



Metropolitan Speleological Society

**Quarterly
Newsletter**

Autumn

Issued June 2018

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Cover Shot: John Gray in Arthurs Canyon (Photo: M Scott)



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	Rod Smith
Treasurer	treasurer@mssadventure.org.au	Cathi Humphrey Hood
Equipment Officer	equipment@mssadventure.org.au	Beth Little
Librarian	library@mssadventure.org.au	Rod Smith
Training Officer	training@mssadventure.org.au	Beth Little
ASF Liaison		Jim Crockett & Rod Smith
Newsletter Editor	newsletter@mssadventure.org.au	Marilyn Scott
Website Manager	webmaster@mssadventure.org.au	Rod Smith
Public Officer		John Gray

Membership Fee Details (2018)

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. Email Secretary for Direct Debit details.



Welcome to New Members

This quarter, we're welcoming new members, **Tanya Smith** (Rod's sister), her children **Connor** and **Eliza** (Rod's nephew and niece of course) and **Edd Keudell** and his partner **Donna Graham**.



Edd and Donna recently arrived in Australia for a two-year stay. The company that Donna works for in the US offered her the opportunity to work in Sydney, and she jumped at the chance. Donna isn't totally hooked on caving, but she's an avid bushwalker and also enjoys kayaking and running. Edd has been caving for many years and is also into cave surveying so we're hoping he'll join us on some upcoming survey trips. Edd's already joined in on a number of caving trips since arriving in Australia, and both Edd and Donna came to our May MSS General Meeting (how keen is that!).

Rod's sister, Tanya and the kids accompanied Rod on a trip to Timor and the kids were hooked! Of course, it helped that Jodie had her daughter along too, so there were other kids to "play" with and explore the caves with!



Breaking News!



For those of you who are into canyoning, there's a new forum that's just come on line <https://canyoning.org.au>. The site is well organised with easy sections for relevant canyoning subjects. Eg:

- Technique, ropework and skill development (posts on retiring of carabiners, the Purcell prusik – extendable cowstail safety line, rope management, options for making emergency abseiling harness with tape);
- Closures, access changes & condition reports;
- Accidents, Injuries & rescues (reports on a couple of accidents plus a snake bite report – all from some time back but still relevant); and
- Sharing of canyoning adventures (trip reports, photos, videos – some excellent ones there!).

Whilst the Facebook OzCanyons site has a big following and there is definitely a place for it for those who are into FB, there are a number of flaws to it, the biggest being (IMO) that anyone who posts a photo there, is basically giving FB the use of that photo (forever). Another flaw is that you might get a good post on something but a week later, it's way down where you can't find it, a major pain.

I'd highly recommend registering for the site, if you haven't already done so!



Diary Alert

The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania

(31st ASF Conference 30 Dec 2018 - 4 Jan 2019)

ASF have a conference every second year and in 2019 it will be held in Devonport, Tasmania. This is an amazing opportunity for cavers as Devonport is a mere 60k as the crow flies from one of Tasmania's most renowned caving areas, **Mole Creek Karst Area** (Kubla Khan, Croesus and Genghis Kahn). Pre- and Post-Conference caving trips will be on offer, an opportunity not to be missed to cave with the "locals" and to see some highly restricted caves.

The website (with details of what caves are on offer, accommodation options and a range of things to do in Tassie) has been released: www.asfconference2019.com, and registrations are now being taken.

Some MSS members have already booked their vehicles on the ferry! Don't miss out.



Check out the website, there are some fabulous photos of the Mole Creek caves.



Lynds Cave Mole Creek, April 2018 (photo: M Scott)

Urgent message to all cavers

From: Denis Marsh, Secretary

New South Wales Speleological Council of the Australian Speleological Federation Inc

"In case you missed this, last week a Bill ("Brumbies Bill") was introduced into the NSW Parliament to protect a feral animal pest (wild horses) in a national heritage listed NSW national park, Kosciuszko National Park.

One can only describe this as a grotesque act of political madness if it passes into legislation.

Kosciuszko NP is the largest national park in NSW and one of the largest conservation reserves in Australia. The park is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and an integral component of the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves, included on the National Heritage List in 2008.

The park preserves a range of special places and values including glacial landforms and karst (limestone) systems, along with plants, animals and ecological communities only found in the park or Australian Alps (21 species found nowhere else) and the most extensive peatlands in the Australian Alps.

Karst (limestone) areas in the park – the Yarrangobilly and Cooleman Plain karst catchments – are nationally significant because of the landforms and the unique plants and animals that they support. These karst catchments also include spectacular limestone gorges, show caves and wild caves. Many NSW and ACT cavers have witnessed the increase in horse numbers around the Cooleman Caves and Blue Water Hole karst area and the increasing environmental damage being caused.

Karst systems can only be protected by protecting the entire karst catchment. This is because karst systems are among the most vulnerable of ecosystems; if they are damaged it takes vast amounts of time for them to be formed again. Their integrity depends on the relationship between rock, water, soil, vegetation and air remaining essentially unchanged. Any interference with this relationship can result in their degradation. Karst ecosystems are at risk from the changes that come with the activities of introduced animals, including horses. These impacts include damage to vegetation and removal of vegetation which leads to erosion and silt clogging up the karst system.

Impacts on bogs and waterways are a particular concern. An Assessment of Feral Horse Impacts on Treeless Drainage Lines in the Australian Alps, found that 56% of the length of the stream beds have a moderate to high sediment load, compared with less than one percent in the horse absent areas. 82% of the length of streams have moderate to high levels of pugging in horse present sites compared with one percent in the horse absent sites (G Robertson et al. 2016, in prep).

The NSW Montane Peatlands and Swamps Endangered Ecological Community includes the wetlands and bogs of the Snowy Mountains. These habitats are included in the nationally listed Alpine Sphagnum Bogs and Associated Fens Endangered Ecological Community.

The NSW Government's own Threatened Species Scientific Committee just last month released a preliminary decision to list habitat degradation and loss by feral horses as a key threatening process (seeking comments now). In 2011, the Victorian Government Scientific Advisory Committee listed the 'degradation and loss of habitats caused by feral horses (*Equus caballus*)' as a Potentially Threatening Process under their Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, concluding that feral horse populations currently threaten the survival and further development of a number of species and natural communities both in parts of the VIC High Country and in the Barmah forest.

If the Bill is passed the Government will be ignoring advice from their own agencies, NPWS staff and specialists such as botanists, ecologists, threatened species officers, staff specialists in pest management, science and research, together with input from an Independent Technical Reference Group.

