

SPELEOGRAFFITI

The Newsletter of the National University Caving Club (NUCC)

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Speleograffiti

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Volume 25 Number 1, December 2019

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Front Cover: Chris Bradley admiring formation in Murrays Cave, Coolman Plains. Photo by Lachie Bailey

Following Page: Ice Pick Lake in Mammoth Cave (J13), Jenolan. Photo by Lachie Bailey



Editorial

Speleograffittititti is back! After 24 years! The one and only (well, not quite) magazine of the National University Caving club that no one can ever spell correctly (two fs and one t, for the record). But why has this venerable publication, previously referred to as 'blasphemous and totally deranged', returned in an era when we could just put it all online on our fancy new website (<https://nucc.caves.org.au/>; thanks to Lachy Deakin)?

Well, mostly we wanted a more permanent way to record what the club does, so that NUCCers and NUCClings of the future might actually know a bit more about the club's past. Also, five of us went on an awesome trip to Takaka Hill in New Zealand, and we want to tell you all about it and the other fun caving we did in 2019. Plus, increasing digital media makes putting this together much easier than in the past. I'm still feeling the pain of previous editors in trying to get people to write trip reports though, so pretty please write some up for me? It doesn't have to be like blood from a stone and all that...

Anyway, NUCC has had a fantastic 2019 underground, and we want to tell you all about it. So read on, dear armchair caver, and think about all the great trips you could be on in the next 12 months. We'd love to have you along!

- Lachlan Bailey, the (reluctant) Editor



Loss of Jenolan Caver's Cottage

In sad news that has come out just as this magazine was being finished, the Jenolan Caver's Cottage has been lost to the Green Wattle Creek Fire. The Cottage has been totally destroyed, although it is possible that some of the metal items (like the bunks) might be salvageable. Hopefully more will come to light once the Jenolan Cottage Association can access the site.

This puts a massive question mark over the conditions and future of caving clubs running trips to Jenolan. Hopefully something will eventuate that allows for the continuation of our current presence at Jenolan Caves.

In the mean time, remember all the fantastic evenings that we've enjoyed in the cottage, and all the days of caving that it allowed!



Above: the exterior of the Jenolan Caver's Cottage in happier times

Left: the main living room of the Cottage in 2019... Think of all the generations of caver's kitsch that has been lost with the cottage burning...

(photos by Lachie Bailey)

Caving News

This is traditionally the place where all the club gossip goes. As I don't have any for you, you'll be getting actual news instead. Sorry. I'd prefer gossip too.

After the devastation of the recent fires, the ASF is running a campaign to gather donations for rehabilitation projects by clubs. If you can, please consider donating: https://nucc.caves.org.au/news/20201801_asfgofundme/ (link to page with link for brevity).

Major developments have been occurring at Yagby over the last 12 months. HSC found an extension to Y395, Mother of Boulders Cave. A neat rockpile extension has morphed into the rest of Y7 West Deep Creek Cave, which has been MIA since the 70s. It is probably now the longest and deepest cave at Yagby, but don't get your hopes up of visiting it, as it'll likely become a gated reference cave.

The ASF library has migrated! It has moved from Jeanette Dunkley's place down Southside, and is headed up north to the Central Coast. The new librarian, Cathi Humphrey-Hood is putting in a lot of work to catalogue and digitise the library, so hopefully material will become easier to access soon.

BREAKING NEWS: CSS has once again been spotted in the wild, this time at Wombeyan in October 2019. This is the first confirmed sighting of a population of this unique species since October of 2018. Sources indicate that it may also be observed in Ainslie on the first Thursday of every month.

SUSS ran another excellent cave surveying course in 2019, on the weekend of the 19-20th October. This is generally open to all ASF clubs,

and it looks like it will run again in October 2020, pending interest.

Rumours are afoot that NUCC may organise another expedition in 2020. The current state of planning is that we might go to Tassie or Kempsey (mid-north coast NSW) after Semester 2, 2020 for a week. Current Tassie thoughts are to go to either Junee-Florentine in the south (like Takaka Hill, but with a different accent), or Mole Creek in the north (pretties galore). Kempsey is likely to feature relaxing on a beach.

The next ASF Conference will be held in Ceduna (South Australia), and hosted by FUSSI (Flinders University Speleological Society Inc). It'll be around Easter 2021, so early April. This will be a good chance for people to go visit the Nullarbor, and we might put together a contingent for a roadtrip over there to visit some of Australia's most magnificent caves. Dates: 2-6th April **2021**, probably with field trips (=caving, usually) on the 7-14th April.

Paddy Pallin has kindly offered all our members a 20% discount on gear bought in store as part of their community outreach programme. To claim this, you will need a membership card so they know you are a NUCC member. Get yours at SRT, but please email caving@anusra.com.au so we know beforehand to make you one.

MSS is still working on their Abercrombie book, but progress is good. Hopefully it should be out at the 2021 ASF Conference. In the meantime, there's lots of surveying at Abers to be done!

AND, most importantly of all, NUCC's magazine SPELEOGRAFFITI is back! Although don't wait too patiently for Volume 26.1; I can confidently predict that it will arrive around 2044, give or take a year or two.

Trip Reports

Bungonia Beginner's Trip

2nd March 2019

By Andy Waddell

Participants: Christopher Bradley, Lachlan Bailey, Bill Lamb, Whitley Rosenberg, Brittany Brockett, Andy Waddell, Xinyi Liu, Dan Liu, Tom Donda, Maxx Fioriti, Shannon Horan, Tali de Mestre, Shweta Balaji, Daniel Sun, Owen Lennon, Ellie Bishop, James Carey, Sophia Cain, AJ Sethi, Kong Tin Yi, Shao Qi Lim, Eliza Lane, Byungchan Kang, and Amber Jones

As our first trip for the year after the annual influx of beginners on Market Day, there were scores of new cavers spread between six cars heading up to Bungonia on Saturday morning. For many, this was going to be their first time underground so there was plenty of excitement.

We arrived around 10am and had enough people to split into three groups, giving more confident beginners a chance to explore more challenging obstacles while those less comfortable with heights could be given extra

guidance. Bill disappeared to rig an exit to the day's cave while others were shown around some of the nearby Bungonian wonders such as the cave Canberra-Steam Pipe (B7-14).

All three groups entered B4-5 (Fossil Cave-Hogans Hole) through the B5 entrance. The faster groups went first, while the rest were shown techniques for navigating squeezes and climbs using the holds available in the first few meters of the cave. All beginners were keen to challenge themselves, so all successfully attempted these obstacles, making for an efficient start to the day. Sending fresh beginners through a cave as sporty as B4-5 is designed to give them a quickstart introduction to the caving skills they will need later on, as well as appropriate exposure to small spaces, big drops and dusty clothing. So it was convenient that the beginners had such a positive attitude, allowing us time to fit more of the cave into the day.



New cavers being introduced to the hairiness of the Hairy Traverse in B4/5 (Fossil Cave/Hogans Hole), Bungonia (photo by Lachie Bailey)

Each group took a slightly different route through the cave. The faster groups explored around the entrance of the B4-5 Extension, Kings Cross and checked out the tree roots in Root 19. Much complaint was heard when both faster groups collided in the very squeeze passageway below Root 19, with some excellent acrobatics being required to fit a dozen people into a chamber that would otherwise fit half that number.

The groups rendezvoused in Signature Chamber near the end of the cave to sit down and have some sugary snacks, as there was more climbing ahead of us. Here Bill found what appeared to be a large worm, and after preliminary inspection we deduced that we had found a small snake! Brittany endeavoured to save a life and very carefully extract the serpent from the cave via a small metal bottle to release it near the entrance, based on the assumption it was not a cave dweller. After some research into what we had discovered, she was confident it was a blackish blind snake

(*Anilius nigrescens*), which usually lives underneath leaf litter and travels through tunnels created by insects.

After exiting the cave, Bill turned the contents of his small fridge into a food fountain large enough to feed 5000, offering an abundance of cakes, rolls and cinnamon buns to everyone who had the space to fit it in (*Ed: except Lachlan's group, which exited to crumbs*).

Having feasted, most of the crowd went on a small walk to check out the Lookdown over the beautiful Bungonia Gorge and *slightly* out of place limestone quarry. Following this, the many weary but newly christened cavers packed themselves back into cars, and we returned to the ANU car park where gear was returned and parting goodbyes made.



The blackish blind snake found in B4-5 (photo by Britt Brockett)

Jenolan Jaunt

22nd to 24th March 2019

By Lachie Bailey

Participants: Christopher Bradley, Lachlan Bailey, Bill Lamb, Whitley Rosenberg, Andy Waddell, Maxx Fioriti, Shannon Horan, Daniel Sun, Ellie Bishop, Sophia Cain, Eliza Lane, and Amber Jones

Jenolan has long been one of NUCC's favourite caving locations, as it has a wonderful range of varied caves with plenty to see in them. Plus, it has (*Ed: had*) the added bonus of a caver's cottage with all sorts of useful bits and pieces, like a microwave for the two-minute noodles. Sadly, for many years we'd been unable to visit Jenolan due to a lack of members familiar enough with the caves.

So, after successfully becoming re-acquainted with Jenolan over 2018, we were all keen to have a trip there for our new 2019 members, and 13 of us all piled into cars for the trip up there. We got to the fantastic cottage at 9pm-ish, a cottage that is only sullied by the fact that someone unknown to NUCC has removed the old NUCC poster from the lounge room. Plans are afoot to replace it... Most everyone got to bed at a reasonable time, except for a certain idiot trip leader and foolish canyoner, who stayed up to 1:30am talking about how it would be awesome for NUCC to go canyoning sometime.

Saturday dawned overcast but not rainy-perfect weather for caving! After many cups of tea, the more recalcitrant cavers were brought into line, and we split into two groups for the day's caving. This was at the late hour of 10am, which rather astounded the SUSS cavers who turned up later in the day to cart dive tanks into Slug Lake. Rather than the expected sleepy uni students, they found a deserted cottage.

One group made a beeline to Aladdin Cave, and the other wandered off towards Mammoth Cave. This was slightly complicated by the fact that the guides had only given us one key, and both caves required it to open them. Chris was kindly volunteered by Lachie to shuttle the key between the caves and be

bait for the cloud of leeches around the entrance to Mammoth.

In Mammoth, the group forged onwards, and into Railway Tunnel. Here, the morning's caffeinated start made its sudden revenge, and one member of the intrepid party had to return to the surface for a short break. We wanted to visit Ice Pick Lake via Snakes Gut, but thought better of going through Unsurveyed Connection as there was a fair bit of loose rock around. Instead of going down Hole in the Wall, we took the path of least resistance, and rocketed down Railway Tunnel and around to Hell Hole.

The group enjoyed stomping along the passageway past the World of Mud to Ice Pick Lake. Here lunch was had, and unfortunate bananas laughed at, before a leisurely exit from Mammoth (well, leisurely for everyone except those poor cavers who needed to pee) and trek up to the cottage. Alas, no one could be persuaded to swim in Ice Pick Lake!



Daniel Sun enjoying the tape-climb-slide just before Ice Pick Lake (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

The Aladdin group apparently had a good time, and also visited Rho Hole. Seeing as they all successfully returned to the cottage, it appears that no-one amongst them was talked into entering the Kennedy Trap. Having been thoroughly traumatised by the abundance of pretty stuff in Aladdin, they all retired to the tourist precinct, thoughtfully not telling the other group where they were going.

Still once they returned a relaxed evening got underway, with some disappointed SUSS divers trickling in (Lower River, and thus Slug Lake, was cloudy, which meant no diving). Despite NUCC's usual poor culinary capabilities, no one managed to ruin their dinner this evening, and some people actually prepared real food, rather than the standard 2-minute noodles.

Sunday was a nice relaxed day of caving- the dispirited SUSSlings couldn't even bring themselves to go caving, and the two NUCC

groups went to Hennings Cave and Lower River in Mammoth Cave.

The Hennings group had been planning to visit Wiburds Cave further up the valley, but gave up part way under heavy onslaught of leeches. Golden Grove was visited, but it was quite sad to see that there appears to have been some damage to the formation there.

The Mammothers turned out to be less cowards than the group at Ice Pick Lake the day before, and apparently some members of the party went for a (voluntary) swim. Brrrrr...

