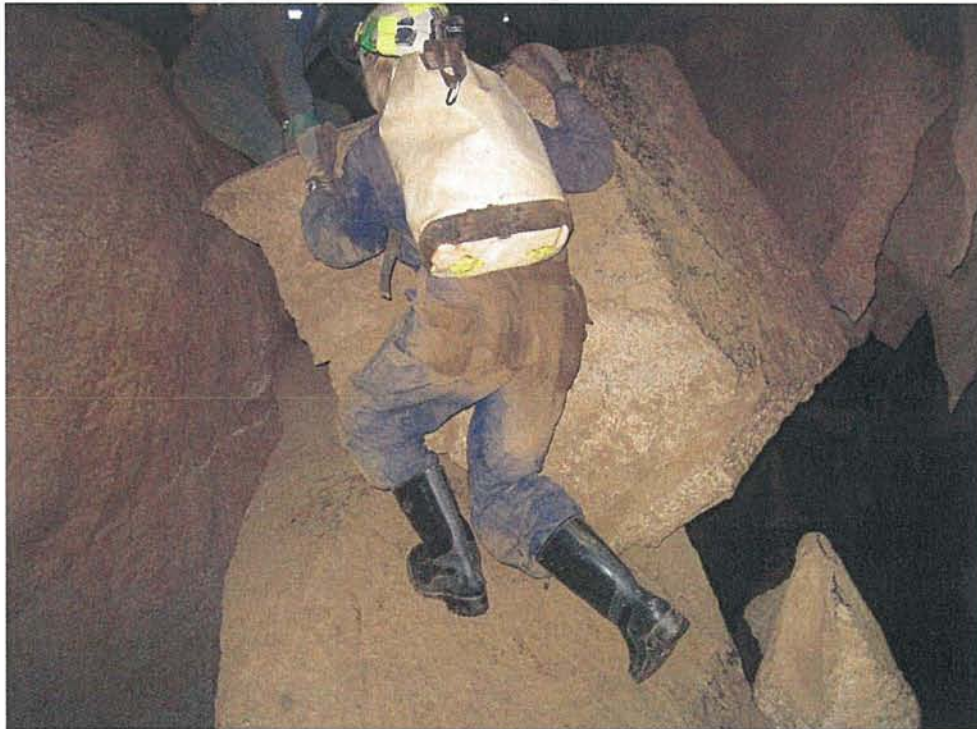


# Oolite

Journal of the  
Blue Mountains Speleological Club

Volume 33 December 2007



# OOLITE

Journal of the Blue Mountains Speleological Society  
Volume 33 January 2007-December 2007

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Cover Photo: Easy does it! Timmy Mann on the Sugar Cubes, Mammoth, Jenolan  
(photo C. Mann)

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## **From the President**

Tempus fugit! It's been a year since BMSC celebrated (in grand style), it's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With over 80 guests, including representatives from OSS, SSS, NHVSS and JCRT present, the night was filled with memories, a fascinating talk by Ian Bogg, displays, awards, games, music and a BMSC photo compilation on DVD courtesy of Rick and Anne-Marie Brett.

It was an opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of so many former members. Their efforts placed the club on a firm foundation and built a good reputation within the caving fraternity. On behalf of all current members I'd like to say "thank you" for building such a great tradition and club.

Well here it is, 2007, and how will BMSC navigate the next 40 years? We have a solid financial position at the moment and have purchased new gear. The club is lucky to have such a hardworking exec. Like many small clubs our membership base in recent years had shrunk, leaving some of us wondering if we are facing an irrelevancy syndrome. This year has seen the (till ongoing) revamp of our constitution and the streamlining of procedures, allowing fewer general meetings. As well we have increased our number of trips, undertaken training of new trip-leaders and expanded our membership. We hope also to run more joint trips with other clubs. We have made a few new contacts through our website, and I would like to thank Jim Foster for his work on its construction and ongoing management.

Finally, I'd like to wish Iain Lynch and his family a well-deserved break from caving. Iain has been a stalwart in BMSC and will be greatly missed. Perhaps when the lure of the limestone and mud stirs in his consciousness, BMSC will once again benefit from his vast experience and skill. Good luck and thanks, Iain, from all of us at BMSC.

