

# Quarterly NEWSLETTER

Winter 2013 Edition  
Issued September 2013



# MSS NEWSLETTER



Society News .....	2
Trip Reports.....	3
Jenolan.....	3
Wombeyan.....	4
Abercrombie.....	7
Cave Adventures in Europe.....	8
International Congress of Speleology – Brno Czech Republic.....	9
Field Excursion to the Moravian Karst.....	11
Upcoming Events.....	13
Trip Calendar.....	13
<i>Appendix 1 – 412<sup>th</sup> General meeting minutes.....</i>	<i>14</i>

Cover Shot: Is it a Cave with a Castle or is it a Castle in a Cave ? You can decide.  
Predjama Castle, Slovenia.  
Photo by Fedz Alfeche

## Society News

Club EPIRB

Just a reminder to all trip leaders that we have the new EPIRB and this should be taken on every trip. Our Equipment Officer, Jim (0407 284 256), [jcrockett3@bigpond.com](mailto:jcrockett3@bigpond.com)), has this, so please coordinate with him to collect it before your next trip.

### MSS Officers list

#### Position

President [president@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:president@mssadventure.org.au)  
Secretary [secretary@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:secretary@mssadventure.org.au)  
Treasurer [treasurer@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:treasurer@mssadventure.org.au)  
Equipment Officer [equipment@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:equipment@mssadventure.org.au)  
Librarian [library@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:library@mssadventure.org.au)  
Training Officer [training@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:training@mssadventure.org.au)  
ASF Liaison

Newsletter Editor(s) [newsletter@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:newsletter@mssadventure.org.au)  
Website Manager [webmaster@mssadventure.org.au](mailto:webmaster@mssadventure.org.au)  
Public Officer

#### Name

Jim Crockett  
Rod Smith  
Jim Crockett  
Jim Crockett  
Rod Smith  
Beth Little  
Jim Crockett,  
Rod Smith  
Fedz Alfeche  
Rod Smith  
John Gray

### Membership Details

Full member \$80  
Prospective member \$30 (3 months)  
Family membership \$160  
Honorary membership \$45  
Preference is for payment by Direct Debit to MSS Bank Account  
BSB 062-021 Account 00901421 (CommonWealth Bank)  
Cheques or Cash also accepted.

## Jenolan - 20th-21st July 2013

Some say...

That all of his internal organs are made of calcium carbonate  
and

his budgie smugglers actually contain budgies

All we know is he's called Ken Harris

It wasn't a particularly fast start. After an uneventful walk up the valley we made our way up to the entrance to Wiburds where Ken found he'd grab the wrong bag that morning. Instead of his lunch he had a bag of powdered milk, that hadn't been sealed overly well. After cleaning the milk out of his pack we made our way in, and almost immediately Ken fell behind. This was due to battery problems. Once that was sorted out he joined us as we made our way towards Silverfrost.

Some say...

Even Chuck Norris bows down to him  
and

He hates paying extra to see the caves in 3D

All we know is he's called Rob Clyne

We had just started to ascent towards Silverfrost when Rob got a bad feeling in the pit of his stomach. Or maybe a bit lower down. We were still relatively close to the entrance so, after some toilet paper was located, Rob disappeared for a short while. He returned feeling much better, so we proceeded.

Some say...

His memory for cave locations is second only to his love of cactus shaped candles  
and

He only ever abseils down

All we know is he's called David Stuckey

With only a vague recollection of the final descent into Silverfrost, Dave rigged a rope, donned his harness, and descended. The start is tight but not too steep. It then opens up and isn't too bad. Up to that point the rope is almost unnecessary. The drop at the end would be rather difficult without a rope, but not impossible. However, since it was there, we all used it. And now it was time to detrog.

Some say...

Looking at his mind would be like looking at the Internet, except the Internet is a more wholesome place  
and

He's afraid of the dark matter

All we know is he's called Rod Smith

Only three people at a time are allowed into Silverfrost. Dave and Rob were the first two in, so I then followed. Because Dave and Rob were a little way ahead, I found myself following the path at my own pace and taking in the wonders in my own time. It may not be the best decorated cave (or path thereof) on the planet, but it's still very pretty and well worth the visit if you have the chance.

