



FUSSI Newsletter

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SPELEOTHEMS IN HIDDEN CAVE, RAPID BAY, S.A.

THE COMMITTEE 2016

PRESIDENT

Heiko Maurer
fussi@fussi.org.au

SAFETY OFFICER

Clare Buswell
fussi@fussi.org.au

EQUIPMENT OFFICER

Tania Wilson
fussi@fussi.org.au

ASF REPS

Aimee Leong
fussi@fussi.org.au
Thomas Varga
fussi@fussi.org.au

TREASURER

Thomas Varga
fussi@fussi.org.au

PUBLIC OFFICER

Clare Buswell
fussi@fussi.org.au

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Neville Skinner
fussi@fussi.org.au

FOR ALL TRIP ENQUIRIES

Aimee Leong
fussi@fussi.org.au

SECRETARY & fundraising

Aimee Leong
fussi@fussi.org.au

LIBRARIAN

Edwina Virgo
fussi@fussi.org.au

WEBSITE

Thomas Varga
Heiko Maurer
fussi@fussi.org.au

CONTENTS

A message from your Editor	p. 3
Past trips	p. 3
Lower South East Caves report by Neville Skinner	p. 4
Mt Gambier Trip Report by Jade White	p. 14
Returning To Yarrangobilly by Clare Buswell, Tim Featonby & Ken Smith	p. 16
A Chance Meeting by Clare Buswell	p. 21
Rapid Bay Caves Trip Report by Neville Skinner	p. 23
New & Titbits	p. 31
FUSSI Membership form 2016	p. 32
Future Trips programme	p. 33

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Web address: www.FUSSI.org.au

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/149385231791386>

All correspondence to:

Flinders Uni Speleological Society Inc.,
C/- Flinders One
Alan Mitchell Sports Building
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide, SA 5001.

Email address: fussi@fussi.org.au

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A message from your Editor:

The year started well, with a trip to the Lower South East for myself and Deborah Johnston from SUSS. This was followed by a Wet'n'Wild weekend trip to the Lower South East, run by Thomas, and shortly after, the annual pilgrimage to Yarrangabilly, in the Snowy Mountains (aka the High Country).

March saw another joint trip between FUSSI & FUUC (Flinders University Underwater Club) where we all jumped into boats and headed down the river looking for caves near the waters edge. The fact we did not find anything significant was really unimportant. It was the fun we had, including a gourmet BBQ lunch put on by Tom Szabo, and a very exciting and stimulating tow behind one of the boats in a small plastic floaty thing (I think it's called 'tubing') that really made the day.

If anyone would like to write a short article (just a few paragraphs) about any trip(s) they go on, we would like to print your story. Or if you just like taking photos and you would like to see them in print, let me know. This is your newsletter, so why not be a part of it?

PAST CLUB TRIPS

Thur 31st Dec – Sun 3rd Jan:

Wrecked Car Cave, Monbulla Cave, The Shaft sinkhole and Three Sisters cave (twice).

Participants: Neville Skinner (trip leader) and Deborah Johnston (SUSS).

Sat 23rd – Sun 24th Jan 2016, Wet'n'Wild Weekend:

Graveyard cave, Morgans cave, Considines cave and a snorkel in Ewens Ponds.

Participants: Thomas Varga (trip leader), Dee Trewartha, Jade White, Cassie, Ryan & Zac.

Sun 6th – 14th Feb 2016, Yarrangobilly Caves trip:

Eagles Nest system, Castle Cave, Jillebennan Cave, South Glory Hole, Coppermine Cave & North Deep Creek Cave.

Participants: Clare Buswell (trip leader), Heiko Maurer, Tim Featonby, Ken Smith and Thomas Varga

Sun 6th Mar 2016:

River Murray boat trip (in search of caves) & Punyelroo cave.

Participants: Clare Buswell (trip leader), Thomas Varga, Aimee Leong, Cate and Ken Smith, Neville Skinner and 10 other Flinders Uni students and members of Flinders Uni Underwater Club.

LOWER SOUTH-EAST CAVES TRIP REPORT

Thurs 31st Dec – Sun 3rd Jan

By Neville Skinner

Photos by Neville Skinner

Trip participants: Neville Skinner (FUSSI, CEGSA) and Deborah Johnston (SUSS).

On Sat 26th September 2015, whilst attending the Cave Divers Association (CDAA) AGM in Mt Gambier, I was approached by a fellow CDAA and SUSS member Deborah Johnston, who had travelled down from Sydney to give a presentation at the AGM on exploration diving and mapping in Jenolan Caves.

Deborah explained that she would be back in Mt Gambier sometime between Xmas Day and the New Year and wondered if I could arrange some caving at Naracoorte caves during that time. I eagerly said: "Yes, I'm sure I can find fellow cavers that would eagerly jump at the chance to go caving over the Xmas break."

It wasn't until December that Deborah emailed me to confirm the dates would be "from Dec 27 until about Jan 7th". After advertising the trip with CEGSA, FUSSI & the Scouts, I could only muster up 4 available cavers - Thomas, who was only available Tues 29th -Wed 30th Dec, Daniel who was only available Wed 30th Dec – Sat 2nd Jan, and Ian Lewis who was available Fri 1st – Sun 3rd Jan! I suspect this also may have had something to do with the two weeks of 40+ degree heat that we were encountering at the time, as well.

After several iterations and the need to organise the permits before Xmas, I settled on the following plan:

Tues 29th - Wed 30th Dec - Naracoorte caves – Sand Cave, Fox Cave & Blackberry cave if possible;

Thurs 31st Dec – Wrecked Car Cave & Monbulla Cave in the Penola area;

Fri 1st Jan - Gran Gran Cave & Mt Burr Cave in the Mt Burr area;

Sat 2nd Jan – Tindales & Three Sisters caves in the Glencoe area;

Sun 3rd Jan – Bakers cave (CDAA cave-dive) in the Bellum area.

This meant Thomas could join us for the first two days, when Daniel would arrive and take his place.

Clare started the process of arranging the permits, while I continued to try and convince the potential participants that it was always cooler in Mt Gambier. It wasn't long before Clare advised that Naracoorte caves would not be issuing permits for access to Sand Cave or Fox Cave because of the extreme heat and subsequent fire danger, and access to Blackberry Cave was also declined. At this point Thomas was forced to withdraw because these were his only available dates due to work commitments.

Then Dan pulled out, because he was concerned at the likelihood he might not get back home on time Sunday, to prepare for work the next day (it's an 12-hour drive from Mt Gambier to his place), and he wanted to spend the time with his family.

Thursday 31st December:

I was staying at my sister's place in Mt Gambier, so Deborah drove from the Kongorong Church where she was staying, to Engelbrechts Cave to meet me. We then moved her gear across to my Honda CRV, and left her Honda CRV under the shade of a tree before heading off to Forestry SA to see if any permits had been left in the receptacle for us. There wasn't, so we then headed off to the Lady Nelson Discovery Centre, where we were informed that things are done differently now – if I could produce an email from Forestry SA that showed the permits had been approved, they will provide us with keys. To assist, they offered use of a public PC with internet access, for this purpose. So I quickly logged onto to my ISP and pulled up the email that I knew was sitting in my mailbox. Once they sighted this, we were able to pick up the keys for Gran Gran cave, which we planned to visit the next morning.

