

# NEWSLETTER MONTHLY

APRIL 2010





# MSS NEWSLETTER

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Cover Shot:

Owen Johnstone in Wiburds Cave, Jenolan

Photo by Rod Smith

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

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## Society News

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### MEETING REPORT: 15TH APRIL 2010

The second MSS meeting for 2010 was held at Bob Horn's place in Baulkham Hills on the 15th April.

The meeting got started at 7.30pm with 6 members in attendance.

### ASF Chillicon Easter 2011

Expressions of interest were sought regarding running a club trip to Chillagoe to coincide with the ASF Chillicon Conference next year. We decided to add a trip to the Calendar, with Jim Crockett as trip leader. Contact Jim if you're interested in joining in.

### UIS Feasability Study

The UIS feasibility study seeks to determine if Australia is able to hold the UIS International Conference in 2017. Previous conferences have been held in Texas, China and Europe and are large events, attracting in the order of 1000 speleologists from around the globe. This event is held every four years. Jim Crockett will be the coordinator for the feasibility study and would appreciate the assistance of interested MSS members.

### Vote on ASF Items

The ASF proposed changes to two documents relating to caving codes of conduct and was seeking approval from each registered club/member. The changes were discussed at the meeting and the members present voted to approve the changes.

### Purchase of a club EPIRB

Due to recent changes in technology and regulations pertaining to satellite rescue beacons, we discussed whether it was necessary for the club to have a new EPIRB available for club trips. The president presented several quotes and specifications and a decision was made to purchase an EPIRB for the club after a few more quotes are obtained and the most appropriate unit decided upon.

### Membership

The cheque to ASF has been sent. Membership details were also discussed, as details for some members are incomplete and/or out of date. At some stage in the near future a form will be sent to all members asking them to update their details. We also discussed sending out a survey and an MSS membership card to all members.

### Safety Officer Position resigned

After many years of duty Johan Verhagen has resigned as Safety Officer. The Committee is to decide if the position should be filled again. Many thanks to Johan for taking care of this role for so long.

### FIELD DAY

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On Sunday the 6th of June (after the Castle Head abseil on the 5th) Rod Smith will be leading a field day for training and revision in SRT and rigging.

## Trip Reports

### New Zealand Caving

April 2010

Report & Photos by: Dave Stuckey  
Participants: People from MSS, SUSS,  
SSS, NUCC, NHVSS.



The cabin steward was summoning me back to my seat..."I think that you've forgotten your passport sir", he was very apologetic. I was intent on getting off the plane and through NZ customs as quickly as possible as the other members of our little caving expedition would be waiting for me. I patted my pocket where my passport was securely residing. The steward presented me with 2 plastic carry bags and I heard the familiar clunk of wine bottles. "Oh...THAT passport". "I hope you enjoyed your Qantas experience" he added. I'd spent the major part of my flight in the rear galley, consuming cheese platters from 1st class and sipping NZ Merlots. I definitely enjoyed my Qantas experience. "Don't tell anyone I gave you these", he prompted. Fairly useless advice considering the two bottles of wine were clearly labelled "property of Qantas".

I eventually cleared customs and met the other members of our team. As we were heading off to collect our hire cars, the fire brigade converged on Auckland airport. "Woop, woop" noises emanated from the building. We had timed our arrival to perfection and headed off leaving the chaos behind us.

Our drive south was uneventful, stopping at Otorohanga Woolworths to collect our food order. We continued to Piopio, then headed westwards to Puketiti Sheep Station. We would be based here for just over a week, staying in the shearers quarters, which were quite comfortable and reasonably well appointed.

Our first trip was to a cave called "Pompei". This was a large stream way of huge proportions, snaking its way through the hills. A reasonable stream flowed, however, not deep enough to cover the gumboots. An excellent introduction to a typical cave of the area. They are mostly through trips with active streams in tall, lofty hallways. "Pompei" was easily 5 metres wide and 15 metres high for nearly its entire 1.8 km length. Underground bushwalking! There were several side passages with some reasonable decoration.

We had hired some Toyota RAV4's and these were ideal for driving around the sheep paddocks to the various caves. Our next objective had the rather gloomy name "Friday 13th". We could almost drive to the doline of this one. A decaying sheep carcase guarded the entrance, something not uncommon in these parts. Another lofty passage charged into the hillside. We followed this until it started to narrow down and the water level rose. Whilst we were exploring this cave, other members of the team were visiting other caves or surface trogging. Many new "Tomo's" (vertical shafts) were located and referenced for future trips.

The caves in this area are special in the fact that there is a large layer of volcanic ash overlying the limestone strata. This means that water filtering through to the caves is charged with other minerals not normally present in karst areas. These minerals manifest themselves in the form of sulphur deposits and gypsum decoration and Puketiti has some world class gypsum decoration as we were about to find out.

The next cave we visited was “Kuratahi”, a network of dry and active stream way passages. As we left the lower level the walls started to take on an “icing sugar” texture. It became thicker until entire walls were covered. Some areas, the gypsum crystal layer had separated from the wall. Shining a light behind these layers caused the wall to light up with a cloud like appearance. Further in the cave, the gypsum took the form of flowers, extruded from the wall and twisting in odd angles. A taste of things to come.



Another gypsum cave was visited on different property. This time, the owners accompanied us to find out why a bunch of people from Sydney would fly all the way over to visit a hole in the ground on their property. They really can't understand what the fuss is all about. We located “Agamemnon”, similar to “Kuratahi”, however, the gypsum formation was much more impressive and delicate. I was happy exploring the stream way, until I climbed up into the gypsum passages.

