

S P E L E O G R A F F I T I

The Newsletter of the National University Caving Club.

Volume 4, Number 6.

August, 1967

EDITORIAL.

There has been considerable noise and discussion within the Club as to whether we should apply for membership of the Australian Speleological Federation. We were invited earlier this year to apply, but, in spite of the fact that no really good reasons for not doing so have been presented, we still haven't done so. Why not?

In exchange for membership we would find it immeasurably easier to obtain information on Australian Caving, and even speleology overseas, since the A.S.F. is a national body. Even if this is not sufficient, for some members, there is the point that we would then be able to get permits to visit Yarrangobilly and Jenolen, which at present we cannot do. (We have twice been refused permits to visit Yarrangobilly.) Admittedly, the reasons for refusal were merely bureaucratic, but we were still not allowed to go, while A.S.F. members are.

Apparently the big disadvantage, or at any rate the one about which most noise was made, was that it would cost members 50 cents per year, for which they each receive an A.S.F. Newsletter. I don't believe there is a member in the Club who could not afford an extra 50 cents per year. Consider the advantages.

EDITOR.

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Reprinted from "Stop Press".

"Did you hear about the caver who got hold of a lot of karabiners really cheap?

He got them in a shop where they were having an AB-SALE."

Yetch.

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So far this year we have undertaken 27 club trips, resulting in a total of 150 hours underground. This compares with last year's total of 25 trips, with a total of 140 hours underground, so that although this year we are leading on trips, last year leads on hours. The longest trip this year, $18\frac{1}{4}$ hours, is the longest the club has done, the previous high going back to 1965, 16 hours. The shortest trip, 5 minutes, is also probably a record. Wee Jasper shows a come-back in popularity (14 trips to date), and also, horror of horrors, Wyanbene with five trips for 47 hours underground. In addition we have been caving in new areas of London Bridge, Cheitmore and Kybean. The least popular cave is undoubtedly Cloyne Cave at Bunyan, with three cancelled trips to its credit. The most popular activity appears to be brewing tea. (67 pots).

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HEARD ACROSS THE STALAGMITES.

SSS have been digging in B16 - B51 at Bungonia, in an attempt to connect it to the big B4 - B5 Extension. They dug into a deep rift which headed in the right direction, but it unfortunately closed down before it reached the estimated position of the Extension. They are now following a strong draft in B22.

CSS announce that six members are off to West Australia in September. They hope to get to the famous Easter Cave, and, on the way home, to look at some of the Nullabor.

MSS have passed the word around that the top entrance to the Grill Cave at Bungonia has temporarily been closed, owing to the developing collapse of the entrance area. Grill ~~and~~ still be entered through the sink below the blocked entrance.

NUCC members have found that the heavy rains at WJ a fortnight ago have flooded Dog Leg again - water was pouring out of the lowest entrance (WJ12) on 27 August, so that's probably the end of exploration beyond the water trap for a year or two. The cave was last open in 1964.

TCC appear to have found the surface entrance of the Mini Martin. The bottom of this shaft was found earlier this year, with a number of logs lying at the bottom of it. The depth at the bottom of the shaft has been estimated to be 400-500', and when connected to Exit Cave the depth becomes a new Australian depth record of 600-700'.

We have received a report on Carpentaria Cave at Chillagoe, written by a member of the Carpentaria Exploration Company. Chillagoe is about 70 miles west of Cairns in North Queensland, about 1400 miles from here. The cave is approximately 4000' long, with great possibilities for further extensions.

MSS is running a photographic competition. Any members interested in submitting entries should talk to John Tilley or Michael Webb.

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On Saturday the 22nd of May, 1965, U Thant called once again for confidence in the United Nations, South Melbourne held out Essendon in a tight finish, and John Bryant fell fifty feet in the Drum Cave and died.

John was not an extraordinary young man. He was eighteen, about the age of most fresher cavers in the N.U.C.C. After a hard day's caving he was tired, like most of us get. The first pitch in the Drum is 135', a little larger than most of us have tried, but not of extraordinary size. John had climbed about fifty feet when he slipped. How many of us have slipped on a ladder? The knot he had tied in his safety line gave way, but how many people in this club know that a bowline will not hold under stress in a nylon rope? His compatriots did not know where the car keys were, and so had to run to Bungonia village for help, about seven miles away, but how many drivers let people know where they put the car keys, and how many people pay

attention when they are told? No, nothing that afternoon was unusual, except that John Bryant became Australia's first death in an organised caving club.

We haven't learnt from this sad tale. Just three weeks ago, an N.U.C.C. party surfaced after setting a club record for the number of hours underground, with over half the party suffering from exposure. It is not to my credit that I was one of them. Fortunately, no serious accidents occurred on this trip. However, at the end of it, none of us were in a fit state to be underground. One should not even have been allowed to enter the cave, since he had had less sleep than usual the night before, and then no breakfast. Another hour underground and he could have died. As it was, in a quarter hour wait at the bottom of a ladder pitch, while wet to the armpits, he literally went to sleep on his feet while waiting for tackle to be hauled up. Luckily he was able to get into a dry sleeping bag and have a hot cup of tea before he became unconscious. One other was in little better state, and repeatedly fell asleep in the Land-Rover while we were looking for a dry place to stay. Two others had mild exposure, and only the trip leader did not seem to be suffering much from this complaint.