Then we left for Penola. The temperature was to be around 39 degrees, so we were keen to get underground as quickly as possible.

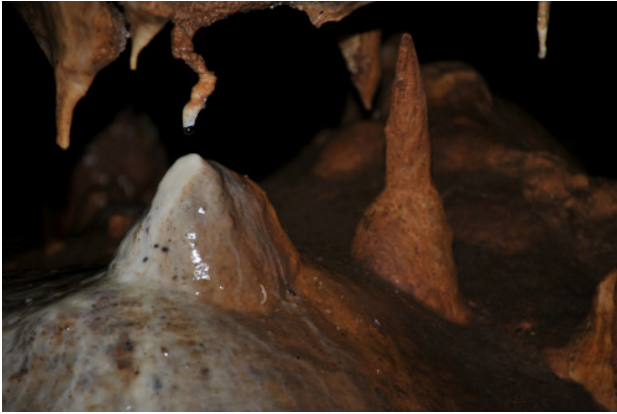
By the time we arrived at the property it was already hot, but at least we could park under the shade of trees. We did a quick tour of the area, locating half a dozen cave entrances, and because the two caves were adjacent to each other, we needed to spend about 10-15 mins determining which entrances we needed to enter. Having examined the maps for both caves, we decided to do the smaller cave first, with a limit of 3 hours to see it, then do the larger one that was likely to take longer and appeared on the map to be more interesting.

By the time we had geared up, we were already starting to dehydrate so we slowly headed to the entrance of our first cave, Wrecked Car cave. The entrance was a small collapse, and 3m diameter and 1-2m deep. Easy to access and once in the cave it was cool. To our surprise the cave was really interesting and very pretty in places.

The following images are but just a sample of the many that I took, and we found that 3 hours was not long enough to fully explore this cave.

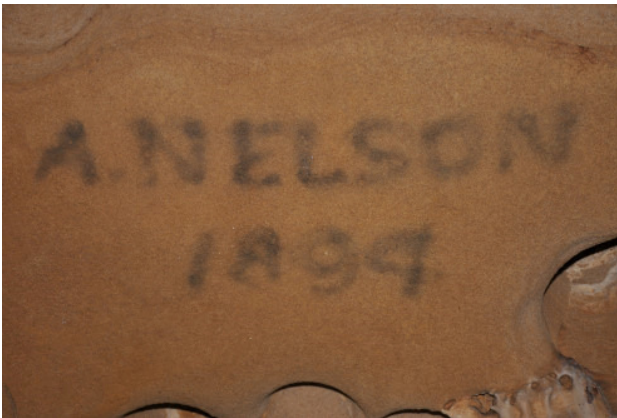


The feature on the left is made up of fine roots. Tree roots travel across the floor to seek a source of water. When they locate a small wet area, fed by constant drops from the ceiling, they produce fine hair roots that compete with other hair roots, growing upwards as they go. The result appears to be a hairy stalagmite, and feels just like a sponge.



In addition to the natural formations, the cave roof contained several hundred (I'm guessing) surnames with first initials of people that had visited in previous eras, and each name was accompanied date or year, all written in candle smoke. In many cases, people also provided the name of the place where they lived. These people were clearly proud of their achievement in getting so far into a cave, with only candles for lighting.

This contrasted dramatically with today, where people put meaningless tags, designed to hide their identity, in the caves and in many cases these are designed to cause the most impact to the environment.



A few of the names of the early settlers that visited Wrecked Car cave.

We very much enjoyed Wrecked Car cave, but had run out of time having only seen about half of it (maybe less?). The cave contains very few tunnels, and for the most part is one big low flattener, probably 200m long and about 20-30m wide, held up by a lot of sections of rock wall that give the appearance of many tunnels going in every direction.



Of course this did make it a little difficult to know which direction one should be heading in, and which areas one had visited and which direction the exit was in!

We never got to the other end of the cave; perhaps we only got half way before we turned and headed around the perimeter in an anti-clockwise direction. Even then it took an hour to get to the exit, with so much to see and so many names to look at on the way.

It wasn't that important, we had another cave to do and it was New Year's Eve. Deborah wanted to spend NYE with her partner, and I had a virus-infected computer at my sister's place to fix.

When we got to the exit, the extreme heat hit us again and we lost no time in getting to Monbulla Cave, where we sat inside the entrance and ate our lunches. In fact, where we had chosen to have our lunches was bordered by three corners, each with a separate entrance. One of these had a tree growing from the floor of the cave, up through the entrance and into the sky. At least that was how it appeared, looking up from the base of the tree.



One entrance had a tree growing from the floor of the cave

Once we had eaten our lunches, we ventured down one of the small tunnels that led off in a north-easterly direction. This brought us into a bat chamber, with iron mesh covering its overhead entrance. Given this was the only entrance that was covered, I am inclined to think this was to stop people or animals from accidentally falling in



The bat chamber, which was the nicest of all of the chambers we saw

Leaving the bat chamber we ventured down another tunnel that led us back to where we started. This time we tried another tunnel and it took us into a different chamber, but the results were the same. Each tunnel reminded me of Corra Lynn, having the same rough gravelly texture that tested the knees.

Deborah had mentioned a smaller tunnel that headed in a southerly direction, so while she looked in there, I tried another tunnel that didn't seem to lead anywhere either. When I returned, Deborah was nowhere to be seen, so I headed down the southerly tunnel to see if she had found anything. First thing I noticed was that it started to bend around to a westerly direction, before entering a wide very low flattener. This was a wet area with active stalactites, and the further I went, the tighter it was getting. I had a choice of leaving the camera behind and continuing, or returning. The area I was in was now only about 300mm high and looked like it was getting lower. I looked for evidence that Deborah had come this way, but could not see any. So rather than push on, I aborted and headed back to the entrance to see if Deborah was there. She was, and she had been wondering where I had got to and why I had taken so long. After explaining what I had seen, we both agreed that we should take a closer look at the walls of a couple of the entrance chambers where Deborah had observed signatures scratched into the walls, before leaving.



The old graffiti located on the walls of the entrance chambers

I was disappointed that we had cut short our exploration of Wrecked Car cave to do Monbulla cave, but you don't know if you don't look. For the most part, that area of Monbulla we had seen was really just the entrance section, made up of 6-7 entrance chambers linked to each other by tunnels. The last tunnel I took must have been the only way into the main section, so until next time I will never know what we missed out on.

I was very glad we had gone there though, as Wrecked Car cave will remain on my list of favourite caves.

We arrived back at Engelbrechts Cave, and returned Deborah's gear to her vehicle. As I was about to leave, Deborah called out her car wouldn't start. I checked and it appeared the battery had failed. I ran my vehicle up and then found I had not relocated my jump leads into the CRV. I was about to race off and borrow a set from someone when Deborah remembered Dean had bought a new set for her car just before they left for Mt Gambier. Once connected, her car started okay and Deborah was off to her NYE party.