Some say...

That if she shaved her head her hair would grow back in the shape of a carabineer  
and

If she caves alone, she glows in the dark

All we know is she's called Natalie Etherton

After Dave and Rob returned, Ken and Nat were able to join me. Nat obviously thought the same as me, judging from her comment, "I've been spoiled by Kubla Khan".

On the return journey Dave got inspired and photographed Rob, the result being quite an impressive shot.

Since it was not only Nats first visit to Silverfrost, but her first visit to Wiburds, we decided to show her a little bit more of the cave before departing. After a quick run down to the Lake Chamber and the Dyke we made our way out.

Once on the surface Ken found that, with the powdered milk stuff up, he'd forgotten to eat his banana before heading underground. Not surprisingly the banana hadn't taken too well to it's subterreanean journey and was looking rather sorry for itself. Needless to say, it's final resting place wasn't far from there.

The walk back included some precipitation and a lovely aroma from the pile of deceased porcines just adjacent to a trap.

Sunday we had Mammoth on the permit, so, not surprisingly, that's where we went. Dave had wanted to check out a hole in Railway Tunnel, so this trip seemed like a great opportunity to do just that.

We didn't muck around and were near the Skull and Crossbones in short order. This is where the hole is located. We were reasonably sure we weren't investigating a previously unknown to man section of cave, but it was unknown to us, and that was good enough.



Dave led the way, abseiling through a slot that then opened up to a nice chamber. Soon we joined him, careful not to disturb the bat hanging on the wall just to the left of the drop.

Three options presented themselves, although one would have required some impressive climbing skills. Picking one, Dave led the way along a rift. This soon led to a couple of other options, and Dave went down. I looked at where he went and decided that I could get down, but would really struggle to get back up. So I stayed high.

Dave returned after a while and went up another passage while I continued to climb. After some dodgy moves I found myself back in the Railway Tunnel, and Daves second option led up to the Railway Tunnel as well. We both had a short walk back to the abseil point (once Dave pointed out that I was heading in the wrong direction). Dave wanted to do the prussik, so he abseiled again, but I was happy to wait at the top.

Once we all regrouped at the top we packed up and headed out. With another successful and enjoyable Jenolan weekend behind us we cleaned up the cottage, packed up and headed home.

Rod.

### **Wombeyan 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> August**

Participants: Marilyn Scott, Catherine Omal, Garth McLachlan, Lindsay Barrett, Glenn Roser, Natalie Etherton, Beth Little, Rod Smith TL

As many of you would know, Wombeyan is an area seldom visited by MSS. This is something I'm aiming to change.

I decided, since I wasn't working on the Friday, I'd go down early to talk to the guides. I arrived right on 4pm, to find the kiosk closes at 4pm rather than 5pm. Thankfully the guides saw me and were nice enough to come out and talk to me.

A new camp area has been set aside for speleos. There's a key to the gate to the area, and this was locked in a key-safe box attached to the wall of the managers building. We went to get the key out, and it wouldn't open. After Dave was called we found that he'd transposed two of the numbers when he emailed me the code. Once that was corrected I took the key and went to check out the camping area, finding Nat on the way.

The camping area is quite good, and a little bit of work could make it even better. It's closer to the amenities than where we used to camp, but away from everyone else, so a bit quieter. And plenty of room for a large group.

The following morning we were joined by the rest of the group. We started the day with a walk to the north to visit Blasted Cave. At first it appeared that there wasn't much to the cave, just a single chamber, but I then found the downclimb into the rest of the cave.

Exploring the cave we were pleasantly surprised with what we found. Not a massive cave, but some decoration, some climbing and scrambling, and a nice small pool in the bottom. Definitely a good start to the day.

We returned to the camp ground for lunch before heading up the hill to look for our next cave. Due to me not checking my print-out I didn't have the full co-ordinates for the location of the cave, so we didn't spend too long looking for it before deciding to move on to the next cave.