The trip home to Canberra was good, with everyone stopping at a bakery in Goulburn for coffee and pies. Most of the party seemed to have enjoyed their stay in Jenolan, and hopefully everyone is looking forward to the next NUCC trip there in June. Maybe we can introduce them all to some of the more *special* delights of Jenolan then, like Mammoth Squeeze or Pirates Delight...



Beautiful formations in the Golden Grove area of Hennings Cave. This area is pristine and quite delicate, so any groups that enter the area need observe the tracks markings (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

Mount Fairy Visitations, Part 1

7th April 2019

By either Chris, Andy, Lachie or Whitley, take your pick

Suspects: Chris Bradley, Andy Waddell, Lachie Bailey and Whitley Rosenberg

Having been on too many SUSS trips, Lachie came up with the bright idea that it was time for NUCC to begin surveying again, after the club took an extended break from it all in the early 1990s. Of course, his survey experience was next to non-existent. So, the field was set for a 'practise' surveying trip to Mount Fairy, using the somewhat derelict surveying gear unearthed in the Great Storeroom Audit of 2019. Only four soon-to-be surveyors could be lured back out caving the day after a Punchbowl trip, which meant that (much to Chris' dismay) everyone ended up in Lachie's car for the trip out past Bungendore.

Trooping up over the hill to Mount Fairy, we dumped all our gear in the entrance chamber of Main Cave (MF1-4), and studied the chambers measureless to all but NUCC. At which point it quickly became obvious- Lachie had chosen a rather complex cave for a first go at surveying... Still, not to be dissuaded, we launched into the survey. Chris and Whitley handled the tape, Lachie sketched, and Andy was the instrumentalist (shame about the lack of church bells, hey).

Immediately, deep existential questions of the sort NUCC is unaccustomed arose- like, are the LRUDs taken perpendicular to the *station* or the *leg*; are we sketching with the true distances or the hypotenusenal distances; and can we use Chris' Scurion as a permanent survey station? After about six legs in two hours (half of that spent arguing), Lachie spat the dummy and stormed out of the cave to have lunch.

On the surface, the sun worked its wonderful calming powers, and everyone agreed to cease surveying for the day before knives were drawn. A tourist trip through the cave was

quickly planned, and just as quickly aborted due to presence of bats. So we did what NUCC does best- napped in the sun for a while and talked about how we could be going caving right now.

After a while, Lachie and Andy wandered off to look for MF25, which has some pretties in it, while Chris meandered up the valley. Whitley snooped around in the gorge, and found a couple of interesting holes. Lachie and Chris came back to see what was up, and Chris and Whitley vanished into the holes, while Lachie took one look at the briar bushes guarding them and had a doze in the creekbed.

After a while Chris came back and reported that there was a squeeze, and Lachie should try it. He did, and got 2/3 of the way through before chickening out (apparently, he's just too damn tall). So Whitley had a go at it, and after removing her helmet, broke through into suspiciously un-trogged cave. A lighter and a camera (but not a Chris or Andy, as neither fitted) were hurriedly passed through the squeeze, and Whitley headed off to explore, with Chris jammed in the squeeze as a communications relay. Lachie and Andy tried to dig an alternative route past the squeeze, but it proved too much for bare hands. After Whitley returned with video of the far section (including some bizarre commentary on worms), we all trooped back to the car in the last of the sunlight, elated that NUCC had found what looked to be a new cave!



View of Cave Creek at Mount Fairy, shortly after NUCC found a new cave (photo by Lachie Bailey)

Mount Fairy Visitations, Part 2

12th April 2019

By Lachie Bailey

Peoples: Chris Bradley, Andy Waddell and Lachie Bailey

There is currently a statement on the NUCC website under the page on Mount Fairy: “We always go to Mount Fairy as a day trip”, so of course Lachie set out to prove the author wrong.¹ The main reason for the trip was that in the space of a week, the status of NUCC’s new cave had become hotly contested, as there was a HSC cave within the margin of error of the GPS used that had a kinda similar map. And plus, we found one cave at Mount Fairy, who knows what else there is to find? I still haven’t located the fire-breathing wombats that are supposed to be endemic to the area; they must be yet another casualty of the NSW government’s environmental policies. So Chris, Andy and Lachie trooped

back, once again (with more dismay from Chris) in Lachie’s X-Trail. Apparently he took the corner off the Tarago road less like a madman this time though, so the club’s driving standards might be improving.

We quickly set up camp, and headed off to say hi to the local landowners. They were really friendly, and we were allowed access to the old quarry area, and to the area around the Effluxes for Main Cave. However, first priority was our new cave, so after a quick squiz at the quarry (some interesting mining relics and lots of blackberries) we headed off across the Zimmerman’s property towards Main Cave and set to work looking for MF59.

Four hours later, we finally found it, buried under a massive thicket of blackberries that Andy had hacked through (getting him appointed as the club horticulturalist). This confirms that our cave from the previous



Chris lighting up a cross-section of the new cave, with a classic modified phreatic profile. It is easily tall enough to stand up here (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

¹ The author being him, of course

weekend was most likely new! With much effort, Lachie, Chris and Andy all made it through the squeeze in the new cave too, and in that order of increasing difficulty as well... We estimated there's about 40m of passageway in the cave, much of it tall enough to stand up in, with some obvious abandoned streamway. A few leads were pushed, one requiring traffic control to delicately pass some straws. A couple of maybe leads remain, along with an obvious dig that would be awful.

We also attempted a voice connection to the MF35 mine adit, with no results except that Lachie was nearly deafened by blowing on his whistle in an enclosed space. Lachie eventually got bored and tapesealed into MF25, discovering that it is a brilliant piece of cave that *really* needs another visit *and* a ladder to get back out.

On finishing the day's caving, a short walk up the valley was had to see the extent of the limestone and spot some of the other

entrances. We got back just on sunset, and were very kindly allowed by one of the landholders to collect some firewood, so the chilly evening was greatly brightened by a campfire.

Day 2 did not feature another visit to the Main Cave area- we wandered around to the Effluxes on Sandhills Creek, and Lachie found another new cave on the hill above them. Sadly, it was smaller than Whitley's at only 6m or so long, and he encountered an unimpressed wombat on the wrong side of a nasty bedrock squeeze. Wedgies were seen, blackberry bushes were contemplated, and surfaces were trogged.

Eventually we crossed over Sandhills Creek and had a look at the limestone on the north side of the creek, although we didn't find anything cavey. A mid-afternoon retreat was made back to Canberra, leaving much unfinished business at Mount Fairy. NUCC will be back...



Lachie delicately attempting a formation choke. Alas, it didn't go, but thanks to careful directions, none of the formation was damaged (*photo by Chris or Andy with Lachie Bailey's camera*)

Wyanbene Wonders

11th May 2019

By Britt Brockett

On Saturday morning, a group of intrepid cavers left ANU bright and early to go and explore Wyanbene Cave. Dressed to survive the wet and cold conditions of a streamway cave, we entered the dark and got down to business (eventually, after much deliberation about how many ladders were needed – for the record, 1 x 50ft was fine).

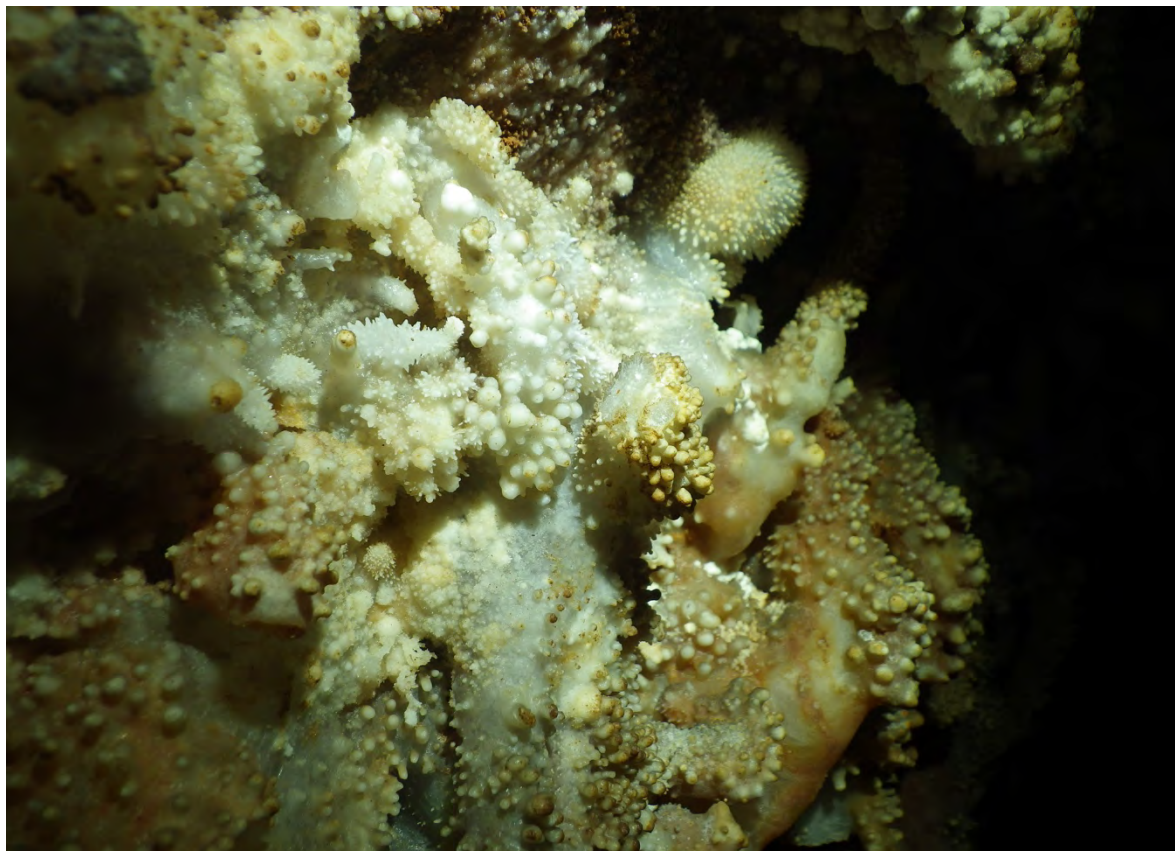
The water level was relatively low, so we stayed dry-ish for the first part after entering the cave. That changed pretty quickly as the water level overflowed gumboots or people abandoned staying dry in favour of easier crawling. Even when the water is low, a streamway cave is still a streamway cave!

By the time we got to the gate, everyone was having a great time. After the handline was set up and the gate unlocked (a difficult process),

people examined the sump and had a chat about the cave. We all agreed that it was pretty great – and we weren't even at the 'good' section yet! Past the gate we explored a small chamber on the other side of a squeeze between the gate and ladder pitch. It had a teasing amount of helictites inside, and got us excited for what was to come.

Helictite Chamber did not disappoint either! There was an amazing amount of formation around us, clumps of helictites larger than anything any of us had seen before, alongside some lovely shawls and a few stalactites. Eventually, though, we continued on towards our final destination, Gunbarrel Aven.

I honestly didn't think anything would impress us more than the helictites, but I was wrong. As you walk into the aven, you're just immediately hit with a sense of BIG walls. The 100m+ of sheer rock curving up into the dark (even Scurions could barely light up the top!) and surrounding you in a circular 'gunbarrel'-esque shape was magnificent. The climbers



Wall formation in Wyanbene Cave (photo by Britt Brockett)

among us were instantly plotting where possible routes could be set, and all of us were just looked around taking it in. We ended up all sitting down and just staring up, trying to decide if the long shape on one of the side walls was a balloon being overgrown by calcite and mud or just a very strange formation, and admiring the huge chockstone that separates the Gunbarrel from another adjacent aven.

After a while, though, the fact that we had spent the last few hours wet caught up to us, and it was time to head out again. I was immensely happy that I had thought to wear knee-pads as we entered the streamway crawl. For once, my knees escaped a trip unbruised!