And I was off to a very late night working on a computer that was no longer useable because it was running so slow after having been taken over by computer viruses. I started by removing the existing up-to-date Kaspersky anti-viral software that I believed was part of the problem, along with several unused and possibly questionable applications. I bought my sister a copy of Vipre Internet Security 2016 over the web, installed it on the machine and started a full scan of all files on the computer, before falling into bed exhausted. It was now after 1am.

Friday 1st January 2016:

Having arranged to meet Deborah at Kongorong at 10am, gave me a chance to sleep in. A quick check of the computer showed the Vipre scan was still running, because of its poor performance. Patience required. I had breakfast, made sandwiches for lunch, had a cup of tea with my sister, and then headed off. The weather had changed dramatically, with a cool change arriving overnight that dropped the max temperature to 25 degrees; at least 13 degrees cooler than Adelaide!

Deborah was up and I had a chance to meet her partner Dean, who wanted photos of me with Deborah to send to his uncle Jim, who was actually a very good mate of mine that I had worked with in Townsville forty years ago, whilst in the Army. I had seen Jim since, having stayed at his place in Washington DC for a week in 1989, and had last visited him at his place near Port Macquarie in 2005. We exchanged stories and I shared several funny stories of memorable times I had shared with his Uncle Jim over the years.

We headed off for Gran Gran cave, arriving sometime just after midday. On arrival we both donned our wetsuits, and grabbed our masks so we could see under the water in the small lake section. As we headed down the left side tunnel I could see that we were going to get wet, and I was concerned for my camera. It wasn't so bad until I hit a deep 1m long section of mud, whereupon I sank in the mud up to my thighs! Somehow I managed to walk out of it, but it wasn't easy.



Deborah didn't mind the mud, and I was beginning to think she was actually enjoying it!

Anticipating the wet area, we had brought a groundsheet in with us, which I put over the flowstone to protect it from getting dirty, but it was already filthy when we arrived. At the time I thought it would be good if FUSSI brought a brush and some water next time so we can clean it up.

After entering the area on the western side, we went left toward the water and were faced with a beach of black mud, with a small lake behind it, and then rocks behind that.

I thought about the mud, then thought about the mud again. Just as I was thinking about the mud again, Deborah threw herself into it. Right up to her knees. No, wait... right up to her thighs, no, wait... right up to her... OMG. Just as I thought she was stuck fast, she threw herself forward and slipped away into the water. Well, I thought, I can't stand here looking the part and acting like a wuss, so in I went, trying to look as manly as possible.

After breaking free from the mud I eagerly swam as hard as I could to the centre of the lake. I had been told there could be tunnels under the water that might be dive-able (you know... the usual stories like it goes to 40m), but there wasn't as much as a yabby hole. No surprises here.

We got out of the water on the other side, and then climbed over the rocks to get to the end of the tunnel, which ended abruptly with a short, steep slope. Perhaps this was where the road is, I thought.

After that we returned the way we came, and departed the cave.

Since we were already geared up, we decided to pop into Quarry cave close by, and check it out. We looked into the area on the northern side but all we could see were wet clay blocks, which we did not want to damage, so instead we took the other tunnel that headed north. We didn't get far though before it got tighter; we dropped down and twisted into a yet smaller tunnel, and eventually gave up. At this point we both needed to lose a lot of weight in order to gain another 3 metres, so we decided to pack it in, reverse out and head for home. After all it was Christmas Eve and the day was just beginning.

Saturday 2nd January 2016:

We had originally planned to explore Three Sisters and Tindales caves on Saturday, but the Tindales permit had been rejected during the extreme weather at the time. So when Deborah told me she had the opportunity to dive The Shaft with Dean, I replied she had to do it while she had the chance because this was the time of year that dive is really awesome. Besides, it was entirely possible we could finish up at The Shaft in time to still do the Three Sisters after that.

I had not come well prepared for diving the Shaft as I had left my dry-suit at home, but I was happy to visit the site and catch up with a few of my fellow divers. I was pleased to learn that Gary Barclay was supervising on the day, because I had not seen much of Gary or Linda for some years and it would be nice to catch up.

As it happened, there were several good friends diving The Shaft on the day so I really had the chance to socialise and enjoy myself. And I was able to assist Gary in getting people in & out of the sinkhole quickly and efficiently.

The entrance to The Shaft is a solution tube, about one metre in diameter and 2-3m deep, that opens out about 5-6m above a very deep lake. This solution tube is located in the middle of a dairy farmer's paddock, with a metal grate that covers the hole when not in use to prevent cattle from getting stuck in it.

There are several CDAA divers that are approved to supervise divers getting into and out of this site and each has his own preferred way of doing so. Historically, most supervisors lower people and gear down attached to a rope, using harness & carabiner and Whale's tail or a rack, with the person topside controlling the speed of descent.



This requires the rope to be pulled back up for the next person/load. Once down, a wire ladder would be dropped down for them to climb back out, and the rope used to haul the gear out, with 5-6 divers hauling at the same time.

But Gary's method of getting people in is a little more imaginative. It involves a length of rope with a figure-8 knot on each end, about 12m long and threaded through a whale's tail attached to the centre of a tripod with a sling. Both ends of the rope (which is threaded through the whales tail) can go down the hole, in such manner as to allow the diver to lower himself into the cave, and control his/her own speed of descent. Once down the end of the rope does not require retrieval for the next person, since one only has to invert the whales tail (and therefore the direction of the rope travel) and connect the next person to the short end of the rope already at the surface.

At this point, I want to highlight a discrepancy between the distance from the surface to the water (previously stated as about 8m) and the length of the rope being used for lowering, which at the point when both ends meet and the diver can no longer control his/her speed of descent is half of 12m, or 6m. And this is not from the surface, but from a point 2m above the surface (aka the tripod).

This means the diver is going to have to let go of the rope about 4m above the surface of the water.

Being directly above the diver and witnessing the various stages of the thought process as the brain worked out something wasn't quite right, to the realisation it was a trick, followed by expletives, then a loud splash, was ... well, really hilarious. And it never stopped being hilarious, as every persons reaction was different.



Dean about to enter The Shaft



Deborah entering The Shaft



Gary hauling diver out by R/C

Getting people out was even niftier. The winch was used to lower a carabiner down to the person in the water who connected it to their harness and was then lifted up using the remote control. Once the majority of divers were out of the water, the last couple of divers would send the equipment up before connecting themselves to the rope. I must say the remotely controlled winch on the front of Gary's 4WD was a nice touch!

Once we had finished at The Shaft, we found we still had plenty of time to do the Three Sisters Cave. Pat Fitzgerald and his dive buddy were keen to join in and so we all headed off. They also had permits to enter the cave - we had the key - and they had the climbing ropes and tripod we needed, so we didn't have to borrow from elsewhere. It's a 20m vertical pitch, but entry is not all that difficult. I took my camera and slave strobe with me because I craved those more difficult pics - and I was quite pleased with my results.