The population of wild horses in the park was estimated at 6,000 in 2016 (Kosciuszko National Park Draft Wild Horse Management Plan 2016), occupying about 331,000 hectares or 48% of the park. It is further estimated that the population of horses in the park increases by around 15% per annum (900/annum based on 2016 estimated population). Between 2002 and 2016, 3183 horses were removed from the park, with the highest number removed in any one year being 612. In 2016, 295 horses were trapped and removed and a further 152 have been removed in 2017. These figures suggest that the current population of wild horses in the park is now likely to be more than 7,400 and currently increasing by more than 1,100 per annum. This situation is becoming an environmental crisis and urgent action is needed. The NSW NPWS are still working to the 2008 Kosciuszko National Park Horse Management Plan focusing on trapping and removal however

the lack of demand for domesticating captured wild horses has been a constraint in achieving key objectives of this 2008 Horse Plan. The Kosciuszko National Park Draft Wild Horse Management Plan 2016 must be approved and implemented as a matter of urgency, see

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectsnowies/knp-wild-horse-plan-draft-160271.pdf>

The Invasive Species Council, part of a broad coalition of forces incensed by this Bill are campaigning to kill this anti-science, anti-national park, anti-welfare and anti-environment Bill. You can help by visiting <https://invasives.org.au/blog/attack-on-all-we-hold-dear/> and signing the petition and forwarding the above under your own signature to NSW politicians. Please circulate to all your other contacts."



MSS Projects

Have you felt that you wanted to give something back to MSS, but didn't know how? Or maybe you didn't want to commit to anything due to time constraints? Well, here's your opportunity.

Over the last few years various members of MSS have taken on projects on behalf of MSS. In most cases assistance on these projects would be greatly appreciated. This can be as little as offering an opinion on a topic up to contributing as much time as you're willing to commit.

The following list details the projects, the type of assistance you could make, and who to contact to offer your help.



- **Abercrombie Book** (Contact: Beth Little) - it's time for MSS to produce an up-to-date book on the Abercrombie karst area. A couple of planning trips to Abercrombie are planned, check out the Calendar for the dates.
- **Abercrombie GPS Tag Location** (Contact: Rod Smith) - The aim of this project is to locate and GPS all the tags at Abercrombie. Over half have been located but there's still plenty to go.
- **Abercrombie Surface Survey** (Contact: Rod Smith) - A lot of the tags at Abercrombie are very close together, so the idea is to do an accurate survey between those tags to be able to see potential relationships between the caves. This project hasn't started yet as there's been a focus on having GPS waypoints for each tag location, but there's no reason why a surface survey can't start. Surveying skills are not required to help on this project.
- **Surveying - Resurvey Stable Cave** (Contact: Jim Crockett) - This project came about because we couldn't find a single map that covered the entirety of Stable Cave. This is likely to get rolled into a re-survey project of multiple caves at Abercrombie in preparation for the book.
- **Website Look and Feel** (Contact: Marilyn Scott) - This project is 90% complete, just need to do some work on the Members area. We still needed some good recent photographs for the website!
- **Documentation** (Constitution) (Contact: Chris Johnstone) - This is mostly complete although there's still some debate regarding the membership types we should be offering.
- **Catalogue MSS Library** (Contact: Rod Smith) - We have a lot of information in the MSS library, but it's not catalogued to enable us to find relevant information. The ultimate goal is to have the catalogue on the website so members can find any information we have with ease.
- **Bolting Course** (Contact: Rod Smith) - This hasn't progressed much passed the idea phase, but could be another useful skill members may be interested in.





TRIP REPORTS

Canyoning, Arthurs & Hailstorm Retreat, 3 & 4 March 2018

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: John Gray, Jeff Boyd, Steve Rowse, Trish Morrow, Brad Moore (BWOC) and Marilyn Scott (TL)

This started out as an MSS trip, but with one space available I made it a joint trip with BWOC and Brad joined us.

On a bushwalk a while ago, John G and I were talking, and John said he'd like to go back to Arthur's Canyon because he didn't take his camera last time. Arthur's Canyon is what Jeff and I had been calling Oliver's Canyon and we had unfinished business there. Back in October 2015, I'd seen a campsite we couldn't get to and then in December 2015 a canyon that we tried unsuccessfully to reverse (using track notes from a non-abseiller) because his route was so dodgy. So, as often happens on a



Waterfall and pool (potential lazy weekend campsite) in the creek (Photo John Gray).



Bonus abseil #1 (Photo: John Gray)

bushwalk or canyon, we planned this trip!

We all arrived on Friday evening and camped in the Hole in the Wall carpark for an early start at 8.30am on Saturday morning. We walked on the fire trail heading towards HitW and peeled off in the vicinity of high point 1014, heading down to the Bungleburi. We followed the route that Jeff and I had used back in 2015 and dropped into a side creek, admired a lovely overhang and waterfall and then continued downstream.

Both Jeff and I forgot that we'd exited the creek to the right, so when we came across a (very old) sling in the creek we figured as we had our abseil gear we'd take the bonus abseil. Then we came to a cliff that was too high for our ropes, so we walked around to where we should have been in the first place and found the route down to the Bungleburi that we'd taken before.

You only have to walk downstream on the Bungleburi for 200 or so meters, but there's a crawl in the way which half of us did just for the hell of it and to avoid getting wet; the other half of the group opted to get wet (only up to their thighs). 100m after the crawl we arrived at the first real challenge of the day, Jeff's Pass. This is a dodgy pass, requiring a tall person to climb up and set up a handline. The



Some did the crawl, others chose the wet route (Photo: John Gray)

A couple of hours later (skirting around, up and down pagodas) and we were in the side creek, which was much scrubbier than I remembered from 2015. I had intended staying in this creek until we got to the waterfall, and then climbing out to the right and heading upstream via the cliff top beside Arthur's creek and then dropping in approaching our campsite from there. But, the plan went out the window; by the time I caught up to everyone, we were at



The dodgy climb/pass (Photo: M)



Scrambling up and down steep pagodas (Photo: M)

rock is very loose, there are hardly any hand or foot holds and the exit isn't nice either. So, we sent John and Steve up to set up the rope for us!

The rope was set and so the rest of us started up. Lots of swearing later and a big rock almost hitting Trish on the helmet, and we were all up in the full sun and the heat of the day. It was then a trudge up hill to the top of the pagodas from where we could see the side creek that we wanted to be in.

the waterfall, found an old sling (not so old as the previous one) and then decided we were all too hot and bothered to climb out so we did another bonus abseil.

