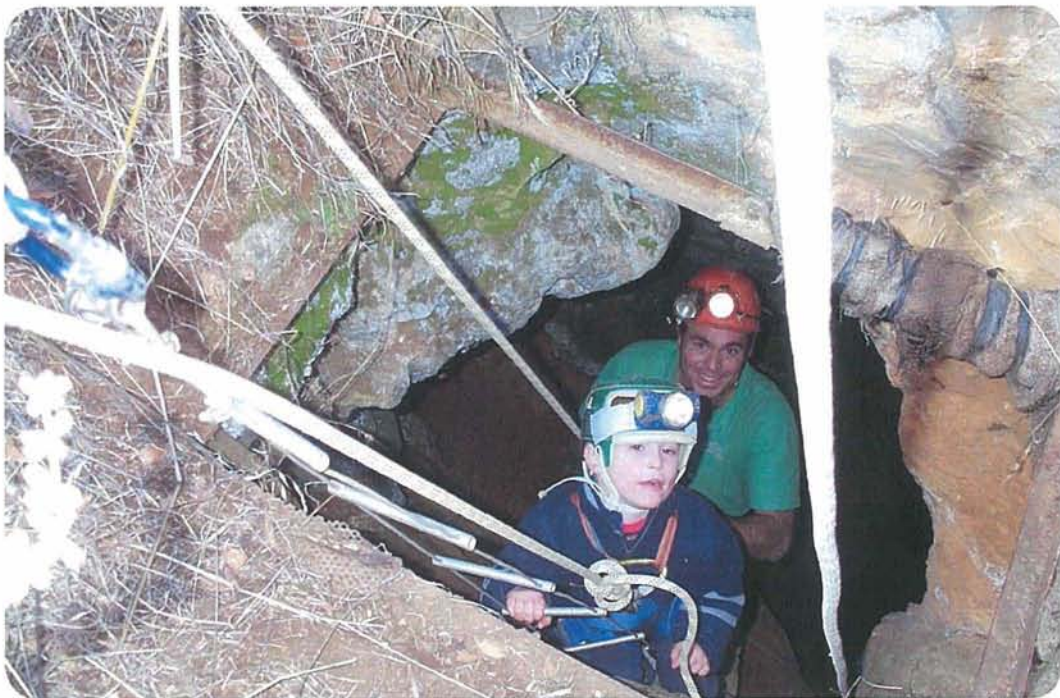


Oolite

Journal of the
Blue Mountains Speleological Club

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OOLITE

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Cover Photo: Iain Lynch with son, Thomas, in Deep Hole, Walli.

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From the President

As the new president of BMSC I'd like to start by thanking our retiring president Iain Lynch for his dedication and leadership these last six years. Iain has been not only an excellent president, but also our most active trip leader for several years, and everyone in the club has benefited from his experience and expertise in all aspects of caving. And will continue to do so.

In October 2006 BMSC will celebrate a milestone – we are turning 40! When I review the club's journals from the first 40 years, there has been lots to celebrate, including exploration and survey work at Tuglow, Abercrombie and Cliefden, as well as mapping in the Southern Limestone at Jenolan – most of this in the years when caving was a more widely enjoyed past-time than it is today. Recent years have seen real membership attrition in many caving clubs and BMSC was no exception. But numbers have picked up and we have managed to hang in there, enjoy some great times together and have started to "give something back" with the commencement of a scientific project. This is a preliminary study looking at the biodiversity of cave microbes at Jenolan, which will continue through 2006.

We look forward to the years ahead and hope the next 40 will see BMSC continue to develop.

Our club demographic may be a little different to many, with 21 adult members and 17 active child cavers under 16, for whom we run several "kid-friendly" trips a year. This presents its own kind of challenge, as caving with the "Microbods" means restrictions on both the types of caves and duration of the trip. So I'd like to thank those generous folk in the club who are more than happy to devote their skills and time to help out on these trips. Also thanks to the kids themselves, who enliven our own enjoyment when we see the wonder and awe in their faces. They bring back memories of when caving was brand new to us, as well as entertaining us with quotes such as: "But it's MY turn to lead!" "But *why* can't we go in the wombat hole?" "But I have to go NOW!" and "*Please, please* can we take the sheep bones home?" What terrific and gutsy kids they are, and what a joy it is to include them!

It's not all about the kids, though. During 2004-2005 we have had the opportunity to visit some magnificent caves, and after a long time away, we have been fortunate enough to cave again at beautiful Cliefden. Trips have all proved very popular – too popular in many cases, as we have not been able to accommodate everyone who would have liked to come along. Our trip leaders are still in short supply, and we need to turn this around with a few more active leaders in 2006.

Our more recent members have invigorated the club with enthusiasm, fresh ideas and new skills, and have certainly added to the camaraderie (not to mention to the microbod head-count!) . And our thanks are certainly due to Iain Lynch and Rick Brett, who ran the vast majority of our trips during this period. As well, I'd like to thank James Foster who has contributed his time and considerable talents to design and launch our new club website, and has given us a product that we are all happy with.

So, gang, all the best for 2006. Let's go caving!

Cindy Mann, March 2006.

Note From the Editor

Hi, me again! Thanks to all who contributed material for this edition. I've included all the trip reports received, some of which are in the "official" club format. Where these occur they are more definitive and succinct than those submitted as informal reports - worthwhile remembering if you're planning a trip or recording hours.

Cindy Mann

Coolah Tops NP Basalt Cave – 21st-22nd February 2004

Present: Louise and Terry Coleborn, Iain and Cheryl Lynch, Rick and Anne-Marie Brett, Michelle Coleborn, Kylie and Tim, Phil Niciak (T/L).

Saturday: Up at 5:00 for a 6:00 start from Lithgow would give me a 1 hour head start on the rest of our party. As the nominal trip leader, I thought it important to be the first to the venue (Maccas at Mudgee, that is!) Great minds think alike, and over a half hour period, most of the rest of our party pulled into the Golden Arches for their RDI of junk food. Breakfast consumed and onto Coolah (1.5 hrs) and a stop at the Black Stump Butchery (at least 5 cuts of meat to choose from) for snags. Allow for 1 hr travel from Coolah to the Barracks Camping Area.

After the bumpy ride to the Barracks, we pitched tents and lunched. Around 2:00 we held the AGM under some shady pine trees. With business concluded I was anxious to "get caving", and we headed off to the Basalt Cave around 3:30, with the temperature spiking over 40°C. A quick check of the Bundella lookout and a round-up of those wanting to walk the 1.5 km to the cave saw us setting off around 4pm. 500 m in and the track requires some rock- scrambling around a crumbly basalt-column outcrop, it then winds back into Rocky Creek gully. The reflected heat off the basalt walls with a western sun had the temp at 40-plus. The sight of 3 large wedgetailed eagles soaring on the thermals was wonderful. In parts the cliff track is level and easy-going; elsewhere some awkward climbing is required, and at this time of year, the basalt is too hot to touch! With some 400m to go I decided to pull out (yeah – the heat got to me). Having scouted ahead, Iain led the group to the Basalt Cave.

From first-hand accounts, the cave is the remnant of a lava tube, some 100m in length. Combine a dusty floor and a stifling atmosphere and you basically have the main attractions of the fabled Basalt Cave. Laura, Ben and I had returned to the cars around 6pm – exhausted. Some 1.5 hrs later a weary group returned – very thirsty.

Sunday: We spent the day sight-seeing at Rocky Creek Falls and Norfolk Falls – I went on to check out Brackens Hut at Norfolk Island Creek Swamp – fascinating area! At the time of this report the 4WD Jemmy's Creek Trail to Coolah Tops was closed.

Lessons learnt from the trip

- The walk to Basalt Cave is best done in autumn or spring.
- Set off around 12:00 for a comfortable 4:00 return, and take plenty of water.
- Next time take a tape to measure the true extent of the cave
- Feral goat population in the NP is very evident.
- We will return – most definitely.

Phil Niciak

Wyanbene – 13 March 2004

The first trip for 2004, and a long time in the making. After five years of trying this trip to Wyanbene finally became a reality. Shane and Alison had headed down Friday and night, and were jumping at the bit when Rick, Steve and I arrived, late (of course) on Saturday morning, having left home at 5.00 am. It didn't take long however, for us all to kit up and head on in.