The next cave I had co-ordinates for, so I punched them into the GPS and headed for that location. When I arrived at the GPS location I wasn't standing in a cave, although I didn't really expect to be. Assuming the co-ordinates were reasonably accurate, we fanned out to look for a hole with the correctly numbered tag attached. We found plenty of other numbers, but not the one we were looking for.

With three more caves on the permit we decided to cut our losses and move on. I entered the co-ordinates for our next cave, Lantern Cave, and we moved on. As we approached the apparent location we found ourselves at the top of a cliff, with the GPS telling us the cave was at the bottom. Everyone was still in a reasonably good mood, so no-one suggested jumping. I'd had some information about Lantern Cave from the guides the day before, which, unfortunately, had confused me slightly into thinking we were going the wrong way. We were close to Bullio Cave, which I had been told it was close to, so we looked in that area. As it turned out, the co-ordinates may have been quite accurate. I found out later that Lantern Cave is indeed near the bottom of the cliff and that the cliff can be negotiated on either side.

The co-ordinates for our next cave were not far away, so we were at that location very quickly. Unfortunately there didn't seem to be any holes at all near there. At this point, as Natalie keeps reminding me, I was starting to get a bit frustrated that we weren't finding any of the caves we were looking for. Still, we had one left.

For the last cave, Labyrinth Cave, we had an advantage. on a previous trip to the area I had been to the entrance of Labyrinth Cave and was reasonably sure I could find it again. So I took off, leaving a trail of cavers in my wake. My memory didn't fail me and I was soon looking into a rift that was Labyrinth Cave, and not possible to climb down. However, a slightly exposed climb took us to another entrance from which we could access the cave.

Based on my extensive geological expertise I can tell you that Labyrinth Cave is ... a cave. In limestone.

We followed the rift to a junction where people headed off in all directions. Although not a huge cave, there was a bit to see. Two of the passages ended where a false floor had collapsed, one of which I

managed to down-climb into. Down there was very large amounts of evidence that wombats used the cave, in the form of droppings.

After everyone had had fun checking out the cave we decided it was time to make our way back to camp, especially since sunset was fast approaching. Sitting around the campfire, eating jaffles, talking, drinking and being merry ended a successful day of caving.

Sunday morning we had arranged to meet Stephen Babka, one of the guides, at 11:00am to help him take some measurements in Wollondilly Cave as well as remove some rubbish. Around 10:30am Steve arrived at camp to inform us the early tour had been canceled due to lack of numbers, so we could get a slightly earlier start on the project. We quickly finished packing and met Steve in front of the kiosk.

We simply required packs to carry out some of the rubbish, Steve supplied garbage bags and gloves. Still, the exercise of getting everyone moving towards the cave reminded me of the saying involving herding cats. I've noticed this seems to be a common feature of groups of cavers. Once inside the cave Beth and I helped Steve take measurements to do with fall heights, a new WH&S requirement, while the rest of our group started removing rubbish. Although we were removing rubbish and taking measurements, we still had an opportunity to enjoy the numerous pretties throughout the cave. Since we had to stay in front of the next tour our time was limited, but we managed to achieve a lot in that time. After Wollondilly Steve offered to show us some other areas of interest not far from the tourist caves. We walked onto the ridge opposite Wollondilly where Steve pointed out a number of caves for future trips, including Macdonalds Cave with an entrance pitch of over 40m. For the return journey, instead of going over the ridge, we opted for through. This involved doing the self-guided Figtree Cave. Having never been through Figtree myself, and I believe the rest of the group were the same, this made for a great added bonus.

Then it was time to leave.



Thanks to Steve for Sunday, we had a great time and are looking forward to our next trip to Wombeyan.



Rod.



## Abercrombie - 31<sup>st</sup> August-1st September 2013

Participants: A cast of a thousand

What a bumper trip we had a total of 19 people including 6 kids and perfect camping weather.