The waterfall was a bit tricky but we all managed and regrouped at the bottom in a large amphitheater. Trish, Brad and Steve tried to talk me into camping there (there was an overhang in case of rain and a pool of water), but I was on a mission to find the campsite I'd spotted from the cliffs above, so we walked downstream for 50m and around a corner and there it was, flat,



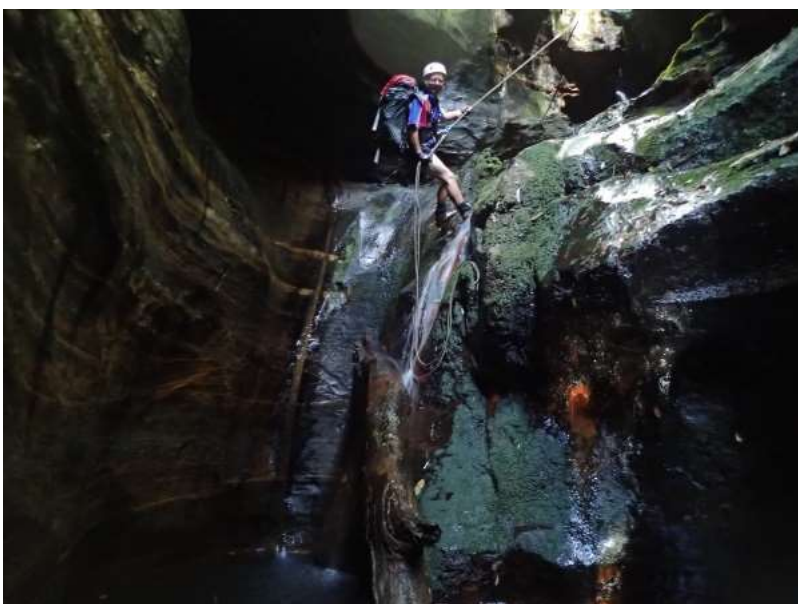
Bonus Abseil #2 at the waterfall (photo: M)



Our campsite in Arthur's Creek (photo: John Gray)

leaf littered, lovely tall Coachwoods ... if there'd been water in the creek it would have been 5-star. (John found water a few metres upstream the next day). It took us 8.5 hours from car to campsite, we probably could have cut an hour off this if we hadn't done the bonus abseils and been a bit more efficient in some of the routes we took.

The campsite scored an extra star that night when we walked around to the waterfall and saw masses of glow worms!



Brad on the 15m abseil, there was a very slippery log that you could walk down to avoid total immersion in the pool at the bottom (Photo M)

Next morning, we set off downstream on the creek looking for Arthur's Canyon. John had marked on his map that there were two abseils, 7m and 18m. We ended up accidentally skirting around the first one and were soon at the second one where we found two slings, very old and covered in moss. Because John had marked the abseil as 18m (a generous 18), we were a little concerned that the 30m rope wouldn't reach, we sent Trish down first and there was a convenient ledge she could stand on. The rope just made it to the water, so we headed on down. Nice abseil, everyone other than me stayed dry. We then headed down a slide and a small downclimb via slippery logs. The climbdown was the start of a tunnel section which was very



*At the top of the abseil, looking down into the canyon
(photo John Gray)*

but it's really satisfying for me to do a canyon that others rarely visit. Yes, not in the league of Claustal but you don't know that till you get there, and that 200m was very, speccky!

Thanks to everyone who joined me for this trip, the conversation around the campfire was stimulating and you're all great to walk with.

As always, more trips for the future planned, watch this space.

speccky. After the tunnel, we were back out in a very wide section of creek, lots of trees, rocks and boulders (none of which I'd remembered from 2015). And then we were in the Bungleburi.

We walked downstream for 1.5k past Scatters Canyon and arrived at the bottom of Hailstorm Retreat at around 12 noon and headed up the bottom scrubby section of Hailstorm to the constricted part where we stopped for lunch. I'd never done Hailstorm before so was interested to see what it had to offer because everyone who goes there raves about it.

The constricted part of the canyon didn't disappoint, very narrow, no scrub and a few challenges. When you exit the constricted part you are probably less than 100m from the top of the ridge and there's a faint footpad all the way to the track that leads out to Dead Log canyon.

Once on the track, the walk out was uneventful (other than Trish and me being rained on at the end). We were back at the cars at 3.30pm and on the road by pm.

This was a great trip (but I think that about everything I do), the heat made Saturday harder than it needed to be, but Sunday was a piece of cake, walking along the banks of the Bungleburi was much easier than I expected!

You're probably wondering why we went to all that effort for what was in effect probably only 200m of canyon. I'm not sure about the others,



In the tunnel section (photo John Gray)



Social, Bat Night – 9 March 2018

Participants: Marcia Kaye & Richard, Beth Little, Anna & James Ossig-Bonanno, Ric Webber (BMSS) & Marilyn Scott

This was advertised in the calendar as a “kid friendly” activity but we didn’t have any kids in our group. There were lots of other kids though, and they were having a great time. We had dinner at a Thai Restaurant beforehand and then rocked up at the starting time of 6.30 (and met up with Ric). Note, parking is an issue and you had to park a long way up the road (car-pooling would have been a good idea!). NPWS offered some great talks, we caught one on fruit bats, and then a little later one on micro bats (the ones that inhabit caves). There were some “experts” both presenting, and in the audience, so we got the correct information when questions were asked.

There were a lot of activities for kids and they had quite a few bats (hand reared by carers and unable to be released due to injuries).



Richard, Marcia, Anna & Beth at the Thai Restaurant



Anna, Ric, James, Beth, Marcia and Richard

there were quite a few in amongst the trees. The volunteer with us had a sensor, so we could hear the sound of the bats’ sonar signals when they were looking for insects.

This was the third time that Ric’s come to the Blackheath Bat Night (says a lot about how much Ric values the event!), and it’s definitely an activity that should go on the program each year as it’s got something for everyone (kids of all ages and adults).

Maybe next time we’ll pair it up with a Mt Wilson canyoning weekend (with some kids’ canyons). Anyone want to co-ordinate the bat night part of it?



One of the carers with a hand-reared bat, she had an injury to her wing and so is unable to be released into the wild (the bat, not the carer).