Well, who said there was a drought?. Plenty of water in the stream passage although one could keep their butts dry through the low sections. Not long and we had unlocked the gate and were rigging the ladder pitch. Once down, we started along the stream passage, busting our guts to stay out of the water as long as possible. The standard routine in Wyanbene. You know it's a *fait accompli* that you will get soaked, but you try to stay dry anyway. Will one ever learn?!

We followed the stream passage, twisting up the squeeze towards the rockpile and on to Caesar's Hall, leaving the Gunbarrel for the return journey – our 1st goal being Frustration Lake. Way, way down Caesar's Hall and way, way back up before heading along the rift to the up and overs.

Well no one remembered how many or how hard they would be. Even now as I write this and cannot remember the first climb or the next. All I can remember is that fear of being the one to climb Anderson's wall and why it wasn't Shane or Alison leading the way up their namesake climb. As with previous attempts, I kicked myself at the top for making it seem so hard.

Now I remember – first it was up and over into diarrhoea pot, which had no mud remaining and only a small pool of water, clearly demonstrating the impact we cavers have on caves. Now on to the climb. Its not too hard if you chimney. Plenty of foot holds, but the drop off below is always a bit daunting. Anyway I made it, and soon we were down the other side and on to Frustration Lake for a break.

Well, this fool didn't want a rest break, seeking to break a long held record of swimming the lake – in one's underwear. No good enough you say? How about sans underwear – equipped with only the head light I was born with, I edged into the lake minimising the disturbance of the sediment. It took until half way across the lake before I could no longer feel the cold. So I continued to the duck under on the other side. The icy waters were too much to dive under water so I peered through the air space before posing for a few strategically modest photos. The record broken, I returned across the lake and resumed normal caving attire.

Once dressed, we retraced our journey back to the chamber after Caesar's Hall. Rick and I spent half an hour searching for the way to the Gunbarrel, eventually taking the 1st passage investigated. There's value in persisting the 1st time. Anyway, it was as usual, very, very impressive.

We headed back to the chamber and out to the stream passage. It is always so much harder on the way out

and one resigns oneself into getting very wet. It didn't take long (except for locking the gate – has anyone got any tips for next time) before we exited the cave late in the afternoon.

As this was a day trip, we packed fairly quickly and headed back to Goulburn, up the Hume and home to the Blue Mountains. Who could ask for more!

Members Present Iain Lynch (Trip Leader), Shane Anderson, Rick Brett, Alison Anderson, Steve Hallam. 7 hours

Iain Lynch.

Walli, 1st - 2nd June 2004.

Present: the Brett, Lynch, Mann, Kaar and McKendry families, Mike Materazzo, Michelle Coleborn, Alison and Shane Anderson. Trip Leader, Rick Brett.

Saturday: We had all arrived at Cliefden by about 10:30 and pitched our tents. It was a fairly brisk morning, and starting to cloud over, as we split into several groups and left for Walli. Those who were caving headed off underground. Allie and Shane did Lake cave. Rick's group did Piano with some of the children. They entered at 12:30 and spent 3 hours exploring. The cave was very dry and dusty, as it always is, but the kids who went along had a great time.

Upon surfacing, we noticed it was colder and rain was imminent. We headed back to camp with the kids riding in the back of the McKendry's ute. All together back at the hut, we spent a happy evening while the rain hammered down. The kids shrieked and wrestled, the fire blazed, the beer flowed and Rob and Rick provided some music on geetar and dij, as they usually do.

Sunday: Dragged ourselves up by about 7:00 after a rainy night, trogged up and split into 3 groups for Stovepipe, Piano (for kids who missed out yesterday) and Deep Hole, after which Rob and some of the guys went into Lake Cave to retrieve gear from yesterday. I was in the Deep Hole party with Timmy, Donna and young Tom McKendry, Mike Materazzo, Mitchell and Iain, who led. Iain rigged up twin ropes so each child could abseil beside a parent. Mitch and Tim had done this before, but it was Tom McKendry's first go. He was a natural, and really aced it. Once down we spent a few hours exploring. It was really great to hear the excitement and awe in the boys' voices whenever they saw something beautiful, and wonderful to see the "minimal impact" ethos developing in them as a result. Conditions in the cave were quite warm, as usual, and I noticed the air seemed fresher (less CO₂-ish) than on our previous visit.

We surfaced after 4.5 h. I prusiked to the half-way ledge and clipped in to wait in case any of the kids needed help laddering out. They didn't, although some still need practice in how to turn the ladder sideways if they need to.

Back at camp we packed up, said our goodbyes and headed out, back to the Blueys.

Cindy Mann.

Colong, October 2004.

Members Present: Iain Lynch (T/L), Mitchell Lynch, Shane Anderson, Alison Anderson, Paul McKendry, Thomas McKendry, Phil Niciak.

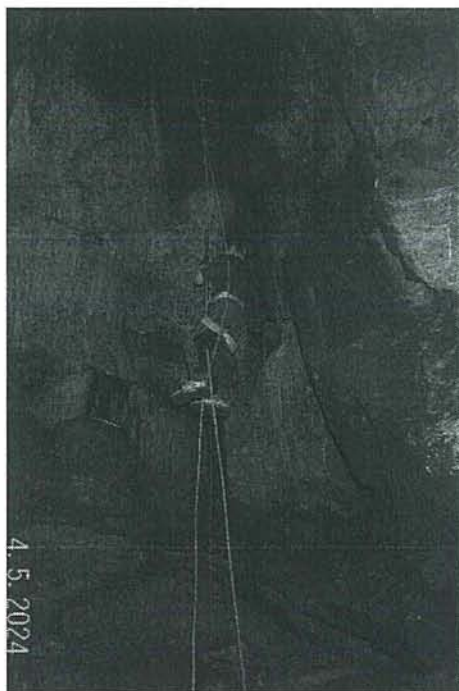
The trip was planned so we did not need to lug our camping gear down to the cave. So we all headed into Batsh Camp on Saturday afternoon, set up camp and undertook a little reconnaissance walk along the track to the caves. We returned to camp as evening approached and prepared ourselves for the next day's caving with a hearty meal and a good night's rest.

Sunday morning dawned and we were soon packed up and heading off towards the caves. What a long way it seemed – fortunately the expectation of some good caving overshadowed the dread of the return climb up Acetylene Spur. It did not take too long and we were at the main arch. We climbed into the arch to inspect the caving cave and the arch itself.

After a quick reorientation, I located the entrance that I remembered from my last trip here, some 17 years earlier, and we all trudged up to the entrance and readied ourselves for caving. We entered the cave, and followed our noses through to Kings Cross. The plan map of the cave had served us well so far. Things went a bit askew from Kings Cross, as I led off back towards the lower entrance. Upon reaching a tight squeeze that opened into a large chamber, I recognised the error and we back tracked to Kings Cross.



Clockwise from top: Assorted microbods at Walli, May 2004; Donna McKendry with Tom, Samuel and Ellen; and Tom McKendry ascending the Deep Hole pitch.





And
another
great
Walli
weekend
bites
the
Dust
As
BMSC
head
home

Off in the right direction now, we headed up over the Crystal Palace. At the next junction, Shane investigated the way on, whilst Alison, Mitchell, Thomas and I detoured into the landslide chamber, noting a large colony of bats there. Returning to the junction we headed off towards the rockpile chamber. We clambered up the obvious passage from this chamber and found ourselves at some bent metal bars which I assumed to be the remnants of the gate. We pushed through the squeeze and found ourselves at the base of the rift. Meanwhile, we explored an alternative passage that led up a flow stone climb to the obvious gate and into another section of the rift.

We all headed up to this point and checked out the climb through the rift. A couple of the party were uncertain of the climb, and whilst I thought the two younger boys were both capable of climbing through, I assessed that their attitudes could put them both at some risk. One being a bit 'gung ho', the other being a bit nervous. We considered installing a temporary handline, but with a general consensus, we decided to save the remainder of the cave for another day. A couple of us had a quick check around the rift, finding that it connected at its lower end with the squeeze adjacent the bent iron bars. We retraced our path back to the rockpile chamber, took a short rest, and then proceeded back towards Kings Cross and out to the entrance.

Returning to suitable attire for bushwalking, we were soon on our way back up Acetylene Spur. Fortunately a light drizzle kept the temperature down a bit, and we were soon to the top and back to camp. We finished packing up, cleaned up and headed on home. A good trip, enjoyed by all, but unfinished – a return trip was already being planned.

Hours Underground: 6

Iain Lynch

ISS Trip Cliefden Easter 2005.

Present: Jenny and Gary Whitby (T/Ls) Darren and Carolyn Dowler, Alison and Andrew Scobie, Phil Niciak, Rob, Cindy and Tim Mann.

