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Journal of
Blue Mountains Speleological Club

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TRIP REPORTS

WALLI - JUNE 1993

We all met at the Cliefden turnoff at about 9.00 am and we proceeded into the camp ground where we parked the cars and put up the tents or we found shelter for the night but before we get to the night bit we went caving.

We all headed down deep hole where everybody did some exploring and a couple of hours caving. On Sunday we did piano, well, most of us did. I had to take my car and get it fixed so everybody else did piano and the two caves on the other side of the hill this trip report is almost 12 months late so is a little wrong but everybody can get a little lazy from time to time.

KEVIN COLEBORN

CLIEFDEN - 4/5 DECEMBER 1993

Purpose of the trip was caving and the club's Christmas party.

Saturday

With most people arriving late Friday or early Saturday morning it made for a late start to the days caving (not to mention the trip leader catching up on some sleep). In any case we all trogged up and headed on to the land owner's house to report in and collect the keys. After this was done we made our way to the entrance of Main (CL1) where Lionel had a battle with the padlock to get it unlocked.

Finally after the lock was opened we split the party into two groups, Kevin leading one and myself the other. Both groups basically followed the same route through the cave. With many people on their first trip into Main we carried out a thorough tour of the main chamber, which had people like Greg and Marty exploring most passages and leads and then they would pop out elsewhere in the chamber. After regrouping we made our way down into the cave where we checked out the Laurel Room which had Nathan, Kylie and Michelle amazed with the beauty of this part of the cave. Again Marty and Greg wanted to explore, and headed in the direction of the Sewers. I quickly stopped them and advised them that we would exit via that part of the cave so we would not drag mud into the Laurel Room.

We had soon seen the extent of the Laurel Room so we all then made our way down into the Boot room where I noted a huge drop in the water level below the boot compared to where it was on our last visit to the cave. Whilst Kevin's group was being led up towards the domino slide we went and viewed the crystal boot, noting what appeared to be a huge increase in mud tracking surrounding the formation in this part of the cave. After this we then headed on to Helictite Wall meeting up with Kevin's group descending the domino slide. With Kevin's group safely down, Greg who was extremely wet by now was first to make the increasingly difficult climb up the slide doing so with some difficulty and with an unusual backstroke type style made it to the top.

After a little help we all managed to get up the slide and then made our way to Helictite Wall where we again took in the amazing beauty of this part of the cave. With the Jewel Room area restricted we turned around and made our way back to the Boot Room, visiting the Clown Room on the way. Waiting in the Boot Room were the keen people who wished to make the exit of the cave via the Sewers, these being

Shane and Iain. With our group reformed we made our way to the Sewers where our once somewhat clean overalls were about to change. With the aid of a tape we entered the sewers via the tricky climb where at the bottom the mud was about to claim some more victims. Marty's boots were stuck in the mud and came clean off leaving him with mud covered socks and boots. After performing a daring one foot balancing act Marty retrieved his somewhat dirty foot wear and slopped them back on. After viewing the many filled sumps we exited the Sewers near the Jewel Room turn off in the main passage and then made our way out of the cave where we met Kevin's group up at the entrance.

Sunday

Visited Gable walking in from Transmission Flat. Again two parties entered the cave. Being careful of the floor formations we did a tour of the cave visiting the Root chamber and most of the loops from this area. We explored for nearly 3 hours not finding much to report in this cave except for the increase in active formations and rim pools. We exited the cave and then hit the river at Transmission Flat for a well earned swim.

Special Comments

Saturday night turned out superb for us all to play the game Dracula. with almost total darkness due to slight cloud cover, people were found hiding, some even putting their caving expertise to work by hiding under cars, in stinging nettles and even making out like rocks. After several hours and drinks the game was finished, with 2 wins to Dracula (Sue) and none to the members. After this game was over we went inside where Winky Murder was played. Unfortunately for some of us it turned into forty winks.

After a great games night we all turned in and caught some sleep. As the trip leader I would like to thank all those who came to Cliefden for this trip as it was a beauty.

Rick Brett

CLIEFDEN - 12/13 FEBRUARY 1994

Purpose of Trip - Caving and Annual General Meeting.

Saturday

Saturday morning was a party of six of head for Mologulli. We pitched the ladder on arrival and demonstrated the reasons for our choice of belay points for both the ladder and belay line to our newer members.

A couple of our group entered the cave via the ladder whilst the rest of the group opted to abseil into the cave. Once we were all at the bottom of the pitch we made our way to the sump. Once at the sump we noted that the water level was rather low considering the amount of recent rainfall (perhaps it will take a couple of months for the water level to rise?). We then decided to make our way up so we could take some photos of the Nazgul. Once we had all viewed the Nazgul and all of the helictites we made our way back down the slippery flowstone, leaving Kevin the job of undoing the tape and free climbing down. After departing the sump chamber we make our way up to the Barrier shawl and then back and up into the many passages above the Barrier shawl. After exploring the passages and attempting the 80 degree climb out of the solution tube in the very top passage (some of the group didn't make it - namely the trip leader) we decided to exit the cave.

Upon our exit we found that the creek below Mologulli was a raging torrent due to some heavy rain activity whilst we were underground and we were amazed that there was little or no evidence of the rain in the cave. Lucky we weren't in Tassie.

Sunday

Once again six of us set off with Trapdoor and Yarrowigga on the agenda. Due to the wet we parked at the silo and headed off on foot to the entrance of Yarrowigga. After locating the entrance to the cave we found that the key did not fit the lock. Fortunately we planned on doing a through trip (for those who were willing) so the top entrance was located and the key this time was correct. After some time of thinking, Kevin and Greg decided that they would abseil in and prussic back out of the cave. After Kevin had the rope set up the rest of us made our way to Trapdoor. Once at Trapdoor we set up the necessary handlines and entered the cave.

Once at the bottom we made our way along the floor passage, exploring the small leads and upper chambers as we went. We finally came to the end of the cave where I pointed out the entrance to the Trapdoor extension. With no-one keen to enter the extension due to its small size we returned to the lake chamber where we then explored the passage parallel to the entrance slope.

After we finished exploring the upper chamber we made our way back down to the lake where we carried out some photography. After getting Shane's camera to operate we then packed up our gear and exited the cave.

WALLI - 23/24 APRIL 1994

Saturday morning saw us meet at the Cliefden turnoff, with the trip leader arriving a little late. We soon called in and advised the property caretaker that we were on the premises and then made our way up to the campsite, where we met up with Greg.

After the camp was set up we tied a rope in one of the trees close by and brushed up on our SRT skills and fine tuned our equipment in preparation for our departure for Deep Hole. Once we had our gear all sorted out we made our way to Deep Hole where we set up the rope and the ladder in case any of us had prussic gear problems. We all eventually abseiled into the cave where I pointed out to Allan the way on into the cave. We decided first to explore the southern end of the cave, so Kevin led the way quickly reminding us how easy it was to go around in circles in this cave.

Soon enough Shane and Greg had disappeared down a side chute leaving myself, Kevin and Allan to follow what we considered the main path through the cave. This being Allen's first trip to this cave and Walli, I pointed out the flowstone features that are in the side passages off one of the higher chambers in this cave. After a couple of hours of exploring we had found a couple of sumps containing water and also many passages that we had on previous trips never seen before. After some time we also found Greg and then found some more passage which reminded us of honeycomb. When we were exploring the honey comb section Greg gave instructions on how to exit a passage in the most unorthodox manner and sustained minor bruising. After Greg had regained his composure we all made our way back towards the entrance chamber with Allan leading the way. We almost made it to the entrance chamber where after exploring so many passages Allan could no longer find the correct passage out.

After a quick discussion, Shane pointed out the correct way so we continued on and into the entrance chamber where we stopped for a drink and then headed to the northern part of the cave where we quickly explored the larger passages and found some unique mud formation in rectangular shapes on the roof in one of the lower areas of the first chamber that we came to.

With the exploring completed we made our way back to the entrance chamber where we all set up our prussic gear ready to exit the cave. First to exit was Greg who used the frog method with only a few hiccups, next was myself using rope walking, then followed by Allan and Shane who both completed their

first prussic from a cave and a 90ft one at that. Last but not least to exit the cave was Kevin. Fortunately the ladders were not used and were then pulled up and rolled under the light of a brilliant full moon.

Sunday

Sunday morning saw us practice our SRT skills in one of the trees beside the campsite prior to departing for a quick one hour visit to take Jamie Lee to Piano cave. Jamie Lee and I only went to the false floors where Jamie decided it was time to exit the cave leaving Kevin, Shane and Greg to continue to the main chamber for a quick inspection of the cave's condition. In the meantime Jamie and I made our way back to the campsite followed about 15 minutes later by Kevin, Shane and Greg.