Caving, Cooleman Plains/Blue Waterhole – 16 – 18 March 2018

Report by: Beth Little

Participants: MSS Participants: Beth (TL), Rod, Marilyn, Anna. CSS Participants: Dirk, Lilly, Michael, Neil, Veronica, David, Llewlyn, Adan & Phillip, Caitlin & Giles.

Cooleman is a beautiful alpine grass-covered limestone plain in the Snowy Mountains. A lovely place for just a day visit if you're in the area, or camp and chill out for a longer trip.

Friday the MSS crew spent travelling down to location, with an afternoon trip to the Blue Waterholes and Barber Cave (Beth, Michel, Anna). Rod and Marilyn were running a little late as they had a flat tire to deal with on the way and a late start from Sydney so sadly missed out on the afternoon excursion.

The afternoon trip started at Blue Waterholes springs, and then up through Clarke Gorge to Barber Cave. Clarke gorge is really pretty, an intimate limestone gorge with sides framing the meandering river so perfectly. The multiple creek crossings were fun and I was able to

just splash straight through with my tall boots, rather than what looked to me like treacherous rock hopping that the other guys were doing (although they assured me it wasn't as dodgy as it looked – but I'm confident I would have gone straight in!). There are several options to do a through trip in Barbers; we choose to first rig an exit 'up climb' with a tape before walking up the valley to use the higher entrance. (You don't really need the tape, but it's easier if it's there just in case). We opted to not do the wet low crawl of the very lower entrance.

European bees were out in force in the area this weekend and we have a suspicion that this is what bit and then harassed me a bit before entering the cave. Mighty sting those little things have - thankfully it turns out I'm not allergic.



Before we set off, Regina giving us the run down on A-tent formations (Photo: M)



River Cave (Photo: M)

The majority of the CSS contingent arrived late Friday night and early Saturday morning. On Saturday we decided to visit Cliff, Murrays and Cooleman Caves via a long route over the plains, with the plan to check the area out in a bit more detail. We split the participants into multiple parties to stagger the amount of people in the caves at any one time, and a number of people (having done the cave before) choose to stay on the surface.

Cliff Cave is a great example of a meandering canyon style stream passage in metamorphosed limestone (i.e. into marble), with small scalloping indicating a fast-flowing water course. Signs of other volcanic activity can be seen in the passageway (extrusions); the streamway ends in a rubble boulder pile.

Was a big trek out over the plains (think it was a round 14km trip in the end!) but well worth it not only to pop out and see Cliff Cave, but also have a chance to find the location of the limestone A-tents we had heard were in the area. A-tents are quite a rare structural 'anomaly' with not many examples in Australia. Andy Spate plans to write a paper and present at the upcoming AKMA conference about them so make sure you check that out when available.



Good example of an A-Tent, not broken by brumbies (Photo: M)

The Murray Cave total passage length is reported as 500m, but sumps (x 3) make only about 300m accessible without being a cave diver. I'd love to go back following a period of prolonged drought as reportedly all three sumps can open in exceptional circumstances. Reportedly the cave terminates in a rock pile, through which cave divers recently established voice connection to River Cave. I was really surprised by just how extensively decorated Murray cave was. I can only imagine how spectacular it would have been before the vandalism reported from the 19th Century (apparently the gardens in the region are decorated with Murray cave speleothems!). The historic signatures are in a number of sections of cave and well preserved.



Coolman Cave (Photo M)

The party was pretty spread out by this part of the day. The plan was for any participants who were keen to check out Coolman (and Right Coolman) on their circuit back to Blue waterholes and then to the campsite. These are fossil stream caves, former resurgence points for waters now rising at Blue Water Holes, they have obvious entrances in the gorge side. I did the Coolman Cave short walk-through passages, whereas a few more adventurous crew did the Right Coolman crawl height passages.

We had a cracking campfire on Saturday night with entertainment provided by a number of the party, most notably Neil's lovely 12 string guitar. Thanks Neil! Caitlin and Giles sadly had to return to Canberra that evening and so we missed the chance to have their company and some ukulele serenades – but they promised next time for sure.

Sunday for MSS was pack up and return to Sydney, with CSSers heading up Clarke gorge to check out Barbers, Whitefish and the waterfall. It was a great trip for the MSSers, although, acknowledged a rather long way for just a weekend. In future we'll think about doing a longer trip to help manage the lengthy travel, perhaps a combined Coolman and Yarrangobilly trip.



Canyoning, Crystal Pools – 25 March 2018

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: Trish Morrow, Alan Green & Marilyn Scott

This started out as a short notice trip to Bell Creek led by Trish, but then we had a week of rain and I wasn't feeling well on the Saturday, so I hijacked the trip and suggested we do an exploratory trip to Crystal Pools. Trish and Alan were ok with that, particularly as Alan's ute was 4WD and would get us up the dodgy part of the Wollangambe Fire Trail. As it happened, it got us down most of the way on the dis-used and rutted fire trail that was to lead us to the canyon. We then walked 300m down to the creek, how easy was that.

Crystal Pools canyon wasn't in Jamieson's 4th edition of Canyons around Sydney, but it did warrant a two-line description in the 5th edition. We didn't find any slings or even a faint footpad through the canyon so figure it's rarely done.

John Gray said he'd one it ages ago but wasn't impressed enough to do it a second time.

There are three abseils, but we did a fourth at the beginning because the rock was way slippery, but you could probably down-climb this small drop. We set a sling at the last abseil, but for the rest we used dead trees/logs. The description said a swim and a couple of wades and that's exactly what we found. The pools themselves were stunning, particularly the last one. The walk out was dead easy; we didn't go all the way to the Bungleburi but decided an extra 100m of scrub warranted an early exit up a convenient pass. Car to car it was 5 hours, but you could easily cut an hour off that (and then go and do Alcatraz afterwards!). The walk out is a piece of cake.

We all agreed that while we'd had a great day (it felt like we were doing a first descent) and it was fun, we probably wouldn't go back to do it again, as nice as the pools were, the canyon was just a little too short and the scrub longer than we'd have liked it to be. Thanks Alan and Trish for humoring me.



Alan on the last abseil, a nice little overhang.