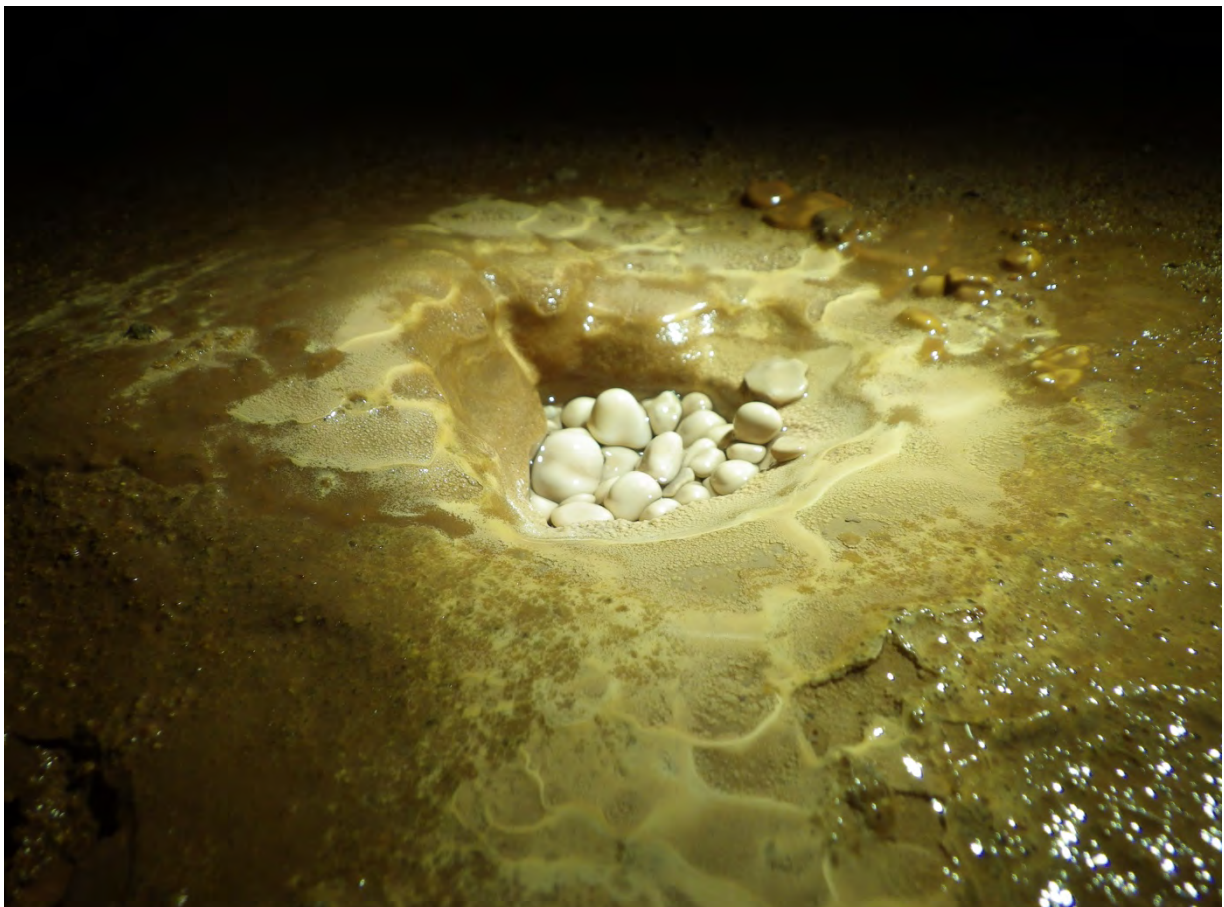
We reached the ladder pitch much faster on the way out than the way in, and it was this time, with nothing to lose by getting even more drenched, that a few of us had a look at the duck under in the streamway. Sitting in chest deep water trying to find a hole that you can't

see is definitely an activity for on the way out of the cave – its not a warm experience. All we have to say about that duck under option is "NO WAY". Its deep and boggy, the gap in the rock is narrow sideways, and it would need digging out before it would be safe to attempt, as there's only about 20cm clearance.

Being soaked while waiting in-between the ladder and hand-line, I was glad that my thermals were pretty effective! Even wearing them, I got a really good feeling of why this section was called the 'Blowhole', and I was glad I didn't have to wait there too long!

It was nearly dark by the time we were out of the cave, and we were all a little weary, but everyone agreed that it had been a great day. There were a few of us who wished we had thought to bring a towel, but we changed into car clothes nevertheless, and by the time we got back to ANU we were nearly warm again!

Wyanbene- would do again!



Small patch of oolites on the floor of the streamway in Wyanbene Cave (photo by Britt Brockett)

Coolleman Easter 2019

19th to 23rd May 2019

By Andy Waddell

The March 2019 Easter Coolleman-Yarrangobilly trip, originally planned as a double between Coolleman and Yagby, was rescheduled to a four day Coolleman due to numbers. Initially, four NUCC members headed up on Friday to set themselves up for an early start the next day. Upon arriving at blue waterholes campground, we were shocked to find such a packed campsite. All of the campgrounds were packed, but luckily we were able to recognise some SUSS vehicles, and set up near their gazebos.

Within an hour of arriving and setting up we were approached by a wild ROC team emerging from the wilderness after exploring Frustration Cave (CP10). Slowly but surely members from SUSS, ROC, MUMC and MSS arrived one by one from various directions until a bustling group of 20 or so campers were sitting around a large campfire, fuelled by planks brought by individuals.

On Friday NUCC and ROC travelled into CP92 and CP93 to explore for recreational caving. CP92 was extremely muddy which didn't help our attempts to navigate the extremely tiny holes that had been dug out within the phreatic tubes. Alan Pryke is to blame for the minimalist dig! CP93 on the other hand was marvellous (*Ed: either you have mixed your caves here Andy, or your version of marvellous is waay off*).

On Saturday NUCC initiated a survey attempt of Black Range Cave (CP12). As it turned out, the Disto had not been calibrated correctly and required a second, more professional attempt at mapping it on Sunday. This was done with much help from Phil Maynard and Ian Cooper from SUSS. On the way to Black Range, we did a quick pass through Barbers Cave (CP14) from the lowest of the two entrances. Once inside, we stumbled across a group of about 10 mates from Wagga in their twenties struggling to get

down the climb connecting the two entrances. They had less than adequate caving gear so we helped them down the climb. They said, "Follow the people with the helmets!", and used our guidance to exit further up the hill. Our help was greatly appreciated, so we were rewarded with beers as we passed by their campsite on our return. At dinner time, there were all sorts of fancy dishes to learn from people; particularly Alan Green from MSS, who slapped a giant slab of lamb on the hot plate (a clear winner).

On Saturday night two more NUCCers arrived to stay the night, and on Sunday we split up in all directions. One group went to Easter Cave (CP21) and only looked through the entrance as we had not received a permit for this cave. I stayed back at the campsite to study and was approached by a couple of rangers throughout the day inquiring about the conditions of the site, as well as a man conducting a survey for the Snowy 2.0 Feasibility Study, which he had apparently been doing for about 2 years.

In the afternoon we ventured into Frustration Valley to find Frustration Cave, which we were not successful in doing because we had walked up the wrong hill. We did however find CP52, where we came across a large spider. After lots of surface trogging we eventually found Clown Cave (CP11) on return, and could only spend half an hour or so in the valley poking our heads in holes.

Monday was spent in Coolleman Main (CP1) and Murrays Cave (CP3), discovering the maps were quite out of date. Some people also went on a drive to Tantangara Reservoir for sightseeing (Lachie got a flat tyre). Overall the trip was a thriller to have so many speleos in one spot at one time.

Mount Fairy Visitations, Part 3

30th June 2019

By Lachie Bailey

Peoples: Lachie Bailey, Whitley Rosenberg, Andy Waddell, Chris Bradley, Britt Brockett

A last-minute-organisation trip out to Mount Fairy to do some of the stuff on the massive hit-list. We literally got access permission the night before, so there had been some talk of SRT at Bungonia instead. The three main goals were to:

A.) GPS locate as many of the caves in and around the main creekline as we could

B.) Take photos and measurements of all the sumps in Main Cave (MF1-4) to provide bait to entice SUSS divers down here²

C.) Relax in the sun

We had some progress on goals A and B. Goal C was the only unmitigated success.

It was extremely windy at the carpark for Mount Fairy, so windy that we were dreading that the valley would be some sort of wind-tube. Everyone geared up accordingly, especially Lachie, who geared up so thoroughly for freezing winds that he needed help to stuff his gumboots on over a billion pairs of socks. We were instead very surprised to find it very pleasant and wind-free in the valley, and immediately set about looking for lost caves and GPSing the ones we knew. This took some time, slowed by the blackberries and some dork losing our only copy of the Mount Fairy book down a shaft, requiring the setup of a ladder and belay to retrieve it. Andy was on form as the NUCC horticulturalist, and Whitley found yet more horrible little crawly holes that may go somewhere.

Chris and Lachie made a foray into Main Cave to try and reach Sump 1, but had to retreat from every attempted route due to the



Britt Brockett fighting the ever-present blackberries and brambles to get a GPS location of one of the 70-ish caves at Mount Fairy (photo by Lachie Bailey)

hibernating bats. However the small sump on the way to the Cat Door (MF50) was reachable, and was quite low and full of yabbies. Neither Chris nor Lachie could entice the other to try the sniffer it presented.

The Cat Door proved easy enough to reach from inside Main Cave, but alas, opens up into blackberry soup. Lachie tried to convince Chris to crawl through a dead wombat into this blackberry mess as a supposed easy route out of the cave, but something about the inordinate amount of glee in Lachie's voice dissuaded him from attempting it.

Eventually the breeze came back, and we beat a very brave retreat back to Canberra after a successful day- we located over two-thirds of the known caves at Mount Fairy. Unfortunately, several new things were also added to the large Mount Fairy to-do list...

² Unnecessarily as it turned out: promise of undived sumps alone was sufficient

Wee Jasper Trip Report

27th July 2019

By Chris Bradley

The trip began with everyone arriving promptly before 8am, except the trip leader who arrived five minutes late (supposedly a tradition). We collected gear from the store room, split into three cars and left for Wee Jasper. It was extremely foggy, so we couldn't see any of the surface geology that Wee Jasper is known for. We decided to split into two groups, with one group laddering into Gong Chamber (the Series 4 Extension in Dip Cave) and the other group exploring Series 1 and 2 via the Rubbish Tip entrance.

My group started with Gong Chamber. I prepared poorly for this cave by wearing Cordura overalls, which left me sweating profusely after a few minutes of caving. Thus, I removed the overalls and spent the rest of the cave in shorts and a T-shirt which was far more comfortable, but left me feeling a little unprotected (some knee pads would have been appreciated). I definitely believe cotton overalls are the way to go for dry caving, especially at Bungonia and Wee Jasper. After laddering out, we attempted to locate the tag, with no luck. Either it has been cleverly placed far from any obvious location, or covered with vegetation as often happens to cave tags.

We had lunch and then swapped caves, with my group entering Dip. The Rubbish Tip entrance seems fairly well maintained with a newish looking rope in place to prevent any slipping and crawling in glass. While my group was exploring Series 1 and 2, apparently the other group was having fun attempting to get each other stuck near Gong Chamber. They discovered a squeeze that takes them into the

same chamber, i.e. utterly pointless (the best kind of squeeze) which you had to be in just the right position to get through. Inside Series 2 I had a little play with photography, but got a little stumped by the focus. Lesson here is to get things working above ground before going underground.

At around 2pm we exited back out the Rubbish Tip to find the other group had finished Gong and been waiting around for 'years'. Since there was still plenty of daylight we migrated over to Signature Cave. On the way we had a little crawl through Amoeba Cave (not sure if that's its actual name) or at least some of us did (*Ed: this is a long running discussion, and I am pleased to report that what we've been calling Amoeba is actually Anemone Cave, WJ26*). It's funny how the most experienced cavers seem the least willing to do crawls, but the most excited to get others crawling...

We had a relaxed stroll through Signature Cave and I got a couple more photos. Afterwards four of us went up the hill to locate the tag on Devils Punchbowl. I was nominated to go search for the tag. After five minutes of finding nothing, Lachlan came in to help and found it instantly, up at the top of the doline. The fog cleared for the drive home so we could actually see the Wee Jasper hillsides. We arrived back at ANU just as the sun was setting, marking the end of a successful and enjoyable trip.