After a quick drink myself, Greg, Kevin and Shane headed off to Lake cave. Upon our arrival at the cave we asked Shane and Greg to lead the way, which they did rather well until the false floor chamber where assistance in direction was required. After continuing on into the cave to above the lake chamber, I was astounded to find that there was not a sign of any water from the top of the chamber as on my last visit the water was up at the now marked high water level point, approx. 3 metres deep. As the chamber was now empty we climbed down to the muddy floor and explored around, eventually finding one hole containing about half a metre of water and a square 2 litre ice cream container. It appeared as though the plug had been pulled and the water quickly drained from the cave. (Perhaps there is a connection to Lake George or even Whycirds Lake cave at Jenolan??) After exploring for some time I eventually located the passage leading to the rest of the cave, where we explored around for a while and pushed a dig, eventually adding approximately 30 metres of passage to the cave, containing a few small straws and some small stalagmites. After finding some new passage Greg, Shane, Kevin and I were rather excited and a little tired due to the morning's exercise in the tree so we decided to exit the cave. The trip out was uneventful and we found our quick trip had actually taken 4 hours.

We then headed back to camp and after the campsite was packed up we left Greg and headed to Pizza Hut at Bathurst for an a-la-carte meal.

Rick Brett

JENOLAN - 4/5 JUNE 1994

Saturday

We all met at a chilly 8.30am at the guides office where Troy M checked in with the guides and picked up the key to Mammoth. Some then drove down to Mammoth flat while the rest parked at no 2 car park and walked in. Regrouping at the flat, everyone except for Troy M set off for Mammoth. Troy was off to the southern limestone, getting as far as possible from Mammoth and still be at Jenolan. Dave was to lead the trip in.

this was to be a trip to Great North Cavern and of the party only Dave, Kevin and Tony had been there before. We entered at 9.30, made our way through the first rockpile and then on through Horseshoe Cavern to the railway Tunnel and the Skull & Crossbones. The Railway Tunnel beyond Skull and Crossbones was out of bounds so the caterpillar (caving party) gingerly made its way down the tricky muddy slope, over and down amongst the large rocks and thence to Central Lake. Today however it was merely Central Slightly Muddy Bit and rubber duckies were not needed. Moving on we quickly came to Central River where we paused for a short time. Central River here, though flowing was a mere trickle.

After the caterpillar had got its breath we pushed on past where the Ninety Footer descends from the northern section of the Railway Tunnel and on to the Middle Bit. Progressing through here we then came to the Junction where a longer smoko halt was called. Here we were more than half way in terms of distance

CLIEFDEN - 2/3 JULY 1994

Saturday

After meeting up at the hut on Saturday morning, we toggled up and prepared to depart for a long trip into Taplow Maze. After leaving the hut we called into the Dunhills to advise them of our club members being on the property. After leaving the Dunhills we made our way down the hill and across the stubble in the lower paddocks to the grassy flats opposite Taplow maze.

We made our way over to the cave crossing the freezing Belubula river on the way. Once at the cave entrance we rigged up the ladder to allow for a risk free entry down the awkward entrance pitch. With some of the party opting to free climb across the top of the entrance pitch the familiarisation and exploration started immediately by exploring the passages at the top of the entrance. Greg quickly found that the upper passages ended in rock or 4 metre drops so returned to enter the cave in the conventional manner. Soon enough we were on our way into the cave, with the aim of visiting parts which are not very often visited. The first area to be visited was the Impossible Dream where the passage entering that area is sharp, tight and awkward, and for some, impassable. Greg, Marty, Kevin, Neil and Alan passed down past the awkward squeeze at the entrance to the Impossible Dream with comments like, "put your body on the line" being given to skinny people like Marty as they passed through the squeeze. Unfortunately I was still trying to enter the Impossible Dream when all the other guys returned, almost 40 minutes later so I gave up and we all then made our way to the Railway Platforms to point out Taplow Station to those who had not been to this part of the cave.

After thoroughly exploring and some photography we made our way to the Railway Tunnel and down into the "O" and "M" section of the cave. Again we pushed the passages as far as possible and then returned, noting lots of active cave formation in the Railway Tunnel area. We had soon enough made way out of the Railway Tunnel making our way back to the main passage and then to Rocky Point Road to give Alan and Neil a lasting memory of Taploy Maze by taking them down the Road to the Blue Room via Ricky's hole. After viewing the blue formations and the taking of photos was completed, we answered questions as to whether someone had put blue icing dye on the flowstone, with the answer of course being NO!

Soon enough Marty and I were exploring the "K" section, whilst the rest of the party took a break near the Blue Room. When Marty and I returned from the "K" section we all headed back to Rosky Point Road so we could start making our way from the cave. On the way out I quickly checked the gypsum crystals which appear to have grown over the last couple of years. On the way out, although we were tired we decided to quickly check out the Ratacombs area and then exit to the entrance pitch via the Horny Toad Roundabout. We eventually exited the cave in darkness and packed up the ladder and made our way to the Greg Cook bus for the trip back to the hut.

Sunday

Sunday saw four of us head for Locke, as Alan and Neil had to depart on Saturday night. After an epic search we eventually found the entrance to Locke. The entrance is a hole about 4 metres by 2 metres in size, so don't ask why it was so difficult to locate. As non of us had visited Locke before we could only follow the marks on the floor to find our way through the cave. After some time we exited Locke via a different entrance so we decided to make our way back through the cave so we could collect our equipment left at the bottom of the entrance pitch. There was not much significant to report, other than we enjoyed visiting another cave which does not seem to get much attention at Cliefden.

We eventually exited the cave after some 4 hours underground so we then made our way back to the hut so we could pack up and head home.

though not in terms of time. So far the going had only reached levels of mild difficulty and we had moved surprisingly quickly for a party of eleven. Spirits were still high. This would change.

When all had finished their munchies the way to North West Passage was pointed out before we set off again. The next obstacle encountered was Ninety nine Percent Friction Squeeze. This is more like Eighty Percent but because of the steep angle of the ascent proved a bit of a challenge for most and it took a little while for us all to get through. Decoration in Mammoth is sparse but there was a little in the passage past this squeeze.

We now came to North Tunnel where Mammoth started to get serious. The first 30 metres or so is a belly crawl with headroom varying from 1/2 to 1 metre, with the tightest part being the Gravel Grovel at the end. Once through however one can stand up at the base of a tricky 4 metre climb. With care the party made its way up, past Thud in the mud and then back to more crawling. From here to Great North Cavern, a distance of approximately 150 metres, it is mostly tight squeeze crawling. Happiness levels had decreased with the roof height. However on we pushed, or rather crawled, with knees and elbows getting a good work-out. Triangle Passage, Backbreaker, Half Moon Passage and Keyhole Passage came and went and just when those of us who hadn't been here before thought it couldn't get any worse, it did!! the innocuously named Formation Squeeze was just about the straw that broke the caterpillar's back. One is presented with two options, the short impossible squeeze to the right or the ludicrous ring angle nightmare on the left through a muddy little puddle of water. A couple of people took up the challenge and attempted the right hand route and failed. After quite a struggle (for most) we all made it through via the left side before inching on to finally reach the Great North Cavern.

Relief at finally being able to stand and walk around (for those who hadn't collapsed) was tempered by the prospect of the return journey. The party's good humour had thudded in the mud long ago and witty repartee was scarce. Nevertheless, David, Michael, Troy, Kevin and Mary pushed on to Twiddly-om-pom. the remainder took lunch and contemplated the return trip. By now everyone was totally covered in mud and wet to boot.

Once we were as ready as we would ever be we started back with Tony leading. The Twiddly-om-Pom crew would follow on later. Cold and fatigue were taking their toll and the rip out was difficult with greater care required at the tricky climbs. Dave and the others rejoined the rest of the party near Thud in the Mud. With the odd main light failure (aren't back-ups useful), battery changes and numerous rest stops we finally exited the cave after even and a half hours underground. Considering the size of the party this was a fair effort. Of note was the fact that this was only Troy and Melinda's second trip underground (their first was Wellington) and this to one of the more challenging horizontal caves around. Alan was particularly impressed with mammoth and made plain his readiness for a future trip.