Cave on,  
*Phil Niciak, President, 2007.*

## **Another Blistering Salvo From the Editor**

Well Hi there.

Oolite is a bit short this year, partly because the contribution rate from members is less than fabulous, and partly because study has taken an inordinate amount of my time, and I have not written all the trip reports I should have. But, then, neither has anyone else...

We have 21 members at last count, and judging from the emails I receive, the standard of literacy is passable. So get cracking. This includes You, dear microbods!!

So many promises, so few reports...The next Oolite will have a Shame File of non-contributors to grace its pages... ☺

Get cracking!  
*Cindy Mann, Journal Editor, 2007*



## Trip Report Cliefden March 10<sup>th</sup>-11th 2007

Present: Cindy Mann (T/L), Rob Mann, Tim Mann, Paul and Tom McKendry, Phil Niciak, Mike Materazzo, Michelle Coleborn, Evan Harden, Liam Connor, Sophie Lai.

### Saturday March 10th

After leaving Woodford at 7-ish we made it to Cliefden at around 10:20. Phil, Mike, Paul and Tom were already there. We pitched camp and trogged up during which time Michelle arrived with the others. We split the group and those who were not caving got ready for some walking and GPS-ing. Those who were caving drove off to near the Murder bluff, and I picked up the key from Anthony's on the way. Fortunately I had no trouble in finding the cave, thanks to the mud-map I had drawn on a previous visit. Gosh it was great to be back in this beautiful area – even walking the hills around here is a joy.

We entered the cave about 1:40, the group comprising myself, Tim, Paul, Tom, Evan, Liam and Michelle. We noted the remains of the skin of a brown snake on the way into the cave.

I had brought a rope for the descent into the entrance chamber, only to realise that the boys had grown past the stage of needing it, so we left it at the top. We passed through the chamber with the "dragon" suspended from the ceiling – Rick asked me to find out if the real name of this is in fact the "Dragon Chamber" or whether this is just BMSC's name for it. (If it's not the real name it should be – the decoration looks just like Smaug...) The micro-gour pool in the chamber was almost empty – perhaps 3 inches of water still present, and the cave looked drier than I've ever seen, which goes for lots of caves in this drought.

On we went up the Post Box, and in the passage leading up to it noted the small femur embedded in the wall (about shoulder height as you belly along this passage). I took a photo of it for Tom, who had drawn our attention to it.

We turned left here and headed along the rift to RDF-4, then down to the vicinity of the Unstable Area sign, which we avoided by following a high passage over. We went on to the Blue Stal, and retraced our steps. I couldn't help but remember how much wetter this section had been when I was here on the Anzac Weekend 2005.

We argued about whether we should try to find the Pineapple and decided against it, as I was supposed to lead the second group in later today also. So we re-traced our steps and let Tom and Tim lead out, which they did very competently. They are really "hitting their straps" as serious young cavers now, and big enough, at 13, to be very able physically. We left the cave after 4.5 hours.

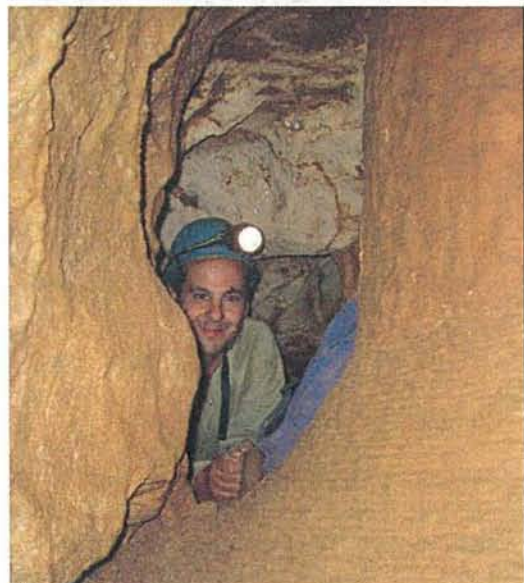
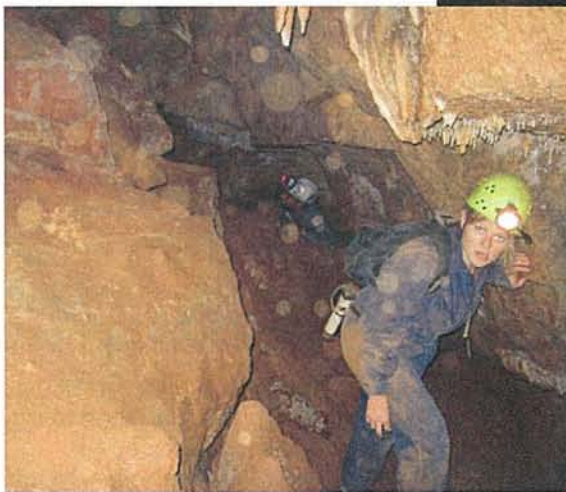
Back at the hut, the bushwalkers had returned and back at camp playing Frisbee. We decided to leave the second Murder trip until tomorrow, and had our General Meeting instead. Phil and I dropped off some BMSC wine and coffee mugs for the Dunhills.