We entered the cave on the side of the road near Tantanoola after first opening the rusted entry. It appeared that no one else had entered this site in at least 12 months. This was quite challenging as we spent about 30 - 40 minutes hammering away at the rust before we were able to open it with a crow bar.

Deborah went first because there was no way she would allow anybody to beat her down, followed by myself and then Pat. I had tied the backpacks to the end of the rope and I lowered them down before abseiling down myself. Pat followed with the final person remaining at the surface for safety.

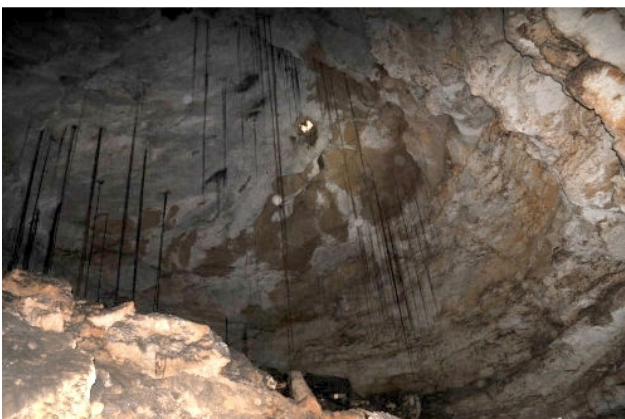


Deborah holding the rope while Pat descends



Pat heading for the exit

After entering the chamber we dropped our harnesses and climbing equipment near the rope and headed off to explore the main chamber.



Main chamber of the Three Sisters



The lake at the bottom of the chamber

First of all Deborah and Pat went to have a look at the tree roots at the top of the chamber, where Deborah was quite impressed with the waterfall formation. I set my camera gear up before joining them. We then went down to the bottom of the chamber and showed Deborah the lake, which Pat and I have dived in the past. This lake goes to a depth of approximately 40 metres with no other leads going off of it.

After this we headed back towards the entrance, admiring more formations on the southern side of the chamber when Deborah noticed a narrow drop heading down the wall to water below. This got Deborah extremely excited and we decided we would return to that location to explore it the following morning.



Deborah & Pat examining roof decorations



Waterfall formation at top of chamber



Formations on southern side of chamber

As Pat was leaving he started to drive in the direction of Glencoe, when I called out to him and asked him why he was travelling in that direction, to which he replied he was going to Tantanoola Hotel for dinner. I then pointed out to him that Tantanoola was in the opposite direction! At first he did not believe me, until I reminded him that Glencoe was east of Tantanoola, and Tantanoola was west of our location. Pat was thankful for that, since the Tantanoola Hotel stopped taking dinner orders after 8pm and the time was 7:45pm. Deborah & I left the area at 8pm.

Sunday 3rd January 2016:

I met Deborah at 9.30am at Kongorong, and after a cup of tea we headed off for Three Sisters cave, where we met up with Pat Fitzgerald, as arranged.

We arrived at 11am and spent the next hour rigging and getting into the site. Pat declined to enter the site as he had seen it the previous day, and remained on the surface as our surface support person.

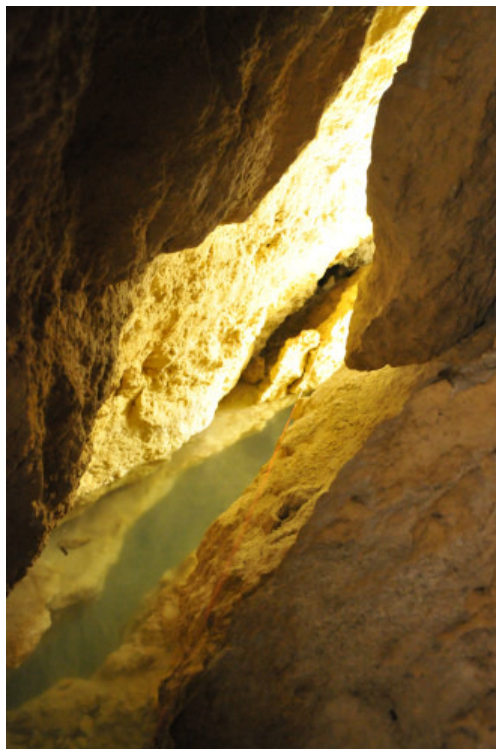
Deborah went in first and by the time I got to the bottom of the rope Deborah had already entered the hole that led to the water! I set my camera up as Deborah was gearing up and then took pictures of her as she entered the water and during her dive. (Photos next page)

It was evident from the smiles that Deborah enjoyed her dive immensely, and was very guarded about what she had found down there. I have vowed to go back another day and see for myself.

A big Thank You to Clare for organising permits, and a bigger Thank You to the landowners who allowed us on their property(s).



Deborah prepares herself for the dive



Deborah looking for that hidden chamber



Deborah puts her hand through the hole in the crutch of her wetsuit while Pat looks on in disbelief

MT GAMBIER TRIP REPORT

Sat 23rd - Sun 24th January 2016

By Jade White

Trip participants: Thomas Varga (trip leader), Dee Trewartha, Jade White, Cassie Xu, Ryan & Zac Wojtkowiak

On Friday the 22nd of January four newly signed up FUSSI members shared the long trip from Adelaide to Mt Gambier for their first caving trip. I was one of those passengers and this is my report of how I found it.

Once we arrived at the caravan park and settled in the first thing to do was see the famous Blue Lake before it got dark and have a little wander around. Zac and Ryan were keen to do some exploring so led the way. Early in the morning the final two of our group arrived at the caravan park and once they caught up on some sleep it was time to start the adventures.

After a brief discussion of what the day would involve, and a quick stop at the Metro Cafe for some much needed caffeine, we headed off to our first cave, Morgans Cave. My only previous experience with the caving club was on a joint trip with the Flinders University Underwater Club, where we travelled along the Murray River and explored a cave on the riverbank. Although that trip left me sweaty and tired it wasn't something I found too challenging and I went into this trip assuming it would be the same difficulty level. I quickly realised this trip was a step up and was excited to try something that would push me a bit more.

Once at the cave site, Dee gave us a harness demonstration and then we descended the ladder into the cave to begin our exploration. 'Chimneying' was a term I had never heard of before but I quickly learnt what it meant and also learnt it was something that didn't come naturally to me. After manoeuvring our way through the cave we made it to the first cave lake of the weekend, the perfect spot to sit and have a rest while looking out across the water. We then headed back the way we came and explored the mazes at the other end of the entrance for a little while.

After surfacing from Morgans cave and replenishing our Vitamin D we were back on the road to our second cave, Graveyard Cave. While Thomas set up the hanging ladder we got back into our caving clothes, harnessed up and listened to how to go about descending into the cave. Once inside we headed towards another lake where I was overwhelmed with how beautifully picturesque it was, definitely one of the highlights of the trip.