Saturday morning most of us started out with the usual touristy visit through the arch and then bushrangers cave. Rod was out in the field somewhere trying to locate as many caves entrances as he could find. The main group proceeded up to A13,14 where the adults had fun squeezing through the narrow section and the kids had it easy. Then it was down to Stable cave via the lower entrance for some more fun and frivolity, on the way out a few of us had some trouble with the nasty crawl that joins the entrance path, it was just that one badly placed rock pinning the shoulder down that created the problems, but we did eventually make it.

We then had a late lunch after which a few of us went back to the arch to try out some new surveying equipment that I just bought home from Europe. The system is called a Cave Sniper and consists of a Disto A6 unit providing the distance measurements paired with a Cave Sniper device which provides the compass and inclinometer readings as well as storage of all the data. This was the first of these units to be taken outside Europe and if it proves successful then the club can purchase it.

After that we had some bonding time before the fire was started. Ray made sure the fire was a BIG ONE and Nathalie made sure the fire was a GREEN and BLUE ONE with the addition of some magic crystals. Josh was the SCARY ONE wandering around in the YETI SUIT and Helena provided entertainment in her TIGER ( Tigger) SUIT.

The sunday morning we went back in to the Arch to see the rest of the passages we had missed yesterday as well a quick trip through Grove. Rod's team continued to try locate more entrances and get them GPS'd.

We had to leave after lunch on sunday so I don' really know what else happened but it was a highly successful trip and my 2 boys came home very satisfied and looking to more cave adventures in the future.

Stuart the resident cave guide for the weekend advised me that Barry Cubitt who is the senior guide at Abercrombie will be retiring at the end of May next year. I am thinking of organising some sort of MSS trip before then next year as this may be the last chance for most of us to see Barry before his retirement. Some of the older MSS members may know Barry is a former MSS member himself.

Jim





### Cave Adventures in Europe

My family including Kris, Bon, my wife Fedz and myself had already been on a demanding trip around Europe visiting Frankfurt, Prague, London, Paris as well as a stopover in Dubai, so we were starting to tire a little. But for me this was getting to an exciting part of our trip. We had just arrived in Ljubljana the capital of Slovenia and were looking forward to visiting the show caves in Postojna. I had arranged for a driver to pick us up from our accommodation in Grosuplje village which was about 20km from Ljubljana. Slovenia is only a small country both in size and population but makes up for that as about 60% of its land is Karst and contains many thousands of caves. This became obvious on the drive towards Postojna as we passed many areas of limestone. We were soon at the cave entrance and boarding the train for the cave tour. We are told “no photographs” but even if you did try to take some photos it would be difficult as the train is travelling super fast. We are on the train for at least 10 minutes and pass by many beautiful formations which adorn the cave from wall to wall and floor to ceiling for the whole of the train ride. We eventually come to a halt at Velika Gora cavern and are divided into groups according to language. Here our guide takes us through galleries full of delicate white stalagmites and there is an amazing variety of stalagmites of all shapes and sizes as well as the spaghetti chamber famous for the profusion of straws. We cross over the Russian bridge which was built by Russian POW's during the war in 1916. After which there are more beautiful stalagmites and stalagmites before we enter a man made tunnel which leads back to the Koncertna Dvorana (Concert Hall) and the underground gift shop ( of course !). From here we board the train for the return back to the entrance point. We got a surprise when they told us that the in the group before us the cave had their 35th millionth visitor since the cave opened in 1818.



The cave tour includes entrance to the Proteus Vivarium which is a biological research station within the cave. Here you can see the Proteus anguinus which is a pink skinned blind salamander only found



in this cave, this is also known as the “Human Fish” as it's skin colour is very similar to humans and it can live to a very similar age to humans. The Vivarium also contains a zoo for many types of cave animals which offers an insight to the world of troglobitic animals and explains how they have adapted to their world of darkness.



We continued to Predjama castle following the the cave tour. The castle is amazing as it has been built into a cave mouth that lies on the face of a 123m high limestone cliff. We finished the day off with a return trip via lake Bled which is quite beautiful. Jim

### **International Congress of Speleology – Brno Czech Republic**

Finally the time had come to attend the main event that I had come to Europe for. One I had been looking forward to for a long time.