### Sunday March 11th

Up early, and another beautiful Cliefden morning. Brekky was over with in time to make an early-ish start for Murder. The team for today was myself, Mike, Phil, Rob, Tim, Paul and Tom. The others went walking and GPS-ing cave locations for use within the club. The caving was a re-run of yesterday's trip, so no need to repeat it here, even down to the time of 4.5 hours. Of note was the fact that the tag on Children's Cave (the cave next to Murder) was illegible and needs to be replaced.

Back at the hut, we broke camp, cleaned up, dropped off the keys and said goodbye to Cliefden. Our new members (Liam, Evan and Sophie) agreed it was a beautiful place.

Cindy Mann



Clockwise from top: The Blue Stal, the Dragon, the embedded femur, Mike Materazzo and Michelle Coleborn



## Trip Report Jenolan April 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> 2007

Present: Cindy Mann (T/L), Tim Mann, John Bonwick, Paul, Donna, Tom, Daniel and Ellen McKendry, Phil and Laura Niciak (Saturday only), Colin Tyrrell (Sunday only)

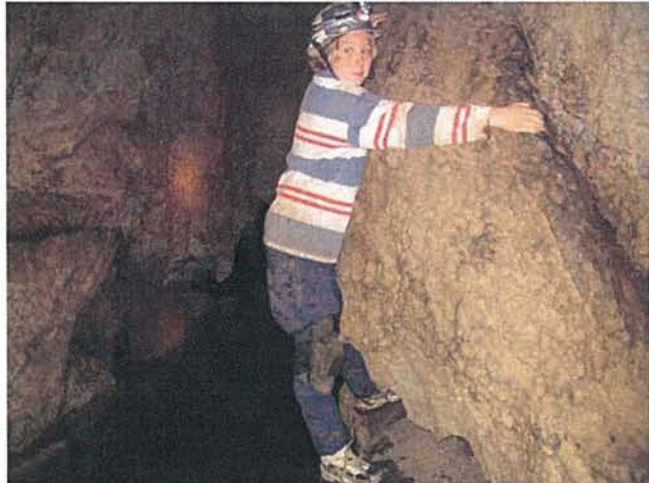
### Saturday

We met at Jenolan around 8:45, but it still took until 11:00 before we were entering Mammoth, and headed straight on down to Lower River. On the way John showed us the old Macquarie uni scaling pole pitch near Horseshoe Cavern. Little Ellen had had enough by this stage and was taken out, which also meant that Donna could do no more caving that day.



At Lower River the kids amused themselves trying to follow Paul along the river. To no avail, of course. But we wondered whether it would be worthwhile taking some floatation gear along on a future trip. The flow was rapid and not much lower (if any) than I had seen it before, although the crawls and tunnels were notably drier than a few years ago.

Unfortunately there was no time to try Smirnoff's, (which Tim would have loved) but we did have a good look at Oolite. The



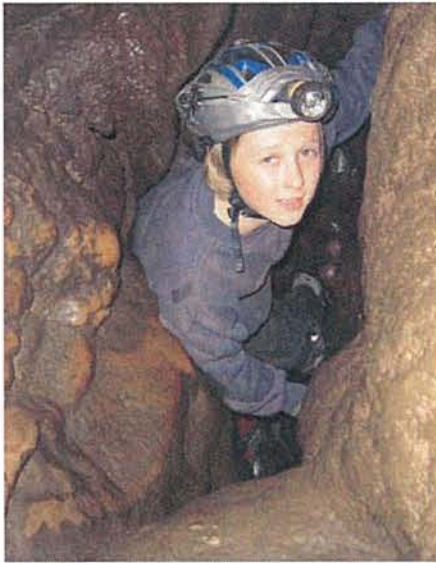
kids were very impressed with the climb up and the beautiful decorations in this chamber. Even though this was a very straightforward trip, we still managed to spend 6 hours underground except, of course, for Donna and Ellen, who did one hour.