We decided to have a day off. The weather was uncommonly good and some of the team wanted to do a bit of a walk. We decided to head to Tongariro Crossing day walk. This would have to be one of the most spectacular day walks in the world, crossing a large area of Volcanic activity, hot pools, steaming vents, craters and some great loose scree slopes where we could practise our glissading. A longish day, 19 ½ kilometres with several steep ascents and descents. There is also the option of climbing the volcanos, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro as side trips.

Back at Puketiti, we had received permission to explore “Grand Canyon Cave”. This is an enormous abandoned stream way over 400 metres long. It is listed as protected as there is occasionally a bat colony in residence. It was here that I saw the largest weta that I have ever seen, as big as my open hand with rear legs the size of chopsticks! Several decades ago, the cave didn't enjoy the same restriction and the locals used to drive the Land Rovers through! In recent times, a section of the roof near the entrance collapsed, making it impossible to enter by vehicle. A permit system now applies. At the far end of the cave, it opens out into a heavily wooded rainforest. There are several more tunnel sections to be explored, one of which, has a small daylight hole in the ceiling. Part of our trip was to scramble up to this hole and drop a rope through, making a brilliant 45 metre abseil.

We were visited by some of the local cavers, one gentleman in particular, “Foto Phill”, is a bit of a local legend with his cave exploration and photographic endeavours. Phill had also assisted us with a lot of local knowledge, maps and locations. He was about to offer another surprise. He had a permit to visit the amazing Puketiti Flower Cave. This is a highly restricted gypsum decorated cave. It is featured in several photographic books of the world’s best caves and is internationally recognised. Phill was now offering the one remaining spot on his permit to someone from our group. We placed our names into a caving helmet and drew one out! So, as I started to prepare my camera equipment for what was promising to be a long day, the rest of the group decided to have a day touring the local scenic drives, returning via the coast and back through Waitomo Valley, location of the famous Waitomo Caves.



Phill, Geoff and I bounced across the paddocks to the entrance. A short ladder pitch was rigged and I could hear the roar of a stream as I climbed down. We proceeded upstream through a beautiful river section before climbing up into the fossil passages. Here the cave meandered and the now familiar “icing sugar” formation began to appear with some small gypsum flowers. “That’s nothing” advised Phill, wait to you see what’s at the end, it’s going to blow your mind. A large gate blocked the way which Phill quickly unlocked. We were in hallowed ground. The passage was fairly narrow and some sections required us to proceed sideways. The further we penetrated, the more crystals, flowers, angel hair, extrusions, all sorts of amazing gypsum formations appeared. It was becoming ridiculous. I didn’t know where to point the camera. “Don’t waste your time here”, advised Phill, “wait ‘till you see what’s ahead”. We were now walking through passage which was entirely covered in some form of gypsum. It was like walking in a freezer with frosted walls. Long fingers of pure gypsum crystal reached out from the walls. Our progress was slow so that we didn’t risk brushing against the delicate speleothems. A sign appeared “Caution: Helix”. Up ahead, the most amazing formation I have ever seen. A single extrusion of gypsum crystal has grown from the wall over 1 metre long. It has formed a perfect spiral approximately 15mm in diameter. It looked like a huge spring that has been overstretched. There were at least 25 complete coils. At the end of the passage, entire walls covered with aragonite crystal. Another photo feast. It was impossible to walk more than 2 metres without taking another photograph. In the end, one had to select photographic subjects with a critical eye. There was too much to see. I was starting to get overwhelmed with it all. My mind was drained. We stopped for some lunch and retraced our steps back into the stream way. There were some excellent photos to be taken here but we’d had it and we exited the ladder pitch. What a privilege to be allowed into such a cave. Another high point in my caving career.





Our final day in Puketiti was spent in “Thunder Falls Cave” a vertical through trip starting with a 30 metre abseil into a large Tomo. At the bottom, a raging stream entered. We followed this through a series of sporting climbs and abseils, eventually exiting a lower entrance via some low crawling in the water. It was a fairly quick trip and some of the cavers went back up the hill and did another lap!

We packed our gear and headed further south through some wonderful karst scenery. Gorges appeared. We passed through the small town of Mahoenui. A little south of here, we once again headed into the hills and arrived at Rauroa Station where Julie was waiting for us, having arrived in NZ that morning and driven down from Auckland. We moved into the quarters and planned our activities.

A lot of the caves we were planning to visit had been found and mapped several decades ago. Some of the entrance references made no sense and many of these caves were technically lost. Our trip leader, with his determination, research and use of Google Earth was able to relocate these caves. The local property owners were also able to assist in a lot of cases.

Our next objective was “Murder Canyon Cave”. The lower entrance of this cave was located with the assistance of the property owner and his quad bike. Another stream way cave. (they all are). This was a very sporty cave. Absolutely thrilling and one of the best day trips I’ve done underground. Plenty of decoration, waterfalls, cascades, thrutchy climbs and of course, soaring stream way passage, over 1.7 kilometres in all. I wanted to reverse the cave rather than walk back on the surface. Definitely a repeater!