Calcite formation in the caves at Wee Jasper (photo by Chris Bradley)

Bungoniabene

3rd August 2019

By Lachie Bailey

It was time for our Semester 2 Bungonia Beginner's trip. We had a fantastic day's caving planned- B4-5, Grill and Hollands Hole, all a great introduction to sport caving. As normal, we piled into cars, this time fitting all 11 cavers into two cars (six in one, and five in the other) for the short drive out to Bungonia. Everything went swimmingly, and by the time we passed through Bungonia township, we were all looking forward to getting out of the cars and getting underground.

Unfortunately, at the park we were greeted by a closed gate and a big, pink sign, with large, block letters of DOOM in black on it: PARK CLOSED. A smaller, more official NPWS sign declared that the park was closed for feral animal culling (probably aimed at pigs and goats). Oops.

We briefly considered sneaking into the park, but this idea died very quickly, because a), it was completely illegal, and b), we could hear a steady stream of gunshots issuing out of the park.

Sanity prevailed, and we considered what to do. A bushwalk? Most of us weren't properly equipped for the sort of bushwalking Bungonia offers. A canyon? They're all closed too, and besides, it's meant to be a beginner's trip. Mount Fairy? Nope, it's on private property, and is batty at this time of year. Wombeyan? Good luck getting access to anything more exciting than Tinted Cave. Wee Jasper? We were there last weekend and did most of the horizontal options then. Bungonia on private property? Lachie doesn't know who to ask for access, and didn't bring his copy of *Under Bungonia* anyway. Go home to Canberra in disgrace? No, us NUCCers (even NUCCers on their first trip) are made of sterner stuff than that!



What happens to you if you ignore NPWS edicts closing access to your favourite caving area! (photo by Lachie Bailey)

We ended up with two options: Wyanbene, or bouldering at Tianjara. We opted for the former, as limestone was involved, as opposed to the nasty sandstone stuff that climbers seem so fond of. Unfortunately, Wyanbene is a 1.5h drive south of Bungonia, so it wasn't until just after midday that we got there (we stopped at Braidwood for fuel and a break).



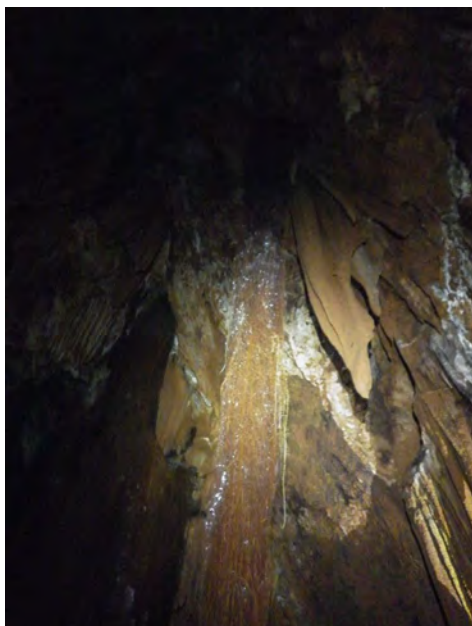
Gearing up and getting ready to go in the Wyanbene carpark (photo by Britt Brockett)

Lunches were quickly scoffed in the carpark as everyone dived into their caving kit, keen to (finally) get underground. Some of the beginners paused after looking at the first wet crawl, but they all leapt at the chance to get wet. Some even managed to stay a bit dry. We all enjoyed stomping down the streamway to look at Sump 1, and one cruel experienced member may have got some joy by indicating that it was the way on.



The party admiring the very dry streamway in Wyanbene Cave (photo by Britt Brockett)

Fortunately, it isn't, and we headed up into the old tourist chamber. After exploring that thoroughly and doing a spot of photography, we climbed up to Bat Chamber to look at the tree roots. It was unusually-un batty, with the



A shawl with a very bad case of mistaken identity (photo by Britt Brockett)

sketchy climb only having a light dusting of guano. After the tree roots received appropriate admiration, we turned round and gradually made our way out of the cave.

Much joy was experienced by all when one gumbooted individual (who had otherwise managed to maintain dry feet) had an encounter with water levels in excess of CWD. We also examined The Elephant on the way out, and came to the conclusion that it is erroneously named: it should be The Mammoth instead (no relation to either the Hairy Diprotodon or Woolly Rhinoceros that continue to haunt cavers at Jenolan). This should be regarded as a contribution to the speleological knowledge of Wyanbene Main Cave of paramount importance.



A mis-identified cavernicolus elephant (photo by Britt Brockett)

On the surface, there was much rejoicing about dry clothes after 2h spent underground. As it was too late for a walk up to the Big Hole, we decamped back to Canberra via Captains Flat. Consideration was had of a visit to the pub there; half the group thought it was a fantastic idea, the other half just wanted to go home. End result: NUCC stayed sober- this time.

Snowy Yagby

17th to 18th August 2019

By Andy Waddell

Peoples: Andy Waddell, Chris Bradley, Bill Lamb, Whitley Rosenberg, Lachie Bailey, Emma Buckland

This trip nearly didn't happen, as we were really worried about all the snow. Instead it turned the Snowy Mountains into a snowscape, all the way from Adaminaby. Lots of brumbies on the way up, and snow around Cotterills Cottage in Yagby Village. We were real keen to get out in it, so dived straight into the snow and headed down to East Deep Creek. Whitley and I were trying out our new trogsuits for the New Zealand trip happening in a fortnight, and they did a good job of stopping the snow and blackberries. The entrance to East Deep Creek was nearly buried in snow, and it was cool to see icicles in the shape of shawls and stalactites around the entrance of the cave. Inside the cave, we went down to an amazing room of formation that we had to detrog for, and Lachie spent ages mucking around with his camera while we all froze in our detrog gear.

Coming out, we went over the hill to visit Restoration Cave, but Whitley, Bill and Emma decided it was getting late and headed back to the cars. Chris, Lachie and I got in as far as the old gate spot, but realised we had the key for the cottage, so headed off after the others. So, no Restoration, but we got a good evening around the campfire instead.

On Sunday, Chris, Emma and Bill went down to Coppermine and enjoyed the front section and

sump. Lachie, Whitley and I went looking for Bathhouse instead, but chose the wrong gully and spent the day bushbashing instead. We decided to follow the creek anyway, and see where it sank, but there were no caves sadly (*Ed: we had the misfortune to pick Traverse Creek, which traverses the limestone, but doesn't have a known sink*). Still we did find a nice waterfall instead, on the creek where it headed down into the gorge before heading home.



Ice stalactites in the (snowed in) entrance to East Deep Creek. Icicles are well know to occur at Eagles Nest, but not often reported in the other wild caves at Yagby (photo by Lachie Bailey)



Above: Whitley admiring a magnificent pool in the East Deep Creek detrog section (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

Below: Andy out of his normal habitat in Yagby with knee-deep snow (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)



New Zealand- Exploring Takaka Hill

31st August to 15th September 2019

By Lachie Bailey, Andy Waddell, Chris Bradley, Lachy Deakin, Whitley Rosenberg

People: Lachie Bailey, Andy Waddell, Chris Bradley, Lachy Deakin, Whitley Rosenberg, Chris Whiting (NSG), Kieran McKay (NSG), (very briefly) Chris Bradley Snr

31-8-19 (Saturday): In Transit

Lachie: Woke up at the awful, awful time of 5:30am to finish packing, tidying and cleaning... Spent all morning running around like a headless chicken, but even despite delivering my spare raincoat to Whitley in Gunners for her to (hopefully) take next Saturday I was ready by the time Chris Snr, Chris Jnr and Andy came past at 11:45am to pick me up. Much amazement ensued, seeing as I've been 5 minutes late for the last 4 caving trips. Despite my worries, we managed to get everything packed in, once I removed a 30m 11mm rope from the rope bag and bestowed it upon Chris Snr. We even managed to get the early bus from Jolimont, leaving at 12:30pm rather than 1pm.

The bus trip was pretty uneventful, and we were early enough that the check-in for our flight wasn't even open yet. Security was painful though- apparently my hair is very suspicious, as the X-ray scanner highlighted it, and I got swabbed for drugs and explosives. Maybe they were bored? Or maybe they heard me pontificating about duty-free being a palace to consumerism and decided to frisk the commie. We killed time at the airport (sleeping), and eventually got onto the plane. Luckily there was still an empty seat where Britt should have been (still sad she couldn't come though), and Lachy and I got upgraded to extra leg-room in the first row. No one got any sleep, so it was still a long 3h flight...

1-9-19 (Sunday): The Pilgrimage North

Lachie: We arrived in Christchurch about 12:45am, and Lachy and I were second off the plane, and first through the obligatory duty-free area. They pounced on us like hawks, even though we didn't want anything. We also got a bit of a hard time in customs- they didn't give a toss about our caving kit, but pulled out our tents and inspected every bit of them.

After escaping the airport (Chris ran into someone he knew from school called Becky), we picked up the cars, which were rather nicer than expected. Lachy was jealous that the Corolla that I ended up with (we booked a Tiida) had Bluetooth. Still had plenty of scratches though, so we took photos of the lot. They also tried to play hardball because no Britt for the car in her name, but luckily a rather aggressive 'I explicitly asked Apex about this, and they said it was fine!' caused them to back down. The Corolla was very different from driving my X-Trail- the suspension actually suspends, the cruise control was confusing, and nothing was where it was meant to be.

Once the cars were picked up, we went searching for a Maccas for dinner- but the first one Andy took us to was closed. The second was open though, so we still got a feed. On leaving, I evidently didn't put my lights on, and didn't notice because we were in a built-up



The sight that we woke up to on the morning of the 1st at Boyle River (yeah gratuitous NZ scenery shot) (photo by Lachie Bailey)

area with overhead lights (and the headlights were extremely dim anyway). I found out quickly though, because I got pulled over by the cops. Good job Lachie: been in the country for two hours and you've already been pulled over. Luckily, I escaped with a warning, and I very nervously proceeded north out of Christchurch. Andy slept, I listened to Magnus Archives, and we saw none of the scenery hidden in the inky blackness.

Eventually we made it to the Boyle River Campground that we were aiming for, and we all slept in the cars. Well, except for me, I slept next to my car using my tent as a bivvy. We nearly gave up before Boyle River to sleep at a roadside pullover, but moved on once we realised that a), we were only 6km short of Boyle River, and b), there was a dead sheep festering in the bushes in the middle of it all. I went to sleep immediately, and then woke up right away as my un-disabled alarm from 5:30am yesterday went off. GAAAH.

Andy: The rest of us slept in the cars, but it really wasn't the worst place on the planet to wake up. Just looking through the windscreen I could see the mountains towering over us and white capped peaks staring back. It was now we realised we'd been driving through a valley and the height of the mountains came as a shock at first. Soon after waking we were on the road again. We drove past magnificent scenery as a backdrop to farms, forests and plains, and everything was very green.

After around an hour or two of driving we arrived at a trig-point and lookout off the road where we admired the many white mountains completely surrounding us far in the distance. It was here that we all realised we were hungry, so decided to grab a bite to eat at the next town. Arriving at Wakefield we went to the bakery and split up because the line was so long. Lachie and I headed off to Richmond while the others waited in line. They were much hungrier than we were!

Arriving in Richmond Lachie I went straight to Greg Pickford's house to pick up the key, which

was stowed in the letter box as he was out. Minutes later he arrived on bike and we got to have a chat with him. Lachy and Chris turned up with the steak and stout pies, which were just what we needed! We ate on the kerb before then heading in to town. In town, we went to Bunnings to grab some gumboots (which are softer than those bought in Australia and not so desirable) and batteries. Next stop was Countdown to grab the food, where Lachie and I made calls to our Dads for Father's Day (in the carpark).

We spent a long time in the shops but made good decisions, lining up some Thai Green Chicken Curry and Vego Lentil/beans for the next couple of nights. Next stop was the booze. The local beer turned out to be very tasty indeed. (**Lachie:** Tui, which turned out to be not so local, and anathema to South Islanders)



Our first round of shopping efforts. You be the judge...
(photo by Lachie Bailey)

Then it was time to head up the mountain. At about this point I discovered how to work the Bluetooth on our vehicle with much delight. (**Lachie:** well, this is somewhat subjective) Coldplay Parachutes was our ambience as we climbed Takaka Hill. The road had been washed out in a number of spots and cars travelled in a single lane governed by a red light where we waited for about 5 minutes. The views were killer with snowy capped mountains in the same portrait as the ocean.