From top: Paul at Lower River; Tom trying to follow; Laura.

### Sunday

We were up earlyish. Phil had taken Laura home but arrived back on time to do the trip to Henning's to look at the fossils (brachiopods and gastropods mainly, I think). Were we impressed? Yes indeed! They are fabulous, even to my unschooled and profoundly ignorant gaze. We ate





Daniel McKendry, climbing to Oolite chamber, Mammoth, and some of the fossils in Hennings

lunch outside and entertained ourselves watching the boys fight (not, alas, to the death) but it was exciting stuff all the same. We thought it might be worthwhile organising a club BBQ; Members could put their money on various kids, and the proceeds could go towards equipment purchases. Somebody suggested having them lightly armed to enhance spectator excitement...A great idea!!!



On the way back we stopped to do Bush-rangers. Phil told us that back in the old days, Ken Keck and MSS had a bit of a dig going here. There was a lead high up in the cave which I followed for a short way, but there was too much crumbling rock for comfort! We spent around an hour in this very dry and dusty little cave.

*Cindy Mann*

## Trip Report Jenolan 7-8<sup>th</sup> July 2007

Present: Cindy Mann, Steve Hallam, Sue Norris, Rick Brett, Paul McKendry, John and Cecily Bonwick, Colin Tyrrell.

### Saturday

A chilly mountains morning! John, Cec and I met the others at the Guides office and collected the keys to Aladdin, Rho and the reserve before meeting the others at the cottage. This was a first for Sue, and a first-in-a-long-while for Steven since his back injury. We drove down to the Playing Fields and headed up to Aladdin. On the way we saw that a falling rock had obliterated a section of the handrail. Wow what a mess! The track to Aladdin and Rho was a little more well-worn now, since SUSS's recent work in the area.



It was getting colder, even with walking. By 10:45 we were in. Aladdin, being an old tourist cave, is both easy and well decorated, and chicken wire preserves the best sections. Steve led the way, remembering the cave from his visit many years ago. The entrance is a sink-hole type, with a steep descent, and then we took the turn to the right. A traverse further in has a fixed rope, then a fixed ladder, and a slot at the far side of it, allowing a quick slide down a glassy slope.

Next is the pretty section, a crawl-way surrounded by chicken wire, outside of which are some lovely little stals and a thylacine skeleton (look to your left, on the floor near a patch of very white calcite). After this we back-tracked a little to the next ladder which we ascended to another pretty section. Here we spent some time taking photos and exited the cave after around 2 and a quarter hours. Steve's back had borne up reasonably well, but we decided that rather than subject it to the rigours of Rho we would show them Henning's instead.

We headed up to the cottage for lunch. Cecily was reading and somehow quite comfortable without the fire despite the freezing cold. Tougher than me, that's for sure...

After lunch we drove back down to the Playing fields and bolted off to show the others Henning's before it rained or snowed. They were impressed with the fossils, (but then again, who wouldn't be?) and enjoyed the day. We said goodbye to Teve and Sue, who had to head home tonight. The rest of us spent an uncomfortably cold night in the cottage.

#### Sunday

We decided on a short trog of the southern limestone (note: the nettles were pretty atrocious and the trog suit was more or less essential). We had a brief look at J297 before heading further south. A little way further on I spent some looking through the scree pile – some fascinating rocks there – and noticed a few nice pieces of dirty crystalline calcite. Moving on we found a crack in the creek bed where the creek, which had been flowing quite strongly, disappeared. We turned off to look at J-282, a large doline-type entrance, before continuing up a tributary valley. We turned back when the nettles became too much for Colin, who was wearing shorts.

Back on the road we stopped at Hampton pub for a late lunch after an enjoyable weekend.