The next cave on the list was “Marmot’s Cave”. A similar style of cave to “Murder Canyon” only longer, nearly 2 kilometres. The passages were smaller in dimension and there were a few squeezes in the entrance series. We also had to contend with an 8 metre pitch, which was descended via a dodgy 7 metre ladder, hanging free under a waterfall, without belay. Okay, so you’re thinking, not the safest thing to be doing

and I would agree wholeheartedly. However, in the event that anyone fell, they would have landed in a very deep pool, so not much risk of injury. As for the 1 metre shortfall, well, we just lowered and dangled until the other members reached out and pulled us to the side of the swirl pool. I should point out that there were no novices on this expedition. Participation was by invitation only, so everyone was highly experienced. The closer we came to the exit, the larger the cave became adopting massive proportions. We rounded a corner and were bathed in sunlight. Looking out we saw tree ferns, rolling hills and a windmill. We had travelled so far in the cave, that once we regained the surface, we had to consult a GPS to locate where the vehicles were parked. In so doing, we were also able to accurately plot the location on the surface map for future explorers.

The last cave for me was the fabulous “Rimu”. Another multi entranced stream way cave with a walk in entrance. This cave was absolutely clean and the stream ran across pure bedrock floors. Virtually no dirt or mud. It twisted and turned and again adopted large proportioned passages. The walls were fabulously scalloped and made some excellent photographs. There were a series of deep pools in the way and some chest deep wading became necessary. Another fantastic sporting cave without any serious difficulties. As we came around a corner, we could see daylight in the distance. We were warned to be careful at this point and approached slowly. The light was entering from a window in the side of a large gorge. The stream tumbled out through this window and plunged into the depths of the gorge. Fortunately, a climb back upstream, led to an upper level of the cave. Another surprise as this section was heavily decorated with Moon Milk. We were able to find a negotiable exit here and scrambled back up to the top of the hill for excellent views of the gorge and the karst landscape.



The vehicles were visible a couple of ridges away and we began our trudge back. It takes quite some getting used to the fact that there are no snakes in NZ. Several times I caught myself being overly cautious, walking through long grass or swampy sections expecting to be suddenly surprised by a moving “stick”! One hazard that is always present though is the ubiquitous electric fence, a hazard almost as painful as a snakebite, but far less lethal! One of our group was to find this out firsthand.

The last day of my trip was spent cleaning gear. Every trace of dirt must be removed to satisfy Australian customs. Boots must be spotless and located at the top of your luggage for easy access and everything must be dry! Suspensions are aroused immediately they see you’ve ticked the box on the immigration card which states you’ve been on a farm. However, I’ve found that once you convince the customs officer that you’ve taken due care, they are very understanding. Be careful with large batteries too. They sometimes want to see them if you’ve packed them into your checked luggage. My lighting for the trip comprised of a new Silva 5 watt LED headlamp with Nickel Metal Hydride rechargeable batteries. The output from this unit was astonishing and the battery pack gives a stated duration of 17 hours on maximum output with 50 hours for minimum. I found it to be excellent with the battery pack neatly sliding into the internal chest pocket of my overalls.

I once again enjoyed my Qantas experience on the return flight and I remembered my passport this time!

David Stuckey



## Skydiving

April 2010

Report by: Dave Stuckey

Participants: Dave Stuckey

*And now for something  
completely different...!*

May 2009:

“...so there’s absolutely no way on earth that you’d ever jump out of an aircraft?” Richard was insistent. I was beginning to wonder what he was fishing for...then it dawned upon me that perhaps “they” were thinking of a suitably exciting gift for my 50th birthday which was coming up in July. “I’ve already told you...I’ll jump off anything, as long as I’m tied to it!”. I was even more insistent. “Abseiling is the second fastest way down a cliff...I’ve no interest in the fastest method”. I was satisfied that I’d stated my case with sufficient clarity that they’d reconsider their intended purchase and get me something a bit safer...like swimming with sharks!



July 2009:

As the strains of Happy Birthday faded out, the task of unwrapping gifts commenced. To my horror, I discovered that my protestations a few months earlier had fallen on deaf ears. As I unfolded the card, the words “Sydney Skydiving Centre” bounced off the cardboard and hit me in the face, followed by the letters “AFF”. I wondered what these initials indicated. “It means Accelerated Free Fall”, Richard proudly announced to all those assembled. “Oh God”, I thought. Richard continued his lecture “you’ll be travelling at terminal velocity from 14,000 feet”. “This just keeps getting better”, I was almost panicking by now. “Let’s look at this in the new year, I thought...that’s months away and I’ve got too many things in the interim”.

April 2010:

I was rummaging through my desk one morning when I found the dreaded skydive certificate. “Geez, I’d better use this before it expires”, I thought. I started to make arrangements. My “friends” who gave me the certificate, all wanted to be present when I did the jump, probably to ensure I boarded the plane. So it came to pass that I found myself at Picton “DZ” (drop zone), sitting in a classroom and learning about high and low speed malfunctions, pilot chute hesitation and some rather curious key words such as “PEEL”, “PUNCH”, “DISCARD”, “HARD ARCH” and more. Our instructor started a new chapter in his textbook. “LANDING IN POWERLINES” he read, “DON’T!”, was his simple advice. So it went on...all sorts of disasters were discussed, “Streamers”, “Hard Pull”, “Bag Lock”, “Line Twists”, seems there are numerous problems which can befall the novice parachutist, all of which need to be handled correctly. “I probably won’t pass the exam”, I thought, that would be an easy way out of this. The pass mark was 100%. Anyone failing the exam would be relegated to a Tandem Jump. No control issues and infinitely less stress. I must have tried too hard because I not only passed the test, but perfected all my drills too. The instructor recommended that I do the AFF jump. Richard and I retired to the Picton Hotel for the evening. We weren’t even allowed to drink, which was exactly what I needed to do!