Once again we then headed back to the entrance to explore the other end of the cave. Small is not a word that would describe me well but luckily I had a useful way to gauge if I would make it through a gap. If our group leader Thomas could fit [Tripleader's note: Oi, what are you implying?!] then I would fit too, so when we came across a tunnel just big enough for a person to fit through lying down, I let him go ahead. Once directed on how to squeeze through I gave it a shot and although I made it through I was thankful it was only six metres. [Tripleader's note: the squeazy passage in question is the dug-out tunnel connecting Graveyard Cave with Unnamed Cave.]

After Graveyard cave we headed back to the caravan park to wash all the cave dirt off and grab some takeaway. The rest of the evening's activities consisted of a pleasant stroll around Cave Gardens in town and some possum spotting at Umpherstons sinkhole.

On the morning of our final day we had another caffeine stop (I'm beginning to notice a theme here...) and then we were on our way to Ewens Ponds for a bit of snorkelling. While the rest of the group went in

search of eels, myself and Luu wandered around the lake to enjoy the scenery. Then it was off to our last cave, Considines Cave. Thankfully for me this was the least physically challenging cave as I was still exhausted from the first day.

Although being more of a relaxing caving experience, it did not disappoint as it had the most beautiful decorations of the trip. After admiring the formations, we made our way through to the biggest cave chambers I have ever been in. All of us new to this cave were surprised at just how big the area was. After a brief exploration we all found a comfortable spot to lay down on, turned off our torches, and took a moment to enjoy the tranquillity. It was complete darkness and the only sound to be heard was the dripping of water and the buzzing of a fly that had followed us in deep below the earth's surface.

On the return trip Thomas asked each of us to have a go at leading the group back, which was a good chance to test the navigation lessons he taught during the trip, and see just how different the path can look from the other side. We successfully made it back to the entrance and then began the trip back to Adelaide, exhausted yet still excited for the next trip.

All up this trip was a great introduction to the world of caving. I found it challenging and at times a bit scary but most of all it was a lot of fun. I got to see some beautiful underground sights that I wouldn't have otherwise had the opportunity to. I would like to thank everyone for making it a fantastic trip and hopefully I'll get to join some of you on another caving adventure soon.

RETURNING TO YARRANGOBILLY

Story by Clare Buswell, Ken Smith & Tim Featonby
Images by Clare Buswell & Ken Smith

Trip participants: Clare Buswell, Heiko Maurer, Thomas Varga, Ken Smith, Gary, Tim Featonby & Will der Beast.

It was on again, the FUSSI February trip to cooler climates, wetness and wonderful caves. This trip saw six of us wander around the place, suffer from Hut Disease, do some work for the caves manager, visit beautiful caves and generally have a grand time. Those on the trip were Clare, Thomas, Heiko, Ken, Tim, Gary and Will the dog.

First up was a trip into the **Eagles Nest System, Y3-Y2**. Whilst Gary drove down the track to the parking area from which we would all walk for another half an hour or so to the cave's entrance, the rest of us joined the track clearing gang. We were, over the course of the week, to drive up and down this track about four or five times. So as a suggestion to those in charge of the place, I reckon that our roadwork has created a base good enough to lay a bit of tar on it. Ok, well in your dreams ...

At the Y2 entrance Thomas took over the task of gate wrangling and as muttering was heard, I guessed that all was going well. About 1.30pm we began finding our way through the rockpile. To aid our return, as we had done on previous trips, we placed a string line through it. This was removed on our way out.

Ken was the only one who had not been in this cave before and as the rest of us were in 'route finding and memorizing' mode, we took our time. The secret of the rockpile is to go right just past the gate after which going down seems to be the best option. Once upon a time, the stream flowed into this cave during summer so you could work your way through the entrance rockpile by keeping the stream on your right as you went in. The last time I remember the stream flowing here was 1992.

We emerged from the rockpile and found the marked route that takes you on to the rest of the cave. The Eagles Nest System is complex, containing large chambers with many ways through them, and with passages leading off them. As a consequence it is easy to get lost. The marked route aims to take you safely into the cave and to keep the impact of caving to a confined area, i.e., the track. We trundled on, taking photos and generally enjoying ourselves.

Tim had brought Zebedee with him, as it had been suggested that we have a go at 3D mapping the chamber that we had gotten lost in last year. The process was to prove too difficult for this trip so we abandoned that idea and, keeping to the marked route, continued on to the Red Room Chamber.



We spent a bit of time working out where we had gone wrong last year. Our error it seemed was around the Pendulites and the large Elephant pits. None of us wanted a repeat of getting lost for an hour, so instead we sat down and had afternoon tea, (a few snakes; chocolate seemed to have been forgotten) and then headed out. We admired all the pretty things we had missed on the way in and continued to locate where we were on the Uni of NSW Speleo's map that was made in the 1970s.

All in all we spent about five hours in this section of the cave. The next time we will try and re-acquaint ourselves with the 'sporting' section of this cave and come in through the Eyrie, drop down 200m through a series of meanders, look for the words, "fuck it's cold" written on the wall near Hughies Dig and go crawling.

Upper Mut Mut cave.

Thomas and Tim, after spending a bit of time recovering from Mut Mut, went searching for Upper Mut Mut. This cave is meant to be just above Y222. By just above I mean about 30-50 metres above it.

They did not find it. I can only put this down to the fact that Mavis had moved the cave! We will return next year.

Castle, Jillabanan and the South Glory Hole (written by Tim Featonby)

Clare had arranged with the Caves Manager, George Bradford, that, whilst at Yarrangobilly, we could attempt to do some 3D LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) mapping with Zebedee. We stopped in, visited George and showed him what we are doing with the 3D scanner. He was well pleased with our project and was very keen for us to map some caves for him. As a result we went on to map Jillabanan and Castle caves which I have provided him with copies. Just prior to leaving I managed to drop in and map South Glory cave as well.



As part of my Zebedee mapping project, from the Snowies I moved on down to Buchan caves where I had an invite to come down and have a look at their caves. I managed to map Fairy cave, Royal and Federal caves for them. They were very happy with the result and have asked that I come back at some stage to map some more.

Then to Mt Gambier where, thanks to Kevin Mott's help, Thomas, Neville and I mapped and photographed Mt Burr, Gran Gran, Quarry, unnamed, Graveyard, Umpherston, and Prung Kart caves.

Tim with the working end of Zebedee! Photo: Ken Smith.

On to Adelaide to talk at the CEGSA meeting, where I was warmly received, they even politely showed interest in listening to me talk about the Zeb and 3D mapping. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the FUSSI meeting whilst I was there, but managed instead to go down to Y1 (Corra Lynn) with Graeme Pilkington to map some of the beginning of that cave.

On my way home I stopped in to Naracoorte caves for a meeting and did some scanning of Avens with the caves manager Deb Craven-Carden and Ken Grimes. There is however, much more to do at Yarrangobilly.

Copper Mine Cave – 11th February 2016 (written by Ken Smith)

Yesterday's trip to Mut Mut cave was particularly challenging. The steep climb through dense undergrowth, carrying heavy ropes and SRT gear, had left me feeling rather tired. So I was pleased to hear that today we could drive close to the entrance of Copper Mine Cave.