Alan on the second abseil



Which was followed by a slide



Bushwalking, Ettrema (Easter) – 29 March – 2 April 2018

Report by: Marilyn Scott

Participants: Jeff Boyd, Steve Rowse, Murray Newman, Emma Parnell & Marilyn Scott (TL in name only)

Whilst the calendar graded this trip as *Hard*, in truth it should have been graded *McGregor*. The route was Greta Road > Rogers Hill > Cinch Creek > Billys Hill > Billys Pass > Hamlet Crown > unnamed spur > Ettrema Creek > Tullyangela Creek > Puckett Pass > Pinchgut Hill > Cinch Creek > Tilly Anne Gap > Possibility Point > Tilly Anne Gap > Greta Road – over five days. Jeff had done the trip 7 years ago, but had forgotten some bits (don't we all).



Emma in Skinny Woman Slot

The first day was pretty easy, although the heat was punishing. We took a disused fire trail for about 12k and then peeled off into the wilderness to battle the scrub. There was the occasional rock slab to walk on but they were few and far between around Rogers Hill. We dropped down through our first cliff-line via some convenient ramps and Skinny Woman slot and eventually cooled off in Cinch Creek where we loaded up with water for the night and half the next day. Then it was up the other side of Cinch Creek onto a plateau battling more scrub to our (dry) campsite near Billys Hill.

Next morning it was back into the scrub to find Billys Pass which would take us down to a saddle and then over to Hamlets Crown. Billy's Pass was a piece of cake and the spur down into the saddle was easy, lulling us into a false sense of security. We had lunch in the saddle and admired the view thinking how great it would be down in Ettrema Creek as again it was a hot day. After



Hamlets Crown taken from Billy's Pass.

lunch we climbed up to the top of Hamlets Crown via a series of slots and chutes and took the time to admire the view once we were at the top. We could see the way forward, a ridge and then a spur down to the creek.

Unfortunately, we spent an hour looking for the pass off Hamlets Crown. Eventually Murray was sent off to see if a dodgy climb-down followed by an even dodgier ledge would get us anywhere. Half an hour later he returned to report “yes, it goes”, so we all did the 3m climb-down and then made our way along the ledge. This was possibly the scariest part for me (apart from the climb-down that is, that freaked me out too) as the ledge which went for what seemed like 100m, was only 1m wide in spots with a nasty 30m drop off to the side. It was so nerve wracking that I didn’t even take any photos of it, and that’s saying something! Eventually we got to the end and there was another climb down which took us to a ridge which in turn took



Jeff coming down the down-climb, my legs were just a little too short so was super scary.



Finally in the Creek!

us to the spur down to the creek. By this time it’s around 2pm and is really, really hot and we’re in full sun going down the spur. We all took our time trying to negotiate a very steep spur and didn’t get to the creek until around 3.30, way later than anticipated. We were all so hot that we just waded into the creek with our clothes on. After that, we made our way downstream (about 5k I believe) to Tullyangela Creek where Murray assured us there was a good campsite.

For anyone who’s been

into Ettrema Creek, you would know how beautiful it is, the water is crystal clear and there are great rock formations and cliffs that surround you, a magical place. You could easily walk by the campsite at Tullyangela, it’s hidden away, but it’s flat, there’s lots of firewood and some sections are lovely green grass. We all had a swim in the river before dinner and the guys went down to Cinch Creek to pick up drinking water.

Next morning we set off to an unnamed spur at the junction of Ettrema and Cinch Creek which Jeff assured us was a stunning knife edge spur. It was, but he’d forgotten about the infestation of native holly, and when there wasn’t native holly, there was Black Sally which is also sharp and scratchy. When we weren’t battling the scratchy plants though, the knife edge spur was pretty speccy.



One of the many crystal clear pools in Ettrema Creek

Just before lunch we got to Puckets Pass, a series of ramps and a couple of climbs all the way to the top, easy as. We had lunch on the top admiring the views before setting off to Pinchgut Hill in search of a

“bore” that’s marked on the map. Why anyone would put one there is beyond me, we didn’t find it, but will now research it to find out what is there (and where) not that any of us other than maybe Murray will be going back there!

Murray led the way off Pinchgut Hill back down to Cinch Creek. We dropped through a small cliff-line right at a spot in the creek that you could cross, it was much larger this far downstream than what we found upstream a few k two days ago. The walking (surprisingly) was pretty easy going upstream in the creek so Murray suggested that we could make for a side creek that would take us directly to Tilly Anne’s Gap (formerly known as Manning Saddle). The plan had been to go further that afternoon but we’d had enough



Looking over towards Cinch Creek just before we got to Possibility Point.

of walking by this time so figured an early camp would brighten us all up. We came across a good water source about 50m from our proposed campsite so were in seventh heaven by this time. Into camp by 4pm was a change from the previous few days!

Next morning, we started out bright and early, first to check out a 2m Diamond Python that Murray had found and then to head over to Pauls Pass, Dog Leg Cave and then the piece de resistance, Possibility Point. The route was all on the disused fire trail, and someone had put up tape markers where the track became indistinct. We

were at the Cave by morning tea and met Louise K who was doing a solo walk in the area, she’s fascinated by Ettrema and walks there every opportunity she can. We then headed over to Possibility Point. Views to die for! We spent a lot of time there taking in the magnificence of Ettrema Gorge until it was time to start back to Tilly Anne’s Gap via Pauls Pass. Jeff and I watched the others go down the dodgy pass, we’d both had enough of exposure for a while. We took a different route back to camp, mostly on rocky slabs with a bit of scrub thrown in to make sure we didn’t forget how horrible it could be.

That night we finished off Jeff’s rum and enjoyed Easter Eggs and the last of our dinners. None of us were looking forward to the 16k walk on fire trail back to the vehicles, particularly me, I’d picked up blisters on my heels that were so bad that I eventually changed into my crocs and walked the last 14k in them.

We were back at the cars at around 1pm (a 5-hour trip) and quickly cleaned up so that we would be at Nerriga Pub in time for Pork Rolls and beers.

This was the first walk that we’d done with Emma and Murray and they were a delight

to have on the trip, Murray’s navigation skills are excellent, and it was a nice change for Jeff not to navigate the whole trip (I’m very lazy these days and just hand the navigation over to him). I think we took Emma out of her comfort zone but she was very stoic about all the challenges (and the scrub). Thanks Steve for coming on yet another adventure, hopefully the next one won’t be so scrubby, and thanks Jeff for making sure that I actually did this trip now and didn’t put it off any longer.



The highlight of the trip Possibility Point with Steve, Murray and Emma out on the edge.



