

NEWSLETTER MONTHLY

Trip Reports:

Jenolan

Boars Head & Sahara

Wee Jasper



April 2009

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Cover Shot:

Danielle Lewin and Johan Verhagen in Wiburd's Lake Cave, Jenolan.

Photo by Dave Stuckey

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

Last Meeting

Watch this space, we're working on something extra special!

Next Meeting

Monthly meetings are temporarily suspended due to the loss of our venue.

The committee are currently seeking alternative accommodation and will advise in due course.

If anyone is able to assist, please let us know.

Quote of the Month

"I just don't want to put my overalls back on." - Rod Smith. A perfectly good excuse not to go caving, isn't it?

Announcements

There has been an update on the bet between Brett and Dave. Due to the unfortunate cancellation of the November Jenolan trip, the bet has been postponed. It is also worth noting that Brett has lost the bet. As such, the next Jenolan trip that goes ahead, Brett will be supplying lamb shanks (cooked in the slow cooker) and a bottle of Mead.

Trip Reports

Jenolan - 21st - 22nd March, 2009

Cavers: Rob Clyne, Johan Verhagen, David Stuckey, Rod Smith, Ken Harris and Danielle Lewin.

Another caving year and our first for Jenolan.

For our newest member, Danielle it would be her first trip to the Jenolan Karst.

We all arrived Saturday morning with Johan bringing into the hut his brand new slow cooker. It was a fine day and it was great to have some new caving blood in our group with Danielle on her first "real caving trip."

Hennings and Wiburds were on the agenda – great caves for an introduction for Jenolan.

Gear organized and more importantly lamp shanks etc loaded into slow cooker for tonight's feast!

As a welcoming gesture, it was decided to show Danielle how our group usually navigated in complex caving situations. At the entrance of Hennings, the regulation ball of string was produced. Johan was given the extremely important job of attaching the end of the string to a rock at the entrance of the cave. This would be our lifeline back and way out from Hennings maze like structure. Dave lead the way, paying out the lifeline.

We penetrated deep into the labyrinth when our first error occurred. Dave accidentally dropped the ball of string down a small 45 deg downward tight horrible slopping chamber. The ball couldn't be retrieved. With each pull back on the line, the string merely unraveled. I volunteered to retrieve it. I only could exit the tight, smelly, horrible hole with Johan grabbing my boots and dragging me out.

Then thing turned for the worst. The string now was loose. The knot at the entrance must have failed. A large argument started between Johan and Dave. "It was your responsibility to tie a proper knot!" etc etc. Tempers were high. How the hell were we to get out? It was decided to follow the string back as far as we could trace it. But more disaster awaited. The string was now broken into numerous small sections (funny that).

What was Danielle thinking! What type of club is this????

After numerous loops and strategically placed bodies blocking the obvious exit – Danielle's welcome to MSS was complete and she was let in on our little joke!. I must say she took it all with flying colours.

With practical jokes complete – we headed up the valley to Wiburds and had a spot of lunch.

After lunch, minus the string this time, we went for an explore in Wiburds.

The lake chamber, Dyke and above Gultches explored. Dave set up some digital photo shots with multi flash.(2D only I'm afraid!)

After our exploration, we picked up Rod who was resting at the entrance due to a stuffed knee and headed back to the Hut.

Glorious aromas wafted from the door of the cottage. The slow cooker had done its job and after a "Top Shower", we settled down a feast of lamp shanks, mash and veggies. Thanks Johan! Bloody Tops!

Due to having a mile of other stuff to do at home – I had to depart Sunday morning with Dave genuinely taking over as TL.

Mr Stuckey takes up the story

(PS welcome to MSS Danielle – glad we didn't scare you off!)

Our Sunday expedition was to Mammoth Cave, with David showing the way, followed by Danielle, Ken and Johan. We wandered up the valley to the cave entrance and prepared to go underground. Johan opened the gate and we filed into the entrance chamber and sat for a while to allow our eyes to become accustomed to the dark conditions. The cave was expressing abnormal humidity. Everyone was feeling it. The slightest exertion caused excessive sweating and discomfort.