The road into the cottage wasn't as bad as I had thought it would be (the bad bits were done up six months ago). The cottage itself impressed all of us though, with its spacious main room, fire, abundance of firewood, and good quality dunnies. What was most exciting were the caves we stumbled across and peeked down barely within 10m of the hut. Most of the drops looked about 10-15 metres. One cave on the walk to the dunny was covered in a grill in case people fall down 15m on their way to the loo... Oops! After a small peak around it was time to crack open the beer, and start cooking dinner (**Lachie:** Thai Green Chicken Curry, or should that be Thai Green Curry Chicken).

Lachie and I headed down the hill a bit west to make a phone call to Chris Whiting from NSG for some advice on the local caves. While he was doing that, I took some pictures of the sun setting over the mountains at Harwood Lookout, which was nearby. We very much enjoyed the extra strong tea Lachie had gotten and made many cups of it (Chanui Extra Strong, comes with a tea-addict's stamp of approval).

A little into the night a head-torch wandered near the hut. We went out to have a look and met Bruce, a local from Nelson, and someone who had helped build the impressive hut. He stayed the night and left first thing in the morning. Overall the day was pretty exciting: getting used to our new home for the next couple of weeks, and enjoying a much needed good night's sleep on large mattresses in a warm room.

2-9-19 (Monday): Summit Tomo

Chris: Woke up at a lovely 10am. Drove for ages (5 minutes) to car park. Walked up firetrail, turned right at walking trail, turned left into scrub about 5 metres after intersection. Went down doline, found cave



The sumptuous NSG Hut on Takaka Hill that was to be our abode (photo by Lachie Bailey)

(**Lachie:** thanks to Chris Whiting's instructions, my grid reference that I got from an old NZSS Bulletin put the cave nearly 400m away). Little crawl into cave to begin, then 10m in slightly squeeze tape climb. 10m further dodgy unassisted climb around and down a rock pile. Got halfway through the climb before becoming petrified of the heights (was only mildly terrified beforehand). Andy tried talking me down, and explaining where to put hands/feet... didn't help. After about 5 minutes, Deakin came back to help. He came to where I was and redid the climb, and then I just copied that. That seemed to work. Walked/slid down 10m steep mud bank. Saw

exiting I had a chat to a nice old lady who found it a bit strange to see someone walking around in overalls with a helmet on. Apparently she has a daughter who works with Nelson national parks finding caves. I went down to the car to put SRT kit away, then returned to the cave to drop the car keys off.

I then decided to walk up the nearest hill to see the view. It took about 5 minutes before I got too hot for my overalls, so carried them for the rest of the day. I was following a track, unaware of where it went, but figured I would follow it until I either reached the end or had been walking for 3 hours and needed to return to the hut for our agreed emergency time of



Chris wandering around on the Takaka Hill Walkway (photo by Lachie Bailey)

glow worms in Ruamokos Hall. Walked down Ruamokos Hall over heaps of loose rocks. Got down to handline, watched Lachlan and Andy do it easily, then attempted it but didn't like it at all so gave up and exited cave.

Deakin came back up to the climb I hated to make sure I was ok, I got it done a little faster this time, but not much. I banged my knee on the tape climb on the way out. That hurt. After

8pm. The track came to T-intersection and I turned right to continue upwards. When I reached the top there were about 5 towers and a quaint little house on a nearby hill. You could see the ocean, along with multiple mountain ranges with snow topped peaks. I'm guessing I could see Mt Arthur, but I wasn't sure which one it was.

Oddly the track continued down the other side of the peak, but thankfully there was a map that explained that I was on the Takaka Walkway loop. Based on the map, the loop looked around 5km, so I decided to continue round. It was mostly nice walking with a few rainforest sections and a few more nice views, although the track could do with some trimming. New Zealand has plenty of super spiky plants, I recommend long pants for that walk.

There were caves scattered along the walk with each one having its own little 'Danger Tomo' signpost. Once I finished the loop I walked down to check out the dead cow that was well preserved inside a broken down house. I also did the rainforest loop. The first half of the loop was nice, following a river inside a rainforest, and goes past the point where the river goes into a cave. The second half was more prickly stuff, don't recommend.

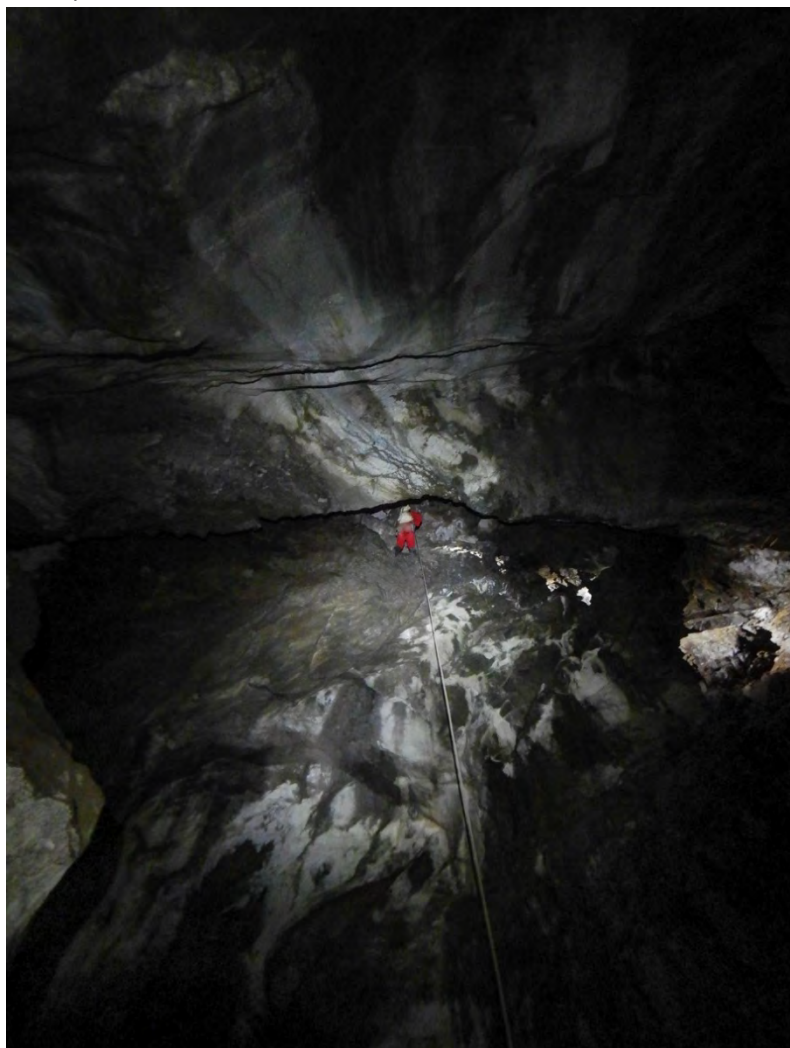
I then walked back to the hut, and explored the surrounding property.

Lachie: After Chris left us, Andy and I went to the top of the first pitch in Summit Tomo, called Protector Pitch, and I started deploying the fixed rigging. Lachy got back just as I had finished, and we proceeded down the pitch, which had a real shit first rebelay a few meters down. It was followed by a second rebelay shortly after (less nasty), and then became a nice free-hang into a big chamber.

At the bottom of this, I had a minor case of geographic embarrassment, but we quickly found the right way down to a pretty impressive streamway passage. This dropped down a series of rather fun waterfalls, and then vanished down a hole

towards what I presume is Turehu Towers. We left the streamway here, and went up an 11m pitch, and then down another short pitch (yet more awkward rigging) and along a rather damp rift. This rift eventually matured into a waterfall and the final pitch.

We had lunch at the bottom of this and crusied on deeper into the cave. I chose the left branch- it would later transpire we should have gone right because left is nasty. We went a while, but had given Chris a call out time of 8pm. Well, it was a call out time for him, in case he'd broken a leg hopping over the karst and was bushed somewhere. But we hadn't made it clear it was for him only and not for us too- and plus you can't exactly call out a search party for someone while you're underground! So we turned around after about 4h



Andy abseiling down the Protector Pitch (photo by Lachie Bailey)



The consolation wall formation for us after going the wrong way and missing Boots Off in Summit Tomo (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

underground, and headed to the surface. I had a nasty time getting back- I lost a glove on the waterfall pitch just as I finished de-rigging, and as I couldn't see it down below was disinclined to go get it, although I'll come back later in the trip! I also started getting leg cramps on the pitch before we got to the 11m (now down) pitch, and needed Andy's help to extricate myself from being suspended in mid air. The 40m pitch was also a bummer- I was now getting both arm and leg cramps, which is rather incapacitating while prusiking. They got so bad that after manoeuvring myself past the last rebelay on the way up, I couldn't feel or move my thumbs- they were both cramped into place. Thankfully, Lachy and Andy helped with tidying up the fixed rigging, and we made a swift exit from the cave. There was frost settled on our car parked at Takaka Hill Walkway, and not surprisingly, we had the whole carpark to ourselves...

Summit Tomo was a fantastic introduction to New Zealand caves, and if they're all like this, it should be a great trip! We got back to the



Lachy trying desperately to keep dry feet in Summit Tomo (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

cottage at 7:30pm to find that Chris was safe and sound and had a fire set for us. A late but delicious dinner of lentils and veggies followed. The hut has a shower that is operated via a bucket with some hose attached to it, and we contemplated using it, but decided to instead get an early(ish) night before Middle Earth and the infamous Lighthouse Pitch tomorrow.

3-9-19 (Tuesday): Middle Earth

Lachie: A big day. A very big day. I will admit I had some somewhat nervous feelings about what we were committing too- my phone call to Chris W had resulted in him offering to take us on a round-trip through Middle Earth Cave. I was excited by this, as I really wanted to visit Middle Earth, and Chris W was taking us up the Lighthouse Pitch, which Alex Williams from ROC had recommended that we must absolutely do while we were at Takaka. But Chris W was very reassuring when we met him at the Harwoods Hole turnoff for the short drive to the cave, and was surprised by how far

into Summit Tomo we had gotten the previous day. Apparently the 'Boots Off' section was the best way to go, not the nasty crawly way we chose and stopped at (oops, it looked better on the map). But apparently Boots Off is very nice, so between that and my missing glove, so I think there is unfinished business here... Maybe once Whitley arrives? Chris also reckons Turehu Towers is boring, but I still kind wanna.

Anyway, we quickly dived into the cave (me wearing one Macpac glove and one Bunnings gardening glove), which is only a short distance from the main road, using our shiny 54m 9.5mm rope to rig the first pitch (fast!). From here, the cave was pretty full on: we clattered past the bottom of the Enviro Pitch, down into Smaugs Hall, down the Connection Pitch. This was just after a mucky crawl, so was a very slow rope, so slow that Chris B needed to use my rack to get down (and then I had to haul it back up). He also kicked a massive boulder loose on the way down, which thankfully



Stunning New Zealand landscape, looking from Takaka Hill down to Golden Bay. Unfortunately, we didn't take any photos of the awesomeness that was Middle Earth (*photo by Andy Waddell*)

missed Chris W and Andy at the bottom (it would have been deadly).

Continued down through the Hall of Ships, past the Greenlink Connection, and had lunch shortly afterwards at the halfway point. After this it was up, up, up, down Cannonball Alley, UP, UP, up, up. This part of the cave is a massive, impressive chamber: Wyanbene's Gunbarrel Aven on steroids. The Lighthouse Pitch failed to disappoint, even from below: a freehanging pitch in a vast chamber, 60m up to a distant ledge on the roof. Then followed a pendulum and a series of small rebelay, up maybe another 50m in bits. I kinda screwed up the pendulum, and pendulumed myself into the far wall: a wall of marble punching you in the face after about 10m of acceleration hurts! And even as I write this on Wednesday night, my nose still doesn't quite feel the same... Thankfully, both Chrises, Andy and Lachy all failed to complete a similar trick, and we all got to the top safely, albeit slightly spooked by a

small rub-point somewhere around 105m above the deck.