A locked gate gave us access to a track, steep in places, which lead to a crossing of the Yarrangobilly River. We parked just before the crossing and began to gear up for caving. I had found out earlier in the trip that I was unprepared for the cold caving at Yarrangobilly. Fortunately Heiko had lent me some thermal underwear, so I had not suffered so far. However, when I saw Heiko and Clare donning their wetsuits I started to regret leaving my wetsuit at home. Clare explained that there was a "duck under" in the cave and I could get wet.

We walked about 100 metres from the cars to a small cave entrance at the base of a cliff. Once through the entrance the cave opened up into nice walking passage. The water level was low and my fears about getting cold diminished as the water barely covered my boots. There is some large and attractive formation in the cave and we enjoyed this as we walked along the stream way.



Typical limestone outcrops in the area



Suspended formation

Then we came to the "duck under". The water gets deeper at this point and the roof comes down to about 500mm from the water surface. I hung my pack around my neck and crawled on my hand and knees through the water for a few metres. I was lucky that the water level was low, and I got through with most of my torso staying dry.

The formation became more beautiful beyond the duck under. We continued until the dry section of the cave finished at an attractive looking sump. I started to wish that I had brought my cave diving gear. I found out later that the sump had been dived and was said not to go. However, this has been said of many sumps in the past, which have later lead to some great discoveries.

One of the objectives of this cave visit was to try and wash off grey deposits on the formation which had been caused by smoke from a bushfire. Clare had given me information about an electric sprayer which had been used in the past for washing formation. I had bought a pump, battery and various lengths of hose with this in mind. The spray removed mud from the formation quite effectively. The grey deposits seemed harder to shift although it was steadily removed. Our conclusion was that spraying, combined with soft brushing, was probably the best way to tackle the grey deposits.



Stream passage near the "Duck Under"



Grey deposits on the formation



Attractive formation in the stream way passage



Washing formation with the electric sprayer

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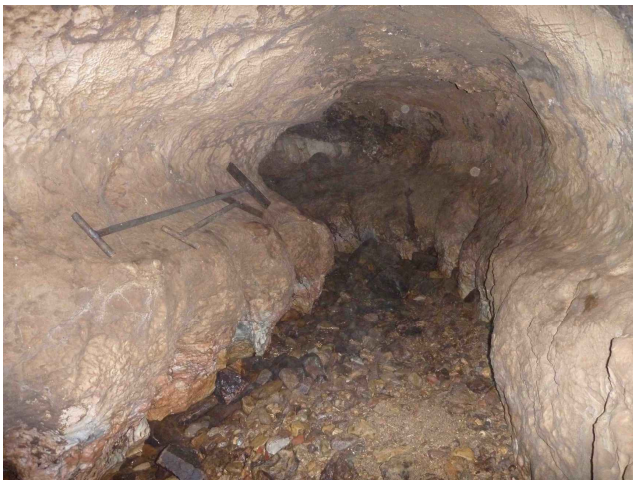
Eventually we began to feel the cold and we left the cave for the warm sunshine. The caving finished earlier today than on previous days and we had the pleasure of watching the sunset, drinks in hand, from the verandah of Cotterill's cottage.

Y7 North Deep Ck,

Now here's a challenge: no map of the cave, no real idea of where the pitches are but we know we need to have enough rope for 6 pitches one of which is 30 meters. No problems, we can cope with this!

Sometime late morning, OK, closer to 1.30pm, saw us all at the entrance of Y7. Numerous ropes, a ladder and SRT gear was hauled into the cave, with Tim in the lead rigging as he went. We followed the entrance rockpile down to the stream. This had a couple of drops in it, so a handline was used on the first, then the ladder got a small workout on the second. This second pitch, although short, has a good couple of metres or so of an exposed drop (read: no footholds or handholds), to clamber over, so the ladder, being a real pain in the butt to carry got a bit of exercise. The next pitch required a rope; down with the 10 meter one and this seemed to do the trick.

We continued on our way till we reached the stream-way proper. It's a beautifully decorated passage, so Ken and I set about taking photos, musing on the duck-under and getting wet. Thomas and Tim had also checked this out and mused on getting wet. Apart from that we had not found the 30 meter pitch so assumed it was past the dunk-under. This required hauling ropes through it, a real pain!



Raking Implements in Near the Duck-under.
Photo: Ken Smith



The First Duck-under. Y7. Photo: K Smith

We piked. We are all from SA. This water-in-caves thingy is just so yesterday. Hang about, 3 people on the trip are cave divers! OK, well maybe it is a Tertiary Limestone thing or we all like swimming in warm water. We retreated to the safety of an uphill exit.

This uphill bit starts at the duck-under and finishes back on the Snowy Mt Hwy at the car. It took about 2 hours by the time we had hauled all the ropes, ladders, associated tired and battered bodies out of the cave and up through the scrub. The awaiting beer back at camp never tasted better! We were all out of the cave at 6.40pm, and back at camp just on dusk.

On our return to civilization, i.e., back in Adelaide, we found out more (thanks to John Brush of CSS and Ross Ellis of SSS). Scaling poles are needed, the Karst Index statement of the number of pitches in Y7 is not correct and the water is as cold as Croesus. Thus wet suits required, with a change back into normal caving gear after both duck-under. These are close together. This all means that we will return, it's just that scaling poles and SA cavers haven't seen each other in years!



The gear, Clare, Thomas and Tim after a trip into Y7.
Photo: Ken Smith.

A CHANCE MEETING

Story by Clare Buswell

Late one afternoon, whilst sitting on the front verandah of Cotterill's cottage, a solitary figure walked up to the cottage fence and started chatting. He talked of many things: about the cottage, its history, the families who lived in it and of Yarrangobilly Village itself. This solitary figure turned out to be none other than Colin Hoad, the son of Alice and Leo Hoad, and the author of *Yarrangobilly - People and Caves*.¹



Right to Left: Colin Hoad, Deborah Bush, with FUSSI members, Heiko Maurer, Clare Buswell and Ken Smith at the front door of Cotterills Cottage, February 2016. Photo: David Bush.

The following morning Colin, his daughter Deborah and her husband David Bush, came up to the house to have a look around and talk about all sorts of things. Deborah related some of the history of the demolition of Yarrangobilly village by different government departments. Colin talked about the introduction of the telephone and the associated party line, where everyone heard each other's conversations whilst they waited to place a call. The post office and the switchboard were the centre of life in a small village. The room on the south-eastern corner of the cottage housed this infrastructure.

In 1930, the Hoad family home was purchased by the Crown, for the Dep't of Forestry and Bruce Cotterill, who was a forestry supervisor, became the Post Master.² It is from this latter period that the house became known as Cotterill's Cottage.

¹ This book is no longer in print according to Colin. He thinks that the Yarrangobilly Caves Office holds the last remaining copies for sale. It was self published in 2004 by Colin Hoad.