Saturday

We arrived at Cliefden around 8:30, to meet Gary and Jenny, who were sorting gear outside the hut, having done Yarrowiggah yesterday (luck them!). Phil arrived about 9:00, having been awarded a speeding ticket for his excellent time in getting here. Rob and Tim set up the camp while I caught up with the Whitbys on their recent Lechuguilla trip.

Later, the Scobies and Dowlers arrived, and we all trogged up and headed for Malongulli, CL-69, the entrance to which is buried under a pile of rocks. We entered about 11:00, taking the uppermost of the 2 flatteners, to avoid damaging the cocopop formations, and headed down to the donkeytails, which were really quite impressive. Then on to the Nazghul. Gary and Andrew were good enough to rig a tape for the awkward manoeuvre up to the Nazghul area. I'd forgotten just how gorgeous the small formations in this area are, and Rob decided this was as good a place as any to try out his new camera. This was Phil's first visit to Malongulli, and he was really impressed.

After the Nazghul we did the loop. I'd completely forgotten how warm the Cliefden caves are and was cursing having worn the cordura overalls. The loop brought us back to the bottom of the pitch. Tim had gone off with Jenny on a Mission to rescue a lizard she'd seen, and I'd given them my pack to carry it out. Jenny had decided to let Tim carry it, and I was anxious that he might accidentally squash it. It was obviously quite large – a blue-tongue, they thought.

Up the ladder pitch and out into the bright, hot sun. It was now about 2:30. Tim and Jenny were discussing where best to release the lizard, and they decided on the campsite. Tim nursed it lovingly in the pack all the way back. We watched as they put the pack on the ground and gingerly opened it with a stick to reveal... Lumps of dirt! No lizard. A great hoax and a few laughs. Tim's finally found a girl who enjoys a joke as much as he does. Too bad she's taken!

Later on, everyone but Phil, Rob and Tim did a quick tour of the Barite Mine, which was fascinating. We followed this up a quick tour of Island Cave, entering CL-6 and exiting CL-58 about 50 minutes later. It was very dry, dusty and fairly interesting – similar to Transmission, with an intact skeleton of (I think) a fox.

Saturday night was great, and it was a pity Phil had to leave. Music, thanks to Rob, then a slide show of the Whitby's Lechuguilla expedition, which was fascinating and left this caver seething with envy... Gary also demon-

strated his Disto laser surveying instrument.

Sunday.

Up about 8:00, and we headed for Main. It was great to be going in after all these years. We did a tour of the Boot Chamber, Helictite Wall, the Clown Room, Patch work Quilt and the lovely basin with the crystals in it and the Laurel Room. It was a rather laid-back tour, with much of the 5h taken up with photography. Unfortunately, Rob banged up his already-injured knee quite badly, which put him out of contention for any more caving that day.

After Main, Rob and Tim headed into Canowindra and Darren made tracks for the NullarNullarbor, which I guess was some compensation for missing Murder. We descended at 4:10 and went looking for the Blue Stal, which Jenny eventually found – yes, it's been a while! It was a short trip, and after 2.5 hours we were topside again. We followed up with another great night, hearing more great stories of ISS trips, and hoping to run another joint trip in the coming year.

Cindy Mann

Cliefden, 24-25 April 2005.

Present: Iain Lynch (T/L), Cheryl Lynch, Rick Brett (T/L), Anne-Marie Brett, Steve Said, Jane Law, Paul and Donna McKendry, Kylie and Michelle Coleborn, Mike Materazzo, Phil Niciak, Cindy Mann.

Children present were Mitch, Angel and Tom Lynch, Ben Niciak, Tom, Daniel and Ellen McKendry, Kirsty, Jamie, Naomi and Lily Brett.

Surface Party: Cheryl Coleborn, Anne-Marie Brett and Steve Said.

Murder Cave, Cliefden, 24 April 2005.

The group included myself, Cindy, Mike, Michelle, Phil, Ben and Tom McKendry. We descended Murder at 1:55 and by 2:30 we were at the bottom of the entrance pitch. I rigged a tape for the 2 boys at the small entrance chamber. This makes things a little more comfortable. In a short while we had found our way to what I call the Dragon Chamber. I am still not sure if that's the official name, but I agree with Cindy, if it's not, it should be! There's a very Smaug-like dragon suspended from the ceiling and the boys were fascinated with it.

We moved on and up through the Post Box and RDF 5 survey tag. Off to our left, we followed a rift and took the second drop down, past the RDF 4 tag, then bearing slightly right to the "unstable area" sign. We by-passed this and took the climb-up and followed through to the Blue Stal. We figured this was a pretty good place to take a rest. It was great to see that the boys have developed a real appreciation of the fragility of cave ecosystems – they were very conscientious about sensitivity of the cave, and were careful not to touch any formations.

On the return journey, I was anxious to find the Pineapple as again we had received reports that it had mysteriously disappeared ...yet again. Phil, the boys and Cindy headed out and waited for Mike, Michelle and I at the top of RDF 4. We were gone about 30 minutes, covering some ground in quick time. With sweat running out of us, Michelle insisted that the Pineapple was higher. Great memory Chelle! She was correct. The pineapple can be confirmed as intact, but rather dry. The drought is having a definite impact here. We blasted back out to find the rest of the group were just starting to get cold. We back-tracked to RDF 5, and Tom pointed out delightedly that the broken calcite plate at the bottom has a small bone (a femur?) embedded in it. Soon (too soon), we were back in the Dragon Chamber. The boys had managed very well in the cave, needed very little help, and I was sorry not to have brought my camera along.

We left the tape in place for tomorrow's group and exited the cave at 5:30, having spent about 3.5 h down. We noted the cave was very dry compared to previous visits, making it much easier to move through. It was also quite warm – felt like about 19 or 20°C or so, and about 32°C outside. *Rick Brett, T/L*

Malongulli Sunday

We decided to do an Adults Only trip into Malongulli before brekky. This involved Iain, Paul, Jane and me. By 8:45 we'd rigged the entrance pitch (30' ladder used), and were in. We continued down the sloping flattener to some spar-encrusted pedulites that ISS told me are called the Donkey tails. They are really worth seeing, and Jane and Paul were impressed.

Next we moved on to see the Nazghul, with Iain rigging a tape at the climb-up. Paul and he had a look, but Jane and I explored around a few holes and tunnels in the vicinity. I tried a hole in the wall, at floor level, on the same side as the shelf-climb up leading to the Nazghul, and eventually came to an area with some really magnificent shaws. I called the others to come and see them, and we snapped away with our cameras for a while.

We exited Malongulli at ~ 12:15, after 3.5 hours underground. We had to get back fast, as we'd said we'd only be 2h. Then we had brekky in double-quick time and got ready for another cave.

A Double Murder!

We split up again. Rick, Kylie, and Mike took Jamie, Kirsty and Naomi into Main. The party for Murder consisted of Iain, Mitch, Donna, Tom McKendry, Daniel and me. We took the same route as yesterday, but in error I took us on a wrong turn for which we were rewarded with some really pretty sights. I'd followed a flattener past some smokey letters on the wall and veered to the left of a fairly tight passage to a spectacular dry rim-pool. It is a little over 1m in diameter, sparkling pristine white in the gloom, and lined with a zillion tiny spar crystals. Behind it is white flowstone, and in front, white glittering rim-stone spills out towards you. I stayed long enough to let first Tom, then Daniel come up for a look. The boys were absolutely entranced – but there was better to come for them from this trip. Camera next time! (Note: this passage could be a bit of a grunt for the big guys).

After passing the Blue Stal, we retraced to the RDF 4 area, down from the 2 pointing fingers, dropped through a hole in the floor, and soon found ourselves in an immensely pretty area. Following this are 2 climb-downs, and 2 climb-ups (roughly), and you emerge into several forests of straws and decorations. Eventually you come to a large drop-down into a chamber with an area roped off with pink tape. The scenery here is truly spectacular. The Pineapple can be seen in the background, fairly low down. In stark contrast to its surroundings, it is darkish and dirty-looking: Unusual rather than beautiful.

We headed back to the Dragon Chamber. Tom McKendry impressed us all with his ability to remember the way back, and all the boys impressed us with their natural climbing skills. We had a short break to cool down in the Dragon's Chamber and exited Murder at about 5:30, after about 3.5 h.

Back at camp we packed up. The crew from Main didn't arrive until later. When they returned Mike and I headed off, tired but happy after a great weekend of caving.