I said goodbye to my wife and 2 children at Vienna airport who were headed off home and I had to find the bus to take me to Brno. It was a bit of an effort as it seemed that all of the buses were already full but luckily I met up with a fellow caver from Belgium and we were eventually able get the right bus, in fact it was almost empty. I arrived in Brno one day prior to start of the Congress just enough time to get some extra sleep and catch up on chores.



The first day at the Congress was prior to the official opening but we had a major task to commence preparing the ASF booth to showcase Australia's caves to the world and convince them to vote to so that we could host the next congress in Australia.



My week there consisted of being in charge of the ASF booth and making sure it was manned by some of the 28 Australians who also attended the congress. When I was not at the booth I was attending one of the many presentations on various topics including exploration and cave technique, archaeology and paleontology and many other interesting topics. I met many cavers from all over the world including a lot from the UK.

At the booth many of the internationals were very interested in coming to Australia in 2017 and at the end of the week the ASF was successfully voted in to host the International Congress of Speleology in 2017 in Sydney.

Overall it was a very successful week but now Australian Cavers we have a lot of work ahead to prepare for such an enormous speleological event but I am up for the challenge and hoping there will be a team of willing workers to share the load and make it successful.





I really enjoyed my week at the Brno congress, I met and made friends with so many people and enjoyed every minute of my time there.

Jim

### **Field Excursion to the Moravian Karst of Czech Republic**

Immediately following the Congress was my chance to experience European wild caving in Moravia which is the best Karst area in the Czech Republic and only about 40km from Brno. We arrived in our campground at Jedovnice and were allocated a hut containing 2 bunk beds and not much more.

I was sharing with Alan Caton and Tim Moulds from Australia and Frederick from France. The hut and the campgrounds were pretty basic as I am sure they were unchanged from the Czech Communist era, but there were 2 modern luxuries as the camp surprisingly had free WiFi and there were numerous bars within walking distance selling cheap refreshing local beers.

They were offering about 15 different trips for whole week but each day there was usually about 4 of those available. I made the most of my time there and went caving every day of the field excursion. The caves I went in were part of or connected to, 2 main river systems in the Karst area.

The Czech cavers are very industrious especially in their use of fixed metal ladders and climbing aids in their caves. The ladders are quite scary as they do not use any belays and one of the ladders was 40m long and another 24m and sometimes you had to change over from one ladder to another mid pitch. All of the caves contained hundred's of metres of electric cables and water pipes which they use to pump out water from sumps to pass them and discover more caves passages beyond. The Czech's also use a lot of mining techniques as most of the entrances we used have been man made as usually the natural entrances are too difficult or unsafe. In one cave they have blasted a tunnel 100m through solid rock and many others have been mined vertically for up to about 40m and then the hole is lined with 900mm diameter concrete drainage pipes with a ladder installed on one side. Some of the caves contain sections with good formations but generally the caves are more of a physical challenge as I am sure that I would have descended and climbed 1000m of fixed ladders and 10km of horizontal stream passage, some of which was in chest deep water.



At one cave called Byci Skala we were taken to an upper section of the cave system which is the site of an archaeology dig which is uncovering bones of bears, foxes and other mammals which have been washed in from a smaller cave close to the surface which was the former den of a lion, quite amazing. The Czech caving culture is quite organised and each caving club has particular caves that they look after and they have a hut very close by to the cave entrance which seems to be used most days of the week.