Sunday

Caving was a four letter word until about 10.30 and great underground deeds were never going to be done this day. However Troy M had for a while wanted to check out J266, a cave in the hill above the caves House car park we climbed the hill and after a bit of a search located the entrance. A rope and ladder were quickly set up for the 60 foot pitch, Dave and Michael abseiled while the rest laddered in. J266 is a single chamber cave and the possibility of further leads lay mainly higher up on the side furthest from the entrance pitch. Initially it appeared the only way up the flowstone wall would be with a scaling pole. However there was a short length of pipe left conveniently in the chamber and Kevin had the idea of placing it, each end in a convenient niche, as a make shift chin-up bar about 8 feet above the chamber floor on the flowstone wall. Troy was then given a hoist up to reach the bar, then pulled himself up on to the bar from where he could reach a more easily climbed part of the wall. He clambered on up to the higher sections of the chamber but could find no possible leads. After he gingerly descended, the pipe was removed and the cave exited.

This was the end of the week-end's caving and we all left for home after a memorable trip.
Shane Anderson

Gas worry for workers in popular caves



By AMANDA PHELAN

Several popular Australian tourist caves have high levels of radon, an inert gas that can cause lung cancer, scientific tests have shown.

A study to investigate radon levels in more than 40 caves is now being carried out across the country. NSW caves involved are Abercrombie, Jenolan, Wombeyan, Wee Jasper, Wellington and Yarrangobilly.

Dr Stephen Solomon, head of the research team at the Australian Radiation Laboratory in Melbourne, said the 12-month study was investigating the possible dangers from radon in caves.

People most at risk were tour guides who spent a lot of time underground.

Dr Solomon said preliminary tests at a number of NSW caves had shown a high presence of radioactive radon.

Radon builds up in enclosed spaces with no ventilation. The gas is present in most houses and mild exposure is harmless. But inhaling high levels of radioactive radon particles can cause lung cancer.

Six caves, including Jenolan, Yarrangobilly, Abercrombie and Wombeyan, have been tested. More than 250,000 people visit Jenolan each year.

Radon levels in these caves were between 10 to 3,000 becquerels per cubic metre, depending on ventilation, with outer caves having lower radon levels. A becquerel is the unit used to measure radiation.

Dr Solomon said safety guidelines would need to be set for caves which exceeded 1,000 becquerels of radon per cubic metre. This would include Jenolan, which had shown readings up to 2,000 becquerels.

Staff working in caves with levels above 1,000 becquerels would need to undertake safety procedures such as keeping a

LINK ESTABLISHED WITH LUNG CANCER

Radon, an odourless gas produced by the natural decay of radium in the earth, can seep into homes and water systems. It causes between 7,000 and 30,000 lung cancer deaths in the United States every year, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

The US National Research Council has recommended a major reassessment of the health threat the gas poses to the population.

It says the study should focus on the possible combined effects of smoking and radon among other issues.

The US agency, which expects to complete the reassessment by the end of 1996, suggests action be taken to lower radon in homes if it is found to be more than approximately 0.15 becquerels per litre of air. But about one in 15 US homes has more than that amount - and some have concentrations hundreds of times higher.

strict written record to monitor the length of time they spent underground, Dr Solomon said.

He stressed the figures so far were the results of preliminary tests, and said the data might not be borne out by the Worksafe-sponsored study now under way, which would take seasonal factors into account.

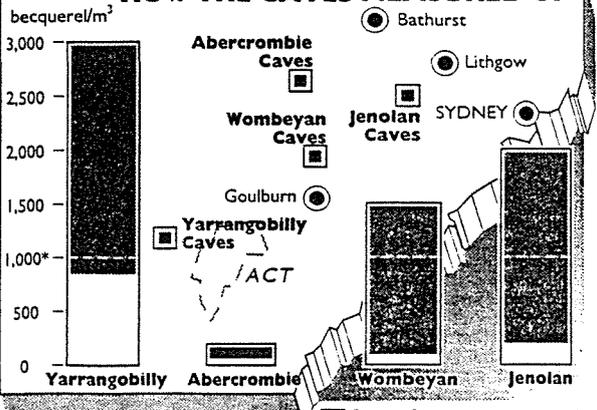
It was the responsibility of cave managements to ensure exposure to radon was minimised, Dr Solomon said. The Worksafe-sponsored study would be a big help.

An Australian Workers' Union industrial officer, Mr Yossi Berger, said the union welcomed the study because it was important to determine what levels of radon were present in caves.

"We need to learn exactly what levels of radon are there, so the study will be a good thing," he said.

"It will let us know the risks involved for people who work in caves. At the moment, the facts just aren't known."

HOW THE CAVES MEASURED UP



UNCONSCIOUS MOTORING HUMOUR

These are genuine extracts from motor accident claim forms received by a large insurance company.

1. The accident was due to the other man narrowly missing me.
2. I collided with a stationary tramcar coming in the opposite direction.
3. I left my Austin 7 outside, but when I came out later, to my amazement, there was an Austin 12.
4. To avoid collision I ran into the other car.
5. I was scraping my nearside on the bank when the accident happened.
6. I collided with a stationary tree.
7. There was no damage to the car as the gatepost will testify.
8. Accident was due to the road bending.
9. The witness gave his occupation as a gentleman, but it would be more appropriate to call him a garage proprietor.
10. The other man altered his mind and I had to run into him.
11. I told the idiot what he was and went on.
12. One wheel went into the ditch. My foot jumped from the brake to the accelerator pedal, leapt across the road to the other side and jumped into the trunk of a tree.
13. I remember nothing after passing the Crown Hotel until I came to and saw P C Brown.
14. A bull was standing near and a fly must have tickled him because he gored my car.
15. A cow wandered into my car. I was afterwards informed that the cow was half-witted.
16. She suddenly saw me, lost her head and we met.
17. I bumped into a shop window and sustained injuries to my wife.
18. I heard a horn blow and was struck violently in the back. Evidently a lady was trying to pass me.
19. coming home I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I haven't got.
20. I left my car unattended for a minute, whether by accident or design it ran away.
21. The other car collided with me, without giving warning of his intention.
22. I unfortunately ran over a pedestrian and the old gentleman was taken to hospital, much regretting the circumstances.
23. I thought the side window was down but it was up as I found out when I put my head through it.
24. I considered neither vehicle was to blame, but if either was to blame it was the other car.
25. I knocked over a man, he admitted it was his fault, as he had been knocked down before.

'I want to climb the world'



Joe Simpson during an expedition to Peru

HE'S been dubbed the "world's greatest survivor" but it's not a description that sits well with best-selling British author and mountaineer Joe Simpson.

He may have spent four days crawling off a mountain with a broken leg in the Peruvian Andes, believed dead by his climbing partner, survived a 200m fall off a Himalayan peak and spent a night dangling from shifting pions after a ledge collapsed in the Alps, but he still does not regard himself as a "survivor". "I think stubborn bastard is more like it," he says of his endurance, through some of the most physically testing times the human spirit could face.

"People assume I'm lucky because I've survived these things but I don't think I am. "I mean I was unlucky to break my leg in the first place and unlucky when these other things happened to me, but when something happens, like a ledge which shouldn't be there stops your fall, you use it like hell to get yourself out of the situation."

By WARWICK BRENNAN

Simpson, who is in Australia to promote his book, *Game of Ghosts*, credits part of his strong will to his Scottish-born mother who he says is as "stubborn as you can get". It's that determined side of his character that has helped him get out of what could have been life ending situations.

"You react to the accidents in a fighting way. I remember even though my leg was broken I didn't just think 'well that hurts I won't try that again', I thought 'I'm going to do it again,'" he says. "I think most people have that same will to live in them — it's just completely against our nature to give up and die."

It was Simpson's survival on the mountain in Peru and the book of the trip — *Touching the Void* — which turned him from unknown climbing bum into a best-selling author.

Climbing with his close friend Simon Yates in Peru, the pair were descending after making the 6356m Siula Grande when Simpson shattered his right knee and ankle in a fall.

Simpson and Yates did not give up, however, and the pair managed to get themselves about 3000m down the mountain in a storm.

Simpson was lowered over an ice cliff and, with him still suspended in mid-air, the rope ran out. With frozen hands he was unable to go back up the rope and there was no way Yates could haul him up again.

For an hour Yates held him as the storm worsened and slowly Simpson's weight began to pull him off the ledge. Slowly as Yates was pulled towards the edge he made the decision and cut Simpson's rope.

Simpson plummeted about 40m, at least 20m of it down a crevasse.

Grief stricken, Yates looked for Simpson but getting no reply continued down the mountain, believing him dead.

Simpson, realising he couldn't go back up the crevasse, continued down. He dragged himself over kilometres of jagged rocks back towards the campsite.