Cindy Mann

Main Sunday 25 April 2005

Rick Brett, Mike Materazzo Kylie Hitchcock, Jamie, Kirsty and Naomi Brett.

We had not waited for Iain's group to return from Molongulli before leaving the hut at about 10:30am. We headed down the dusty dry road towards the cave of the day, CL1. We entered Main at 11:00am.

Our aim was to have a nice easy trip down to helictite wall. Kylie was not sure if she had been there before and Mike had not recalled visiting there for a long while and nor had I. The kids also had never been there before. It had been several years for me since visiting cruisy main cave...damn, it was tougher than I recall, or is it simply that I am a little older, a little heavier and have a little less hair??? In any case we told the kids the game plan and gave them a safety drill of cave do's and do-nots before entering the cave. We found that it was rather warm inside as we made our way cautiously from the entrance gate, down to the main chamber. The track marking I felt was a great idea and assisted to keep people away from the more unstable areas. With the kids showing that they had good style, energy and caving ability, we soon made our way to the main chamber. We took in the pretty sights and grand stal that to me is the highlight of the main chamber. An opportunity also arose to educate the kids in regards to pointing out the damage that was done many years ago due to the mud throwing. A classic educational area!! I also showed Mike and the rest of the party how to select cave features that can be used for highlighting turns or climbs when they are leading. There is a large stal in the main chamber below the entrance pitch which clearly points they way out.

With a survey completed of how everyone was feeling, it was an easy decision to head for the boot room. The going was tougher than I recall, as having little Naomi with us really made me take note of the drops, holes and heights that we were negotiating. We followed the rift down into the cave. Kylie, Jamie and Mike were doing well whilst Kirsty and Naomi were like little dynamos, therefore arriving at the Jewel room turnoff after about 20 minutes. This area was another educational point where there are many little brown straws on the roof, making a nice identifier. We had a short rest before moving on and down to the boot room. The boot that hangs above the sump was a real treat for the kids (it has since featured in some classroom artwork) and was another great marker for the way out. I pointed out to my party that I had never seen the sump dry in Main before, and I mean dry. Not a drop of water, just damp clay to be seen. I was kicking myself that I did not have a camera, as in years to come, people will be amazed to think that the sump was once empty. Another rest was had at this point and it was a memory stretch to locate the way to Helictite Wall. I had the party wait in the boot room whilst I went

off to find the way on.

Within about 15 minutes I found the bottom of Domino slide, so made my way back to the boot room to evaluate the group's willingness to go on. We were all keen to continue but decided to give the crystal boot viewing a miss. On we went passing the entrance to the clown room and down into the damp muddy passages en route to Domino slide. Once hitting the mud Naomi decided that this was Not Fun Anymore, and needed a bit of persuasion to continue. We all reached the bottom of Domino slide, where I decided to not go any further and wait with Naomi. Mike did a great job leading from here. Negotiating the slippery mud bank to get up the slide still proved difficult work for Mike even though it was drier than normal. After reaching the top, Mike located a suitable anchor and dropped a hand tape down. Kirsty zipped up without too much trouble. Kylie assisted Jamie with great words of encouragement as Jamie made her way slowly to the top. Kylie, well she just blitzed it! With the gang at the top, I yelled some instructions as to where to head to get to Helictite Wall. Naomi and I made up a few songs and had a good rest whilst the others took in sights of the amazing formations.

With Helictite Wall viewing completed, we re-grouped with the comments of AWE about this feature. A deviation on the way out to take the easy route back to the Boot Room was taken. From there we took a rest and after catching our breath, headed for the Main Chamber. Recalling the "pointing finger", the kids were able to spot the way out. All went great and reached the surface at just after 4pm. Total of 5 hours underground.

Rick Brett

Colong 21st-22nd May 2005

Present: Iain Lynch (T/L) Paul McKendry, Shane and Alison Anderson, Colin Tyrell, Cindy Mann.

Iain and I got going shortly after 7:00pm and arrived at Batsh Camp as the others were thinking of turning in for the evening. Joy of joys, the billy was boiling. It was cold and I knew I'd regret sleeping in the back of the Suby, but I'm a lazy slob so...

I woke to the thump of Iain's fist on the car and after a hurried breakfast we hit the trail for Acetylene Spur. For reasons unclear to the rest of us, Iain had decided to take his mountain bike down...which would be fine, I guess, although the ride out wouldn't be (and indeed wasn't) too entertaining...for him anyway. We could hear his brakes squealing for mercy all the way down, to no avail.

We took some time to enjoy Camp Cave on the way, and admire the magnificent cedars in that area. We entered Colong Cave shortly after 10:00. It was my first visit here. The entrance is open and roomy and not far in we came to the elegantly sculpted "Madonna and Child" formation. Soon we were at the confusing (to me at least) Kings Cross. There was plenty to see through here, but it was rather drier than I'd expected.

Eventually we came to a section where there are 2 possible ways on: One is through a squeeze, and one is a narrow cleft which is negotiated using both walls at some height (high enough to possibly break a leg. Not difficult, but you do need to step carefully). Ali led some of the group through the squeeze, while Iain, Shane and I opted for the cleft. A little later, Colin decided against the squeeze and ended up joining us in the cleft.

We split into 2 groups and spent considerable time familiarising (or re-familiarising) ourselves with the next section of the cave, and re-grouping for a very short break before proceeding on to Woof's Cavern. Ali's long-term memory and impeccable sense of direction was very helpful in getting us there. Colin was experiencing some pain from his injury and decided not to follow on to Woofs. Paul very nobly stayed with him, which shows he's much nicer than the rest of us (which we already suspected, anyway).

I was leading the last little section and was negotiating a rift fairly high up, back on one wall, feet on the other, thinking the gang were following, but they'd turned off at some stage. I exited the rift coming up beside a really nice, large pool, crystal clear water, with an exceedingly thin layer of calcite on it's surface. Then I saw all the others laughing at me from the other side as it finally dawned on me I hadn't been leading them at all...Jerks!

We saw into Woofs and photographed the finely decorated passage that terminates in a really pretty little area. No-one attempted to enter the passage, of course - it was just too lovely. But we snapped away from near the entrance.

Returning to the others, we found them starting to get pretty cold. We were pretty hungry, so lunch was 5 minutes of bolting food before moving on. Taking the "squeeze" route out, (which is not really constrictive enough to qualify as a squeeze,) we continued back to around Kings Cross. Iain, Paul and I were looking for some alternate way out, (GC2) which Iain found, and the others exited the way we'd come in. We were out about 3:15 after

a most enjoyable time. Ali, Shane and I decided to "go for it" up Acetylene Spur. Shane did it in 24 minutes, and Ali and I made it just on 27 minutes. We were seriously stuffed, though. They were in training for a rogaine. The others took a more leisurely pace.

Back at Batsh Camp we enjoyed a parting feast – a hot cup of tea and some of Donna's fabulous cake. Then it was back on the road until the next trip.

Cindy Mann.

Jenolan 2nd-3rd July 2005.

Saturday: Iain Lynch, John Bonwick, Paul McKendry, Andrew Kaar, Cindy Mann (Acting T/L).

The day had dawned cool and rainy, and after the recent heavy dump of rain we had abandoned our plan to do Spider, opting instead for a trip into Mammoth. We wanted to see the World of Mud area, and had planned to do it tomorrow in any case. Iain and I got a lift with John Bonwick and met Paul and Andrew outside the Guides Office shortly before 9:00. We caught up with Ted Mathews (who kindly invited us to a party at his place later that night) and Dave Rowling (brother of Jill).

At the hut, everyone unpacked, yarned, sorted gear, yarned some more, trogged up and finally got going. It was drizzling as we walked across the playing field, and the creek was flowing. We entered Mammoth at about 11:00.

The entrance passage was damp, but the Glassy Rock was still bone dry. We went via the Jughandle, Cold Hole, Horse-shoe Cavern and the Sugar Cubes, rigging the usual handline at the Skull and Crossbones. Shortly after we were in the Snakes Gut, which reminds me of Baby Snake in Bungonia, except without the CO₂. This time I remembered to stay high through the passage avoiding the awkwardness of having to swear my way out of this otherwise grunty little swine!