After a brief chat, we started down the steep chamber to the "Jug Handle" pitch. We swung down here and scrambled to the top of the rock pile. This route to the southern section doesn't seem as complicated as it used to? It's fairly routine now and not really that difficult. Down at the bottom of the 40' pitch, we awaited the rest of the group to wriggle their way through, before heading off to "Home Sweet Home" and onwards to the crawl ways. We couldn't resist making the booming sounds in the "Gun Barrel" tubes. This passage really does present excellent reverberations and seems to amplify any slight sounds. Once we popped out the other end, we could hear Lower River in the distance. The oppressive atmosphere was taking its toll on our team. It's amazing how lethargic we felt. We were overheating with even slight movement. The way down was fairly straight forward. After a rest and exploration at the river, we decided to skip our planned visit to Oolite Chamber and retraced our steps back through to the top of the rock pile. We headed into part of the northern section of the cave via the "Cold Hole" and "Horseshoe Chamber" and wandered along to the start of the "Railway Tunnel" before climbing to the top of the dirt bank, overlooking this massive chamber. It was here that we enjoyed our lunch.

When everyone had had a break, we scooted down the back of the bank and along the crawl way shortcut back to the "Sand Passage" and the "Cold Hole". It wasn't long before we were back at the "Jug Handle" pitch. Here we assisted Danielle to reach to crucial holds. As we climbed back to the top of the entrance series we could hear the distant echoes of thunder. We also noted that the previous feelings of humidity and stuffiness in the cave had gone and the usual cool conditions prevailed. It was a curious change of atmosphere and I couldn't help but suspect the change in weather conditions, outside the cave, were in some way responsible. We gained the top of the chamber and scrambled out through the gate. A very pleasant trip towards the end.

The gate was secured and we headed back to the cavers cottage for our final clean up and departure.

Boars Head & Sahara abseils - 4th April, 2009

Attending: Danielle (new member), Steph, David, Jim, Rod, Rob, Tim, John and Johan (TL)

This was a day of big abseils, big exposure and big excitement – all for \$3!

Our Boar's Head abseil trip started with a 25m abseil into a rainforest gully – descending a nice, flat and shady wall. Then a walk down a gully and around the corner to 'The Slot' - which separates the Boars Head massif from the main Headland.

Entering 'The Slot' is where we actually had to traverse in a caving manner, with one foot on the Boar's Head cliff and the other foot on the Headland! So scary too, looking beneath our feet into the 'Bottomless Slot' with wind blowing through the slot. Just a fantastic place to be!

Next, a 15m abseil into 'The Slot' – the rock architecture here is simply amazing!

Continuing, the third and fourth pitches are 25m each, descending more of the Gully / Chasm / Slot / Abyss ie too deep for measurement!

Back into the bush-line, we did a little stroll around the escarpment to the final pitch – a big 55m abseil! Wow!

Readers, next time you are in the mountains, please go for a drive along Narrowneck and look across to the Boar's Head cliff line. From the comfort of your car, you can clearly see a giant, black chasm splitting the escarpment underneath the Boar's Head – that is where we descended!

As a bonus to this trip, there was still more to do.....

The mighty abseils – Sahara and Kilimanjaro – awaited us.

'Sahara' is a new route – with more than adequate exposure – and finishing immediately above another acceptably exposed abseil – complete with a 'barn door' on the arete – 'Kilimanjaro', always guaranteed to wobble the legs! WOW!

To make these two abseils even better, the Blue Mountains weather turned on a special afternoon of misty fog, which made the abseils look particularly scary – Gee, nothing like peering over a big pitch whilst foggy bits of mist spiral past in the updrafts!

We finished the day with a very civilised coffee, hot chocolate, ice cream and tasty cakes in one of the Katoomba cafés.

Johan

Wee Jasper - 25th - 26th April, 2009

Cavers: Rod Smith (TL), John Stathakis, Danielle Lewin, John Marshall (kinda).

John Stathakis picked me up just after 6am Saturday morning and we packed all my gear into his car. As we headed to Danielle's place to pick her up we hoped that she didn't have too much gear, there wasn't a lot of room left. Thankfully, still being used to the military way of doing things, Danielle had packed light, so we fit her in without any problems.

A non-eventful drive saw us arrive in Wee Jasper almost exactly at 11am, the time I'd told John Marshall we'd arrive. We first went to the camp ground (Billy Grace Reserve) where I'd told John we'd be camping. He wasn't there. Maybe he was at the other camp ground. No. Maybe the pub, the shop, Careys Cave. No. We started asking around, no-one knew. Finally we asked the ranger at Billy Grace Reserve (maybe we should have done that first). Yes, John had camped there the night before, they'd even shared a drink at the pub. We did another lap of a few places, including Dip Cave, with no success.

What to do? We'll set up camp and hope that John finds us. By this time it was lunch time, so we had a feed, pitched our tents, and made ready to go underground. We found out from another caver that it had poured with rain Friday night, but the caves were still surprisingly dry. By 2pm we hadn't found John, but we couldn't wait any longer, Dip Cave was waiting.