Chris W then led us out through the upper sections of Middle Earth to the Hobbit Hole, which had some really spectacular formation (although all of us were a bit too tired to appreciate it). We even had a peek at Pickford's Parlour, which reminded me of the streamway in Eagle's Nest at Yagby. Chris W had a different name for it though, based on what a French gentleman called Benoir had gotten up to in there (*Ed: I really hope I'm slandering the right person here*). We made it out of the Hobbit Hole right on the dot of 7:30, which was a relief, as Chris W had specified a call out time of 8pm. Another fantastic cave, and thanks so much to Chris W for taking his time to help the Aussie tourists through it! We decided to leave our 54m rope in the cave and retrieve it later: we were all keen to be back at the cottage, and a trip back to the Enviro Pitch would be nice. Chris W accompanied us back to the hut for a beer, and gave us some



We still have no Middle Earth photos, so you get another random piccy, this time of Andy looking at Earl Grey. Earl Grey is right next to the NSG Hut, but we never got around to entering it (photo by Chris or Lachy with Andy Waddell's camera)

recommendations of caves to visit, and we spent a good couple of hours chatting about caving in the area before he headed home. Dinner was a mashup of whatever we had, so onions, paprika, cumin and coriander cooked together as a sauce, along with the free gravy from Countdown at Stoke and rice. The gravy was a fantastic addition: maybe it was just because it was free (a previous customer left it behind, so they gave it to us), but it tasted yummy. We all slept very well tonight!

4-9-19 (Wednesday): Shopping Odyssey

Lachie: After Middle Earth yesterday we were all feeling a little bit tired, and decided on a rest day, under siege by the Hut's resident weka. The fact that it was bucketing down rain and we were mostly out of food also helped convince us of our choice! So after a leisurely breakfast and morning, we all trooped off down the hill to Motueka for some house-keeping. Andy camped in Maccas for the free wifi, I went to Mitre 10 to procure new gloves (still want the missing one back though), and Chris and Lachy went to Countdownworths to

get more food. We did a somewhat better job of planning out meals this time- hopefully we have 6 nights food, rather than the 3 we got in last time...

We regrouped in Maccas and spent a while there waiting for my computer to charge, before heading back up the hill to home. As with both previous trips, we got stuck at the lights. I swear that they're perpetually stuck on 6-12 minutes! Like any good rest day, the rest of the arvo and evening was occupied by beer, tea, chatting, reading, and no attempt to go caving whatsoever, despite the three obvious entrances beckoning at us within a short walk of the cottage (Earl Grey, Cabbage Pot, and something small, nasty and likely nameless). I cooked chilli for dinner, which seemed to be a hit, despite the lack of chilli in it.

Made plans for tomorrow too: I was keen to visit Eds Cellar, but Kieran warned us off it after the rain by text (hopefully he'll be around tomorrow evening). So we're going to go to Commentary Cave (Chris reckoned it should be fine), and check out Little Harwoods Cave if we



New Zealand has fun birds. This one is called a Weka. It lives at the NSG Hut and irregularly held us hostage by stealing our food and gear. It STLL has one of my socks (photo by Lachie Bailey)

can find it. Fingers crossed that my grid reference for it is a little bit more accurate than the one I had for Summit Tomo...

5-9-19 (Thursday):Takaka Valley

Lachie: Bearing in mind the warnings from Chris W and Kieran about the general wetness of everything, we headed down Takaka Hill to the west. Aim of the day: Commentary Cave, a cave that apparently never floods in any weather. The drive down the hill was slow, with a damp road and lots of very sharp turns. No rain, thankfully, and the forecast suggested that it should hopefully be a bit dry for the rest of the day. We found the relevant farmer's field, and spotted the area with caves pretty easy- a large hill studded with dolines.

However, getting ready to go caving was less than easy: as we had now abandoned the heights of Takaka Hill, the sandflies we out. In Force. They went for me first, descending in a cloud of doom, whilst just pestering Chris, Andy and Lachy. But the doom-cloud spread, first to Andy, and then to Chris and Lachy. Soon we were all racing across the farmer's fields, hoping to outpace the cloud of sandflies behind us.

Also, we were all quite grateful of the fact that caving involves pretty much neck-foot clothing cover... Sandflies may be tough, persistent bastards, but even they can't bite through cordura overalls!

We went through a huge gate, and up the hill to the pine plantation, past a small impenetrable resurgence (possibly the Commentary Cave resurgence). Then we

followed the edge of the pine plantation till we came to a running stream, which plunged down a small pitch into a cave in a semi-circular streamsink. Bingo!

We figured this was the Tomo Entrance, and plunged off into the cave enjoying the glowworms and streamway. Much to our distress though, this large, never-flooding cave soon became small and crawly, with pinecones and other flood debris embedded in the roof. After a couple of hours wandering around in this, everyone was starting to get the jitters and worry about flood risk. Luckily, we soon came to a daylight hole, and with some sketchy climbing and rigging on the part of both Lachlans, we were soon back on the surface.



Andy abseiling into what is almost certainly not Commentary Cave
(photo by Lachie Bailey)



Glowworms webs in un-Commentary Cave. I wish we got glowworms in caves over here in Australia, they're cool! (photo by Lachie Bailey)

The tomo we climbed through certainly wasn't the Monster Mouth Entrance that we'd been aiming for! It was also now raining, so we were VERY glad to be out of this clearly flood-prone stretch of cave (it's possible this was Weka Cave, not Commentary Cave).

To while away the afternoon, we went surface trogging amongst the many dolines on the hill. Chris and I found a couple of interesting holes that went nowhere, but we were soon recalled by Andy and Lachy, who wanted me to rig something interesting they'd found. Lachy reported that there was a 10m pitch just past a small squeeze, and pointed me at it to rig it. I excitedly dived in, contorting myself and my SRT kit through the squeeze to find a delectably dead-end chamber with no pitch.

Suspicious giggling noises were heard outside, and soon a grumpy Bailey was pointed at the actual 10m pitch, all of 3m away. This went down a nasty slot to a dead end chamber, with a side chamber that connected into the pitch half way down.

Definitely a cave (it even connected back into the small practical joke hole from earlier), and if it was Mount Fairy, we'd even give it a name (Andy found it, and offered Peanut

Butter Pit because of the peanut butter coloured cave coral). But this is New Zealand, so we can't even put a tag on it- apparently the Kiwis tried plastic tags and decided they didn't like them. You need to try metal tags, people! We faffed around our new cave a little bit (we were pretty confident no one had been down



Reorganising kit in the rain after our nosey into Peanut Butter Pit. Takaka Hill is somewhere off in the rain behind Chris (photo by Lachie Bailey)

there), pushing any lead we could. But they all died, and this cold, damp work eventually caused us to retreat off the hill, back to the cars, and up to the hut.

On the way back, we discovered that the (electric) fences in the farmer's paddock had migrated slightly, and were mobbed by curious cows looking for something to eat. We decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and didn't hang around to give them a chance to find out what caver tastes like.



Andy preaching to his flock and trying to convince them to join his religious moo-vement. I think they would have, if he had something to feed them (photo by Lachie Bailey)

Beef snags (take that cows!) with veggies, rice and gravy for dinner; the gravy was yummy. Chris and I went to contact Whitley while dinner was cooking and check out her plans for Saturday. Lachy and Andy finished the cooking. Got back to find mere scrapings left, although the other two protested that this represented 'half'. Chris also offered up his highest praise ever for my driving; apparently it was 'tolerable' in the Camry (**Lachie, note on behalf of Chris:** praise retracted on Wednesday the week after).

6-9-19 (Friday): Bushwalk (err..tramping) Day!

Lachie: Today dawned wet again, so we decided it was bushwalk day, although we did nearly take the cop-out option of Cabbage Pot and Earl Grey instead. Headed back down the hill to the west to Takaka township, and kept on going to Golden Bay. Lovely countryside; if it wasn't for all the damn sandflies, I think I could live here! Also got final confirmation from Whitley that she was coming- the next day! We all agreed that booking international flights within 24h of the flight departing was cutting it a teeny bit fine... We were tossing up between Parapara Peak and Farewell Spit. Farewell Spit won, as I protested that I didn't want to do a 18km walk with 1km of elevation gain when there was no possibility of views. Chris was disappointed.

The country out on Farewell Spit was really pretty, and Andy, Chris and Lachy were raring for the bushwalk. And not really patient for me, as I mucked around with the range of tech that I was keen to hang off myself prior to departing (camera, GPS, phone...). Chris led off, and we headed off to Fossil Point as the chosen destination. Well, for 200m at least anyway, because we took a wrong turn and followed the southern beach of Farwell Spit. This was adjudicated to be an agreeable mistake, and we continued to cruise out along the beach, enjoying the birds, shells and mudflats. Eventually the Spit Walk crosses Farewell Spit, and we enjoyed exploring the massive bald



Looking back along Farewell Spit to the mountains (photo by Lachie Bailey)

sand dunes around here. Lunch was had on the highest point we could find, with majestic views back to Visitor's Centre, and out to the end of Farewell Spit.

We'd slightly deviated off the track at this point, so after lunch, headed in a straight line back to the beach (and track). We were all enjoying cruising along the open sand-dunes and swales at our own pace, when there was a massive shout and squelching noise from Andy at the back. Funny, there hadn't been any lakes around. Turns out we had wandered into the middle of a massive quicksand bog, and Andy was the first to stand still long enough to find out about it. Rather than wear his gumboots, Andy was wearing his sandals over his joggers (because apparently neither were suitable for a bushwalk), and the sand had just tried to claim both. And Andy's leg.

This was of course good amusement for the rest of us, and we stood around watching the show and laughing at him as he tried to get his equilibrium back. Fun for the first 30 seconds anyway, as soon we'd all been standing still for too long, and all started having issues too. So the next 15 minutes were enjoyed squelching our way through the quicksand, laughing at each other. Thankfully, it wasn't real bad quicksand, although it could have killed you if you tried, or if you were on your own. No one

ended up in deeper than thigh deep, although I did nearly face-plant into it all. We got to the beach, and regrouped at the DON'T GO PAST THIS SIGN sign, and I washed all the quicksand out of my boots. Chris then decided to find out how far he could walk back along the beach with his eyes closed, in a straight line. He managed about 4.5km, or until he ran out of beach. Unfortunately there

wasn't much straight line to be seen, and everyone had a wonderful time laughing as he obviously walked into sandbanks and



Andy having a near-quicksand encounter (photo by Lachie Bailey)



Chris and Andy trooping out on the flats to Eds Cellar (photo by Lachie Bailey)

driftwood. Back to the cars via the Puponga Hilltop Walk, and a quiet drive back to the hut. Or at least for Chris and Andy anyway- I got sick of Andy's music, and when Andy went to sleep, replaced it with a horror podcast at full-volume (so I could hear it over the rain, of course).

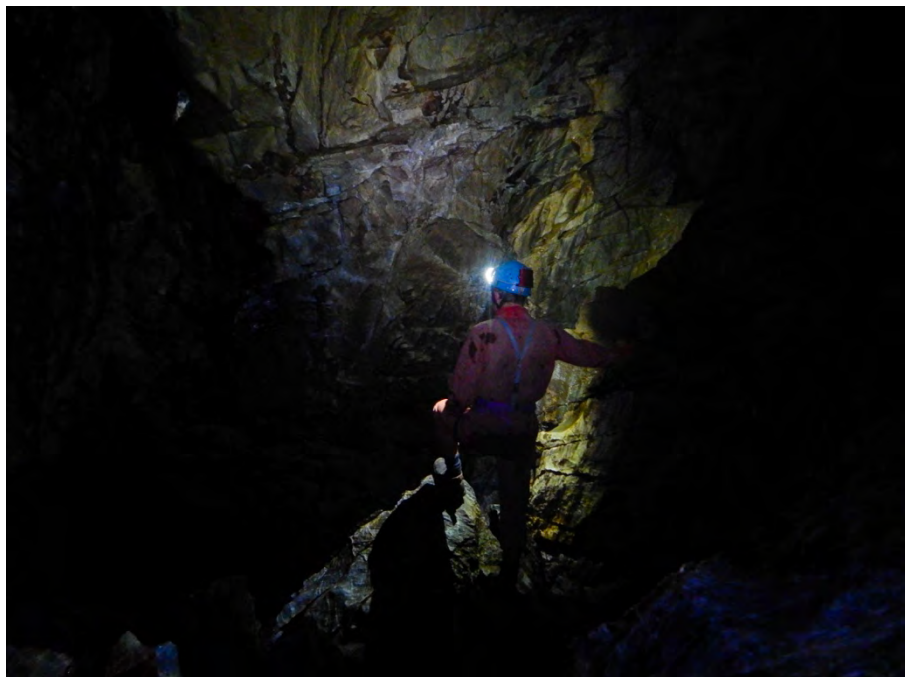
7-9-19 (Saturday): Eds Cellar

Lachie: Off down the hill at horrendousAM to pick Whitley up at Nelson airport. The others declined to accompany me, and went and did the Takaka Hill Walkway instead. Aimed to get into Nelson at 9am, so that I'd be there when Whitley arrived, but didn't account for the roadworks at the bottom of Takaka Hill, so got there just after she had left the airport. I figured I'd have a bit of spare time, but also didn't account for the small airport factor (I may also have gotten lost in Richmond). Listened to Alice Isn't Dead on the way down, so that I could tell my sister what I thought of

it. Pretty good, although I guess it'll have to wait for me to get back to Canberra to finish it. We visited the market in Nelson on the way back to Motueka to meet the others at Maccas- it was a fantastic market. Was slightly out of it though, after a week of caving, the whole bustle of commerce thing was rather ethereal.