² Ellis R., 'Yarrangobilly Village History'. In: Ellis R. and Halbert E. (eds), *Caves and Karst of Yarrangobilly*. Sydney Speleological Society. Sydney. 2016. p. 332.

Colin also talked about his family's sadness of the loss of what they had spent close to fifty years setting up at the Yarrangobilly Caves and Caves House when National Parks took over the area. After the area was taken over by the Crown, Caves house was used to house prisoners for a time as National Parks could not find anyone to take on what the Hoads, Bradleys, and Days had achieved. It was deemed too remote. Colin views the recent refurbishment of Caves House and its reopening for accommodation, as a positive step in keeping in the public eye the uniqueness the Yarrangobilly area has to offer.



The former Hoad Family Home, Late Evening, February, 2016.

Photo: Clare Buswell

It was both a pleasure and an honour to meet Colin Hoad, his daughter Deborah and her husband David. However, I found it immensely sad to show the Hoads through a poorly maintained house that Colin's grandfather had built. It became the centre of the Hoad family's life and is the only remaining house in what was once the thriving community of Yarrangobilly. I am sure that some in the speleo community feel that something should be done about this house before it is really too late to restore.

RAPID BAY CAVES TRIP REPORT

Sun 14th Feb 2016

By Neville Skinner

Photos by Neville Skinner & Daniel Dingwall

Trip participants: Neville Skinner and Daniel Dingwall.

This trip started with a telephone call from Daniel, saying "Hi, I'm in town for two weeks and I want to know where we are caving this weekend"...

I suggested we go back and complete our check of that Rapid Bay sea cave that we never finished exploring last time due to lack of gear and time, but Daniel wanted more. After offering a few words about it would have been nice to have more time to explore other opportunities and arrange cave access, Daniel agreed Rapid bay was the best option.

I checked the weather forecast for Rapid Bay and it said 5-10 knots SE wind swinging around to the SW during the day. This meant the wind wouldn't be pushing the waves into the rocks on the shoreline... PERFECT! High tide was at 8am, and low tide was 2pm, with the next high tide at 8pm... This meant the sea would not be high on the way to the caves, nor would it be high on the way back... and it would be at its lowest while we were exploring the area around the sea caves... High seas means in places you are forced to climb higher on the rocks, but on Sunday we may even be able to walk on patches of beach previously inaccessible without getting very wet... PERFECT! And a 20% chance of isolated showers meant a cool day and no sunburn cream required... PERFECT.

I had promised Felicia that I would let her know next time I was going there, so I contacted her and Daniel met up with Dee on the Friday night, and asked Dee. She was not able to come due to other commitments, but Felicia was very keen to come and said she would bring her boyfriend with her as well. We agreed to meet at Rapid Bay carpark at 9:30am. We needed to start early because it would be a long day.

Daniel met at my place and we headed off at 8:30am, equipped with ropes, tapes and harnesses (just in case), as well as my Nikon camera with a large slave strobe and 10W LED floodlight for extra lighting. We knew it would be a pain climbing the cliffs with heavy backpacks, but this time we were not going to arrive to find we needed something that we had left behind.

We made the usual mandatory 5-minute stop at Kangarilla Bakery, so I could buy one of the best pasties in Australia (Disclaimer: I have no financial or other interests in the Yankalilla bakery).

As we came though Second Valley, I discovered I had two missed calls on my phone from "No Caller ID" – one at 8:52am and the other at 9am. I didn't know anyone of that name, so we continued.

When we arrived at Rapid bay, I was amazed to find the caravan park was virtually full of tents and caravans, much busier than I had ever encountered before. Was this a welcoming party? Perhaps there had been a Fringe event on the beach the previous evening?

I could only count 6 people on the Jetty and the same number of small boats in the water.

There was no sign of Felicia and her boyfriend. Had their car broken down?



Even the northern end of the Rapid Bay Caravan Park was busy (NS)

I worriedly called Felicia, and she said it was her who had tried to call me earlier. I asked her where she was, and she said she was in Hahndorf.. OMG! "Did you take the wrong turn?" I asked. No, Felicia replied "I did not want to get caught in the rain." I looked up at the sun shining down between the clouds, and then at the families walking up and down the beach, and thought to myself "Yes, it pays to be safe."

The weather was good, so we took our time and had an early morning tea break – we decided there was no point in carrying our pasties and other delicacies all the way to the cave, and then eating them. And they would probably get crushed en-route anyway.
After this, we double-checked our gear, making sure we had everything, and headed off.

We travelled faster as we were closer to the sea than we had ever been, and were able to take advantage of the lower tide. At one stage, I did climb 2-3m higher to avoid running across a short stretch of beach that Daniel sprinted across, because I was afraid of getting my boots wet.
It was this decision that took me past a small recess that looked like it contained a piece of fossilised tree stump. I called Dan back and went to inspect more closely. It turned about to be just a piece of up-ended slate that gave this appearance, but while I was looking at it and preparing to take a photo of it, Dan noticed a crack in the rocks barely a metre to the left of it, and exclaimed “That looks like a tunnel!”
Indeed it was and off went Dan, like a rat up a drainpipe. Within seconds, I could hear this muffled voice calling back “You gotta see this Neville...”



The up-ended rock that caught my eye

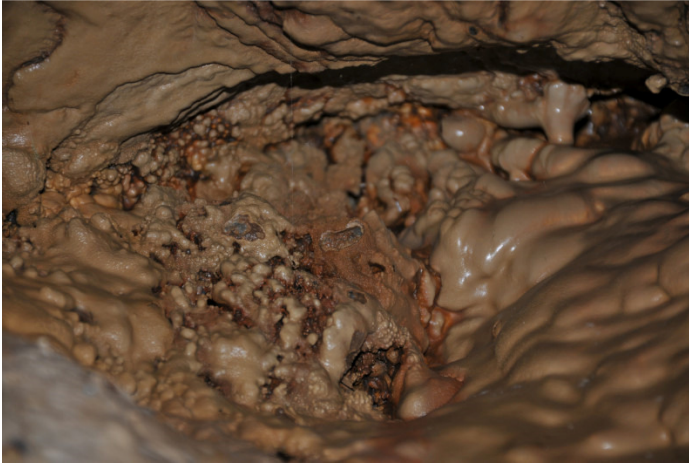


Small tunnel (Dan's light at end)



Daniel checking out the end of Hidden Cave; pretty flowstone formations on wall to the right

Suddenly, I wanted to be a rat also. Scurrying 7-8 metres down the end of a narrow tunnel, I find myself 1.5m off the floor of a small cave, with the right hand wall covered in flowstone of various colours and shapes, some containing small shells with their deceased inhabitants, frozen in time. A quick check of the cave reveals there are no other accessible entrances, just a damp floor of smooth round stones of various colours, washed smooth and carried in by the tides that enter through cracks between the boulders. What an exhilaratingly magnificent find!