*Cindy Mann*

### Trip Report Cliefden August 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 2007

Present: Cindy Mann (T/L), Paul, Donna, Tom, Daniel and Ellen McKendry, Phil and Ben Niciak, Mike Materazzo, Carly and Ben Sanford, Rick Brett, Colin Tyrrell

#### Saturday August 11th

We met around 10:00 at the Cliefden Hut, and filled out the appropriate paperwork. Rick and I picked up the keys from Anthony's place. By the time we were back most of the crew had pitched camp, and were trogging up for Main.

It was noon before the caving group was all assembled at the top of Main, and another 15 or 20 minutes before we had the gate undone. The group consisted of Paul and Tom, Phil and Ben, Mike, Rick, Ben Sanford and Cindy.

It took 15 minutes to get the gang down to the bottom of the entrance pitch, and the plan was to find the Dogtooth Spar grotto. We spent absolutely ages looking for it, (which, of course was fun,) but alas! We all thought we remembered... We'll have to hijack one of the OSS guys next time! The cave was drier than I remembered. Still muddy, but the mud was drier. And relatively hot – perhaps 20°C, I would guess.

With Dogtooth Spar eluding us, we headed over to the Laurels – just absolutely beautiful! We took



lots of photos and explored the area, and an adjacent chamber, where Paul found some crystals high in a cleft. He took a beautiful photo. Often the tiny, hidden recesses have treasures every bit as spectacular as the larger, iconic formations. The boys were very impressed and it was gratifying to see them so appreciative of the beauty of the cave, rather than just viewing caving as an adventure. They understand the ethos of "caving softly" and protecting the cave environment. After this we headed off to the Boot Chamber. Rick was trying to locate the crystal boot and also find the way to Helictite Wall, while Paul and I did a little more exploring and photography.

We regrouped and retraced our steps, letting the boys lead, to test their memories, and they did very well. Tom especially has a bomb-proof sense of direction. We exited Main after 5 hours, disappointed that we had not been able to find Dogtooth Spar, and determined to do better next time.

Back at the hut, Donna and the girls had lit a very welcome fire. We cleaned up and started our meeting, and I rang Rob, to find out why he and Tim had not arrived after soccer as planned. Unfortunately Tim had concussion, so I decided to get a lift home with Phil and Ben, leaving Rick to lead the caving for tomorrow. This NEVER would've happened if he'd come caving...

*Cindy Mann*

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Cliefden Supplementary Trip Report.**

Due to an incident with Tim at home, Cindy our TL for the weekend departed Cliefden on Saturday Evening, so I led the trip on Sunday.  
TL Rick Brett.

Cave Visited.: Mollongulli.

Party.

Rick Brett, Paul McKendry, Tom McKendry, Mike Materazzo & Colin Tyrrell.

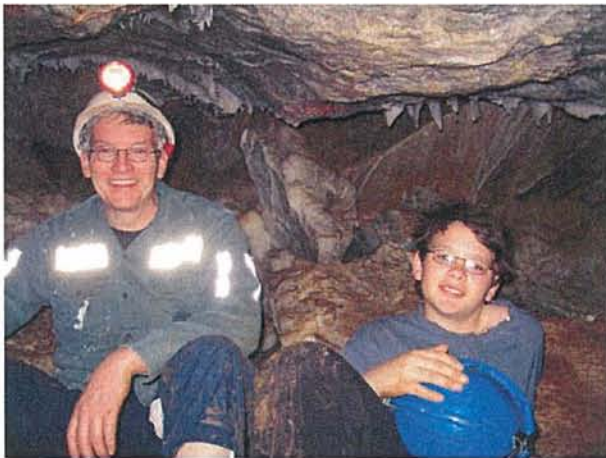
We found the cave without too much trouble, however seem as though it had been a few years since visiting, there was a fence now missing, throwing me a little. Once locating the cave, we removed the rocks which were covering the gate. The short 15-20ft ladder pitch was rigged by wrapping a long trace around a large boulder approx 2.5 metres away from the entrance. Colin assisted in the rigging. A total of 3 traces were joined together and then the ladder connected. The ladder sat nicely and made for a nice entry into the cave, except Mike who due to his height, found it difficult to get his legs down through the first slot. With all belayed in safely, and myself last with a bottom belay provided by Colin we were underway. The way on after the ladder provided some discussion, yes move along a slot and then down through a hole – slot (now a squeeze) and then up a little..traverse etc and away we go, yes now it was coming back again...I think it had been at least 4 years since visiting this cave for me. Tom found a small wood beetle on the way in, and it looks like he was well lost at this depth already. As time was getting away, Colin had to depart, so we made a quick trip back to the ladder, where a bottom belay was set. Colin scaled the ladder with ease, also utilising good footholds on the rock to get back through the squeeze entrance slot and safely to the surface. For the rest of us we headed back into the cave. I pulled out the video camera and did some filming with our star performer Paul McKendry showing us how to traverse, whilst Mike and Tom demonstrated how to get through a flattener. With the camera gear packed away we zipped down to the sump, which to my surprise now had at least a metre of water in it - (last time I was here it was empty). We looked at the formations in the sump chamber and then did the little climb up to the Nazgul. The rock was dry, making it a nice climb, however after reaching the top I still set up a handline to assist the rest of the party as there remains some exposure off the edge of the flowstone. We took a bunch of pictures and some video footage of the Nazgul and the helictites in this area before making our way back down to the sump. Paul drew the short straw to do the free climb down (last) so he de-rigged the handline and climbed back down to the sump chamber without an problem at all, in fact making it all look too easy.. Wait till it is all wet. Mmmm. From the sump chamber we did some familiarisation (tried to locate the barrier shawl). We looked high, we went low, we followed some pas-



