larger chamber with a big compacted dirt floor and a small pitch over to one side. We rigged another dual rope and glove abseiled our way. At the bottom, a small boulder scramble saw us emerge into daylight under a large arched entrance. A steep climb back up the boulders and onto the track completed our journey. The top entrance, a mere 40 metres away meant we could retrieve our surface gear quite quickly. An excellent cave with sections reminiscent of Tuglow, Wyanbene and Yagby.



The Underground River
Photo: Brian Evans (I.S.S.)

In the evening, we had a brilliant cavers barbeque dinner with over 75 people attending. There were stories and drinks and laughter...plus a nice campfire. The rain politely held off until well after bedtime.


On Sunday, I represented M.S.S. at the NSW Speleological Council meeting. Not much to do here but to listen to the latest developments in caving issues, conservation, safety etc. etc. There were a few grumblings from clubs who have recently visited Wyanbene Caves, only to find that they couldn't open the combination lock. Some funny stories. It finished, mercifully, at 1:00pm, just in time for lunch. I left the area mid afternoon and decided to drive home via Black Springs, Oberon and across the mountains. As usual, Johan had the kettle ready...

















David Stuckey.













Future Trips

Welcome to the new look future trips section. Anyone with artistic abilities are welcome to submit their own icons for any of the categories here, and/or any other categories. If we use your icon then you'll have to be prepared to accept the praise and admiration from your fellow club members. Send your icons, or any other feedback, to roderick_smith@hotmail.com.

Legend:

<i>Activity</i>		<i>Grade</i>		<i>Accommodation</i>	
	Caving		Easy		Camping
	Canyoning		Easy/Medium		Cottage
	Diving		Medium		
	Hiking		Medium/Hard		Kites
	Abseiling		Hard		Camp Ovens
	Cycling		Extreme		
	Horse Riding				
	Kayaking				
	Climbing				
	Skiing				

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Grand Canyon	21 st Nov			Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com			18 th Nov	
Other Info:								
Annual Dinner/XMas Party	21 st Nov		Delicious	Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com		The meal will cost around \$35 plus drinks	7 th Nov	
Other Info: This will be held at Bachus in Katoomba.								
Fortress	22 nd Nov			Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com			18 th Nov	
Other Info:								
Cottage Rock/Coal Seam Cave – Decadence Walk	5 th - 6 th Dec			Dave Stuckey 0414 590 305 stuckedl@cba.com.au			2 nd Dec	
Other Info:								
Wollangambe	26 th Dec			Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com			22 nd Dec	
Other Info:								
Claustral	27 th Dec			Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com			22 nd Dec	
Other Info:								

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Better Offer	28 th Dec			Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com			22 nd Dec	
Other Info:								
Freshwater	9 th Jan			Rod Smith 0438 444 262 roderick__smith@hotmail.com (that's 2 underscores)			5 th Jan	
Other Info:								
Kites Over Kosci	23 rd - 26 th Jan			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			19 th Jan	
Other Info: You will need to take the 25 th off since it's not a public holiday								
Nullabor	Aug 2010			Rod Smith 0438 444 262 roderick__smith@hotmail.com (that's 2 underscores)			At this stage I just need expressions of interest	
Other Info:								