Four days later and 20kg lighter he reached the campsite. Simpson, who dedicated the book to Yates, says the main reason he wrote *Touching The Void* was to set the record straight for himself as well as Yates, who had faced criticism over cutting the rope.

"The cutting of the rope was one incident right at the end and had been blown out of all proportion," he says.

Simpson says Yates had done everything

Mountaineer turns into best-selling author

right to ensure their survival. "I understood his actions in a few seconds after I realised what had happened," Simpson says.

"I remember I was angry when I started falling because I thought now he is going to die as well. When I realised the rope had been cut I just thought 'great, he's still alive'."

Simpson had no idea how successful the book would become. Translated into 14 languages and selling more than 400,000 copies around the world, it won the UK's top award for non-fiction when it took out the NCR award against competition including Stephen Hawking's *Brief History Of Time*.

For some time Simpson struggled to come to grips with finding himself a celebrity being whisked away on promotional tours.

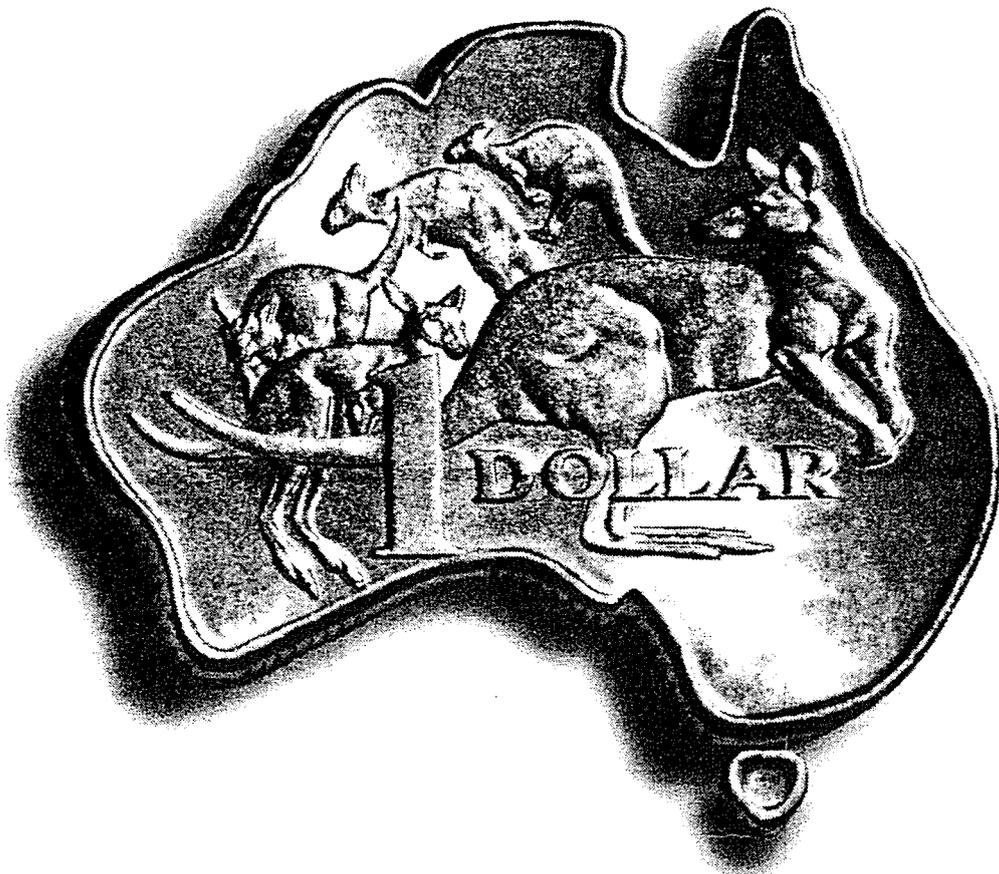
"I didn't write for four years after *Touching The Void* because I was just so freaked by it all," he says. "I was so confused by the whole thing because all I'd ever wanted was to climb the world and all of a sudden I was becoming well known for writing."

Simpson said he just got to the point where it was becoming ridiculous because he was not being a writer or a climber. Since that realisation he has been achieving both.

He has made several trips back to the mountains to climb and has completed his third book, *This Game of Ghosts*, an autobiography.

"It seems a bit daft writing your autobiography at 33 but why wait until you're 70 to write it when you don't really remember what it's like to be 20," he says.

Joe Simpson will be giving a talk on his climbing and writing in Sydney on Friday October 21 at the Wesley Centre, 220 Pitt Street. Tickets are available from Australian Geographic shops.



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SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, OCTOBER 16, 1994 - 30



Simpson: 'I think most people have that same will to live in them — it's just completely against our nature to give up and die'

The Sydney Morning Herald

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1994

NO. 49,073 FIRST PUE

Found: tree from the Dinosaur Age, and it's alive

By JAMES WOODFORD
Environment Writer

Only a few times this century has something so spectacular as the Wollemi pine turned up — a living fossil that has miraculously survived the ravages of unimaginable time in its own little Jurassic Park in the Blue Mountains.

The previously unknown native tree is a towering 40 metres tall, with a three-metre girth, is covered in dense, waxy foliage and has distinctive bubbly bark that makes it look as though it is coated in Coco Pops.

Missing for 150 million years, its discovery in a remote gorge in Wollemi National Park, 200 kilometres west of Sydney, has astonished scientists.

Its only known home is a tiny 5,000 square metre relic grove of prehistoric rainforest in the 500,000-hectare park. So far only 23 adults and 16 juveniles have been found, making it also one of the world's rarest plants.

Once the trees may have covered vast areas of the continent, but as the climate changed the trees

apparently retreated into the damp, protected gorge: they have somehow hung on through millions of years of massive climatic change and terrible aridity in more recent prehistoric times, when countless other plants perished.

"The discovery is the equivalent

of finding a small dinosaur still alive on Earth," said Professor Carrick Chambers, the director of the Royal Botanic Gardens. "It is a really major find."

The scientific director at the gardens, Dr Barbara Briggs, said: "On the world scene it's one of the

most outstanding discoveries of the century."

The few scientists who have been alerted to the find so far have put it on a par with the rediscovery of the lungfish in south-east Queensland in 1870, or the coelacanth in the depths of the Indian

Ocean in 1938: both fish had previously been known only from 385 million-year-old fossils.

The Wollemi pine was discovered in August by Mr David Noble, a project officer with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), who was spending

his weekend in the park. He was canyoning in a 600-metre-deep gorge when the big trees caught his eye. He brought a branch back to show to Mr Wyn Jones, a senior naturalist with the NPWS.

After a cursory glance, Mr Jones told Mr Noble that he

thought the branch was from a fern. "No," Mr Noble said, "It's from a bloody great big tree."

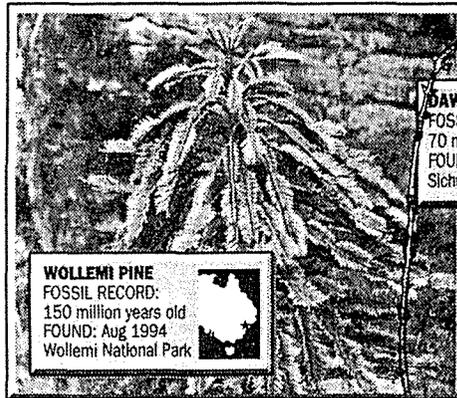
Mr Jones first saw the trees in the wild a fortnight later.

"My reaction was amazement," Mr Jones said, "I had never seen anything like it."

Since then Mr Noble, who may have the tree scientifically named after him, Mr Jones and a

Continued Page 8
PAGE 8: The chance discovery; waiting wildlife.

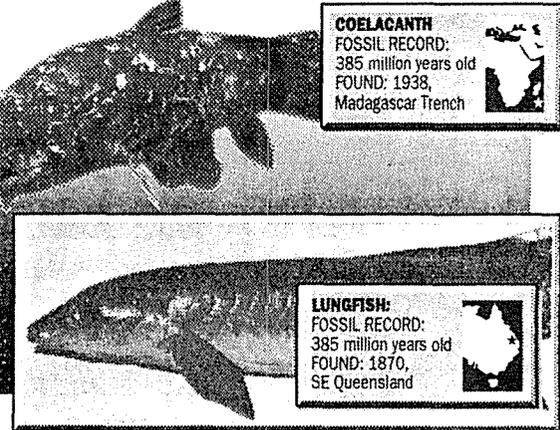
BACK FROM THE DEAD: RECENT REDISCOVERIES



WOLLEMI PINE
FOSSIL RECORD:
150 million years old
FOUND: Aug 1994
Wollemi National Park

DAWN REDWOOD
FOSSIL RECORD:
70 million years old
FOUND: 1945,
Sichuan province China

BONDEGEZOU
(tree kangaroo)
FOUND: June 1994,
Maokop range,
Irian Jaya



COELACANTH
FOSSIL RECORD:
385 million years old
FOUND: 1938,
Madagascar Trench

LUNGFISH:
FOSSIL RECORD:
385 million years old
FOUND: 1870,
SE Queensland



Tree from dinosaur age found

From Page 1
volunteer, Ms Jan Allen, have made several trips to study the trees.