We continued on to a section called the Voice Connection, and John told us the story of its discovery. From there it was a few meters of belly work to where the permanent traces are attached to the wall, where we rigged a ladder for the approximately 3.5m pitch. The bottom of this is officially the World of Mud. There was certainly no shortage of the stuff, most of it having been carved out by flowing water into an array of criss-cross patterns. From there we followed John to the first of a series of fixed handlines leading up to (eventually) Tom's Kitchen. At the top of the second of these was a pretty expanse of almost arctic-blue flowstone called the Blue Lady. Then it was onto Mammoth's version of Hairy Traverse, a couple more handlines and a series of boulders from which we emerged into Tom's Kitchen.

We stopped here for a leisurely lunch, and John told everyone about Tom Hayler, the SSS guy who boils a billy of tea for the gang whenever he comes on this trip. Sadly, we had not invited him – an oversight which will have to be remedied on future trips. As usual, I was the first person to chill down, and at about 2:30 we moved on. Moving ever upward we came to an area with some small patches of what appeared to be aragonite on the walls, and we did some photography here. Directly after this we grunted our way up the flattener which leads to the "Wall of Death". I think Andrew had been looking forward to this, and was quite let-down when he saw it. John rigged a belay on the cordelette (which is still in very good condition), ascended very gingerly and then rigged the ladder for the rest of us. The wall is aptly named, as it consists of a loose amalgamation of rocky infill deposited during past flood events.

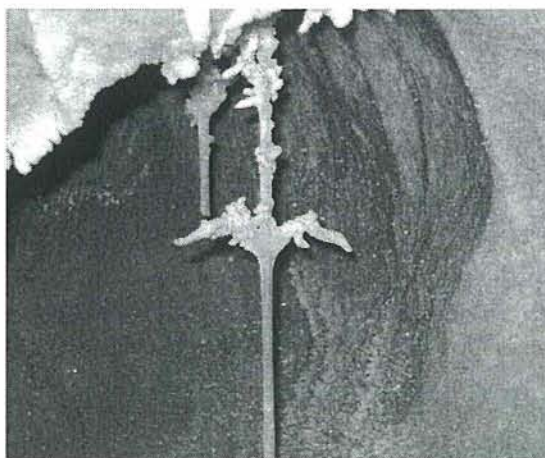
Once up, we poked around and headed past the turn-off to the infamous Cadbury Patch, which definitely sounded worth missing. Eventually, moving slightly uphill we came to a second cordelette route which leads up to Death By Aragonite. However, we couldn't visit either that or the Aragonite Snowfield on this visit, as we'd have needed another ladder.

We retraced our route, exiting the cave by 6:30, having had a very enjoyable time and having learned a lot from John about an area of Mammoth unfamiliar to BMSC members. But it wasn't over yet! We cleaned up and headed over to Ted's, (mostly empty-handed, it has to be said) and had a great night catching up with various friends from Jenolan and viewing his Chevalier slide show.

Cindy Mann, Iain Lynch

7 Hours – All members

Sunday: Iain Lynch, John Bonwick, Paul McKendry, Andrew Kaar, Cindy Mann (Acting T/L), Rick Brett, Phil Niciak.



The famed Nazghul in Malongulli



STOMP! Yarrawiggah.



Rick, Kylie, Iain, Mitch and Timmy in Yarrawiggah



Cavemen at Jenolan. A particularly primitive species...

Rick and Phil arrived shortly before 9:00, and by 11:00 we were once again outside Mammoth with the idea of a tourist trip to Wilson's Rift, Lower River and Oolite. We made our way down to Horseshoe Cavern, which was wetter than our previous recent visits. Paul led from here to near the Railway Tunnels area. The flattener leading to Wilson's Rift is the second hole in the wall on the left-hand side, and is more-or-less opposite the Skull and Crossbones, with a wall in between these areas.

We ascended Wilson's Rift, and spent quite a while photographing the magnificent shawls that decorate this chamber. Iain went exploring the opposite rather exposed slope. By 1:00 we were back down. At this point John decided he just couldn't wait for lunch, and went back to Horseshoe Cavern, while the rest of us explored around the Railway Tunnels and the area in the vicinity of Naked Lady chamber before returning to Horseshoe Cavern. We ate lunch, which I had to end after I started to chill down. But not before John had told us the classic story of the exploding car at Bungonia. Very, very funny!

We headed back to the bottom of the Jug Handle and headed on to Lower River. The volume and flow of the river had really picked up since my last visit a couple of months ago. Iain and Andrew made their way downstream while the rest of us wished we could climb like that. After a short break it was up to Oolite. The climb up was actually running a small stream of water. Those who hadn't seen this chamber were suitably impressed, and happily snapped away.

By now it was time to get going, as we still had the clean-up in front of us. We made a quick return journey and exited the cave shortly after 4:30, having spent a very enjoyable 5 1/2 hours in Mammoth.

Thanks, John, for sharing with us your knowledge of this great cave system!

Cindy Mann.

Jenolan 24th – 25th September 2005.

Present: Iain Lynch (T/L), Colin Tyrell, Sam Liao, Cindy Mann. Sunday only: Phil Niciak & Paul McKendry.

Saturday: Mammoth

Sam, Colin and I travelled out together, arriving at Jenolan about 8:30. After chatting to Ted Mathews for a while we met Iain and headed up to the hut. Sam, who is doing a Masters in biotechnology had joined us. He and I were taking soil samples to do some preliminary investigation of the culturable microbial populations in cave and aboveground soils. Luckily for us, permission to take the samples came through late in the previous week. The group also hoped to take another look at the fascinating World of Mud area.

We sorted our gear and walked to Mammoth from the hut. Arriving there we were horrified to see the damage wrought by feral pigs. It was very recent, and certainly this level of devastation wasn't seen on our July visit.

The party consisted of Iain, Colin, Sam and I. We entered Mammoth at 11:00 and headed down towards the Skull and Crossbones, detouring on the way to the bottom of Wilson's Rift, where Sam took a couple of soil samples. I realised I'd gone too far when I got to the survey tag, but I eventually found it. The start of the climb-up is right beside a pretty flowstone area. Continuing on to Skull and Crossbones, I rigged a short handline at the top and down we went. I wondered how Sam might find the Sugar Cubes, this being his first underground experience, but they (and indeed everything else), were no problem for him.

We continued through the keyhole and Sam and I headed off for a look at the area above Central River. From the keyhole, continue directly down a shaft at your right foot, for 10' or so. A rope comes in handy here. At the bottom we followed the phreatic tube lined with largish, well rounded rocks, exiting through a V-shaped arch, then you find yourself at the top of the slot that leads down towards Central River. I first showed Sam the nearby mudslide, then we headed down the slot (no handline is needed). We left our packs at the top to make our return easier. It was still pretty dry down there – hardly surprising as the drought hasn't broken yet. Sam took a soil sample and we headed back up.

We went along the passage and eventually came to the rope which the guides use for the adventure tours. It leads to somewhere up near the Mud Tunnels from which you can access the Railway Tunnels. About now Colin mentioned he wasn't feeling well, so we decided to leave World of Mud for another trip. He headed up, and he exited the cave, to be sick in peace and quiet. The rest of us left him to suffer alone while I did a lightning trip to the Mammoth Squeeze – which I did in a hurry – an absolute breeze without the pack – but the guys declined. We surfaced a little after 4:30, having spent about 5.5 hours under.

Had a very pleasant stroll back to the hut – Sam had really enjoyed himself and showed an enviable level of natural ability. Colin couldn't stay, so that left Sam, Iain and I. So we headed to the bar at Caves House for some

well-earned liquid gold and the usual post-caving chat.

Sunday: Wiburds

Woke around 6:00 and took my cuppa for a stroll up the hill and just enjoyed the peace and solitude. Not for long though – the guys were up shortly afterwards and we decided to walk to the Southern Limestone to try and find a hole Iain wanted to explore 15 years ago, on the Lucas side, above Blue lake. We searched around the top of the bluff, but there's a lot of bluff to look at though. Possibly Troy Magennis or Dave Noble might remember the location. But for now, Iain was forced to console himself with an unprotected climb to the top of a nasty spike of rock. My palms got sweaty just watching him.

We headed back to the hut by 9. Phil and Paul were there, and eager to blast off. We were a little weary, and a little less eager, but they prodded us into action.

We walked north through McKeown's valley, aghast at the pig-wrought damage. Paul, as usual, was a fund of knowledge about the local flora and fauna, whether it's weeds, ferals or natives. We got to Wiburds, entering J-92 at about 12:20. It's an easy entrance, dropping down fast to what must be the Lake Chamber. I tried to locate the Marble Sewers and couldn't, but we had a great time anyway.