Sunday morning, the weather was perfect...worst luck! We were at the DZ early and put our names on the manifest. My "audience" began arriving, ordering coffees, making skydiving jokes. I was a little nervous. My red socks did little to ease the tension. My jump was booked for late in the morning. Eventually, I was called to the gearing up area. I was fitted with a jumpsuit, altimeter, helmet, radio, goggles and a parachute. My jump master was firing questions at me. "What are the 5 elements of a perfect canopy?", "What do you do at 9,000 feet?" and so on. I fired back the keyword responses which had been drilled into us the previous day. Everyone seemed happy. On board the aircraft, I did not notice the falling temperature, quite the contrary, I was sweating profusely and my goggles were fogging up! The back of the fuselage began to open and I peered out at the clouds which seemed an incredible distance below us. Several sport jumpers nonchalantly launched themselves into the abyss. My jump master looked at me, "Let's Go" he yelled. We started backing our way to the door. I grasped the door frame and positioned myself on the edge of space! Final checks completed, no time to think...we were off!

During our training, we were warned about "sensory overload". I can tell you that I have absolutely no recollection of the first couple of seconds of my jump. One minute I was standing in the doorway of the plane, the next minute, I was in a stable position and plummeting rapidly. Somewhere in there, I'd gone from 14,000 feet to 12,000 feet. My training took over and I started performing my upper circle of awareness checks. The camera man bobbed into view in front of me and I gave a wave! I performed my practice throws of the pilot chute. Time to cruise for another few seconds and look at the amazing view.



My altimeter indicated that I was rapidly approaching the altitude where I was to deploy my main parachute. I communicated my intention to my jump masters who responded with their confirmation. I grasped the pilot chute and threw it out. The deceleration as the chute deployed was incredible...almost violent. Then all was silent and I was floating under the canopy. My jump masters continued their free fall and were lost to sight. I was on my own. Further checks were now due to ensure that I had a "perfect" canopy. I looked up and was greeted by the sight of my chute risers twisted around each other several times. "Great" I thought...a low speed malfunction on my first jump. Again, training took over and I

calmly followed the procedures to correct this fault. My lines cleared with a reassuring twang and I was ready to start flying the parachute. I took hold of the controls and started steering the canopy around to locate my target on the ground, still 3,500 feet below me. This was fantastic...cruising along, sheer exhilaration! The aircraft was returning to the airstrip and flew directly underneath me, 2,000 feet below. Here I was, looking down between my feet at an aircraft in flight! Is that not the most amazing sight?



After a series of circuits around the drop zone, I began my final approach. My controller took out his batons and was indicating my various landing actions. I was coming in nicely. The controller indicated for me to fully flare the canopy which reduced my forward speed from 30kph to almost zero. I looked down, the grass was about 1½ metres below me. I touched down firmly on my feet and then sat back. Wow! Any landing that you can walk away from is a good landing! I was jumping out of my skin as I started to field pack my parachute. The cameraman came over and filmed me, the van arrived to take me back to the jump centre. What an excellent experience! The most amazing and committing thing that I've ever done!

Richard was on hand to greet me "...so there's absolutely no way on earth that you'd ever jump out of an aircraft?" he enquired. "Maybe one more time", I replied.

David Stuckey





## Jenolan Caving

24th to 26th April 2010

Report by: Rod Smith, Photos by Rod Smith and Jim Crockett

Participants: Rod Smith, Jim Crockett, Ken Harris, Beth Little, Jess Swarth, Chris Johnstone, Helena Johnstone, Ben Johnstone and Owen Johnstone.



Caver Jim  
Photo by Rod Smith

I prefer sleeping in the garage. It may seem odd to people, no fire for warmth, a short walk to the cottage which can become quite unpleasant if it's raining. But, if I get the double mattress in the back it's worth it. My main competition for the mattress is Johan, and he wasn't coming on this trip.

I arrived to find Ken already there, but he'd taken the top bunk near the door, the double mattress was mine! The trip was off to a good start. Jim arrived just as I was about to go to bed, Beth and Jess arrived later.

Chris, Helena, Ben and Owen weren't due til about 1pm Saturday, but everyone agreed to wait and not head underground until after they got there. I still needed to go down to the guides office and get the keys. Beth, who hadn't been to Jenolan for at least five years, had an urge to do a tourist cave, and it wasn't long before we'd all decided to join her. I got the keys without an issue, they were only running an Aladdin tour during the weekend, so we could go in the caves whenever it suited us. We then joined an Imperial tour, where we were treated like celebrities. "We've got some real cavers on this tour", the guide proclaimed.

After the tour we decided on hamburgers for lunch, then I stuck around waiting for the Johnstones while the others went back to the Cavers Cottage for a little R&R. Chris and co. arrived later than planned, but not too late. I jumped in their car and directed them to the Cavers Cottage, or, at least, the bottom of the driveway. After much discussion it was decided that we'd all go to the Horseshoe Chamber and Railway Tunnel, which should be easy enough to get the kids there.

Gear was sorted and in a short time we were piled into Jim's and my cars and on our way.

This was my first real go at leading a Jenolan trip, the navigation was up to me. Thankfully Mammoth is easy to find and we were there in good time, with only a very minor stinging nettle incident. In we went, and we realised that the first bit would be a bit difficult for shorter legs. Thankfully Owen and Ben are both light so, with Ken leading the way, and proving to be very helpful with the boys, we were at the bottom quite quickly. The only problem was that we'd missed the Jug Handle, my first navigational error. Still, to rescue the situation, I decided to show everyone the Mammoth Squeeze.