Today the NSW Government, the NPWS and the Royal Botanic Gardens will formally declare that the Wollemi Pine is a new genus — the scientific classification used to embrace a group of similar species.

Final identification of the genus was done by Mr Ken Hill, senior botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens. "When you can find 40-metre-high trees 200 kilometres from a major city it makes you wonder what else is out there in places that are even more remote," Mr Hill said.

The only trees like it that have existed on Earth are found in fossils deposited during the time of the dinosaurs. The genus is midway between New Zealand's kauri pines and Australia's Norfolk and hoop pines.

"This tree is a missing link between the kauri pines and the araucaria pines [includes hoop, bunya and Norfolk Pines] it will fill in a whole lot of gaps in our knowledge," said Mr Hill.

Scientists from the Gardens are trying to propagate it as a precaution against collectors stealing seeds or a natural disaster such as a bushfire.

Fewer than 10 people know the location of the trees. "It's going to be one of the stunning confers of the world," said Mr Hill.

A chance discovery unveils hidden gorge's age-old secret

By JAMES WOODFORD
Environment Writer

Wollemi is an Aboriginal word meaning "look round you! Keep your eyes open or look out!".

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) followed the advice and now it is reaping the rewards — a scientific discovery of international significance.

Twelve years ago, Wyn Jones, senior naturalist with the NPWS, was searching the wilds of Wollemi National Park in the Blue Mountains for rare plants.

Unknown to him, he came within 100 metres of a Gondwanaland-relic rainforest. The rainforest, in a deep gorge, contained trees that were only known from fossils more than 150 million years old.

But in Wollemi, where dense bush and massive gorges make travel almost impossible, 100 metres may as well have been the moon.

For the next 12 years few — if any — people would have come near the remnant rainforest. If any did manage to get that far, they were probably too worn down or frustrated by the ruggedness of the terrain to care about a strange, enormous tree that towered above the soaking, tangled understorey.

Or if they did notice, the prospect of carrying a branch back to civilisation would be unthinkable.

In August this year, Mr David Noble, an NPWS project officer enjoying a weekend of bush

trekking and abseiling with two companions, dropped into a 600-metre gorge on the end of ropes.

The place they entered was untouched and almost impenetrable rainforest — the home of scrub turkeys, lyre birds, wallabies and wombats.

In such a rainforest the canopy should have been dominated by coachwoods, Wollemi's main rainforest species. Instead, Noble saw clusters of strange trees unlike any he had seen before.

He knew that what he had found was important but was sure that such large trees would have had to be known.

Mr Jones, whose career with the NPWS has centred on the study of rare plants, had been a lifelong friend of the Noble family and had taught Mr Noble to bring back anything unusual from his wanderings.

When Mr Noble pulled the branch from his backpack in the headquarters of the NPWS in the Blue Mountains, Mr Jones thought it was from a fern, but Noble insisted it had come from a strange tree at least 40 metres tall.

"After I had seen it [the branch] I kept dreaming about it," said Mr Jones.

"It became clear to me that there was more than just a passing interest here. The fact that Dave said it was a bloody great tree made it even harder for me to work out what it was."

The pair trekked into the gorge a fortnight later.

Mr Jones said his reaction at first glance was: "My God it's



Ken Hill with leaves from the Wollemi Pine and one of its fossilised ancestors. Some sort of introduced pine tree that had grown from a seed dropped in the gorge by a cocky".

When specimens of the tree were taken to Mr Ken Hill, senior botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, he also thought it was an introduced

species related to a Chinese conifer. A team led by Mr Jones which included a volunteer from the Blue Mountains, Ms Jan Allen, and Mr Noble, spent the next two months pouring over every scrap of scientific literature on conifers that was available.

Before they took the samples to anybody else, they wanted to have a watertight case to show that what they had found was something new.

Two weeks ago, confident they had done the homework on the tree that they were now calling the Wollemi Pine, they

again took a bundle of leaves, branches, pine cones and bark to the Botanic Gardens — but this time they were sure of their research.

After a one-hour examination of their evidence, Mr Hill confirmed that a fossil had literally come to life.



Mr Sadlier holds the gecko's strange cousin.

Weird wildlife lies waiting

By JENNIFER CONNELL

The mallee worm lizard may look like a worm but it is, in fact, a 120-vertebra-long cousin of the gecko. It eats ants and their larvae and lives underground in ant burrows.

A specimen found recently is only the second mallee worm lizard ever found in NSW, according to National Parks and

Photograph by PETER RAE

New pine species found



The National Parks and Wildlife Service has made one of the most outstanding botanical finds of the century with the discovery of a new species of trees in Wollemi National Park in the Blue Mountains.

The NSW Minister for the Environment Mr Chris Hartcher said the new species of 40 metre tall trees, to be known as Wollemi Pines, had been verified by the Royal Botanic Gardens.

"A discovery like this scarcely seems possible just 200 kilometres from the heart of Sydney," Mr Hartcher said.

"This is like finding a living dinosaur in your backyard.

"These Wollemi Pines are truly living fossils as their closest relations are extinct plants only found in fossils from the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods about 65 to 200 million years ago.

"The trees are so distinctive that botanists from the Royal Botanic Gardens believe they are not only a new species but a whole new genus.

"This is a discovery of international significance and with only 40 trees known, Wollemi Pines are one of the rarest trees in the world.

"This grove of about 40 trees is in an extremely remote and rugged part of the Wollemi National Park. The isolation seems to

be one reason the trees have survived.

"Scientists from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and staff from the Royal Botanic Gardens have studied the Blue Mountains for years in an effort to understand and record the biodiversity in this unique environment.

"The fact that such a large plant can go undiscovered for so long is a clear indication that there is more work to be done before we can say we understand our environment.

"The Wollemi Pines are an important link between the ancient continent of Gondwana and today and will help us understand the evolution of Australian fauna."

The pines were first found by NPWS field officer David Noble while bushwalking. NPWS senior scientist Wyn Jones worked closely with Ken Hill of the Royal Botanic Gardens and botanist Jan Allen to identify the new plant.

The exact location of the plants is being kept secret to protect the plants and a conservation strategy is being prepared in the hope that attempts to propagate the species will be successful.

Cave art a treasure trove

By PAUL WEBSTER

PARIS, Thursday: Archaeologists hope that a network of underground caves found in the south of France on Christmas Day will provide more important clues to prehistoric life.

The ancient "art gallery" of 300 beautifully preserved paintings has been undisturbed for up to 20,000 years and has been described as a treasure trove to match the Lascaux caves, also in France, or those at Altamira in Spain.

The site at Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, in the Ardeche, also contains the remains of cooking fires, stone weapons, discarded lumps of natural paints and evidence that the prehistoric families shared the network of caves with bears.

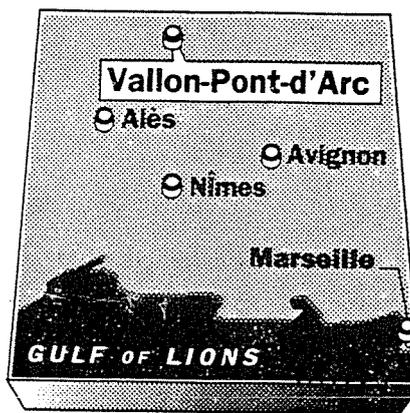
The French Culture Minister, Mr Jacques Toubon, who announced the discovery after the site had been put under guard, said the 300 paintings in red, brown, yellow and black represented a unique variety of animals including mammoths, horses, deer, rhinoceroses, owls and bears.

"As far as we know, this appears to be the only network of caves which has remained totally intact since the Palaeolithic era," Mr Toubon said. "Apart from the remnants of man's presence, there is a unique naturalist study to be made of the evolution of the natural environment since the Ice Age."

The site is in an area dotted with small collections of cave paintings scattered along a net-



Frozen in time ... 20,000-year-old paintings discovered in the south of France. *Photograph by REUTERS*



work of underground rivers. The curator of a museum of prehistory at nearby Orgnac, Mr Jean-Marie Chauvet, who is also responsible for protecting the prehistoric sites, discovered the art work when making a routine inspection.