Phil wormed his way along a squeeze to a smallish chamber. We noted it's terminus seemed to go, but to have been deliberately blocked. Removing a few of the rocks, we saw it went back into the entrance chamber. A mystery.

We made our way out through J-92 after 3-and-a-bit hours. The threatened rain had held off so we had an enjoyable walk back to the hut. On the way Sam, to his unbounded delight, found a kangaroo skull, which he souvenired to adorn his room at Uni, and I have a sneaking suspicion it may have been the greatest thrill of his weekend, and possibly of his entire time in Australia...

We cleaned up, packed up, dropped off the trip report and headed back to another week of the grindstone – another week of No Caving.

Cindy Mann

Yarrangobilly 30th September – 3rd October 2005.

Cavers: Iain Lynch (T/L), Phil Niciak, Paul McKendry, Mike Materazzo Cindy Mann.
Others present: Cheryl Lynch and kids (Mitch, Angel and Tom).

Friday

I caught a free ride down with Mike, but paid dearly for it in terms of having to listen to the de-brief of his recent *fabulous* diving trip to Nuie. And his diving trip to Samoa. And the one in Truk Lagoon...Hard to take for this once-a-year-at-Jervis-Bloody-Bay diver...Now I remember why I hate him. On the way, we ran into Shane and Alli in a servo. They had the temerity to be going kayaking instead of joining their fellow BMSC-ers...We got to Cotterill's late, and promptly crashed.

Saturday: Janus

Up early after a cool night, (very glad I'd taken Phil's advice and brought 2 sleeping bags), and headed off for Janus. We started the walk from the cars at about 9:00, and it was already warm. Surprisingly, this area does not seem too overgrown with all manner of thorn bushes. A quick bite, and we trogged up and headed into Y-58. It was now 10:30. Because we'd forgotten the cave map, we stuffed around for nearly 2h trying to sort out the way on.

Janus turned out to be an easy cave. Two short ladder pitches (about 10 and 15 feet), but the first one can be awkward if you don't keep the trace aligned with the groove in the rock. I think the limestone in this cave is quite a bit softer than elsewhere. Moving through, the cave gets really pretty. We spent 2 hours snapping away (with the cameras, that is).

We continued on to the detrog area that leads to the famed Rawlinson's Chamber. Wow! I changed into several layers of clean thermals and flowstone shoes but the guys were mostly in undies and clean shirts, with bare feet

(silly buggers), and for once I was warmer than everyone else. Another orgy of photography, then back through the detrog and a leisurely stroll back out. Too leisurely as it turned out – It was 6:40 and almost dark by the time we exited. So the walk out, in the dark, though mostly trackless undergrowth wasn't as enjoyable as the cruisy walk in had been. Iain's infallible direction got us through without complications.

Back at the cottage, we decided to head for the thermal pool. It was a beautiful dark, starry night, and the pool area is beautiful, the water is 27°C and no-one was cold except me, so I piked and got out early, confirming my reputation as a wuss beyond all doubt.

We stayed up late, enjoying the comfort of a fire, and hit the sack around midnight.

Sunday: The Eagles Nest

This turned out to be our best day. We woke early and were eager to get going – except for Mike who opted to go with Cheryl and the kids to Adaminaby. We parked near the second cutting, set off down the track (such as it was), and got to the Y2 entrance of Eagles Nest an hour later. It was pretty hot, and snakes were out in force – I almost trod on a brown.

Just before Y2 we passed Y1, in a huge doline. We descended Y2 at 10:15, and this time we took the map. There was an absolutely thunderous waterfall near the very tight entrance, which could be viewed on the way down, and the cave was wetter and colder than Janus, but it wasn't freezing.

Unlike Janus there was very pretty stuff all through this cave. This meant frequent, longish stops for photos. And it was an easy cave, or at least the parts we did were. Most spectacular were some lovely ribbon shawls in the early chambers. Then we went through the passageway under the Bloody Big Chock-stone (not pretty – just enormous) and onto the Crystal Pool. This was stupendously beautiful: A calcite-lined basin a couple of meters across and maybe a meter deep, full of arctic-blue water, under an actively dripping ceiling. Right beside it ran a dry, crystalline stream-bed, full of tiny rim-pools.

There were also the Railway Tunnels, with a very jagged, unusual roof, and the magnificent Red Crystal Room which Iain and I visited separately. This cave was even better than Janus, and on a par with Chevalier. No doubt we'll be back to do the rest of it next year.

We were getting tired, even though we'd only done 4.5 h, but we were only a third or so of the way through the cave. So we left the cave and dragged ourselves back up the spur in the heat. Back at the hut, after a meal, everyone except me opted for another dip. It was cooling down fast outside. I collected kindling (not easy to find any, either!) and had the fire going when they got back, cold and tired. The non-cavers had had a great time having snowfights at Adaminaby, by all accounts. Another late-ish night and then (blissfully), we hit the mattresses, except for Phil and Paul who drove home in the dark.

Monday

We slept late. Iain and co packed up quickly and left, and Mike and I did a short bushwalk and dropped of the key to the guides office before heading off feeling we'd really got our money's worth from this trip.

Cindy Mann.

Cliefden 29th-30th October 2005

Present: Iain Lynch (T/L) and Mitchell, Rick, Anne-Marie, Naomi and Lily Brett, Kylie and Michelle Coleborn, Paul, Donna Tom, Daniel and Ellen McKendry, Cindy and Timmy Mann.

Saturday: Yarrowiggah

(Iain, Rick, Kylie, Mitchell, Tim, Cindy).

Tim and I arrived at the hut at 9:30 under a very hot Cliefden sky. We trogged up and the caving team for the day, (Rick, Iain, Mitchell, Kylie, Tim and I) drove out to the river. I decided not to attempt driving the Suby across. We headed for one of our favourite caves, and after 5 or 6 years, it was great to be back!

The entrance to Yarrowiggah is buried – much like the entrance to Malongulli. The way in is straight down till you find the sporty little rift – a tube of a few body-lengths, on a 45° incline going up. Of course Mitch and Tim blitzed up here, giggling at the efforts of us big, clumsy adults who took somewhat longer...At the top we fol-

lowed the larger exit into a roomy chamber, with a climb-up and a walk through to the main chamber.

Iain had decided to try the abseil entrance, which leads into the main chamber, so we waited for his boots to appear dangling from the hole in the ceiling, but it was a no-show. Apparently it was just too tight and he pulled out after having gone as far as he could, and followed the path we'd taken.

Next was down a chimney, for which Rick rigged a handline for the boys. Once down this we were into fairyland and the cameras took a hammering. This section is very beautiful, but was much drier than the last time we'd been, several years ago. As always, the cave was quite warm – perhaps about 19 or 20°C. It was very gratifying to see the boys taking great care not to touch decorations or to do anything that might cause damage. They were as appreciative of the beauty and uniqueness of the caves as the adults.

We exited after 4.5h and walked upstream a little to do Trapdoor. I'd almost stepped on a snake on the way into Yarrowiggah, so we were watching out for more, but didn't see any. The entrance to Trapdoor was horribly overgrown and we'd have needed a machete to clear away the nettles. A sheet of corrugated iron had been placed across the entrance and not disturbed for some time, by the look of the weeds that had recruited around it. We'd have needed to dig it out with a shovel to get access to the cave, so we decided to come back and try it tomorrow.

We cleaned up with a dip in the creek (and took the opportunity to let the creek clean some gear for us, too, which it did very well). Then it was back to the camp for a very pleasant evening. By now the McKendry's had arrived, although young Tom had hurt his knee, so caving was doubtful for him. Timmy and I slept in the Suby and it was surprisingly comfortable.

Cindy Mann

Sunday: Taplow

Rick, Mitchell, Michelle, Daniel, Donna, Ellen, Iain,

Tim and Cindy opted to leave to keep the party size legal and the rest of the crew opted to continue caving. Today it was Taplow.

Rick drove Ellen and Naomi as close as he could to the river so the girls wouldn't have such a hard time of it. The rest of us enjoyed a walk through the long grassy paddocks to the river. Getting to the cave was extremely eventful with Michelle taking an unplanned plunge in the chilly waters of the Belabula River! When Rick finally arrived we had been scouring the place for quite a while looking for the cave entrance, with no luck. Michelle, realising the river crossing could be tricky went back with a few of the crew to help the younger girls and Rick cross the river. They were fine but Michelle wasn't having a good day. A branch she was holding to help her over the fence, broke, leaving her sitting on a freshly deposited, warm, moist cow pad!!!!!! So...back to the river for another wash!!

