



FUSSI Newsletter

Vol. 29 | No. 1 | 2017



SHALL I JUST CUT THIS ROPE?

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Front Cover Photo: Vertical Skills Workshop. Sydney.

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NARACOORTE IN MARCH

Trudy Ann Field

Participants: Clare, Thomas, Neville, Janice, William, Sarah, Nicole, and Trudy.

Naracoorte Caves, 24–26th March 2017

The FUSSI crew eagerly left Adelaide on Friday night, destined for the famous Naracoorte caving area. William and I, newly acquainted on the drive up, chatted the whole way (thanks to Will's famous speaking abilities). At 10 pm, we were first to arrive at the Wirreanda Bunkhouse... but how to get in? Thomas saved the day, with phone directions to a key drop...yet upon following said directions, where was it? Will was next to save the day, finding the keys that granted a well-earned sleep. He soon bunkered down for a long-awaited snooze. Meanwhile, and shortly later, the esteemed and famous trip leader Clare rocked up, together with caving Tassie all-star, Sarah. Still getting over the excitement of my son's first sports' day, I went for a wander, and what a wonder it was...the tally included 2 possums, numerous "glow-in-the-dark" spiders, 3 kangas, some exciting looking caves with "keep out" type fences (darn it), and a gigantic sized echidna, not too happy to have its slumber disturbed. Sometime in there, Neville and Janice made an appearance, then lastly, Thomas, with the newest member of FUSSI, Nicole, at around 12am. Needless to say, at such a late hour, bed was top priority.



My Echinda Friend

William finds the Keys!

Well, Saturday morning, what is to be done? Coffee of course. We left campsite late and eventually arrived at the famous Naracoorte Caves coffee shop, where we ... you guessed it, drank coffee. Those of the team not in the know were pleasantly surprised to receive a staff discount, \$2 per coffee, an absolute bargain for such a delicious brew. We met up with Barb, Jake and Danielle, three of the Naracoorte cave guides, to discuss plans for the weekend. Clare had kindly organised to train Barb, Danielle and Jake in the finer skills of belaying, whilst the rest of the FUSSI team dutifully tackled part of the weekend's endeavour, Sand Cave. So, after a drop or two of sustenance, that is where we headed.

Sand Cave was awesome. Thomas rigged the entrance, a locked grated gate, from his Troopie, whilst Neville trained the rest of the group in ladder skills, utilising a nearby tree. The group

NARACOORTE IN MARCH

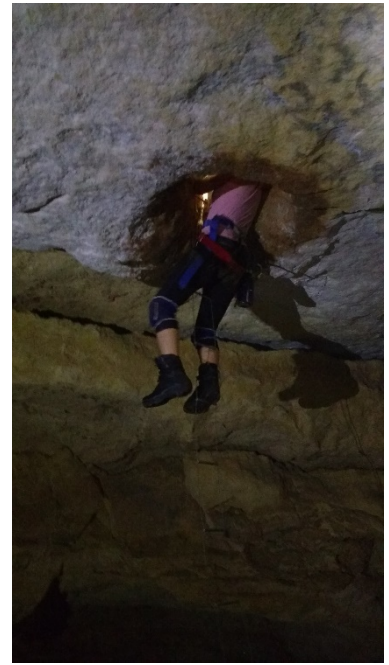
used their combined skills to either abseil or climb in, whilst a cave cricket performed feats of acrobatic delight for those waiting at the bottom. For many, this cave was new, whilst Thomas, Neville and Janice had been there before. A rather unfortunate small kangaroo (or was it a wallaby?) had spent its last hours inside the entrance of Sand, and Neville astutely showed us the tracks it had trod, in a desperate attempt to escape. Its final resting place appeared rather artistic, with a lovely green glow. A myriad of buzzing blow-flies added to the artistic experience.



Thomas Sets Up



Sand Cave Entrance



Janice Pops in for a Visit

Once the group were safely in, we began our adventure. The first chamber had a large sand funnel, littered with rubbish from days gone by, when caves were a convenient dumping ground. Always on the lookout for a bargain, I couldn't help but scour the area for hidden treasures, but none was to be found. There were some impressive chambers in Sand Cave and some rather pretty decorations, my favourite feature being the glistening tree roots with their many drops of water, making them sparkle like little diamonds. I also got a bit of a kick out of various rock crawls and scrambles and squeezes ... always love the up and down rock part. The signature room was interesting, a host of names from cavers and landowners long ago ... I could almost hear them whispering to us in the darkness. We were reminded that random acts of visual graffiti are no longer considered good caving practice, but still, makes for an interesting and historical look. My least favourite part ... the sand squeeze.

William showed his chivalrous nature in the 25 m sand squeeze, between the "Signature Room" and "Nullarbor Junction". Will and I had disclosed a few surprising secrets on the way to Naracoorte, including my displeasure and fear of crawling through small sandy spaces, an embarrassing fact I have long kept private. Noticing I was behind him, and last in the group, William turned his head and kindly checked that I was surviving the squeeze, a true feat of

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bravery given this was only his third ever cave. Despite this kindness, I managed to get stuck a short while later and decided squeezing out backward would be a better option than digging my way through. Thankfully Neville had stayed back to take photos and was generous in delivering me to Nullarbor Junction via the alternate route, where Thomas calmly took the lost caver issue in his stride ... or perhaps losing me was always part of the grand plan?