Situated at the end of 500-metre-long tunnel, the caves appeared to have been abandoned about 15,000 years ago. The tunnel ceiling had collapsed, sealing off access, and it was only after a team of archeologists had cleared a passage on Christmas Day that the network of galleries was revealed.

The most striking paintings were of 40 woolly rhinoceroses, a common animal at the end of the Ice Age. They are rarely depicted on prehistoric sites but the most famous are two at Lascaux, a site discovered by children during World War II.

At Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, the dome of the main cave is more than six metres high and some of the paintings are huge.

The Guardian

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CONGRATULATIONS



TO

**RICK AND CAROLYN BRETT
ON THE BIRTH OF THEIR
DAUGHTER
KIRSTY**

AND TO

**KEVIN AND SUE COLEBORN
ON THE BIRTH OF THEIR
SON
RICHARD**

MANY HAPPY RETURNS FROM BMSC

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Journal of

Blue Mountains Speleological Club

Vol. 24 No 2

TRIP REPORTS

WEE JASPER - 24/25TH SEPTEMBER 1994

Saturday

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Sunday

Entered Punchbowl - explored the cave after waiting for some time to enter due to various other parties in the cave. Next visit a map would be rather handy so as to note where we were in the cave. Laddered in and out using 30 meter ladder plus 5 metre ladder.

Rick Brett

CLIEFDEN - 10/11TH DECEMBER 1994

Saturday

Saturday was spent making our way to Cliefden with our car rally being held along the way. In short the observation trial began at Katoomba Scenic railway and diverted via many side routes along the way to Cliefden. Upon arrival at Cliefden the scores for correct answers were calculated to decide the winner. The winner was Shane and the winning margin was only one point. Shane was presented with a bottle of Directors Special Port for his efforts. Saturday afternoon was spent trogging the hills around the back of the old hut and playing cricket.

Sunday

Sunday saw a party of four of us making our way to Murder. Upon arrival at the cave entrance we found that the normally wet and slippery entrance was dry, dusty and had plenty of grip. After negotiating the entrance we made our way down to

Croesus (14th)

For Croesus we teamed up with a group from CEGSA. The CEGSA members were David Wright, Wayne Goldsmith, Nicola and Damien Trenorden. Croesus is a horizontal active stream passage cave with a tremendous amount of high quality decoration. The water is also very cold.

Lynds (15th)

We visited Lynds with the same party from CEGSA. Lynds is also a horizontal active stramway cave and in our opinion is of the same quality as Croesus yet it is not gated - admittedly it is a harder cave to gate.

Thursday (16th) - Supplementary report by Kevin

Genghis khan was headed into first thing to show the CEGSA members around and to take a few happy snaps. Then we headed for My cave. After navigating a loose lower entrance (not being wise to any other entrances) we went to the end where the cave sumped. A few more photos and wet feet we headed out via a more stable entrance which was a relief. We then headed over to Bauldocks cave for a quick look then to Wet cave and walked through getting our feet wet again. Honeycomb entrance was entered to finish a great day's caving. Thanks to CEGSA.

Growling Swallet (23rd)

As there was only 2 of us we restricted ourselves to a short familiarisation of the upper sections as far as Wind Rift. The side passage to New Feeling was located but not entered. A very different cave to the Mole Creek caves.

The remainder of the trip was spent touring and fishing.

Shane Anderson

WYANBENE - 8/9TH APRIL 1995

Most of the members headed down Friday night dodging wombats except for Rick who managed to hit one anyway. After visiting areas not normally on the way (we got lost) we got to the Big Hole camp ground and set up camp about 2.30am.

After a late start Shane arrived and we headed down to Wyanbene cave. On entering we headed straight for the

MEMO

DATED: 29th September 1995
TO: All staff
REFERENCE: Special high Intensity Training

In order to assure that we continue to produce the highest quality possible, it will be our policy to keep all our employees well trained through our program of Special High Intensity Training (S.H.I.T). We are giving our employees more S.H.I.T than any other office.

If you feel that you do not receive your fair share of S.H.I.T on the job, see your superiors. You will be placed on top of the S.H.I.T list "Special Attention".

All of our supervisors are particularly qualified to see that you get all the S.H.I.T that you can handle at your own speed.

If you consider yourself to be already trained, you may be interested in helping us to train others. We can add you to our Basic Understand Lecture List - Special High intensity Training program (B.U.L.L.S.H.I.T).

If you have any questions, please address them to our Head of Training for Special High Intensity Training (H.O.T.S.H.I.T).

Yours sincerely

Boss In General
Special High Intensity Training
(B.I.G.S.H.I.T)

P.S. With the personality some of you display around here, you could easily become the Reginal Assistant Trainer of Special High Intensity Training (R.A.T.S.H.I.T).

Those of you with no personality at all will be nominated for the honorary position of Deputy of Unpaid Management Briefer - Special High Intensity Training Students (D.U.M.B.S.H.I.T.S).

Light of research uncovers creatures in caves' darkest depths

By JAMES WOODFORD
Environment Writer

The snarling pearl-white tooth of a Tasmanian tiger glints in Stefan Eberhard's helmet light. The remains of the carnivorous marsupial are buried deep in the wall of a cavern, not in Tasmania but near Orange, in NSW.

For Mr Eberhard, a cave biologist employed as a consultant by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the old bones are of only passing interest.

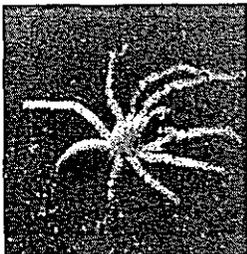
In caves, Tasmanian tigers and marsupial lions are almost par for the course - Mr Eberhard has found half a dozen skeletons in his travels through caves in Tasmania.

He and his colleague, Mr Andy Spate, the cave co-ordinator for the NPWS, are more interested in what crawls, flies, hops and slides around the fossils.

The two scientists are undertaking the first biodiversity survey of the wildlife in every one of the State's 100 cave areas. So far they have collected 400 insect specimens and up to half of these may be new to science.

People may think of caves as lifeless but even algae are known to live in parts of caves up to a million times darker than the light 30 centimetres from a bright candle. In such circumstances it is impossible to see your hand in front of your face.

It may be years before their collection can be properly studied. Each of the specimens will need to be classified and



Under glass ... possibly a new species of spider.

described and only a few scientists in the country have the skills to do this taxonomic work.

Of special interest to the scientists is a live spider they found last week which may possibly be a very ancient Gondwanan relic species. The spider will be given to Dr Mike Grey at the Australian Museum for further study.

The work is wet, dirty difficult and not for claustrophobics.

The cave with the fossil remains can only be reached by wiggling and twisting through a tiny tunnel with a diameter not much bigger than a large person's waist.

Beside the tooth is the skull of another ancient creature and a mysterious tangle of bones.

Perhaps the animals preserved in the cavern died together, the smaller mammal falling prey to

the marsupial tiger, which disappeared from the mainland about 3,500 years ago and in 1936 in Tasmania.

Or perhaps they were dumped there by a scavenger at a time when there was a hole opening to the surface. They may have been washed into the caves after the animals died on the outside, or the site may once have been the lair of a predator.

Either way, somehow the cavern has ended up covered in a macabre wallpaper made up of masses of bones - some as long as a human arm - that has light shone on it only a few times every decade.

The cave supports a colony of endangered bent-wing bats that leave smelly droppings on the floor of the cavern. In a world of darkness the droppings are the major food source for some of the millipedes, mites, spiders, beetles, moths and harvestmen (relatives of spiders) that breed and thrive according to the movements of the bats.

"The caves are dark and mysterious and you don't know what is there," Mr Eberhard said. "The aim of this project is to record the whole of the invertebrate diversity living in NSW caves ...

"It might seem like another world but it's not. Everything that lives in the caves depends on the outside world and everything inside the caves is incredibly susceptible to change on the outside and from people visiting the caves."



Seeking things which crawl, fly, hop and slide ... Andy Spate, left, and Stefan Eberhard in a cave near Orange. Photograph by PALANI MOHAN

Recd 4/2/96

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Light of research uncovers creatures in cave's darkest depths - The Sydney Morning Herald - 17 March 1995	
Mallory's Everest - at last - Sunday Telegraph - 28 May 1995	

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Sunday

Sunday saw a party of four of us making our way to Murder. Upon arrival at the cave entrance we found that the normally wet and slippery entrance was dry, dusty and had plenty of grip. After negotiating the entrance we made our way down to

the right hand extension and viewed the Skeleton. We departed the extension and made our way to the Dragon chamber and on to the Blue Stal. After some photography at the Blue Stal we then headed on to find and photograph the upside down pineapple.