Dan examines the geology of Hidden Cave (NS)



Sea Shells set in flowstone, with various deceased tenants (NS)



Dan exiting Hidden Cave (NS)



Dan waiting for Neville to exit (NS)



Dan takes a look back toward Rapid Bay Jetty before we continue (NS)

After exiting Hidden Cave, Dan decided to take a run up the adjacent slope, which showed significant signs of water erosion from heavy rains (or is this evidence of glacial action as seen at Hallett Cove?).

But we did not stop to check the rocks for scratch marks; we were there to check for caves.

(Since then I have wondered if this could be the safest and most stable route to take to reach the area above those caves that we currently cannot get to from below?)



Dan (lower centre) returning after checking out the base of the slope (NS)

Dan reported no cave activity in what might have been a glacier or a very large waterfall, and we continued on to reach our goal. We were still on time.

Along the way Dan pointed out the cave we were headed for, and as he did so I noticed a much larger cave about 40m east of it and much higher up the slope.

As soon as we reached our destination cove, we looked up the slope at what had clearly looked like another cave from a distance, and both agreed there was no way we were going to try and climb up to it, as the slope is near vertical from the beach up.



Could this be another cave, 30m east of 'our' cave? (NS)

We then checked the area around the main sea cave, and discovered a portable camping toilet. Sadly it was of no use, and hadn't been emptied for some time; it was full of toilet paper and doo-dos.



Dan slowly descends for a closer look...



and gets his feet wet in the process!

I scaled the rocks and proceeded around the side of the point, using a narrow ledge (think 30mm) to walk on. This was all the encouragement Dan needed, as he worked his way around me and proceeded even further than I was prepared to go. Jumping onto a small beach, he had no chance of keeping his feet dry as a small wave raced up and over both boots before he could make it to the dry section.

Leaving Dan behind, squeezing the water out of his socks and overalls, I returned the way we came, and carried all our bags up the steep slope and into the small cave & tunnel that we were to conquer.

By the time I did this and got ready to enter the tight restriction, Dan had returned. Once I got through the restriction, Dan passed all the gear to me and I stowed it in a small alcove just inside the restriction, and proceeded through a second tight restriction, where we repeated the process.

I was now inside the main part of the connecting tunnel to the sea cave we were to explore, and with Dan's help set about installing a harness tape around a rock that was still firmly attached to the floor and wall. To this we added a carabiner and attached the rope we would use to abseil into and climb out of the cave.

Once completed, I moved down the slope to make room for Dan to enter, and to set up my external slave strobe in anticipation.



Dan abseils down into the sea cave below... and then climbs up to the dry chamber on the other side

Once the strobe was set up, I focused on taking a few pics of Dan as he entered the sea cave chamber below, and then climbed up to explore the ledge opposite where I was. I then abseiled the 8m pitch to the sea cave below, to explore and to see if I could utilise the slave strobe to capture a few good images.



View looking from sea-cave entrance (NS)



View looking toward sea cave entrance (NS)

Dan had found a way to clamber over and around the rock walls to get to the section up high. After a quick look around, Dan excitedly calls back that he has found a room with columns and numerous stalactites in it, and could I come up and check it out with him.

After asking Dan how in the world did he get up there, I concluded that there was an advantage in having long legs, because I could not envisage swinging my leg around those rocks! So I asked Dan to secure a prussik rope around one of the rocks, and I prussiked up that.



Neville prussiking up to join Dan (DD)

Once up, I wasted no time following Dan into the Inner Sanctum of Hidden Cave. I was amazed at what Dan had found. This had indeed been a very successful trip. By now the tide was returning and we were forced to depart the cave... until next time.



View looking toward sea cave entrance (DD)



Old formations demonstrate existence of dry cave (NS)



Formations protruding from the ceiling (NS)

All images below, showing stalactites, formations and various other speleothems (DD)



NEWS & TITBITS

The wine glasses burb:

Get in before it is too late!
Very special FUSSI wine glasses
Celebrate with one of these and
be the envy of the caving set.
\$8.00ea or \$48.00 for a half Dz.

Membership fees are due:
Single : \$88.00

Family: 119 + \$20 per family member
Student: \$65.00
Introductory. \$40.00

Please contact the FUSSI Treasurer for payment details.
Membership is valid for one calendar year and includes membership of the ASF.

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FLINDERS UNIVERSITY SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY INC.
MEMBERSHIP FORM 2016

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBERS, Mob: _____ Home: _____

FLINDERS UNIVERSITY STUDENT NUMBER: _____

EMAIL: _____

NAME OF NEXT OF KIN OR EMERGENCY CONTACT:

1) _____ Ph: _____

2) _____ Ph: _____

3) _____ Ph: _____

ADDRESS:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

GENERAL INFORMATION:

DO YOU HOLD A CURRENT FIRST AID CERTIFICATE?

Circle as appropriate: Y / N

Expiry date: ____ / ____ / _____

Any other current medical/first aid qualifications: e.g. Nurse, volunteer with St. Johns or the SA Ambulance Service: _____

Do you have any medical conditions that require medication(s)?

Circle as appropriate: Y / N

If so please give details (use separate sheet if required):

**Take your medication with you whilst underground on a FUSSI trip.
Please inform the trip leader of your medical condition.**

Do you consent to have your photo placed on the FUSSI website, FUSSI Facebook site for PR purposes and general sharing amongst members? Circle as appropriate: Y / N

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

29th Feb – Start of 1st Semester

- Sun 6th Mar: **Murray River Caves by boat. 9:30am – 6pm**
Bring boots, overalls & knee-pads, if you have any.
Clare coordinating.
- Thu 17th Mar: **Social Meeting. 6-8pm on campus**
Get your mojo working with a map & compass.
Tania is going to show us how.
- Sun 20th Mar: **SRT Training afternoon. SRT competent members only**
- 25th Mar – 3rd Apr: **Nullarbor Plains caves – the biggest chambers you’ve ever seen!**
An extended Easter trip.
FUSSI exec. coordinating.
- Sun 10th Apr: **Post-Nullarbor gear clean-up & SRT Training afternoon**
SRT Competent members only (training session).
- Sun 17th Apr: **SRT Training afternoon. SRT competent members only**

MID SEMESTER BREAK: 11th – 26th April

- Sat 23rd – 25th Apr: **Mairs cave, Clara St. Dora cave and Mt Sims cave, Southern Flinders Ranges.**
Great beginners trip (Anzac long weekend)
Thomas coordinating
- Thu 28th Apr: **Social Meeting. 6-8pm on campus**
Guest Speaker: Ken Smith - “The Caves of France”
- Sun 1st May: **BBQ at Bunnings. All help is needed. Aimee is coordinating.**
- Sun 8th May: **Corra Lynn Cave - a one-day trip to see the longest cave in SA.**
(We only see part of it.) Thomas coordinating
- Thu 12th May: **Annual Social Meeting: 6-8pm, Room 250 SSN on campus**
Come along and join the party.
- Sat 21st – 23rd May: **Naracoorte caves. A great beginners trip.**
Contact: Clare.

Gloom, Depression, EXAMS: 20th June – 3rd July

followed by the Wake, then the...

MID YEAR BREAK: 4th – 24th July