We finally found the cave entrance with Ian and Rick leading the way. The children enjoyed crawling their way through the snaking tunnel system of Taplow. Rick tried testing their skills for finding their way back, and they met the challenge reasonably well.

The trip home was uneventful, with Michelle on her best behaviour.

Donna McKendry

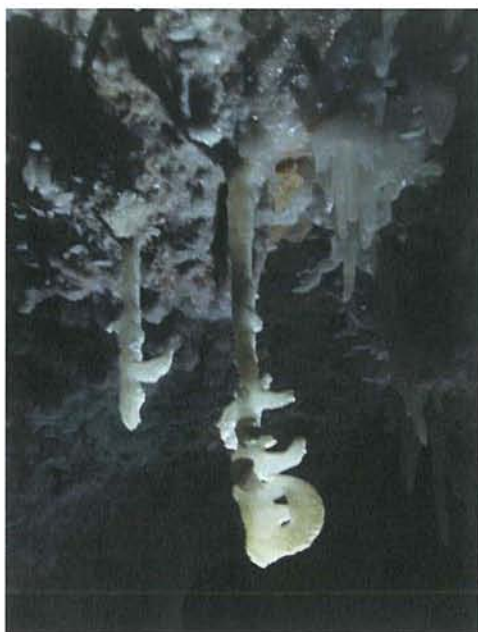


Naomi, Donna, Ellen and Michelle descending Taplow

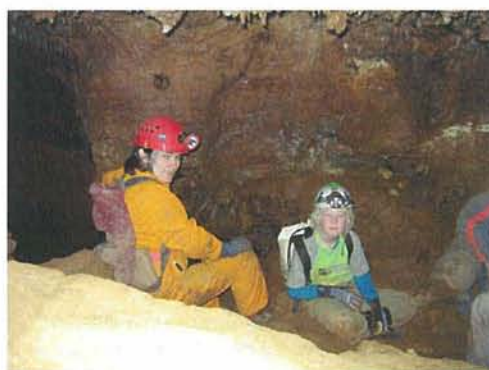


Naomi, Ellen, Daniel and Mitch

Trip Report



Intriguing... Yarrowiggah.



Partners in Crime - Jenny Whitby, of ISS
and Tim, in Malongulli.
Below, detrog in Janus, Yagby.



Pool in Eagles Nest,
Yarrangobilly



Rawlinson's, Janus.

Cave Name: Colong

Date: May 21-22 2005

Cave No:

Trip Leader: Iain Lynch

Members Participating

Iain Lynch (6) hours

Shane Anderson (6) hours

Alison Anderson (6) hours

Colin Tyrrell (6) hours

Paul McKendry (6) hours

Cindy Mann (6) hours

Gear Needed

None but 6-10 metre handline recommended for rift climb in case of difficulties

Coordinates / Map Reference: N/A

Flora/Fauna Sighted: None noted

Training Skills Displayed: N/A

Report:

Following our trip last October, we were to return this week to finish what we had started and complete our journey to Woofs Cavern. It was an adults only trip – no this does not mean any R rated activities, but as we found last time, the rift climb posed a bit of difficulty for children. So in order to maximise our chances of getting to Woofs Cavern, it was adults only. We all arrived at Batsh Camp on Friday, ready for a solid day of caving (and walking) tomorrow.

The night was clear and cold, so the start in the morning was a bit slow. Nonetheless, we were on our way fairly early. The trip down Acetylene Spur was a little easier this time. On reaching the cave, we again checked out the formations in the arch and the camping cave. We then trogged up and entered the cave via the upper entrance. I had not brought the map this time, but we found our way to Kings Cross in next to no time, and soon we reached the rock pile chamber. At this point we checked out both passages leading towards the rift. The tight squeeze at the iron bars proved too tight for some, so we all headed up the flowstone climb, over the gate and into the rift climb.

The climb proved challenging for some, but with some grunting and groaning, we were soon across, and heading further into the cave. It did not take too long before we reached a little rocky chamber, where we rested a while. Colin and Paul waited whilst the rest of us checked out the passage that dropped out of the chamber. To our delight, we did not have to go too far before coming across the climb into Woofs Cavern.

Cindy, Shane, Alison and I took a while to review the wonders of Woofs Cavern, particularly the beautiful little stream of water flowing through the boulders, over the flow stone and small rim pools. Another little piece of magic that makes all the effort worthwhile.

Time was getting on, so we returned to Paul and Colin, who were content to head out. It took a little while and a bit of trepidation at the rift climb, but we found our way out with little effort and were soon back to Kings Cross. Shane, Alison and Colin headed out to the upper entrance. Meanwhile, I led Paul and Cindy towards the lower entrance. With no map, and never being here before, it was all new to me. But the challenge of finding my way through this unknown maze was too exciting to give up. So on I pushed, with the others lagging a little behind. It did not take long before I found daylight. I waited for the others and we three emerged out of the lower entrance. Well of course, we then had to trog back up the hill to the upper entrance, where we changed and started the return trek back to Batsh Camp.

Once back at camp, we finished packing and headed home.

Time Factors: 1 to 1.5 hour walk from camp to caves, bit longer return

5 to 10 hours in cave, depending on amount of exploring

Safety Factors: Care around rock pile chamber (nothing unusual)

Tricky climb through rift (nothing unusual)

Iain Lynch

Trip Report

Cave Name: Main

Cave No: CL01

Venue: Cliefden

Date: 20 August 2005

Trip Leader: Iain Lynch

Members Participating

Iain Lynch (3.5) hours
Angelique Lynch (3.5) hours
Paul McKendry (3.5) hours
Donna McKendry (2.5) hours
Thomas McKendry (2.5) hours

Colin Tyrrell (3.5) hours
Laura Niciak (3.5) hours
Phil Niciak (3.5) hours
Ellen McKendry (2.5) hours
Daniel McKendry (2.5) hours

Gear Needed

None

Coordinates / Map Reference: N/A

Flora/Fauna Sighted: None noted

Training Skills Displayed: N/A

Report:

Various factors prevented a full weekend trip this weekend, which turned out just as well. The weather was miserably cold and wet, and the hut was in a bit of a sad state following a party for the property owners son a couple of weeks earlier. So, a quick day trip to Cliefden was planned. We all got out there at a reasonable time, got the key and headed down to main. A little longer walk in, as the rain made the ground slippery and the vehicles we head were not suited to paddocks.

Through the cold wind and rain we trudged down to the entrance to Main. Inside was warm and dry, and we were soon in the main chamber. I led the group around to the climb down leading to the dog tooth spar. A lucky few headed down including Phil, Donna, Laura, Angelique and myself. Always amazing!!

We returned to the main chamber to find that Donna had taken Thomas and Ellen out already. Paul waited with Angelique and Daniel in the main chamber, whilst the rest of us ducked down to the Laurel Room. It was beautiful as always and many photos were taken. We climbed to the top of the chamber and down to look into the sump, which was dry. After enjoying our surrounds for a while, we return to the main chamber, collected Paul, Angel and Daniel and headed out. We cleaned up, returned the key and headed on our way home.

Time Factors: None

Safety Factors: Care down through entrance chamber – some loose rocks

Iain Lynch



Mike, left, and Colin, Field Day Sep 05.

Trip Report

Cave Name: Janus
Cave No: Y15
Venue: Yarrangobilly

Date: October 2005
Trip Leader: Iain Lynch

Members Participating

Iain Lynch (7 ½) hours
Paul McKendry (7 ½) hours
Cindy Mann (7 ½) hours

Phil Niciak (7 ½) hours
Michael Materazzo (7 ½) hours

Gear Needed

(In order of use from entrance)

20 foot ladder

20 metre handline

30 foot ladder – possibly two 30 foot ladders or 50 meter rope for SRT / belay

Coordinates / Map Reference: N/A

Flora/Fauna Sighted: None specific

Training Skills Displayed: N/A

Report:

It had been several years since I had been into Janus, and as I had not led the trip, I did not have a good memory of getting to the cave. However, with a check of the map at the hut, and a recollection of the small gully near the cave, we successfully located the cave without taking a backward step. Good start so far.

We arrived at the cave entrance about 10.00 am and took a while to get sorted at the cave entrance, but were soon on our way. We climbed down from the entrance and soon reached the floor at the gate. A bit of jiggling and we managed to open the lock, leaving it aside to replace with a new lock, as requested by the guides from the NPWS. Paul and I rigged the 20 foot pitch with a 30 foot ladder fixed to a sling around the gate posts. The angle of the top of the pitch makes this climb a little tricky, as the ladder does not hang straight. However, we all descended as well as handling the multitude of packs.