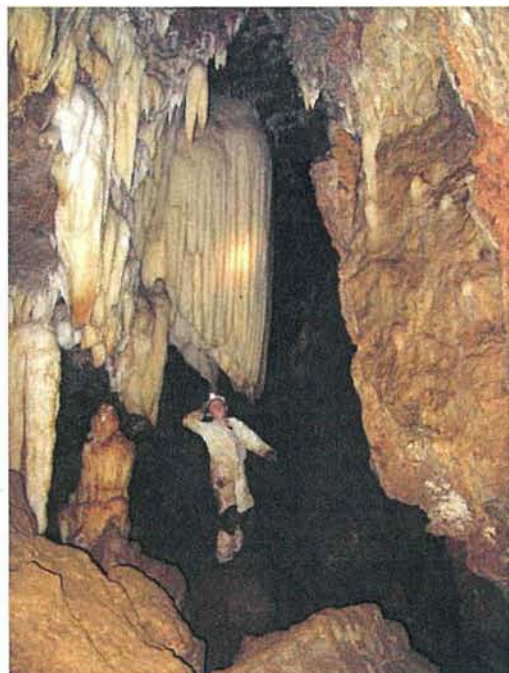
sage, and finally found it. The shawl still looks good, however it is evident that some people are now climbing past it again as there is some track marks starting to appear on the edge of the shawl. A good clean again of the shawl is needed. (Maybe we can discuss with Denis at OSS) Also some track markers to indicate a "no go past" could assist to prevent newcomers from climbing past the shawl.

After taking some more pics we decided it was time to head out. Back the same way as we entered, this time with battery removed to negotiate the new squeeze. (no I think I am just a little bigger these days).. We took some more video footage of Paul doing the ladder climb. Once at the top of the pitch Paul called out that there was a loose rock, which he wanted to stabilise before the rest of the party made the ladder climb. From the bottom I could hear the rock being slid as Paul advised it was too heavy to lift out. Once the rock was made safe, Tom headed on up, followed by Mike. All too easy, and now for myself to exit. The climb went well and I managed to easily get past the slot as I used the rock features to exit. Once past the slot, I then saw the "rock" that Paul was talking about. Crikey!! Not a bad size at all, with a weight of approx 120-160kg. The rock's original location was about ½ metre directly below the gate lying in the gently sloping floor. Simply the ground was so dry the clay had shrunk around the rock, allowing the rock to move easily once loaded in turn allowing it to easily start to slip with assistance of gravity on the dry floor from its original location. Due to the precarious nature and location of the rock we established that it was best and safest for all to actually remove it from the cave completely. We tied a tape around the rock and with Tom, Paul and Mike hauling we slowly manoeuvred the rock back up and eventually out of the cave. Now all is safe again, and the entrance to the cave remains as it was before, except less one nasty big rock. A great trip.