Owen probably only realised he was in the squeeze because I said it was, he barely had to duck to walk in. I got a couple of photos of him near the start, but we didn't want him heading through without an adult in front. Thankfully, for Owen, Beth decided to give it a go. So through she went, with lots of encouraging words from the following Owen. The other end of the squeeze requires a considerable down-climb, which we didn't want Owen to attempt, so Ben went in to get him. Ben almost made it through before turning back with Owen in tow, both making it look way too easy. No-one else seemed inclined to try it, so I gave Beth some instructions to get to the bottom of the Rock Pile and we would go the other way to find her. Then Jess, who had been psyching herself up, decided to have a crack at it, and also had no problems.

So now we had two people to rendezvous with, we just had to find the Jug Handle. While I was looking in the slightly wrong spot, Ken managed to find it. This was the one spot I thought we might have trouble getting the kids down, but it turned out to be reasonably easy. Down the bottom, the way to the Railway Tunnel headed off that way, the Forty Footer was that way, the Rock Pile was ...



Photo: Rod Smith



Photo: Rod Smith

I should know, I've been that way plenty of times, but leading is a lot different to following. After one false start Jim and Ken helped out. Ken managed to make voice contact from the top of the Forty Footer, while Jim managed to take the right turn and get down through the Rock Pile. We waited for a while, but Jim and the girls hadn't returned. I headed off the way Jim had gone and ran into them coming up. They'd been momentarily displaced coming up through the Rock Pile, but had found the way by the time I found them.

We were all re-united and headed for the Horseshoe Chamber. Ken was leading. After a while I thought, I haven't been in here before. I wasn't sure where we were, but the going was easy, so we opted to keep going. Eventually we reached a small drop that would be easy to

get down, but a lot harder to get back up. At this point we turned around and went back to the last known location. We turned left and, before too long, arrived at the Horseshoe Chamber.

After a brief look at the Railway Tunnel we headed for the exit. It took us about three hours to get there, and about 20 minutes to get back. It was dark when we exited, but everyone had remembered to pack a head torch.

It rained most of the night, but stopped by morning. The plan was to do Hennings then Wiburds, but Helena, Ben and Owen would only do Hennings. Again it was up to my navigation. I was hoping my memory was sufficient, and then we arrived at the right spot. It all looked right, the entrance was in the right spot, but the number was wrong. I was looking for 39, but was looking at 76. I had a look in the entrance, and was expecting to see "Mr Hennings" on the left, but didn't. Was I in the right spot? Was this just another entrance? I should have checked the numbers of other entrances.

We decided to err on the side of caution and not head underground. Instead we went further upstream. Nowhere else looked right for Hennings, and it was about the right distance to Wiburds. I knew we were in the right spot, just needed to find the entrance. Again my navigation failed me. We spread out, people yelling out the occasional number as they found a cave entrance. After a while I stepped back and realised I was too far upstream. I went back to where I started looking but went further up the hill and immediately found a track, a track that looked all too familiar. Sure enough, there was the entrances, the one we weren't allowed to enter, and the one we were.

I found a prominent spot to yell out "I found it", and then it started to rain. Chris, Helena, Ben, Owen and Beth all went in the entrance while Jess and Jim huddled under a small overhang. But where was Ken? A bit more yelling and I located him heading back towards us. We all went underground where it was drier.



Photo: Rod Smith

The first bit I remembered and soon arrived at a junction. I wasn't sure which way to go from here, but the right looked right, so we went that way. Soon we arrived at what looked like a pit, which looked vaguely familiar, but also difficult to get everyone into then back out of. We turned around and tried some other ways. They all ended up too tight, too muddy, or too wrong, so I went back to the pit. On closer inspection it was easier to negotiate than I first thought and, after going slightly further, soon confirmed it was the right way. Heading down, then left, and we arrived at the Dyke, a feature I recognised immediately.

From here we negotiated a short crawl then headed roughly north. We found a couple of small crawls to keep Ben and Owen entertained before arriving at the end of the passage. I hadn't been this far into Wiburds, so I couldn't tell people which way to go. Beth went exploring while everyone else waited. Soon I was let through and started following her. At this point Chris and Helena decided to take the boys back,



but they needed my car keys to get stuff out of my car. I didn't want to crawl back to them just for that, so they asked Ben if he'd go through and get them. He bawked, but Owen immediately volunteered. Owen made the crawl look way too easy and was soon returning to his parents with my car keys.

The other five of us proceeded. None of us had been this far in, so we weren't sure where we were going. We were following a small stream passage but soon found a junction with a passage heading up to the right. It looked promising so again Beth went to investigate. She found a spot where we could stand, so we all followed. Another couple of splits in the path, but straight ahead was the most promising, after the awkward squeeze. Jess went through to have a look and, after she'd gone a fair way, Jim followed. While we waited Beth took the time to support the cave wall which was looking rather tired. They returned having found the end of the passageway.

Back in the streamway and Beth was back in the lead. The next obstacle was a puddle of brown water about an inch deep. Not so bad if we'd been walking, but we were crawling. Beth went through and then said the passage may not go, so we opted not to get muddy yet. The next report was that the passage was continuing, time to get wet! It wasn't long before the streamway ended and the way on zig-zagged. Although not exceptionally tight, it was not easy either. A downclimb that would have been rather awkward to reverse eventually stopped us. Time to exit then look at the map to determine where we'd actually gone.



Photo: Jim Crockett

As some of you may know, we confirmed once we'd returned to the Cavers Cottage that 76 is one of the other entrances to Hennings. We'd been in the right spot all along.