Canyoning, Glen Davis – 12 – 13 May 2018

Report by: John Gray

Participants: Marilyn Scott, Jeff Boyd, Catherine McLachlan, Garth McLachlan, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Andrew Baker, John Gray (TL)

The week leading up to the trip filled us with trepidation as the weatherman predicted snow and high winds. As I headed up early on the Friday morning, there was indeed a dusting of white on the higher peaks north of Wallerawang. Arriving at the campground at 8.30am I set up the gazebo and tent and made sure the guy ropes were well secured.

Anna was my companion for the day's exploratory walk into Freshwater Creek. The "D" branch looked interesting on the aerial photos. The day was spent scrambling up huge boulders and exploring under cliff-lines. I've never seen Freshwater Creek so dry but crystal-clear pools of water still existed in the canyon. After a tricky climb up a small waterfall (with a plunge into icy water should I slip), we discovered a bypass ledge. This enabled us to find an excellent camp-cave. Plans are underway to return and explore the area from the cave (probably 2019 when Anna gets back from her travels). We finally walked back into camp close to 5pm and got the fire going.

The rest of the party arrived during the evening and



Freshwater D (Photo: John Gray)



Drowned Rat Canyon (Photo: John Gray)

following morning for Saturday's long-awaited descent of *Drowned Rat Canyon*. On a previous trip we had used the half-way ledge to investigate the slot and it hardly stopped raining all day! The final abseil looked to be big. The question on everybody's mind – would 60m ropes be enough? Marilyn, Jeff and Garth would walk to the base of the drop with walkie talkies while Catherine, Cathi, Anna, Andrew and myself climbed the ridge to eventually drop into the headwaters of the creek. We thought that a rendezvous time of 11.30am would work but I underestimated the scrub on the ridge. At 11.30 we were only just reaching the creek.

Some hours later we reached the top of the big falls and made radio contact. Our support crew below had stuck it out and lit a small fire to keep warm. On the previous trip a drop into water had stopped us getting to the end of the canyon. This time we abseiled in from the side to avoid the water. A short walk later we reached another drop into water. To avoid this we set up a sling around a boulder on a higher ledge. This put us at the top of the big drop. A narrow ledge around to the left had a reasonably sized gum tree. Its base was hanging over empty

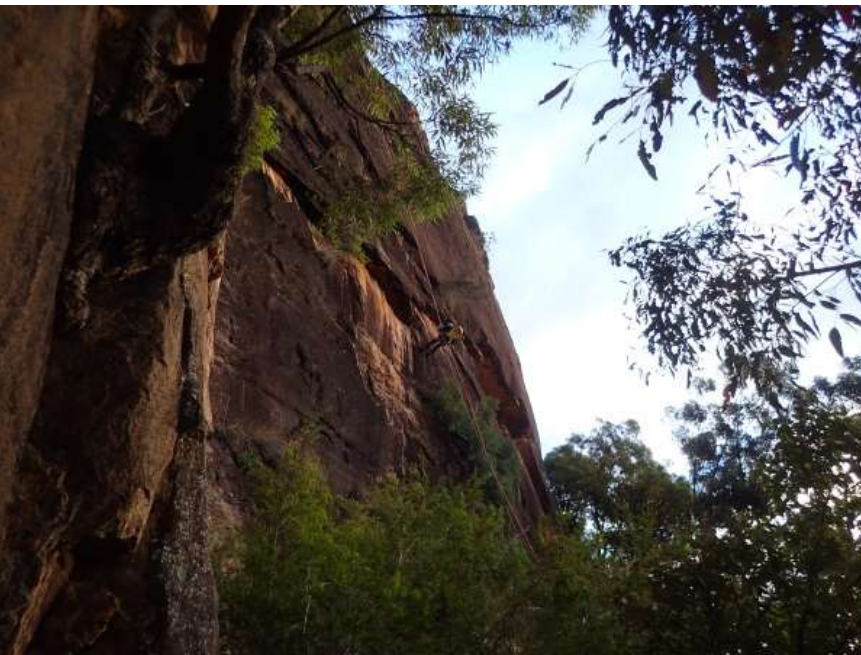
space but multiple large roots led back into cracks in the rock. My new 60m rope was lowered from here and soon afterwards the radio chirped out the news “it doesn’t reach, looks about 10m short”. There was a large ledge about 10m below us, so out came the roll of tape. Andrew abseiled down to the ledge and once again the rope was lowered. This time it made it!

All we now had to do, was lower the 2nd 60m rope and away we could go. The radio chirped again “it doesn’t reach, it might be caught on a ledge”. Andrew decided to abseil anyway and work out it out on the way down. It soon became obvious that it wasn’t caught on a ledge. Andrew was unperturbed and prussiked back up again. The ropes were re-rigged to

allow a single rope abseil (while retaining the ability to pull down the ropes at the end using a strategically placed alpine butterfly and carabiner). A shorter rope was attached to the end of the short 60m rope which allowed it to be tied off at the bottom. The last person (me) then removed the knot and carabiner to make it



The last abseil (note the knotted rope near the overhang) (Photo: M)



John on the last abseil (Photo: M)

easier for the pulldown. Made an interesting start to the abseil as I had to take in 60m of rope stretch. All made it safely down, and back to camp for a well-earned night around the blazing campfire.

When I got home I measured both 60m ropes and discovered that the older one was about 6m shorter than the new one. The consensus of opinion was that ropes do shrink by about 10% over time. The lesson learnt was to re-measure ropes periodically during their life. I would suggest that any parties doing this canyon in the future should have at least one 70m rope. This would remove the need to leave large amounts of sling behind.

On Sunday we did a walk up Coorongoba Creek to look at an interesting slot in a side creek. We climbed to the bottom of the cliff-line on the opposite side of the creek and decided that the slot will be worth a future trip to investigate from above.

Another great weekend was spent at Glen Davis. The forecast rain did not eventuate.



Vertical Cave Rescue Training - 5/6 May & 18/19 May

Participants: Multiple members from Volunteer Rescue Association/Cave Rescue Squad, Beth (MSS), Heather (MSS), and Cat (MSS).



Hawkesbury Lookout (Photo: Beth Little)

What a wonderful opportunity to engage with the Cave Rescue squad over two weekends and learn about vertical cave rescue techniques. The first weekend was at the small bolted climbing area at Hawkesbury lookout, a perfect spot to run mini scenarios for vertical cave rescue and learn the new techniques. The second weekend was down at Bungonia, getting to put our new skills into action in the underground vertical cave environment.