After more shopping at Motueka, we all trooped off back up

the hill to the cottage. It was early afternoon, so we dropped Whitley off at the cottage for a nap (she hadn't slept since Canberra), and continued on to go caving. Target for today: Eds Cellar, which you get to from the Harwood Hole carpark. It's a nice 1.5km walk along farm tracks to the cave, which is in a well-cloaked doline. The first pitch is just inside the cave, and Andy fell asleep at the top of it while



Chris surveying the inky blackness of Grannies Grotto (photo by Lachie Bailey)

waiting, bailing out of the cave. Down to three now... We got to Grannies Grotto before turning around. Back to the hut to meet a just-awakened Whitley, and a late dinner at about 9:30pm.

(Intermission)

Andy: About now Lachie's laptop ran out of power. And we were far too lazy to write anything up on paper after consistently returning to the hut exhausted. So I'm writing the following entries in December 2019, long after the trip. Admittedly, it would have been a lot nicer to have done this a few months ago while the memories from the trip were still fresh. But this is the best I can do for now. I'll try to keep it brief so as to not unintentionally give a false recount of events.

8-9-19 (Sunday): Riwaka Resurgence

Andy: Sunday was the best day yet, a comment I made many times on the trip because the caves just kept on getting better and better!

We drove to the base of the hill to attempt the mighty Riwaka Resurgence, the spot where all of the caves on Takaka Hill comes to an end. There was a very large flow rate of water surfacing from the very base of the hill. In previous years, this had been the entrance for cave divers into the cave, the only who could get in. And what a mighty current they would have had to fight. We walked through the lovely rainforest up the hill a few hundreds meters on a small track that took us to Simply Sumplless, a humble hole in the ground. Simply Sumplless had only been discovered in recent years, and the dense rainforest it was buried in indicated why. We climbed steeply down a series of squeezes very similar to Rho Hole at Jenolan. It was very unlike NZ because of all of the squeezing, and felt very much like home. That was until we reached the bottom of the climb. What came next was amazing.



Chris examining the pool where the Riwaka River resurges. This single point drains Summit Tomo, Middle Earth, Greenlink and a host of other caves on southern Takaka Hill *(photo by Lachie Bailey)*

We plunged into a massive room, much larger than the one with the Lighthouse Pitch, although not quite as high. There was a loud, large flowing river through a rock pile and past a magnificent chunk of pure flowstone where we took a few pictures, which did not do the creature any justice. We climbed up the other side of the cavern and navigated through large boulders to another large room about 15m high. Lachie and Whitley sat down for a small nap while Chris and I went down a path that was full of formation. Returning to Lachie and Whitley we realised that Lachie had already proceeded further into the cave and climbed a mammoth rock pile. It was unfortunate Lachie and Whitley didn't make it into the next chamber, mere meters away, because it is a room I don't think I will ever forget.

We climbed a large rock pile and in front of us was a perfectly smooth wall. Unlike anything we had seen before, the wall was 10m2, a

completely flat surface. All of the marble rocks we were climbing on were perfect cuboids, with sharp edges and vertices as if we were in a giant's Lego playground. The ceiling had holes in it the shape of cubes, the same shape as the rubble we were climbing through. The boulders were a few meters in diameter. It was astonishing how clean cut all of the objects were. We failed to find a rope to the next passage hidden amongst the boulders. Apparently just a couple of years ago this was a walk through passage. And so (presumably from an earthquake), all of these rocks had fallen recently, and had fractured at very clean cut shear planes – especially for the massive wall which nothing short of a large shear plane! You really wouldn't want to be there the day the roof caves in, which could be any day, as the cave would rain thousands of tonnes of rock on you, and if lucky enough to safely shelter, would've definitely lost all hearing!



Chris under very active flowstone in the Riwaka Resurgence. In times of heavy floods, the spot he's standing in can be metres underwater (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

**9-9-19 (Monday):
Middle Earth Again**

Andy: We decided to drive back to Middle Earth, nearby. We had planned to go here anyway as we had left the 54m rope rigged on our last trip, which was near the entrance. It was also another chance to get in the cave. This was a pleasant trip as we were already partially familiar with the route. It was also nice to show Whitley the cave. We went up through the Eco Pitch / Enviro Pitch, didn't have time to revisit the Lighthouse Pitch, but got another glimpse at Benoir's sex dungeon (*Ed: Pickford's Parlour, good to see that I'm not alone in slander*), which beside its dirty history was definitely a highlight of the trip (also, not a very comfortable place to get it on). It was a room packed to the brim with flowstone and a perfectly still reservoir immersed amongst rimstone pools. There was even a little beach. It was here we turned around and came out of Hobbit Hole again, this time in daylight.



Chris, Whitley and Andy enjoying the sun outside Middle Earth's Hobbit Hole entrance (photo by Lachie Bailey)

When it was time to collect the rope, Lachy and I thought it would be fun to see how quickly we could race down, collect the rope and race back up through the rock pile (now laden with a heavy rope bag). We managed to get down and up in 7 minutes, subtract the time it took to pull up the rope from the 40m pitch. Surprisingly, it took only about 30sec extra on the way up with the bag. Interestingly, gravity was not a major factor affecting our time, rather it was remembering the route on the way down!



Looking out to distant mountains over Canaan Downs. Eds Cellar is down in the valley, on the right (photo by Lachie Bailey)

**10-9-19 (Tuesday): Eds
Cellar with Dive Tanks,
and Corkscrew**

Andy: We heard that Chris and Lachy had a pretty sporty day in Corkscrew, but Lachie's and my journey through Ed's Cellar nearby, was an absolute epic. We had already been to Ed's Cellar, where I had conked out from a powerful food coma at the entrance. This time we offered to help

Kieran Mckay, a very experienced NZ caver, do an exploratory dive in a stream only found a few weeks earlier. We were joined by Chris Whiting. This was the best day of caving yet, again. And it completely squeezed it out of us. It involved lots of crawling through passageways, pitches and most importantly, fighting through powerful waterfalls, all with heavy dive equipment.



Chris Whiting sheltering in his Speleoponcho to stay warm while Kieran gears up for his dive (photo by Lachie Bailey)

Once we reached the bottom we were very cold because we had just been baptised by a wall of water. So we very much appreciated the thermos tea Chris had to share around. Kieran's dive was short because the passage narrowed at the bottom, where he would need a different set of kit next time. Prusiking back up the waterfalls was again an immense challenge and despite the waterproof overalls, there was nowhere the water couldn't reach. We arrived on the sun setting and I had a wonderful chat with Kieran. He used to run leadership training trips down Harwoods Hole for soon-to-be NZ Army Generals. He told me that they were more scared caving than when under fire by the enemy!

We arrived back at the carpark to meet the fellas from Corkscrew, and drove back to Whitley, who was taking a rest day.

Lachy: Corkscrew cave was an interesting cave. We'd been told of many bolts but were surprised to find that we had to go off natural rigging points most of the time (and unfortunately, we didn't bring much tape).

Given we had mostly brand new 9mm rope we spent a lot of time carefully choosing rigging points and using advanced techniques to minimise rubbing (e.g. shoving a bag between the rope and a corner).

Chris took charge and got us most of the way down until we found some precarious bolts. The bolts were a few metres out from a safe ledge and directly above

a 15m or so drop. I tied myself in and carefully made my way across knowing that if I fell, I would swing back and feel some pain. I was bridging across, but it got a bit too wide. I ended up smearing one foot with the other foot on a tiny little ledge. I reached out and managed to get a carabiner into a bolt and descended feeling relieved.

Chris then jumped on rope and said some notable things such as "this is the most precarious position I've ever been" and "you are crazy" as he made his way across to the bolt. He turned around only to notice an extra bolt hidden away that would make the whole thing far safer and easier. I came back up and we rigged it again with that bolt. Chris came down and went down one more pitch but then

we decided it was time to head back to the surface. Overall it was a good cave, but we wish we had come with more tape!

11-9-19 (Wednesday) and 12-9-19 (Thursday): Castle Rocks Tramping

Andy and Lachie: After a very physically intense day on Tuesday we decided to go for a tramp. We had been planning to walk up to Mount Arthur Hut and frolic in the snow, but after an hours' drive, we got to the Graham Valley Road and discovered Flora Saddle was closed for roadworks. So around we turned, and back up the Hill it was for option two, Castle Rocks. On the drive we stopped at the Ngarua Cave lookout, where we ate the usual cheese and salami with bread rolls (this time with added lettuce).

We parked at the Harwoods Hole carpark, and began our delightful walk through the bush. There were wonderful views all around (the default for tramping in New Zealand), with the snowcapped ranges of Kahurangi National Park on the other side of the Takaka Valley forming a wall to the world. Eventually the views of distant mountains were overtaken by beech forest, which seemed amazingly verdant and lush to Australians used drought-stressed gumtrees. There was plenty of interesting stuff to look at, with many small bush birds and plenty of fungi along the track.



Too much interesting stuff to photograph on the track! (photo by Lachie Bailey)

We just made it to Castle Rock Hut on the Abel Tasman Inland Track just before dusk. Everyone agreed that it was an excellent track- plenty of roots and mud bogs to keep everything interesting, but never overgrown enough that you actually had to fight your way through the bush. The hut was very nicely set up, and had a very high tech fireplace which

made it unbearably hot at night due to the lack of ventilation. As usual, Chris slept in his bivvy on the patio!

As the first thing in the morning, we went out to see the view from the Castle Rocks that Castle Rock Hut is (not quite exactly) named after. This had prime views out to the east of the ocean and nearby snowy peaks. The beautiful scenery bestowed an instant case of itchy-feet, and the walk back was full of



The view from Castle Rocks out across Tasman Bay (photo by Lachie Bailey)

discussion about more ambitious walking ideas, like the Dusky Track, the Overland Track, and the Australia Alps Walking Track. Chris had already ran to the lookout the night before and was feeling equally ambitious. So, instead of returning the way we had come like the rest of us, he completed a much larger loop and actually beat us to the car! We had been very slow at packing up in the morning... Or at least that was the excuse anyway.

13-9-19 (Friday): HARWOODS HOLE!

Andy: Today was the day of all days. The cave of all caves. Harwood's Hole. This trip had been anticipated for months, and we had debated regularly over whether we should actually do it. Lachie in particular was worried about the rope dynamics, and that it was too dangerous, and, and much more.

Unfortunately Chris was feeling unwell with a bad case of the chuck-ups, and stayed at the hut. In hind-sight was a very good idea.

To get to the hole, you have to for about 45 minutes. I carried the 200m rope on my back, which was the largest cave pack I have even seen. When we arrived at the hole we were blown away by its sheer size and even though we could not yet see to the bottom, it was already quite nerve-wracking. It took a little while to find the bolts at the top of the pitch, and Lachie mistakenly started rigging the wrong approach gully off natural anchors. This wasted a bit of time, but he did find a very expensive drone that someone had lost to Harwoods Hole.