You see, the problem boils down to three factors : gear, knowledge and fitness. The first, as Equipment Officer, I can try to eliminate, but the other two are entirely in your hands. They can kill as easily as any T.V. villain, either swiftly as in the first example, or slowly and insidiously as in the second.

Skills can be learnt on Field Days, on actual trips, or even in the Union. But on the last Field Day, only a handful of the people who needed it most turned up. On trips or around town they can be learnt by asking, especially people who lead trips. Nobody has been killed for asking, but plenty have been killed for not doing so. Practice is also essential, so go on more trips, and when at home practice things like knot tying. You could even try chimneying in the back hall. Don't just follow blindly into a cave, but look around and especially behind you for guide features that can be used on the way out.

Fitness is an everyday affair. Don't laugh at Harold, he could save your life if you follow his fitness scheme. Play squash, walk to (the) Civic, instead of driving there, run around the oval, or the block at night. Take salt tablets and glucose tablets with you on long trips. Have a good night's sleep beforehand, and plenty of breakfast before you leave.

Or don't come caving with me!

D.H.MOORE.

DID NEANDERTHAL MAN HAVE THE A-BOMB?

Two enterprising members of the N.U.C.C. have calculated the energy released during the formation of the Big Hole, near Wyambene. It turns out to be 4 billion foot-pounds, or approximately that involved in the explosion of 24 million tons of our old friend Tri-Nitro Toluene. (T.N.T.)

This must have been quite a bang, since even 1 ton going off in e.g., Parliament House, would probably break every window in Canberra. Consequently we can be fairly certain that it happened before the area was settled around 1840. Indeed, Sturt mentions it in his "Two Journeys", so it must have been there before 1830.

Now the Big Hole is not situated in limestone, being about 2 miles west of a projection of the Wyambene belt, so it is unlikely that the pit is a collapse into a cave. In fact a cave of such size as to form the hole when it collapsed would appear to be stable anyway.

We must therefore conclude that the Big Hole is not natural. Hence to answer the question "What caused the Big Hole?" we must look further. The Australian Aborigine evidently does not possess the technology nor the inclination for destruction on such a scale, but what about Austra lo-Pithecius, or gold old Homo-Neanderthalensis? They were both warlike souls, delighting, like their modern counterparts, in making a mess for the sake of it.

Maybe some up-and-coming young Archeologist may like to carry out radio-carbon and strontium-90 tests in the crater to try to date it further, and to decide if they used U-235, thorium, or plutonium in their bomb?

M.G.W. & B.J.D.

Maybe some up-and-coming Psychologist may like to carry out tests on the writers? - Ed.

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TRIP REPORTS.

WYAMBENE. 5 August, 1967

We left Canberra at 9.15 a.m. in Ian Raine's Land Rover, and arrived at the cave at 11.15, after a very slippery trip from the Shoalhaven River. We were underground at 11.45, and went straight through to the Blowhole, where we met two M.S.S. types on the way out.

For some reason, people experienced great difficulty with the wet stretch - I was sitting at sump 2 for almost an hour before the last person was out of it. For those inquisitive souls who wonder at the water temperature, it was 43° Fahrenheit at 6.30 p.m.

We all finally reached the top of Rockfall at 7.25, and quickly cooked up a meal. At this stage, some of the party decided to change into dry (?) clothes. We left gear at "Base Camp" at this point, since it would not have fit through Nicholl's Squeeze, shortly thereafter re-located by Dave Christie, so we adjourned to Caesar's Hall. D.H.M. and self went down to the floor, while the others went up toward the roof.

David and I inspected the mud slide from Ceasar's to the river, then returned to the ledge. Noticing at this stage that one member was suffering the early stages of exposure, with one other not much better, I decided to cancel the assault section of the trip, and concentrate on trying to photograph the Hall, but we experienced great difficulty in persuading 56 flashbulbs to ignite, so we tried an 8 minute available light (or available dark as the case may be) shot.

At 2 a.m. we returned to Base Camp to find that we only had 20 hours of light left, so we filled 4 lamps and started on the return journey, reaching the Blowhole at about 5.15 a.m. with more than one exposure case. One person repeatedly fell asleep on his feet while standing at the foot of the pitch, so I instructed that a safety line must be used. We found water streaming all over the place from here on out, although fortunately the river had not risen (yet?).

We surfaced in driving rain at 5.55 a.m., and then crossed the Shoalhaven to shelter in a derelict homestead. It took us $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours for the 4 miles to the Shoalhaven from the cave, and 5 minutes to cross the Shoalhaven, which was 14" high.