Unfortunately after exploring for a long period of time we were unable to locate the pineapple, although we did manage to photograph some of the pretties the cave has to offer. After our unsuccessful attempt to locate the pineapple we decided to exit the cave noting an eyeless worm type creature along the way out.

We exited the cave after six hours underground and made our way back to the hut where we packed our gear and headed for home.

RICK BRETT

TASMANIA - 11-25TH FEBURARY 1995

We arrived in Tassy on the Saturday morning (11th) and after some grocery shopping in Devonport we made our way to Mole Creek and set up camp at the Sassafras Creek caravan park. That evening we were invited to Paul van Nynantan's home in Launceston for a BBQ to meet Paul and there members of the Northern Caverneers. Arrangements were also made for the next day's visit to Kubla Khan.

Kubla Khan (12th)

The Northern Caverneers goup met us at the caravan park at 10am from where we set off via their hut to Kubla Khan. We did KK as a through trip from the top entrance to the bottom entrance. Areas of the cave we passed through/visited were Mt Arbora, Khyber Pass, Watergate, Ridgeway, Forbidden City, Silk Shop, The Khan, Sally's Folly, Cairn Hall, Pleasure Dome and of course the River Alph which we waded to exit. Kubla Khan is a magnificent cave and the policy of limited access, ashing stations and route marking will hopefully keep it that way.

Genghis Khan (13th)

One person's opinion of a cave is necessarily different to anothers but after KK we found Genghis to be rather an anti-climax. Basically a single large rockfall chamber it would rate reasonably on the mainland but after KK it was rather ho-hum. Still we came and we saw.

Croesus (14th)

For Croesus we teamed up with a group from CEGSA. The CEGSA members were David Wright, Wayne Goldsmith, Nicola and Damien Trenorden. Croesus is a horizontal active stream passage cave with a tremendous amount of high quality decoration. The water is also very cold.

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The remainder of the trip was spent touring and fishing.

Shane Anderson

WYANBENE - 8/9TH APRIL 1995

Most of the members headed down Friday night dodging wombats except for Rick who managed to hit one anyway. After visiting areas not normally on the way (we got lost) we got to the Big Hole camp ground and set up camp about 2.30am.

After a late start Shane arrived and we headed down to Wyanbene cave. On entering we headed straight for the

Blowhole where after an anxious moment the new combination lock was eventually opened (don't forget to depress the shackle!). We set up a ladder to return to the stream passage and continued on until we reached the dreaded water crawl. Here Rick's new technique of keeping your upper body dry by using your belly seemed to work well for him. After reaching the Rockfall chamber we detoured to the Gunbarrel Aven for a brief look before returning to the Rockfall chamber for a bite to eat.

We then headed for Caesars Hall. After navigating the rockpile at the start of Caesars and then re-navigating it for 40 mins we finally found our way through, red faces and all. Michelle's main light began to get rather dim and as she was also beginning to feel the cold we decided to head out. With Rick's bag suffering from being pulled and yanked through squeezes and crawls we finally exited in the late afternoon.

Those returning to Sydney departed while the remainder settled for an evening around the biggest bonfire ever seen (not quite perhaps, but it was good). The next day was a brief walk to Big Hole but no death jumps were attempted. A good weekends caving.

Kevin Coleborn

MEMO

DATED: 29th September 1995
TO: All staff
REFERENCE: Special high Intensity Training

In order to assure that we continue to produce the highest quality possible, it will be our policy to keep all our employees well trained through our program of Special High Intensity Training (S.H.I.T). We are giving our employees more S.H.I.T than any other office.

If you feel that you do not receive your fair share of S.H.I.T on the job, see your superiors. You will be placed on top of the S.H.I.T list "Special Attention".

All of our supervisors are particularly qualified to see that you get all the S.H.I.T that you can handle at your own speed.

If you consider yourself to be already trained, you may be interested in helping us to train others. We can add you to our Basic Understand Lecture List - Special High intensity Training program (B.U.L.L.S.H.I.T).

If you have any questions, please address them to our Head of Training for Special High Intensity Training (H.O.T.S.H.I.T).

Yours sincerely

Boss In General
Special High Intensity Training
(B.I.G.S.H.I.T)

P.S. With the personality some of you display around here, you could easily become the Reginal Assistant Trainer of Special High Intensity Training (R.A.T.S.H.I.T).

Those of you with no personality at all will be nominated for the honorary position of Deputy of Unpaid Management Briefer - Special High Intensity Training Students (D.U.M.B.S.H.I.T.S).

Caving at Camooweal

Camooweal Caves National Park offers a perfect outing for experienced cave enthusiasts.

Situated about 8km south of Camooweal on the Urandangi road, Camooweal Caves National Park boasts an elaborate cave system unlike any other in Queensland.

Sinkhole openings dot the 13,800 hectares of Barkly Tableland which make the national park.

These openings are the only clues to the natural beauty of the systems that lay beneath the surface. These caves contain very few of the usual features commonly found in other cave systems.

The dolomite here is subject to extremes of temperature and sudden flooding makes it difficult for stalagmites and stalactites to form. Great Nowranie Cave is the best cave to explore. Its entrance can only be reached after negotiating an 18 metre drop and the use of climbing gear is advised.

This is the largest sinkhole on the park and is 290 metres long and 70 metres deep.

Access

Access by conventional vehicle is possible, although visitors may experience some difficulty at creek crossings or on rocky sections of the road.

The best time to visit the park is in the middle of the year when it is cooler and drier.

South-easterly winds at this time also help to make conditions more hospitable.

Travelling the caves when it is likely to be wet should not be attempted as the road becomes extremely boggy for several days following rain.

Intending visitors should check road conditions with the ranger at the Parks and Wildlife office in Mount Isa office or local police when planning a trip to the park.

Camooweal Caves National Park can be found by turning left on to the park boundary road after crossing the fourth grid from Camooweal on the Urandangi road.

This can be followed around the fenced paddock of the main park area, rejoining the Urandangi road near Nowranie waterhole.

Continue north (right) over the 2causeway to return to Camooweal.

Experienced only

Only people experienced in caving who are appropriately equipped should consider exploring these caves.

Camping

Camping permits can be purchased from the ranger at Mount Isa, or directly from the self-registration station on the park.



Within Camooweal Caves National Park are some of the largest and least explored caves in Australia. Only people experienced in caving should consider exploring these caves.

For further information about the park, contact the Division of Conservation, Parks and Wildlife, 2nd floor, Mount Isa House or phone 48 5572.

--- joints and restaurants. ---

Caves in for travellers

By JAMES SHRIMPTON

DEEP in the mountainous jungle of Sarawak lies what the locals call the Eighth Wonder of the World: the awesome and vast limestone caves of Mulu, some 30 million years old.

Four of the 27 explored caves are open for tourists, and while a visit still entails travel by motorised long-boat and on foot by paths through the rainforest, there's now a five-star hotel in the area where the weary traveller can relax in comfort at the end of the day.

Until the Royal Mulu Resort opened last year, accommodation in the area was restricted to spartan backpacker-type digs — still available for the more adventurous and economy-minded.

The caves are well worth the trip, even if the biggest of them is not generally on tourist itineraries. That's the Sarawak Chamber, at 104,000sq m the largest natural rock chamber in the world, where it's said you could park 40 Jumbo jets.

Visiting the chamber means spe-

AT A GLANCE

How to get there: Fly from Australia to Kuala Lumpur with Malaysia Airlines with regular connections to Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, and Kuching and Miri.

Entry: Valid Australian passport.

Climate: Dry season in Malaysia is from March to November.

Language: National language

Bahasa. English widely spoken.

Currency: \$A1 equals about \$1.9.

Information: Contact Malaysia Airlines on 132 627.

cial permission from the Gunung Mulu National Park and a strenuous torch-lit trek for four hours.

While all four caves have distinguishing features, Deer Cave is perhaps the most spectacular partly because of its bats; estimates of the numbers vary, but have been put as high as six million.

● JAMES SHRIMPTON flew to Mulu with Malaysia Airlines and stayed at the Royal Mulu Resort as a guest of Tourism Malaysia.

Light of research uncovers creatures in caves' darkest depths

By JAMES WOODFORD
Environment Writer

The snarling pearl-white tooth of a Tasmanian tiger glints in Stefan Eberhard's helmet light. The remains of the carnivorous marsupial are buried deep in the wall of a cavern, not in Tasmania but near Orange, in NSW.