After dinner Beth and Jess had to leave. Jim, Ken and I went outside to see them off. Ken went back to the Cottage before Jim and I heard him laughing. The door had slammed shut and we were locked out. With a bit of ingenuity, Ken got us back in after only 40 minutes.

The next morning Ken had to leave early to meet Gill, so Jim and I decided to join Chris, Helena and the boys for a trip through Nettle cave, the self-guided tour. We'd all received complimentary tickets with the tourist cave. While we were down there it would be the perfect opportunity to return the keys to the Guides office. I found the Mammoth key, but where was the gate key? Beth had been the last to open the gate. We called Beth when we had reception. Sure enough, it was in her pocket. I returned the Mammoth key and told the

guides that the gate key would be mailed back to them. What else could go wrong?

I found Nettle cave interesting, but mostly due to some of the facts narrated on the audio guide we each had. We could go at our own pace, which didn't seem fast enough for Ben. After Nettle cave we went for a short walk past Blue Lake and down beside the river. It was then time to bid the Johnstones farewell, and clean up the Cottage before departure.

I'd already removed my belongings from the garage but decided to do a final check. Good thing I did. In the middle of the floor was Ken's wallet, obviously fallen out of his pocket as he'd left. I'd just figured out what else could go wrong. Jim thankfully volunteered to arrange return of Ken's wallet.

What a weekend! I'm going to apply for another permit for October. Come along if you dare!

## Upcoming Events

Weekend: 8th / 9th May – Caving at Wombeyan

Trip Leader: Rod Smith

Contact by: Trip is full

What's involved?

A weekend of medium to hard caving. SRT skills required. Camping at Wombeyan.

You will need:

Caving gear and food, camping gear.

Weekend: 15th / 16th May – Caving at Tuglow

Trip Leader: Jim Crockett

Contact by: 11th May

What's involved?

A weekend of medium to hard caving. SRT skills required.  
Camping somewhere. Tuglow can be wet.

You will need: Caving gear, camping gear and food.



Tuglow photos by: Luca Chiarabini

Weekend: Saturday 29th May – Mountain Biking

Trip Leader: Beth Little

Contact by: 25th May

What's involved?

An easy day of mountain bike riding along the Oakes Fire Trail.

You will need:

Mountain bike, helmet, lunch, water.



*Coming up in June:*

*Boars Head Abseil – 5<sup>th</sup> June  
Trip Leader: Johan Verhagen*

*A medium-hard day abseiling one of  
the Blue Mountains' classic descents.*

*Coming up in June:*

*Training Day – 6<sup>th</sup> June  
Trip Leader: Rod Smith*

*Spend a day brushing up on your SRT  
and rigging skills.*



The next NSW Speleo Council meeting is 10 am, Sunday 23rd May at Tricketts Arch, Jaunter. This is Peter Dykes' property. There will be the opportunity for caving on Saturday and a presentation and BBQ on Saturday night. Camping is at the nearby Tuglow River



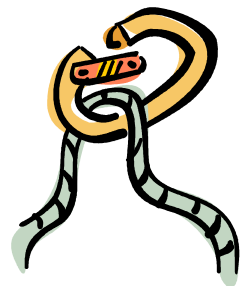
PLEASE contact Jim Crockett (ph. 0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com)) if you are interested in attending this, as it would be nice if MSS is represented at this meeting.

Peter Dykes' contact details are:

Tricketts Arch  
605 Jaunter Road  
Jaunter NSW 2787  
Ph (02) 6335 5247  
M 0488 151 459  
[ngalina@activ8.net.au](mailto:ngalina@activ8.net.au)

## Monthly Horrorscope

Your adventure starts for May 2010 ... or for any other time period you care to apply them to.



Mt Everest - 1st January - 31st January

Time to be number one, rise to the top and overcome all adversities. You can be the master of your domain. King of the Castle. The biggest cheese. Just don't let it go to your head.

K2 - 1st February - 28th February

You are second fiddle. Always the brides maid, never the bride. You'll get the second biggest promotion, the second prize in the lotto, the second best waterfront property, the second most beautiful partner in the world. Might as well kill yourself now.



The Eiger - 1st March - 31st March

In the dessert of life, don't forget the garlic and chilli. In the garden of life, don't forget the mausoleum. In the book of life, don't forget the audio.

Anconcagua - 1st April - 30th April

If at first you don't succeed, try again. Then give up. No use being a damn fool about it.

Ben Nevis - 1st May - 31st May

This is a good month to be traditional. Wear a kilt and learn the bagpipes. Eat haggis. Find out what your family tartan is. It doesn't matter if you're not Scottish, just add Mc to your surname, ie, McWong or McNguyen.

Mt Kosciuszko - 1st June - 30th June

Who are you kidding, making yourself out to be bigger and more important than you are. You barely rate. You may be the biggest fish in your pond, but you're in the smallest pond.

Kilimanjaro - 1st July - 31st July

I am looking into your future. It's foggy, but it's clearing. I'm starting to make out shapes, and sounds. Soon it'll become clear to me. Wait, it appears this is very important. I've run out of space.

Mt Cook - 1st August - 31st August

This month is a good month to commune with nature. Specifically the sheep. Just don't do too much communing, that could be frowned on.

Siula Grande - 1st September - 30th September

Try to come at things from the right direction, it'll make a lot of difference. It could be the difference between success and failure, winning and losing, life and death, cats and dogs, smarties and M&Ms.

The Matterhorn - 1st October - 31st October

Oh, I don't know. You'll have a month. It'll be 31 days, 31 nights, and you'll probably see the end of it. It'll be a bit of a bummer if you don't.