Jim





## Upcoming Events

5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> October      NSW Karst Atlas Trip  
 MSS Co-ordinator: Rod Smith, 0438 444 262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
 Contact by: 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
 Grade: Easy trip and Camping  
 Search for Caves and Karst features in a little known area.  
 Document what you find for later publication.  
 Trip organisers: Peter Dykes and Joe Sydney

19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> October      Jenolan Caving  
 Contact: Rod Smith, 0438 444 262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
 Contact by: 17<sup>th</sup> October  
 Grade: TBA  
 Hut Accommodation

9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> November      Canyoning – Incorporating AGM  
 Trip leader: Rod Smith, 0438 444 262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
 Contact by: 7<sup>th</sup> November  
 Grade: TBA  
 Canyon locations TBA

5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> October ( Long weekend)  
 NSW Karst Atlas Trip  
 Location near Kandos

MSS Co-ordinator: Rod Smith, 0438 444 262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
 Contact by: 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
 Search for Caves and Karst features in a little known area. Document what you find for later publication.  
 Trip organisers: Peter Dykes and Joe Sydney

19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> October  
 Caving at Jenolan

Trip Leader: Rod Smith  
 Contact: 0438 444 262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
 By: 17<sup>th</sup> October  
 Grade: TBA

October or later (TBA)  
 Caving at Colong

Trip Leader: Rod Smith  
 Contact: 0438 444 262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
 By: TBA  
 Grade: Medium

9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> November  
 Canyoning – incorporating AGM  
 Location TBA

Trip Leader: Rod Smith  
 Contact: 0438 444 262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
 By: 7<sup>th</sup> November  
 Grade: Medium/Easy

23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> November  
 Canyoning Glen Davis

Trip Leader: Jim Crockett  
 Contact: 0407 284 256, [jcrockett3@bigpond.com](mailto:jcrockett3@bigpond.com)  
 By: 21<sup>st</sup> November  
 Grade: Medium/Hard

30 <sup>th</sup> November - 1 <sup>st</sup> December Canyoning Serendipity and Zorro	Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: 0438 444 262, <a href="mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com">roderick_smith@hotmail.com</a> By: 28 <sup>th</sup> November Grade: Medium
11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> January Canyoning Bungleboori	Trip Leader: Beth Little Contact: 0450 226 811 <a href="mailto:littlebeth78@hotmail.com">littlebeth78@hotmail.com</a> By: 9 <sup>th</sup> January Grade: Medium/Hard
11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> January Interclub Kids Caving Wee Jasper Organiser: Joe sydney	Trip co-ordinator: Jim Crockett Contact: 0407 284 256, <a href="mailto:jcrockett3@bigpond.com">jcrockett3@bigpond.com</a> By: 9 <sup>th</sup> January Grade: Easy/Kid friendly
22 <sup>nd</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup> February Wombeyan Mares Forest Canyon	Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: 0438 444 262, <a href="mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com">roderick_smith@hotmail.com</a> By: 20 <sup>th</sup> February Grade: Medium

## **MSS 412th General Meeting, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

Held at Beth Little's place

Meeting Opened: 7:10pm

### **Present:**

Roderick Smith, Jim Crockett, Beth Little, Rob Clyne, Laura Clyne

### **Apologies:**

**Any Corrections to Previous Meetings Minutes:** None

### **Correspondence:**

### **Committee Members Reports:**

President: None

Treasurer: None

Equipment Officer: None

Training Officer: None

Librarian: None

Web Manager: None

### **Status of Action Items:**

Updating membership details – Jim Crockett: On hold.

Bolting Course – Rod Smith: None

Resurveying Stable Cave – Jim Crockett: None

Abercrombie surface survey – Rod Smith: None

Abercrombie documentation – Rod Smith: None

### **New Business:**

#### Trip planning:

Wombeyan Mares Forest Canyon: 22nd-23rd February (TL Rod). Grade: Easy/Medium

Canyoning, Serendipity (Sat) and Zorro (Sun): 30th November-1st December (TL Rob). Grade: Medium

Canyoning: 9th-10th November (TL Rod). Grade: Easy/Medium. Incorporating AGM.

Bungleboori Canyoning: 11th-12th January (TL Beth). Grade: Medium/Hard.



Glen Davis Canyoning: 23rd-24th November (TL Jim). Grade: Medium/Hard.

Possible trips for next year:

Colong

Cliefden

Wyanbene

Buchan

Yagby

**Next Meeting:**

AGM 9th or 10th November – in Katoomba

Meeting Closed: 8:50pm