For Mr Eberhard, a cave biologist employed as a consultant by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the old bones are of only passing interest.

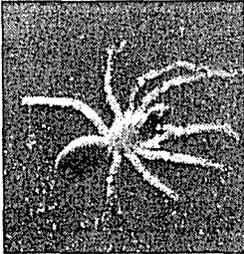
In caves, Tasmanian tigers and marsupial lions are almost par for the course - Mr Eberhard has found half a dozen skeletons in his travels through caves in Tasmania.

He and his colleague, Mr Andy Spate, the cave co-ordinator for the NPWS, are more interested in what crawls, flies, hops and slides around the fossils.

The two scientists are undertaking the first biodiversity survey of the wildlife in every one of the State's 100 cave areas. So far they have collected 400 insect specimens and up to half of these may be new to science.

People may think of caves as lifeless but even algae are known to live in parts of caves up to a million times darker than the light 30 centimetres from a bright candle. In such circumstances it is impossible to see your hand in front of your face.

It may be years before their collection can be properly studied. Each of the specimens will need to be classified and



Under glass ... possibly a new species of spider.

described and only a few scientists in the country have the skills to do this taxonomic work.

Of special interest to the scientists is a live spider they found last week which may possibly be a very ancient Gondwanan relic species. The spider will be given to Dr Mike Grey at the Australian Museum for further study.

The work is wet, dirty difficult and not for claustrophobics.

The cave with the fossil remains can only be reached by wiggling and twisting through a tiny tunnel with a diameter not much bigger than a large person's waist.

Beside the tooth is the skull of another ancient creature and a mysterious tangle of bones.

Perhaps the animals preserved in the cavern died together, the smaller mammal falling prey to

the marsupial tiger, which disappeared from the mainland about 3,500 years ago and in 1936 in Tasmania.

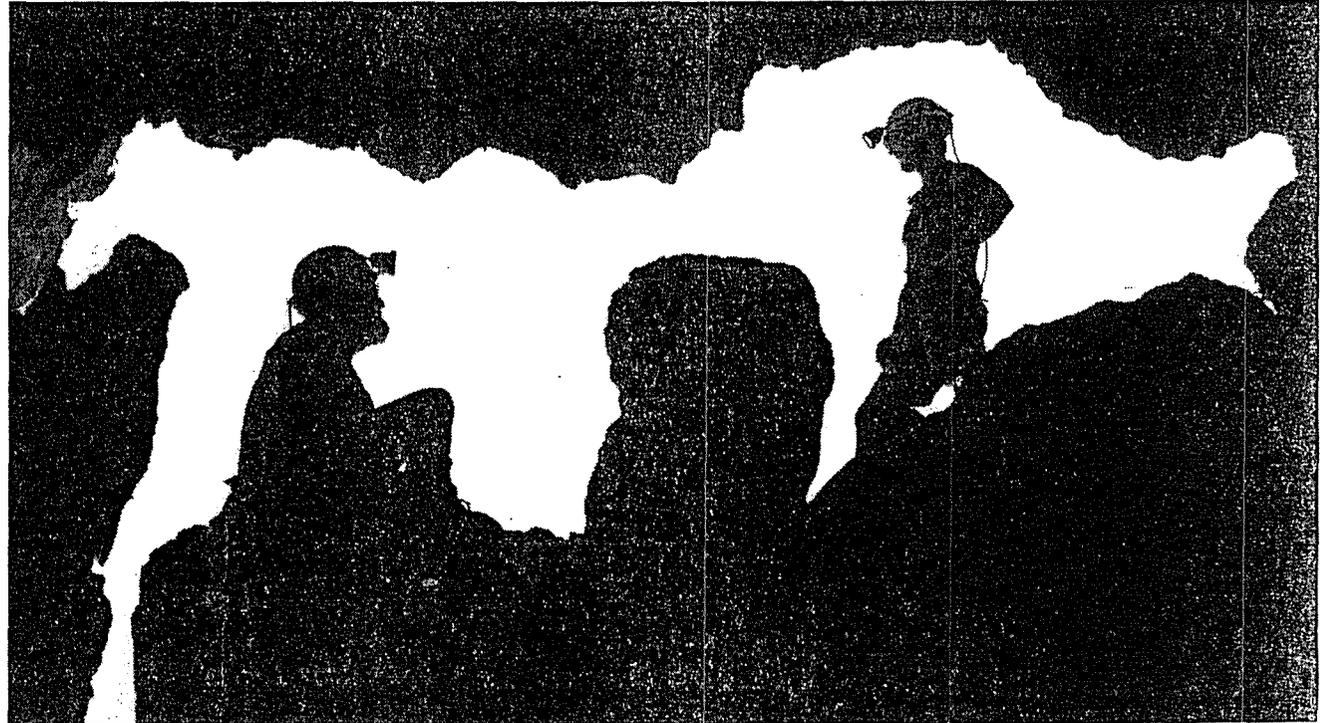
Or perhaps they were dumped there by a scavenger at a time when there was a hole opening to the surface. They may have been washed into the caves after the animals died on the outside, or the site may once have been the lair of a predator.

Either way, somehow the cavern has ended up covered in a macabre wallpaper made up of masses of bones - some as long as a human arm - that has light shone on it only a few times every decade.

The cave supports a colony of endangered bent-wing bats that leave smelly droppings on the floor of the cavern. In a world of darkness the droppings are the major food source for some of the millipedes, mites, spiders, beetles, moths and harvestmen (relatives of spiders) that breed and thrive according to the movements of the bats.

"The caves are dark and mysterious and you don't know what is there," Mr Eberhard said. "The aim of this project is to record the whole of the invertebrate diversity living in NSW caves ...

"It might seem like another world but it's not. Everything that lives in the caves depends on the outside world and everything inside the caves is incredibly susceptible to change on the outside and from people visiting the caves."



Seeking things which crawl, fly, hop and slide ... Andy Spate, left, and Stefan Eberhard in a cave near Orange. Photograph by PALANI MOHAN



George Mallory (right) on a trial run for his successful Everest climb

Mallory's Everest — at last

By SARAH HARRIS

SEVENTY years after disappearing in a wind-whipped cloud of snow, George Leigh Mallory has finally reached the summit of Mt Everest.

but was defeated by a treacherous turn in conditions as he began the descent.

George Leigh Mallory II, grandson of the famed adventurer who perished on the mountain in 1924, has claimed the honour denied his forebear.

In the best romantic traditions, the civil engineer from Melbourne planted a photograph of his namesake in the snow atop the world's highest peak on May 14.

"Mallory's made it now. This time there's no dispute," the 35-year-old told The Sunday Telegraph from a Katmandu hotel where he is recovering from the climb.

But, having fulfilled the destiny of the Mallory name, the young man was unable to resolve the enduring mystery of his ancestor's final climb.

He joined the American-led expedition hopeful of finding his grandfather's body and with it the camera which could resolve mountaineering's greatest question.

Did George Mallory and his companion Andrew Irvine reach the summit on June 8, 1924 — some 29 years before Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay?

In the absence of further proof than the eyewitness account of support climber Noel Odell, Mallory the younger certainly believes so.

"Odell always said he saw them climb the Second Step. Now, having been there myself, I am convinced that they made it," Mallory says.

"When you are at that point where Odell stood the first and second step look very different. It's inconceivable that you can confuse the two features."

Mallory believes his grandfather managed to reach the summit,

"We don't know whether they did get to the summit or not and probably never will. But it is my belief they did," Mallory says.

His own conquest of Everest was rather more easy than the first expeditions by Mallory and other British climbers.

The 20-member team followed the same route from the North Ridge to the North East Ridge which Mallory first identified in 1921 as the most feasible path to the summit. There the similarities ended.

"With experienced sherpas and modern technology it was much easier than in the '20s. We were very lucky with the weather window and sort of just strolled up."

However, Mr Mallory found it rather more difficult to describe his emotions on reaching the roof of the world.

"I thought about my grandfather and wondered if he had made it," he said. "It was a pretty deep sort of feeling; very emotional and well, amazing really."

A relative newcomer to mountaineering, he became driven to follow the challenge of his name after a visit to the Himalayas in 1992.

He has never asked himself why he wished to climb Mt Everest. In any case his grandfather had already famously provided the answer: "Because it's there."

"I've been into rock climbing since I was a boy growing up in South Africa so I guess there is something in my blood," he says.

Like his grandfather, he has kept a diary of the adventure and is considering writing a book which will juxtapose Mallory's present and past.



The photograph of his namesake Mallory planted in the snow on Everest