Mt Druitt - 1st November - 30th November

Try B good. Not bad. No sleep wid sista. Or cuz.

Mt Washington - 1st December - 31st December

You are an antelope in the sea of life. The full moon's sunshine reveals your desire to feel the colours of the rainbow. Forget your cherished memories, cherish your remembered forgets and remember to forgotten cherishes.

## News from the Underground

News from the underground aims to provide snippets of what has been happening around the world, primarily in the areas of caving and canyoning, climbing, mountaineering...

April 2010

Caverinfo.com reports the success of the Mexico J2 spring expedition in their aim to discover the join between the J2 system and a cave “Last Bash” that was found in 2005. The join was found 685m below the surface. Fortunately caverinfo.com gives a summary here: <http://www.caverinfo.com/> as the original report here: <http://www.pza.org.pl/news.acs?id=329598> is written in Polish.



5<sup>th</sup> April: Experienced mountaineer Heidi Kloos was killed in an avalanche in Colorado’s Baldy Peak. Her cattle dog stayed near where she was buried for two days until rescuers arrived to find her body under three metres of snow. Heidi was a well-known Everest climbing guide. Story from ExplorersWeb:

[http://explorersweb.com/everest\\_k2/news.php?id=19221](http://explorersweb.com/everest_k2/news.php?id=19221)

Also provided by Caverinfo.com is a wrap-up by Alexy Zhalov of the “Jasen 2010” meeting of Balkan cavers that took place from the 8th to the 11th of April, near Belitsa village in Macedonia. It was organised by the Macedonian Federation of Speleology. A number of caves were visited, including the Peshna Cave near Lokvitsa vill, which contains the remains of a Byzantine fortress. A number of cavers attended, with representatives from Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia and Romania. Photos of the event and the field trips can be found here:

<http://www.jasen.com.mk/Default.aspx?id=54b6a46c-983f-46d5-a545-824c6992c7d7>



April 25th: Australian adventurers Rob Rigato and Linda Beilharz along with 23-year old Sarah McNair-Landry arrived at the North Pole. Theirs was an assisted (resupplied) but unsupported trip of 55 days. Linda and Sarah have previously reached the South Pole. The group were helicoptered out to Barneo Station after reaching the pole. Story and photo from Icecap North Pole Dispatches:

<http://www.humanedgetech.com/expedition/icecap3/>

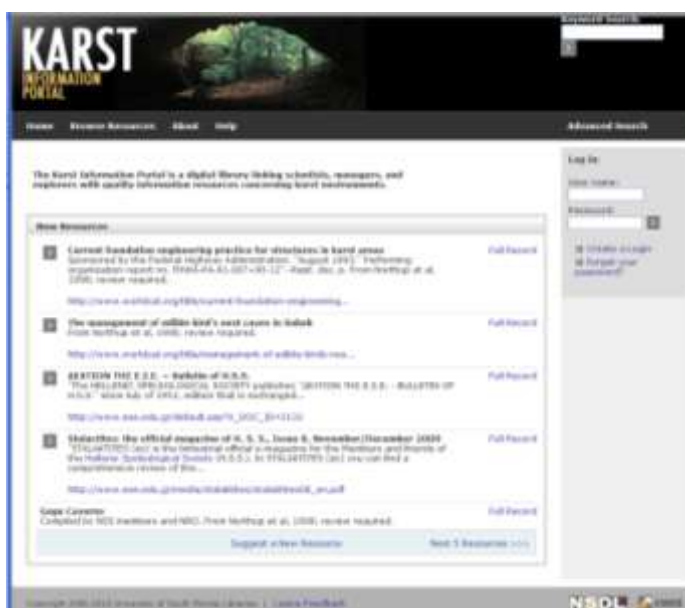
The top of the world must have been a crowded place – also reaching the North Pole on April 25<sup>th</sup> were Dan Darley (33) and Amelia Russell (27), who had undertaken an unassisted and unsupported trip from Canada. Story from ExplorersWeb: <http://explorersweb.com/polar/news.php?id=19283>

27th April 2010: Seven climbers have been rescued from Manaslu by helicopter, from a height of 6,500m, after they became stranded at camp 2. The site of the camp was wide enough to allow the helicopter to land, and the weather stayed fine just long enough to perform the rescue. This was undertaken by Air Zermatt + Fishtail, who offer their services for rescues up to 7000m. On April 23rd, they retrieved the body of Danish mountaineer Philip Ulrich from Mt. Kyajo Ri after he fell from near the summit at 6186m. Story from ExplorersWeb. [http://explorersweb.com/everest\\_k2/news.php?id=19288](http://explorersweb.com/everest_k2/news.php?id=19288)

While helicopter rescues have been saving climbers in Europe for around 40 years, their use in high altitude mountaineering has been controversial. Some climbers believe the possibility of rescue detracts from the challenge of climbing the highest peaks and are concerned that climbers might make less of an effort to get themselves down if they know the helicopters are coming. This is a real risk - after the rescue of the Tomaz Humar from the Rupal Face of Nanga Parbat in 2005, it appears more and more Himalayan mountaineers are beginning to realise that being stranded high doesn't have to mean a death sentence. These kinds of rescues are still the exception rather than the rule however, and the rescuers themselves face grave danger in attempting to fly at the limit of their machines. Tomaz Humar was killed last year after breaking his leg on Langtang Lirung – the weather was too bad to allow helicopters to fly and he passed away before rescuers could get to him. [http://explorersweb.com/everest\\_k2/news.php?id=19287](http://explorersweb.com/everest_k2/news.php?id=19287)