Dip is a reasonably sized cave with 4 entrances. By abseiling through entrance WJ4 we would land in series 4 and could explore series 3, 4 and 5 before abseiling through the rat hole into series 2 and exiting the cave through the rubbish tip.

We arrived at the entrance to find another rope set up, it appeared the group already in the cave were planning on prusiking back out, having set up a single rope. We doubled the rope over and John descended first. After a slight delay due to a knot in the rope Danielle then followed before I descended last. We pulled the rope down and let our eyes adjust.

We decided to start with an explore of the western end of series 5. This goes further than I had remembered with a couple of interesting climbs. We found a number of bats and enjoyed watching them fly around, sometimes quite close to us.

Next we went to series 3 and started at the western end of that. Clambering through a rock pile didn't produce any ways through, so we headed for the eastern end. This goes a lot further but eventually gets smaller til there's no way on.

Time to do the abseil.

Back to the rat hole it's clear where plenty of ropes had been anchored in the past. I threw our rope around the column and then into the pitch black of series 2. We were comforted to hear the thud of the rope hitting the floor of the chamber beyond.

Again John led the way, but had no problems with knots this time. Soon Danielle and I joined John and we made our way for the exit. It didn't take long to find the exit, and find that it was dark and raining outside.

An amount of water and mud made it into the back of John's Jeep, but I think he was happy to see it being used like a proper 4WD should be. He also had to put it into 4 low to get out of the slippery mud. He was also happy to drive over to the shower block so at least we were clean for the evening.

In the morning Danielle didn't feel like going caving, and I didn't want to put on my wet overalls, so we opted for a surface trog. We went out to a section of limestone near Careys Cave that wasn't fenced off and John and I went for a walk while Danielle guarded the Jeep from the sheep. We located ten tagged caves, one we couldn't safely get close enough to to read. Seven of the other nine don't go far, the other two I haven't found any information on.

Then it was time to go home. I called John Marshall when I got home to find out that Saturday morning he'd awoken with a bug (illness, not insect) and had come home.

Another top trip (aren't they all!).
Rod.

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:

Activity



Caving



Canyoning



Diving



Hiking



Abseiling



Cycling



Horse Riding



Kayaking



Climbing



Skiing

Grade



Easy



Easy/Medium



Medium



Medium/Hard



Hard



Extreme

Accommodation



Camping



Cottage

Extras















Kites



Camp Ovens

| Where | When | Activity | Grade | Trip Leader | Accommodation (if applicable) | Additional Costs | Let Trip Leader Know By: | No. of Spots Left |
|--------------------|--|---|---|--|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Malaita Wall | 9 th May |  |  | Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au |  | | 6 th May | |
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Pilchers | 10 th May |  |  | Rod Smith 0438 444 262 roderick_smith@hotmail.com (that's 2 underscores) |  | | 6 th May | |
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Deep Pass | 16 th - 17 th May |  |  | Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com |  | | 13 th May | |
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Abercrombie | 30 th - 31 st May |  |  | Rod Smith 0438 444 262 roderick_smith@hotmail.com (that's 2 underscores) |  | | 27 th May | |
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Narrowneck | 14 th Jun |  |  | Rod Smith 0438 444 262 roderick_smith@hotmail.com (that's 2 underscores) | | | 10 th Jun | |
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Kanangra | 25 th - 26 th Jul |  |  | Dave Stuckey 0414 590 305 stuckedl@cba.com.au |  | | 22 nd Jul | |

| Where | When | Activity | Grade | Trip Leader | Accommodation (if applicable) | Additional Costs | Let Trip Leader Know By: | No. of Spots Left |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Yarrangobilly | 7 th - 13 th Sep |  |  | Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com |  | We'll be staying in Caves House, which will be an additional cost | 14 th Aug | |
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Jenolan | 1 st - 2 nd Aug |  | | Rob Clyne 0409 033 224 caver@people.net.au |  | | 27 th Jul | |
| Other Info: | | | | | | | | |
| Tongariro Track – New Zealand | Jan 2010 |  |  | Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au |  | Flights, huts fees etc. | 1 st Jul | |
| Other Info: One of New Zealand's “great walks”. | | | | | | | | |
| Lake Waikaremoana Track – New Zealand | Jan 2010 |  |  | Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au |  | Flights, huts fees etc. | 1 st Jul | |
| Other Info: One of New Zealand's “great walks”. | | | | | | | | |
| Waitomo – New Zealand | Jan 2010 |  |  | Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au |  | Flights, trip costs etc. | 1 st Jul | |
| Other Info: These are commercial trips, but well worth the costs for the amazing experience. | | | | | | | | |