Several rests and chambers later, we headed for the end of the cave, where it was amazing to see a host of little clay figurines left by a past expedition team. The little figures pushed all my kindergarten buttons, making me want to grab the closest mud pie and start sculpting (which of course is also no longer recommended in caves). We made the journey out after this, several hours after we went in, which as usual, seemed to take half the time...perhaps because it was now early evening and we were starving for our pub meal. Most of us climbed up the ladder, which took surprisingly long. I was shocked at how arduous this was...I'm sure it was much easier when I last climbed a caving ladder, 15 years ago! Time to work on technique me thinks. I am awarding the Sand Cave "humble" medal to Sarah, who, despite being accustomed to Tassie caves (where if you snooze, you don't just lose, you freeze), never once complained about our many pit-stops. The Sand Cave "cool, calm and collected" medal definitely goes to Nicole, who had only been caving once before (as a kid), yet seemed to tackle each and every squeeze like an easy walk in the park. The "caving in lycra like a legend" award goes to Janice, who managed the various squeezes in my old gym pants, which I strangely thought was a good idea, despite the multiple snags this created (sorry Janice!).

Upon exiting Sand cave, we were greeted by Clare, who was kindly on belay after a day playing teacher. We had a much needed shower and arrived for dinner at 9pm, where we again met up with Jake and Danielle (who had long finished eating). William amused us with some rather interesting conversation, fuelled by the half a beer he had managed to consume. He met his match with Jake and from then on the banter and slightly inappropriate jokes never stopped. After a shot on the skill tester, it was back to Wirreanda for a short chat and bed.

Sunday morning Clare headed back to Adelaide to do boring paperwork, whilst the FUSSI caving adventures continued. We met Karen and Jake at the coffee shop at 9:30 and again had coffee, then eventually managed to head to Fox Cave about 11:30 am...time had once again vanished. The drive to Fox Cave was scenic and lush. Several gates later we met an obstacle—the slush pit. It appeared someone was determined to keep all 2 wheel drivers out of Fox Cave, but Neville knew better. He watched the beefy 4 wheel drives take the deep plunge, then, armed with a stick, considered the consequences of pushing his two wheel drive through. Eventually he realised that not even his bat wings could save him from this watery obstacle, so he squeezed with Janice into Thomas' Troopie.

Entering Fox Cave was enjoyable. Neville had instilled fear into us by explaining about the tight squeeze and difficult navigation through the locked gate, so I was secretly pleased and relieved that it seemed reasonably easy. Fox is another enjoyable cave. There are several chambers to visit, mostly all joining back to one main chamber. There is the odd crawl over,

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up and under rocks, but this is fun (and no small sand crawls!). There are pretty decorations, including those in the lovely “Madonna” room. A pile of interesting fossils also makes for a good look. Barb and Jake added to the interest by sharing their knowledge and Barb chatted about her experiences taking adventure tourist groups into Fox Cave (thanks guys). Of course, Will and Jake continued with their banter throughout the cave. It was good to see emergency supplies inside Fox, such as spare food, water, blankets and first aid gear, in case these are needed for the tourist groups. These were in the main chamber, so were easily accessible, a good set up.



L to R: Sarah, Janice, Jake, Neville, Will & Barb,
Getting Ready To Enter Fox Cave



Barb Chats About Fox Cave Fossil
Collection

After a rest (and for some, yet another coffee), Jake took us through one last cave, the lovely Alexandra Cave. It was a great place to take more happy snaps and I felt privileged to have access to a “Tourist” cave, without other tourists present. Eventually, it was time to say our goodbyes and to head home to Adelaide...where I imagine most people arrived about 9 or 10pm. The sunset on the drive home was pure delight. Thanks Clare, Thomas and Neville for an enjoyable and safe trip, and thanks to the whole group for the great company and fun time.

CARRY YOUR OWN BAG: OR HOW NOT TO KILL YOURSELF!

Dee Trewartha and Tania Wilson.

In mid-April two intrepid FUSSI members, Tania Wilson and, I set off to Sydney to join up with the NSW Cave Rescue Squad's weekend complex vertical rescue workshop. The April weekend, held in the Blue Mountains, was the first site of a two weekend programme, with the second weekend is to be held in June at Bungonia. The lead instructor was Al Warild and we were joined by four other VRA members and 4 cavers from various caving clubs around Sydney.

The first day, held at the Hawkesbury Lookout, we practiced rebelay...lots of rebelay... for a lot of the morning, with people generally monkeying around the cliff face and the nearby tree. Then Al demonstrated how to rescue someone using a foot loop to make a counter balance system through their foot ascender. He also showed us how to use a cowstail to do the same. Basically you prussik up to your casualty, and with some effort, some kicking in the



Going up anyone!