After a rest and a meal (that was the best cup of tea I have ever tasted - 8.15 a.m.), we attempted to go back for the M.S.S. bogs, but could not get across the Shoalhaven River - it was too high and fast - so we reported to Mr. Cambell, "Fairfield", Krawarree, N.S.W. - the local Civil Defence officer - and left for Canberra.

Comments and Recommendations.

1. All people invited on such a trip with me again should read David Moore's article first. The temperature at the top of Rockfall was 54° - very conducive to exposure after a while.
2. Most of our problems occurred through clothing and food deficiencies - lack of sufficient breakfast etc. This should not happen again.
3. Not enough people know first-aid, especially the treatment for exposure.
4. Photographic and assault work must take place on separate trips. I think that assault beyond the bottom of Caesar's probably requires a Photographic party, and an Assault party, since so much gear is required beyond here. While an Assault is in progress, the rest of the group should keep out of the way.
5. I should like to see the food dump we have established at the top of Rockfall Chamber, increased to 7 days' food for 3 men, and also add a Space blanket and a first aid kit with instructions, because sooner or later someone will be trapped inside Wyanbene, and it's a long way to the surface. D.H.M. and I would also like to see the same at Dog Leg for the same reason.
6. D.H.M. thinks that trips of this length ($18\frac{1}{4}$ hours) should not be undertaken, but I'm inclined to think that if those concerned have taken good note of his article (printed in this Newsletter - Ed.) it's probably all right.

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MICHAEL WEBB.

BUNGONIA. 22 August, 1967.

Free climbed into Bl6 at about 10.45 after a quick cuppa, but were forced to use a 30' ladder at the second pitch. Then proceeded slowly to the Bl6-51 connection, and down it to the end. It consists of a continuous 100' crawl-cum-sq ueeze. Having got most of the way through, it was pointed out that -

1. the place can fill with water rapidly, and it was probably raining outside;
2. we needed ladders to get out of B51; and
3. the time approached 1.15,

so we rather reluctantly repaired to the surface, arring at about 2.30. After a long winded lunch we arrived back in Canberra about 6.30 p.m.

DAVID MOORE.

WEE JASPER. 26 August, 1967.

Arrived at WJ on a sunny Saturday at 11 a.m. to number caves. After the inevitable brew, we checked out the locals for permission to enter property, and then started numbering north of the township, on the western side of the road. The following number system was used -

- i) started at 301;
- ii) used yellow painted 6" high numbers only. (No WJ prefix);
- iii) numbered 301-305, 311-315, 321-325 .. as we moved further north on the western side. This allows -
 - a) an areal connotation of the number, and
 - b) expansion retaining same;
- iv) numbered holes over an estimated 20' or likely digs in two cases. Both were large collapse areas going down about 10';
- v) numbered fairly unobtrusively, near most likely entrance, and out of the weather.

We numbered about a dozen entrances on the western side of the road and one, 601, on the east.

At 5 p.m. we decided to pitch camp down near Wee Jasper Creek at Punch-bowl Hill and were joined afterwards by some 40 screaming, yelling, bunger-throwing, smoking, drinking, swearing young 14-17 year-old children from Kogarah, who, in very poor taste, camped right on top of us.

After tea, we trotted up to Punchbowl to collect mud samples, look for wild-life and get into the roof sections. (By the way, just who did knock off Strawberry Shortcut?) We spent about 2 hours inside, of which about half an hour was spent protecting our ladder from the obnoxious crow mentioned above. When we came out it was raining, and this continued until about 11 the next morning, flooding Dog Leg in the process (WJ12 was sumped 6' in, for 10' or so. M.G.W.) and giving the locals about an inch and a half of water all round.

Continued numbering on Sunday, collecting another 10 or so caves on the western side of the road in 4 hours, before we headed for home!

P.S. as this numbering needs to be done, I will offer a beer per day to anyone who comes out with me for same. The car has a limit of me plus three, so don't all kill me in the rush. (Offer open to 1/3/68).

P.P.S. This, like Smedley Strongheart, is a continuing story and all results will be plotted up on a base map, which may be published at the end of initial exploration.

DAVID MOORE.

COMING TRIPS.NARRENGUILLEN. 9 September.

Leader : Michael Webb.

Large cave beside Lake Burrinjuck. Third chamber is over 350' long and probably nearly 200' high.

WEE JASPER. 15 September.

Leader : Ian Raine.

COLONG. Long weekend in October.

Leader: Norm Stokes.

Woof's Cavern in Colong is about the same size as Caesar's Hall, but getting to it is not as uncomfortable.

TUGLOW. 25-26 November.

Leader: David Moore.

End of term celebration trip. 265' chimney, followed by 4200' of tunnel. Fantastic formation, and spectacular subterranean river.

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Contact the Leader or a Committee Member by 5 p.m. on the Thursday previous to the trip if you wish to go. Names are below :

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