*Rick Brett. TL.*



Phil and Ben; Shawls in Main; Spar in Cliefden Main.  
Photos: (top) Cindy Mann and (bottom) Paul McKendry





## Trip Report Jenolan 8<sup>th</sup> September 2007

Mammoth: Cindy Mann (T/L), Tim Mann, Paul McKendry, Tom McKendry, Kim Kaar, Mike Materazzo, Ian Wild, John Bonwick.

Wiburds: Colin Tyrrell (T/L), Donna, Daniel and Ellen McKendry, Rick Brett, Sue Norris, Andrew, Emily, Rowan and Sam Kaar.

### Mammoth

We met at the cottage at 9, after having dropped by the Guides Office to pick up the keys from John Callaghan. We unpacked, trogged up, sorted gear, split into our respective groups and headed off for some serious caving. My group entered Mammoth at 11. The cave was relatively dry as we made our way down the Jughandle, Horseshoe Cavern and on to the Skull and Crossbones. I rigged a handline here, and John and I went down first to guide the boys, and the others followed them. Next the Sugar Cubes. I'd thought of rigging a handline here for the kids, but it turned out to be not necessary. John, Paul and I crossed over first and kept an eye on the boys, but they had no trouble.

Next the Snakes Gut. The kids were a great help here, passing the gear through. They are now at the stage where they are quite an asset in a cave. On through the cold, pebbly squeezes that led to a more open area where we stopped for lunch. I was starting to feel very tired and wondered why (although I figured it out later, when the aches and temperature kicked in...).

Another hour or more further into the mud and we had arrived at the bottom of the Speaking Tube 10' (or so) ladder pitch, and shortly after found the first handline up to Tom's Kitchen. John, as always, was a mine of interesting historical information regarding how all these places got their names, and was able to satisfy the curiosity of the boys, who no doubt long for the day they can get in on some serious exploration!



Kim climbing down from Tom's Kitchen; the gang in Mammoth

The ascent is easy, assisted thanks to the fixed ropes, but they would be dangerous without them. At the top the others went a little further with John, to look at the Wall of Death, but I felt so lousy by now I had to sit back-to-back with Mike with Tim on my lap just to try and retain some body heat. They all would've liked to go further, but didn't, mainly because of me. C'est la vie! Thanks guys. Ah well... It was a great 7 hours or so – even with the flu.

*Cindy Mann*





## **Wiburd's Cave 8/9/2007 (or the "Are we there yet?" trip)**

Saturday morning saw our trusty crew considering the walk down the hill. Like brave souls that we are, it was decided we would share the lift with the group going to Mammoth. This was especially so, when it was worked out that we would have the vehicles for the trip back up. After a somewhat damp walk up the valley, we arrived at Rowe flat where the obligatory comfort stops were made, then ascended the hill side to the J92 slippery dip entry.

We toured down 22 Passage as far as the junction with Yawning Gulches No 1. Rick went down the hole first, followed by Colin - the rest followed trying to dodge the puddles. Colin knew he was close to Rick when he heard a sharp "Be careful." Rick was calmly sitting on the edge of the drop into the Gulches as I came out the tunnel. The highlight of this section - even though only 2 made it to the Gulches (passage was too narrow for more and we had nowhere to go) - was the highly polished floor that was absolutely covered in fossils. The other interesting thing down here was the number of midge like insects flying about!

Back to the Dyke Passage junction where Rick decided on some more home movies of us trying different moves to go under the Dyke(?) in the passage. After some amusing moves, we toured to the mud slide where we turned around. (a certain young duo wanted to go out now). Most of us decided we need to come back here again and continue along the upper passage we had taken last time.

It is amazing how saying "we are on the way out" can encourage the young. We returned to the junction, collected the bags that looked like they had been breeding and headed back....with an hour long detour to the Lake chamber. Colin and Andrew went climbing up rock piles and mud slides following the greatly increased air flows. The highlight - the amazingly large fossils in the chamber. We had gone from lots of little ones in the floor to a chamber where the walls were full of big ones - some over 300mm long. Definitely have to come back and study these guys!