The focus of the weekend was the movement of an injured person in a rescue stretcher through a range of re-belays, using pulley systems or Tyrolean setups. I thoroughly enjoyed learning new skills and techniques, so different to other vertical rope rescue that I have done; none of the z pulley systems you come across in mountain crevasse rescue for example. I loved the use of 'body' counter balance pulley systems, applied in a range of different ways to control the stretcher moving up, down or across. This similar pattern is used to move the stretcher between horizontal and vertical positions, depending on what the needs of the cave or patient injury are. Such a brilliantly simple and effective technique; using brain rather than muscle.

I happily learnt that many of the knots I used for my

cave rigging are now outdated. No more the use of those figure eights that you cannot undo easily once they've been weighted. The easy to tie double bowline is my new favourite; I've always loved a bowline. So easy to tie the double and undo after weight! Also learnt about the 'fusion' knot – a much better option than the old bunny eared figure eights. Another fantastic knot I learnt was the 'stein' knot – for locking off a pulley. Applicable in canyoning when you want to use both sides of the rope. I will never use two alpine butterflies to tie off a canyon setup rope together again after learning the 'stein' knot – so much the superior of the two! Happy to show people these knots at the next trip if interested.

These two weekends were a wonderful taster for vertical cave rescue. It has left me wanting to learn more. You certainly need to keep practicing and using these techniques in a wide variety of different scenarios so you can develop speed and efficiency in the setup, plus the on-rope communications when controlling the patient.

A huge thankyou to all the cave rescue squad for their time and generosity in teaching us on these weekends. A special thanks to Al and Brian who took us under their wings! I am hooked and will be joining up for sure.



Photo: Beth Little





MSS TRIP CALENDAR

2 – 3 June Caving Timor Caves	NHVSS	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Jodie Rutledge <i>Contact:</i> jodie@rutco.com.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy/medium <i>Details:</i> For those of you who missed the March NHVSS trip to Timor, here's another opportunity to join on an easy-going trip. If you haven't been to Timor, make sure you go with NHVSS as they're the experts. Shearers quarters are available for the weekend.</p>
9 – 11 June Bushwalking Namadji	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Marilyn Scott <i>Contact:</i> marilyn_scott@bigpond.com <i>Grade:</i> Hard <i>Details:</i> Yanky Hat carpark to Mt Gudgenby and then to Sams Creek. We will climb some of the peaks at the end of Sams Creek, return route yet to be decided.</p>
9 – 11 June Caving Wean area	NEW NHVSS	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Melissa Hadley <i>Contact:</i> melissa.hadley2@tafensw.edu.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy <i>Details:</i> An exploratory trip to a new area to check out whether there are lava tubes on a private property that the owner has invited NHVSS to check out.</p>
16 - 17 June Caving Abercrombie		<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Beth Little <i>Contact:</i> littlebeth78@hotmail.com <i>Grade:</i> Easy/ Medium <i>Details:</i> Caving during the day, Saturday evening we'll brainstorm to scope out the Abercrombie Book project including planning the surveying project. Possibility of accommodation rather than camping.</p>
16 – 17 June Caving Jenolan	NHVSS	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Andrew Baker <i>Contact:</i> Andrew.Baker@environment.nsw.gov.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy/medium <i>Details:</i> Join NHVSS on a classic horizontal caving trip in the Blue Mountains. Be advised that this is likely to be a photography trip as Andrew has a new camera. Accommodation at Cavers Hut.</p>
23 – 24 June Bushwalking Yengo	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Marilyn Scott <i>Contact:</i> marilyn_scott@bigpond.com <i>Grade:</i> Easy <i>Details:</i> Departing from Mogo Creek camp ground, easy 2 day walk in lovely area with 5 star campsite. Short 4k walk into campsite with opportunity to check out aboriginal art along the way. Due to short walk in, bring gourmet food for dinner! Check out some more aboriginal art on the walk out.</p>
30 June – 1 July Caving Jenolan	NEW	<p><i>Trip Leader:</i> Chris Johnstone <i>Contact:</i> chris_johnstone@hotmail.com or 0401 988 096 <i>Grade:</i> Easy/ Medium <i>Details:</i> Staying at Cavers Hut, so numbers limited to around 10. Kid Friendly (no plans for anything vertical or particularly sporty at the moment. Caves are as yet not specified on permit so open to suggestions, keeping in mind that we are unlikely to get any restricted caves unless someone has a good scientific reason for doing a restricted cave. Unless a better idea comes along, leaning towards Wyburds, Mammoth and a couple of others. Leader has a scanned copy of the Jenolan Northern Limestone book if anyone wants to take a look at that and come up with suggestions.</p>

14 - 15 Jul Caving Wellington		Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: roderick__smith@hotmail.com Grade: Easy Details: Another opportunity to visit an area most of us are unfamiliar with. Further details to follow.
2 August Social Canada Bay	NEW	MSS Meeting - opportunity to meet at Burwood prior to the meeting for a catch-up dinner. Email secretary@mssadventure.org for information on meet-up venue.
4 – 5 August Caving Jenolan	NHVSS	<i>Trip Leader:</i> Andrew Baker <i>Contact:</i> Andrew.Baker@environment.nsw.gov.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy/medium <i>Details:</i> Join NHVSS on a classic horizontal caving trip in the Blue Mountains. Probably another photography trip. Accommodation at Cavers Hut.
18 & 19 August Canyoning Glen Davis	NEW	Trip Leader: John Gray Contact: JOHN.GRAY@sydneywater.com.au Grade: Medium Details: Retrieval of anchors out of Drowned Rat Canyon and checking out a small canyon on eastern side of Coorangooba Creek that was subject of recce in May (exploratory). Saturday evening happy hour(s) and campfire will be a highlight. Numbers limited due to exploratory nature of trip and experienced canyons preferred.
25 - 26 Aug Caving Glenrock	NEW NHVSS	Trip Leader: Brian Reeves Contact: 0402 099 329 Grade: Easy/ Medium Details: Details: Join NHVSS for a weekend of exploration, photography and digging for new caves. New area to explore on this weekend.
25 - 26 Aug Caving Abercrombie		Trip Leader: Beth Little Contact: littlebeth78@hotmail.com Grade: Easy/ Medium Details: Caving during the day, Saturday evening we'll brainstorm to scope out the Abercrombie Book project including planning the surveying project. Possibility of accommodation rather than camping.
8 - 14 Sept Caving Yarrangobilly	NEW	EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST rip Leader: David Stuckey Co-ordinator: Marilyn Scott Contact: marilyn_scott@bigpond.com Grade: VARIOUS Details: A week of caving at Yarrangobilly, staying at Caves House. Numbers limited to 8. Email asap to advise whether or not your interested.
8 - 9 September Caving Abercrombie	NEW	Trip Leader: Cathi Humphrey-Hood Contact: cathi@emeraldimages.com.au Grade: Easy Details: Recreational caving plus opportunity to do some photography.
15 - 16 Sept Instructional		Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: roderick__smith@hotmail.com Grade: Educational Details: Navigation Training
Sept 29 – Oct 27 Caving Nullarbor		<i>Trip Leader:</i> Cathi Humphrey-Hood <i>Contact:</i> cathi@emeraldimages.com.au <i>Grade:</i> Easy <i>Details:</i> Advance Notice of a Joint trip with NHVSS. Looking for new caves using drones and other techniques.