27 April 2010: Congratulations are in order! Oh Eun Sun has become the first woman to summit the 14x 8000m peaks, with her conquest of Annapurna. The Korean climber, leading a team of six (which included two camera-men), summited at 3pm local time, returning to camp 4 before nightfall. Eun-Sun's nearest rival for the top honor was Spanish mountaineer Edurne Pasaban, who is expected to climb her 14<sup>th</sup> mountain, Shishapangma, sometime in the next few days. Story and photo from ExplorersWeb:

[http://explorersweb.com/everest\\_k2/news.php?id=19294](http://explorersweb.com/everest_k2/news.php?id=19294)



NSS Forums report the Karst Information Portal <http://www.karstportal.org/> has been given an updated interface. The Karst Portal is a bibliographic database which contains document records but links to the full text documents only where these are freely available. Even though the actual documents might not be available from the Portal site, a high proportion of nearly 5000 indexed documents can be searched by keywords, with full-text searching set to become available later in 2010. Source: NSS Caver Forum:

<http://www.forums.caves.org/viewtopic.php?f=21&t=10061>



29 April: Caving Survey and Mapping Grades – Review of Standards: The International Union of Speleology (UIS) has decided to use existing Australian cave survey and mapping grades to begin their establishment of standards for cave surveys. Contributions and discussions are invited ASAP from interested parties by joining the forum at: <http://www.uis-speleo.org/forum/viewforum.php?f=63> . The web page outlining the work done so far by the UIS Informatics Commission can be found at: <http://www.uis-speleo.org/forum/viewforum.php?f=63> . This information was posted to the OzCavers Forum by the President of the UIS Informatics Commission, Peter Matthews on April 29, 2010.

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## ***Trip Calendar***

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Weekend 8th / 9th May  
Wombeyan  
TRIP IS FULL

Caving (Joint NHVSS trip)  
Trip Leader: Roderick Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
By: FULL  
Grade: Medium/Hard

Weekend 15th / 16th May  
Tuglow  
Permit obtained

Caving  
Trip Leader: Jim Crockett  
Contact: 0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com)  
By: 11th May  
Grade: Medium/Hard

Saturday 29th May  
Oakes Fire Trail

Mountain Bike Riding  
Trip Leader: Beth Little  
Contact: 0405 226 811, [littlebeth78@hotmail.com](mailto:littlebeth78@hotmail.com)  
By: 25th May  
Grade: Medium

Saturday 5th June  
Castle Head

Abseiling  
Trip Leader: Johan Verhagen  
Contact: 02 4758 9811, [johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au](mailto:johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au)  
By: 1st June  
Grade: Medium/Hard

Sunday 6th June  
MSS Field Day

SRT & Rigging – Training & Revision  
Trip Leader: Roderick Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
By: 3rd June

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Weekend 13 / 13 / 14 June  
Barrington Tops

Hiking  
Trip Leader: Danielle Lewin  
Contact: 0404 305878, [danielle.lewin1@bigpond.com](mailto:danielle.lewin1@bigpond.com)  
By: 8th June  
Grade: Medium

Saturday 26th June  
Kanangra Walls

Walk to Pages Pinnacle  
Trip leader: Johan Verhagen  
Contact: 02 4758 9811,  
[johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au](mailto:johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au)  
By: 22<sup>nd</sup> June  
Grade: Easy

Weekend 24th / 25th July  
Perisher Valley

Snow-shoeing / XC skiing  
Trip Leader: David Stuckey  
Contact: 0414 590305, [stuckedl@cba.com.au](mailto:stuckedl@cba.com.au)  
By: 20th June  
Grade: Medium

July (date TBA)  
**MSS MEETING**

Quarterly MSS Meeting  
To be held at: Jim Crockett's place  
Contact: 0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com)

31st July – 15th August  
Nullarbor  
At planning stage  
**!Permits Pending**

Caving  
Trip Leader: Roderick Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick__smith@hotmail.com)  
**By: ASAP**  
Grade: Medium/Hard  
Joint trip with NHVSS

Week 11th – 19th September  
Yarrangobilly  
**Permits acquired**

Caving  
Trip Leader: Beth Little  
Contact: 0405 226 811, [littlebeth78@hotmail.com](mailto:littlebeth78@hotmail.com)  
By: End of May  
Grade: Medium

Weekend late Sept or early  
October  
Jenolan  
Permit Pending

Caving  
Trip Leader: Roderick Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick__smith@hotmail.com)  
By: Mid september  
Grade: Medium/Hard

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Weekend 16th / 17th October  
Gooches Crater

Decadent / Family Friendly Trip  
Trip Leader: TBA  
Grade: Child's Play

Weekend ? / ? October  
Myall Lakes

Kayaking  
Trip Leader: Bob Horn  
Contact (02) 9639 3672, [randphorn@optusnet.com.au](mailto:randphorn@optusnet.com.au)  
By: ASAP  
Grade: Easy/Medium

Easter 2011  
Chillagoe QLD

Chillicon  
Trip Leader: Jim Crockett  
Contact: 0407 284 256, [jim.crockett@reach.com](mailto:jim.crockett@reach.com)  
By: expressions of interest by Oct 2010  
Grade: Conference with field trips

May or June 2011  
Timor Caves

Caving (Possibly joint NHVSS trip)  
Trip Leader: Roderick Smith  
Contact: 0438 444262, [roderick\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com)  
By: expressions of interest  
Grade: Easy/Medium