And so up we went, once past the squeeze to the entry chamber there was no holding the younger folk back. Once all out we went for a stroll further upstream so those that hadn't done so could check out the ruins while Colin and Rick continued towards the end of the flat. Alas, it was time to return to the cottage. Total cave time 3hrs, total trip about 6 hrs.

*Colin Tyrrell*

## **Coco Creek 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2007**

Present: Paul McKendry, Phil and Ben Niciak, Rob, Cindy and Tim Mann (BMSC), Ian Curtis, Glen Griffith, Sandra Chrystall, Adam and Helena Griffith, Denis Marsh (OSS).

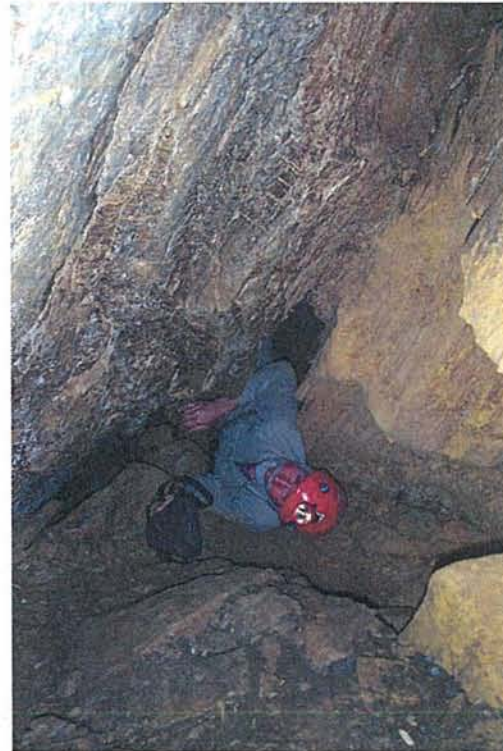
It was a rather chilly morning when we met the OSS crew at the Glen Davis turn off around 9.30. BMSC members had been looking forward to this joint trip for some time, as none of our current caving members have previously visited caves in this area. Unfortunately Steve Hallam, Sue Norris and Bruce Howlett couldn't make it at the last minute due to a variety of complications. The rest of us enjoyed the drive through beautiful Capertee Valley. After a chat with the property owner we continued the drive but had to leave the 2WDs the last couple of km. Tim and I rode on the back of Denis's car, and enjoyed this almost as much as the caving.

By noon we were at the entrance. Denis entered the cave first, and warned us about loose rocks on the way in. The shale in areas of the roof proved less dodgy than it looked, fortunately. I was surprised to find the cave more extensive than I had thought (having heard some years ago that it only went for a few metres). However Denis told us it is around 100 m long. The route could hardly be more straightforward as it's mostly a simple tunnel. Some way into the cave is a choice of routes: A squeeze (fairly commodious as squeezes go), or a short climb, for those who prefer chimneying to grovelling. There is a further short climb, which exits into passage and then a small chamber, near the terminus of the cave. Everyone enjoyed exploring this area and the kids (Adam, Helena, Tim and Ben) were particularly adventurous.



There is a little decoration in the cave, but the impressive tree roots hanging in clumps through the roof were really something to see, as were the many bats we encountered. The cave was dry, and I bitterly regretted forgetting fresh batteries when Ian Curtiss found a dated signature in the cave...Next time! After about one and three quarter hours we headed out for lunch before heading off to Blue Rocks where the OSS guys kindly showed us the impressive karst area there. The OSS crew were camping over, but we had other commitments and couldn't join them. We all enjoyed the day and are looking forward to another joint trip in 2008, and to getting back to Blue Rocks. Thank you OSS!

*Cindy Mann*



Above from left;  
Tree roots in Coco Creek;  
Denis in the squeeze and  
the gang outside the cave  
entrance.

Photos, Cindy Mann.

And our web guy Jim, putting the memories  
together for us...Thanks Jim!





## COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS for 2008

President: Paul McKendry	4758 8497
Vice President: Phil Niciak	4758 8388
Treasurer: Colin Tyrrell	4758 7194
Secretary: Cindy Mann	4758 6322
Safety Officer: Rick Brett	4730 1764
Equipment Officer: Rick Brett	4730 1764
Trip Officer: Mike Materazzo	4729 2615
Publicity and Journal: Phil Niciak	4758 8388
Webmaster: Jim Foster	4872 3275

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