Oct 20 & 21 Cave Surveying Wombeyan		Co-ordinator: Marilyn Scott Contact: marilyn_scott@bigpond.com or 0417 453 170 Grade: Instructional Details: COURSE FULL!
November 3 - 11 Caving New Zealand	NEW	Trip Leader: David Stuckey Contact: stuckedl@cba.com.au Grade: Easy/Medium Details: Postponed to October 2018. Awesome! But be warned, after caving in NZ, you may never cave in Oz again. Numbers will be limited due to transport/accommodation logistics.
Nov 17 & 18 Canyoning Glen Davis	NEW	Trip Leader: Rod Smith Contact: roderick__smith@hotmail.com Grade: Hard Details: Wowzers & Doomsday . Limited numbers for Wowzers as it is an exploratory trip (we have some details). If there's a lot of interest in visiting Glen Davis we may look at finding a second leader to take a group through Freshwater or Coinslot.
26 Dec 2018-4 Jan 2019	NEW	The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania (31st ASF Conference) pre- and post-conference trip dates to Mole Creek Karst area into some spectacular caves. See notice on Page 5.
Easter 2019 Caving Ashford	POSTPONED	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's at least four known caves. More details to follow.



Sassafras Cave, Mole Creek - April 2018 - Register now for the conference for the opportunity to visit these stunning caves! (Photo: M Scott)



APPENDIX 1 – MEETING MINUTES

MSS 426th General Meeting – 10 May 2018

Held at SES Canada Bay

Meeting Opened: 7:30pm

Present: Roderick Smith, Beth Little, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Marilyn Scott, Katryse Nicholls, Owen Nicholls, Donna Graham, Edd Keudell

Apologies: Chris Johnstone, Jim Crockett

Any Corrections to Previous Meetings Minutes: None

Correspondence: New Caves Chronicles – Volume 49, January 2018

Committee Members Reports:

President: None

Treasurer:

Brought forward:		\$6,317.18
Total Incoming:		\$269.00
Memberships:	\$185.00	
Trip Fees:	84.00	
Total Outgoing:		\$3,363.00
SF cheque (outstanding from last meeting)	\$2,556.00	
Australia Post PO Box Renewal	127.00	
Jenolan Cottage	160.00	
140m rope	520.00	
Account Closed:		\$3,223.18

Anyone who wishes to look at the full report, please email secretary@mssadventure.org and it will be emailed to you.

Equipment Officer: We have purchased 140m of new canyon rope that has been cut into 1 x 60m length and 2 x 40m lengths.

Training Officer: Beth has found a great new spot for future vertical training, which we may make use of by end of year. Beth has conducted three 1 on 1 trainings which were extremely productive and certainly a good option to continue with. Unfortunately, due to various circumstances Beth will have to give up the training officer role at end of year.

Librarian: Another working bee was conducted since the last meeting and was quite productive. There's still work to be done.

Web Manager: The new website is still in production. Unfortunately, time has been limited of late and a re-installation of Visual Studio has been required, which hasn't helped the process.

Membership Report: We have some new members since the last meeting. They are:

Tanya Smith (Rod's sister) and her children Connor and Ellie, Edd Keudell and Donna Graham.

Project Updates:

- Cave Surveying Course (Marilyn): The trip is full and there is one person on the waiting list
- Abercrombie book: We are waiting for official sign off from the NPWS regional manager. Since most of the karst is on NPWS managed land we want to ensure they are happy with us producing a book. The general consensus is that we will get sign off.

New Business

- Cave Sniper update (Jim): Jim has lined up a buyer for the Cave Sniper and is in the process of arranging money transfer and shipment.
- Bank Account update (Jim): Jim made some enquiries and found that Bendigo Bank provide an account which would be perfectly suitable to our needs.

Resolution: That MSS will open a Bendigo Bank account to replace our existing bank account. The signatories on this account will be Rod Smith, Beth Little, Cathi Humphrey-Hood and Jim Crockett
 – Moved by Marilyn Scott, Seconded by Edd Keudell.

- Grants applications update (Cathi and others): Cathi has been following up with Sue White, but not getting much feedback, which is most likely due to Sue being rather busy. Cathi will continue to chase.
- Meeting location update (Marilyn): Marilyn has submitted an application to hold our general meetings at Epping RSL. If successful, our first meeting there would be February next year.

Other general business:

- Rod raised an idea to run some training on the scaling poles – This idea was met with approval. There's no specific date or location for this, but it will be looked at for later this year or next.

Trip planning:

Ashford postponed – The trip to Ashford planned for the June long weekend has had to be postponed. We are looking at running the trip during Easter next year. Marilyn is running a bushwalk in Namadgi National Park that weekend and NHVSS are running a trip to Wean (north west of Tamworth) to explore some lava tubes.

Date	Leader	Activity	Location	Grade	Notes
30/6 – 1/7	Chris Johnstone	Caving	Jenolan	Easy	
8/9 – 9/9	Cathi Humphrey-Hood	Caving	Abercrombie	Easy	Probably a photography weekend
8/9 – 14/9	David Stuckey	Caving	Yarrangobilly	Medium	Seeking expressions of interest
3/11 – 11/11	David Stuckey	Caving	New Zealand	Medium	Trip Full
23/6 – 24/6	Marilyn Scott	Bushwalking	Mogo Creek	Easy	
9/6 – 11/6	Marilyn Scott	Bushwalking	Namadgi NP	Hard	
18/8 – 19/8	John Gray	Canyoning	Glen Davis	Medium	

Next Meeting: Canada Bay SES 2nd August

Meeting Closed: 8:40pm



Croesus Cave (Mole Creek) Tasmania, April 2018 (Photo: M Scott)