Photo: Dee Trewartha

head and kneeling in the crutch, you get them rigged up to you and you to them, your descender on them and their ascending gear off (which is where the counterbalance comes in so that small ladies can lift large blokes etc.) and then you end up descending gracefully with the casualty in your lap in under 5 minutes. Ideally. Sort of. With the foot loop method you stand in your improvised pulley so your whole weight lifts them up. Being not so heavy myself I found this the easier method. It also allowed me to reach their gear from above their lap rather than from underneath. With the cowstail method there are less gymnastics to get your foot into the counterbalance, and you simply lean your weight back in a professional calm fashion to lift your casualty off their ascender.

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After mastering this one (not even remotely) Al showed us a French caving method where you take the end of the rope up from the bottom, prussik up to and then past your casualty, then use their foot ascender as a new rigging point using the free end as the new rope. You have your casualty hooked up close with a chain of karabiners harness to harness. You then attach your descender to the new rope, and when all is ready you get out your pocket knife and ...cut their rope! Cut the correct rope!!...then you both gracefully descend, this time with your casualty hanging from your harness so that you land on top of them...well, not ideally. All in under 5 minutes. (Might need some more practice, any volunteers?).



Tania in Action. Photo Dee Trewartha

This technique is only useful if you have something on you to cut the rope. Al is a believer in being able to rescue using equipment you would normally have on you, which makes a lot of sense.

After mastering this technique (not quite) and some candid photos of compromising moments, it was time to derig and head back to Allie's house where we were being billeted.

The next day we went to a new cliff face, Little Zigzag on Mt Victoria. At the bottom of the pitch we received a lesson in CRS preferred knots and why they are preferred. Then I got a crash course in rigging with Al, consisting of him showing me how to rig the two ropes at the top then us descending with rope bags attached. Al rigged one rope with four rebelayes while I rigged the other under his instructions. Once at the bottom, as there were less people than

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the day before, Tania and I got to practice the techniques from the previous day whilst taking notes and photos to bring back with us.

At the end of the session I went up and derigged as I climbed and another person derigged the second rope at the same time.



A Happy Landing. Photo: Dee Trewartha

The Sydney crew took excellent care of us, and made sure we had someone's attention and help the whole weekend. We were well fed and well housed and we learned a huge amount. One of the guys delivered us to a train station nearer to the airport and we lugged our packs into the station just as a huge lightning storm hit and water started bucketing down! It was a terrific weekend and I'm really looking forward to the next one!

Editors note:

Tania and Dee will be holding teaching sessions to pass on to members the skills that they learnt. These will be a series of hands-on workshops on self-rescue and in-cave rescue practices over the next couple of months. Keep an eye on the dates of events in the FUSSI Programme.

CARRY YOUR OWN BAG: OR HOW NOT TO KILL YOURSELF!



SOME OF THE RESCUE PRACTICES THAT HAPPENED OVER THE COURSE OF THE WEEKEND



WHAT IS ON

Note: FUSSI holds a general get together/meeting on the Third Thursday of each month except where notified. Programme subject to change.

May 13–14 th	Flinders Ranges Trip.	Great trip, suitable for all. Clare coordinating: <i>fussi@fussi.org.au</i>
Thurs May 18 th	AGM.	Yep, come along and add some impressive roles to your CV. New members needed on the Exec. Out with the old and in with a new lot. Noel Stockdale Rm, Flinders Uni Library. Bring a bribe! Or just watch the blood flow.
Tues May 30	Sprigg Lecture,	Given by Dr Alan Cooper. The Aboriginal Heritage Project. SA Museum 6pm - 7pm. The Museum will open to guests at 5:30pm, with a complimentary glass of wine available prior to the talk. Booking essential. http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/learn/sprigglectureseries?mc_cid=52b39449db&mc_eid=5ec9edb8b0
Thurs June 15 th	Library and pizza night.	At the club store. On Campus, under Union Hub.
Sunday June 18 th	One day trip.	Yorke Peninsula. Thomas Coordinating. <i>fussi@fussi.org.au</i>
June 17/18 th	Workshop, (part two).	Vertical Skills and Rigging. Bungonia NSW. <i>Run by NSW Cave Rescue squad.</i> Contact: be.somewhat.insane@gmail.com
July 3–24 Mid-Year break		
July 8–16 th	Nullarbor trip	A FUSSI fun trip to the WA side of the Nullarbor. See the Nullarbor in winter. Thomas Coordinating. <i>fussi@fussi.org.au</i>
July 27 th	Workshop	Using Nesty and Working Out How Rescue Yourself. Noel Stockdale Rm. <i>NOTE meeting date.</i>
August 12/13 th	Search and Rescue Practice.	Flinders Ranges. Putting the Theory into practice. Weekend Coordinators: Dee, Tania, Clare A hands-on weekend. Date to be confirmed.

Sept 18–Oct 3 Mid-Semester break

Conferences:

IUS international Caving conference: 23–29 July.

Jenolan, NSW, with pre- and post-caving trips around the country and New Zealand.

www.speleo2017.com

Training days: To be announced. Other trips being considered: Tassie in Dec, Yarrangobilly in Feb 18.