We explored the small chamber before climbing up the steep mud slope which led up to the rockpile chamber. Here we encountered some difficulty in finding the way on. Despite going the correct way the first time, it took me nearly an hour before I realised this was the way on – up the steep wall – handline optional but recommended for the down climb on the way out. Up the top of this tricky climb, we popped through into a large chamber with a huge rift falling away to our left. A break in the rock at the top of the rift led us to a climb down into a canyon, before emerging further down the rift. A small climb down where the rift narrows, led to the top of a 20 foot pitch. At this point we rigged the ladder, and belay rope. A 60 foot ladder could be rigged higher in the rift above the short climb, or a 50 metre rope could be rigged from the top of the rift.

We clambered down the ladder pitch and found our way on towards the detrog point. Off with the dirty clothes and boots, we carefully wend our way through the narrow water course, before climbing up through the rockpile and down again into the main chamber. The next hour or so was spent exploring the extent of the marked tracks and snapping of numerous photographs. Some beautiful formations, pure white flowstone, pretty shawls, long clear straws, and rimstone pools. When the pain of cold feet on sharp rock told those of us without shoes it was time to head back out, and we proceeded that way, stopping to shoot a few more photographs on the way. We were also mindful of the time as the afternoon was getting on, and I did not look forward to finding our way through the bush in the dark.

It took a while longer than I'd hoped to get out, and after refitting the gate with a new lock, we emerged from the cave on dusk about 5.30pm. We packed up quickly, but it was too late and we were soon trudging through the bush in the dark. Down the small gully and skirting the spur around to one of the creeks, I was delighted with my judgement as I walked straight to the large log crossing the creek. Once across the creek we headed up the dry gully in the general direction of East Deep Creek Y4. On the way in I had heard the distinctive flow of water in the creeks on both sides of the spur, flowing well as result of the recent rains and snow melt. Using this as a guide I walked up hill away from the creek crossing until I could hear the creek again on both sides. At this

point we headed straight up the spur and soon found the indistinct track that led back to cars, back up at the highway. The bush is regenerating well over the track now that it is gated up near the highway.

Back at the cars, we detoggled, headed back to Cotterill's Cottage, picked up the others and headed down to the thermal pool for a refreshing dip on a very dark night – eerie and exhilarating!

Another beautiful day!

Time Factors: 30 minutes to 1 hour walk from highway to cave, bit longer return
7 hours plus in cave, depending on amount of exploring

Safety Factors: Care around climbs and abseils/ladder pitches

Iain Lynch

Diversity of Cave Microbes at Jenolan.

BMSC has commenced a joint project with University of Western Sydney looking at the diversity of cave microbes (bacteria and fungi) in caves at Jenolan. The study involves taking small soil samples from various sites within the caves and above-ground and culturing the microbes present to get an idea of the relative biodiversity within and between caves, and compare the results with sites outside the caves. Permission to sample cave soils was kindly granted by the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust in September 2005. Sam Liao, a Master's student at UWS is conducting the lab work and is being supervised by Dr. Paul Peiris and myself. As Sam is studying biotechnology, he's also looking at bioactivity profiles from these and many other bacteria that he's isolated.

Why are we interested in microbial populations in caves? Because cave environments are unique, and are often very different to the outside environment, even though they are spatially very close. Many cave environments are also very stable, because they are not exposed to weather events and animal traffic - a factor which favours the succession of particular kinds of microbes. Cave soils are also generally low in organic matter and high in calcium, which is why we find a particular type of bacteria, the Actinomycetes, present in high numbers. SO: Does all this mean that the types of microbes present in cave soils differ much from their neighbours on the surface? Stay tuned...

This is a preliminary study, in which we are looking only at the types of bacteria which can be cultured in the laboratory. It is a fact that most bacteria present in the environment actually can't be cultured, and to study the biodiversity in an absolute way, it is necessary to extract the microbial DNA from the soil for "molecular fingerprinting" – a very expensive process, and one beyond our means. The current work will still give us a good indication of the types of bacteria present in cave environments, which all adds to the knowledge we have of cave ecology. Although invisible, microbes are certainly numerically significant, and the presence of certain types can tell us something about the caves. So now when you see me taking the occasional teaspoonful of cave soil on the Jenolan trips, you'll know why!

Cindy Mann



Sam Liao, sampling
in Wiburds.

Safety Note – Harness Hang Syndrome.

For those in our club new to caving and SRT, here are a few facts worth knowing about a potentially serious trap for new players...Harness Hang Syndrome (HHS), also known as Suspension Trauma. No matter how comfy that rig may feel when you're trying it for those first couple of minutes, if you get stuck things can quickly go pear-shaped. And no matter how much you paid for your harness, you can still get HHS.

The first reports of HHS emerged from France. In 1978, Dr Maurice Amphoux, was researching the industrial safety of harnesses and found that healthy volunteers rapidly lost consciousness simply from hanging immobile in a harness, in one case after only three and a half minutes. But it wasn't until 1984, after doing some tests of

their own, that the French caving community took his results seriously. The Medical Commission of the French Federation of Speleology (FFS) had volunteers hang in their frog systems (no pun intended), and noted that these volunteers also quickly succumbed. Loss of consciousness occurred sooner if the head was unsupported and was delayed somewhat if the subject squirmed. The key to HHS is immobility. If you keep moving about, even if you're otherwise stuck, you will stave off HHS.

The symptoms of HHS start with feeling ill or faint, pallor, increased heart rate and blood pressure, hot flashes, sweating, nausea, dizziness, breathlessness and arrhythmia. This all happens quite quickly, and, just to complicate matters, the mental acuity of the poor slob in the harness declines apace as HHS sets relentlessly in. Loss of consciousness follows in about 6 to 10 minutes. And death will follow in minutes if the subject is not released.

It is easy to see how this could happen in a caving situation, especially when fatigue, dehydration, injury or even cold are present. In the case of an accident, an unconscious caver is particularly at risk, and any rescue must be performed without delay. For safety reasons if you are tired, chilled or dehydrated you should recover before attempting to prusik. You should also have had your prusik skills ticked off by the safety officer at a training session – otherwise use a ladder. Follow club safety procedures! Meanwhile, if you want to learn more about the potential hazards of prusiking, the references below are very worthwhile

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Lightning Safety and Caving.

We all know the dangers of hanging around in cave entrances during lightning strikes, and the hazards posed by conductors such as ladders, metal gates, hanging wet ropes and water. However, you might reasonably imagine that if you were caving well underground you'd be safe from lightning. Perhaps not always so! Author John Gookin of the US National Cave Rescue Commission cites a case where cavers as far as a mile underground were shocked by lightning, with the effect apparently greater for those standing in a streamway. Generally the intensity and danger are far greater for cavers near the entrances.

So why is lightning a consideration near caves? At the risk of over-simplifying, the basic mechanics are as follows: The air that caves exhale can be highly conductive. (Rob tells me this may have something to do with cave dust – since dust particles which emanate from caves are colloidal, and fine colloidal particles are always electrically charged). As a storm approaches, the barometric pressure drops, increasing this exhalation (i.e. sucking the air out of the cave). One possibility is that the ionised air around caves helps attract lightning, especially to caves that breathe a lot, although ionisation at ground level happens anyway at the onset of a storm. Plumes of positively-charged ions form on the ground. They attract downward-reaching negatively-charged streamers from storm clouds and these form a conduit for lightning. Perhaps the fact that caves are often pretty damp places also plays a part. And active streamways are very good conduits, especially in areas which may be otherwise well drained.

It is a fact that some caves are struck more often than others. The phenomenon may be related to moisture in cave exhalations, who knows. There's documented lightning strike data for caves in the U.S. but none, to my knowledge, for Oz. There are a lot of unanswered questions about caves and lightning but, you'll be pleased to know, the relentless Search Goes On!! (I'll keep you posted but don't hold your breath).

So: You're about to exit a cave, you're just a short ladder climb or prusik up to the (gated) entrance and you realise there's a storm on the flip side of the cave's roof. Whaddayagunna do?? The experts, as always, disagree. Apart from the obvious steps of avoiding metal and wet ropes, it's probably best to retreat further into the cave and wait it out. Keep out of water. But remember, you're much more likely to get struck walking to and from the caves.

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Cindy Mann

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