Nevertheless, we eventually got it, and rigged everything up. While looking for the actual bolts, we found a few climbing bolts that traversed up the wall over the hole – which was crazy! We rigged a 60m rope as well as the 200m rope for the purposes of rope recovery. We decided to communicate by clapping rocks as no voice can be heard down 200m vertical meters, and one of the two whistles had been



Whitley, Lachy and Andy posing for a photo at the top of Harwoods Hole (although the Hole goes up for at least another 30m). Helpful tip: the anchors are to the right here, not left (photo by Lachie Bailey)



Whitley preparing to get on rope with over 170m of air behind her heels (photo by Lachie Bailey)

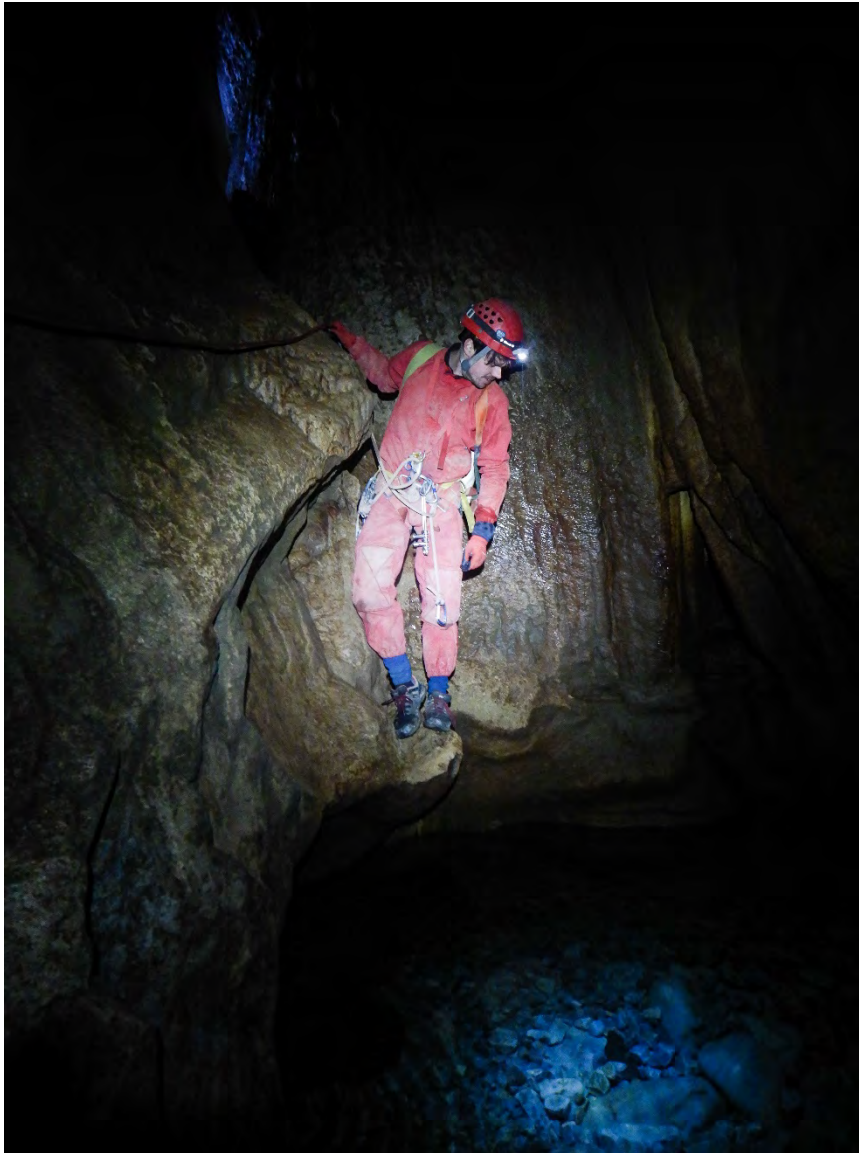
misplaced (*Ed: read as dropped down the hole*).

The descent took me half an hour. Half an hour of non-stop abseiling. 173m vertical. It was very slow because of the 20kg of rope below our racks. But the view was astonishing. It was absolutely incredible. I had no idea what a 200m pitch would look like. I find it very hard to describe because everything was so distant. I thought, boy I'll never see something like this ever again. I thought, 'I've seen it all now!'. I did what any kid would want to do and when I was on rope at the top, I spat and watched and waited for the spit to reach the bottom. After about a minute of watching the droplet in freefall I got bored and gave up on watching it, concluding perhaps it will never reach the bottom! Then I lost sight of it. You would barely spot a human at the bottom from up there.

Lachy went down first to set up a belay, and was the fastest. Then Whitley went down, having a frustrating abseil as she had to haul

herself nearly all the way down. I followed Whitley, and then Lachie brought up the rear. He took 45 minutes, as he had to set up a re-belay, and got a bad case of rope-spin. The re-belay is needed for a minor rub point about 40m down, and is a precaution in case we needed to prusik upwards in an emergency. God help anyone who ends up in that situation! 60m is enough (*Ed: Andy, you did the Lighthouse pitch a week and a half ago, that was 110m*)! At the top it was very scary because, well, there was 200m below you, and you get on rope at a 30cm ledge above free-fall. My hands were cramping up when trying to begin the descent because of the weight of the rope. But about 20 minutes into the abseil I had completely lost feeling in my legs. Reaching the bottom, while a relief, was quite painful as a result.

When we were all down we had bite to eat and it was time to exit through Starlight Cave, completing our through-trip. This cave easily had the best formation of any cave I have ever



Lachy on a traverse over crystal-clear blue water in the upper sections of the cave (photo by Lachie Bailey)

seen. And the water was a perfect blue. The cave was very fun because there were rope swings over water and a few spots where we had to bridge the water using narrow ledges. We had been told it was a quick 3 hour trip through Starlight. It took us a lot longer, which naturally made us a bit worried. There was lots of gushing water and waterfalls so we got wet very quickly. Eventually Lachie started to worry we had lost the way, the map was deteriorating from the water and mud, and we were already running a few hours later than planned. Despite my growing concern, Lachy was content to continue trudging through.

Lachy and I lost Whitley and Lachie off ahead and as we found out later, Lachie had been on the cusp of hypothermia from a shock plunge into a pool. We were expecting a walk through (except the Blasted Squeeze) due to miscommunications with the Kiwis, but there were a few small crawls and squeezes sowing doubt in our minds. So we were extremely relieved when we got to the reflective marker pointing up to it and discovered that no, we were where we thought we were.

Past the Blasted Squeeze (it was blasted open, and is also blasted, as it is small and wet) the cave got even more wet, with several big deep pools to swim. This was fun of course, alongside the many destroyed ropes, some of which didn't even have sheaths

anymore (Ed: NSG is planning to remove all the tatty old rope in Harwoods Hole/Starlight Cave, as there have been several nasty accidents because of it. So bring your own! We did use some of the in situ rope, but only after assessing it, and had our own rope too)!

The swims were spectacular, long deep and narrow with flowstone all round, but very cold, so that by the end Lachy and I were a little chilled but in a manageable state. Lachie and Whitley are a lot skinnier than us, and were definitely in a rush to get out, hence leaving us. I will never be more relieved to see the exit of a cave than this one, after a very stressful day. Starlight had taken about 4 hours. While 4



A slightly tricky to keep dry moment, as you have to traverse around the pool on thick flowstone ledges. My recommendation would be don't bother: you'll get wet anyway eventually, just wear warm clothes
(photo by Lachie Bailey)

hours is not much for a cave, we had also spent a few hours at the top of the hole, and still had to de-rig and walk back.

But the day wasn't over yet. We had exited out the side of a mountain into a deep gorge. We walked/climbed past a small helipad painted on one of the rocks, evidence of just how dangerous the cave can be to unprepared groups. Now we begin our ascent in the dark and light rain for the remaining 500 vertical meters back up the hill. It was very steep going, with lots of loose rock and very dense bush off the vague track.

We split up, Lachy and I ahead of the others, to go and de-rig. Lachy and I loved the climb up the hill. We were both very low on energy to the point where Lachy may not have made it up the hill if it weren't for the remaining muesli bar. For the others the climb wasn't as pleasant, which is fair given their condition and

how steep and slippery the hill was. We were blessed with reflective markers on trees on the way out. If they had not been there we most certainly wouldn't've made it back. Our lights were very dim, and once Lachy replaced his battery we could actually see the markers again.

Lachy and I went to de-rig while the others would go back to the car, call Chris Whiting and let us know that we had made it out. Although Lachy and I had quite a task ahead of us, and we were already very low on energy. I remember we had thought it was too dark and wet to go and retrieve the rope. That was until we reminded ourselves that we were cavers and actually most of our rope work takes place in cold and dark places!

The rope took a couple of hours to haul up and much credit to Lachy who bore the main brunt of the hauling. I was simply stuffing the rope in

the bag! Although given the conditions, even this was far from an easy task. It did go quite quickly, as tasks do when you're exhausted.

Lachie: Here are some notes on times for the trip, based on my camera's photos. We left the NSG Hut about 7:30am, and got back at



The Gorge Creek from near the exit from Starlight Cave (the camera lens is still wet from the cave). In typical New Zealand fashion, it started raining 10 minutes after we left the cave (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

We returned to the carpark and were met by a very relieved Lachie just short of the Hole, as he was worried about how long we had taken. Apparently, he'd been worrying about us since we left back down at the helipad. Packing up and getting changed, I took my gloves off and noticed for the first time since the whole trip that my dermatitis had reached extreme levels without my noticing... To top such an incredible day off, I now had gruesome hands with red flesh visible! Chris Bradley was relieved to see us when we returned at night, but had thankfully not launched a one-man rescue mission. It has to have been the most action-packed day of my life, and I'm sure not far off for the others! We all collapsed into bed very quickly after getting back, leaving an ominous pile of dirty caving gear.

11:30pm that night- a 16h round trip, that ideally would have taken about 10h.

- 45min from car to top of Harwood Hole
- About 2h, 20min rigging, 45min of that probably being me in the wrong gully
- 2h, 45min to get us all to the bottom
- 40min from bottom of pitch to Twin Falls
- 3h from Twin Falls to the Starlight entrance helipad
- Probably 3h from here back to the cars, including derigging

14-9-19 (Saturday): Cleaning Like Hell

Andy: Thoroughly caved out from our excessive underground indulgences over the past two weeks, we still had a lot of cleaning to



Honest, you'd never even know we were there! Except for the massive dent we put in the wood-pile (sorry Greg), although apparently that happens every time Aussies stay at the NSG Hut (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

do if we were to have a chance of getting through customs! We utilised the tank fed sinks while rigorously brushing all of our gear, then hanging it up to dry around the fire. The drying was slow, and ropes took a long time to clean by hand. We also made sure to eat all the remaining food we had, although Whitley was very unimpressed by Lachie putting peaches in a curry.

In the evening, we returned to Christchurch, dropping the Harwoods rope off to Chris Whiting in Richmond, and paying the hut fees to Greg Pickford. Getting back over Lewis Pass was a bit dicey due to snow, but thankfully the snow plough had just been through and the road was open.

15-9-19 (Sunday): Returning Home

Andy: We had dinner and waited a few hours overnight for our flight at Maccas in Christchurch, where we had spent our first night. It wasn't the most ideal place to spend

my birthday (**Lachie, Chris, Lachy and Whitley:** HAPPY BIRTHDAY ANDY!), but there were plenty of family deals to share around so not many complaints from me! We then attempted to have a nap in the cars for about an hour before we drove to the airport and broke off. Lachie and Whitley were to head to Auckland, while the others went home. The trip home was a great time to get some rest. The customs had absolutely no issues with us, even having declared caving, and didn't even look at our caving gear! If only they had known where we had been! All of the cleaning was for nothing...

Well, there's one thing I can say. It was quite a trip. ;)

SUSS Wombeyan Cave Survey Course

18th to 20th October 2019

By Lachie Bailey

Clubs: NUCC, SUSS, CSS, MSS

Once again the annual SUSS cave surveying course was back through popular demand. I went along because I've picked up a taste for cave surveying- that's what happens when you gatecrash too many SUSS trips. Seeing as I have a handful of survey projects on the go, I reckoned it would be good to have a better understanding of surveying so I could teach other NUCCers how it works. The course was ably run by Phil Maynard, Jill Rowling and Mike Lake.

I rocked up on Friday arvo, and for several hours Em Butcher (SUSS) and I were the only people there. We relaxed in the luxurious cottage SUSS and MSS had booked for the weekend, and drank

our way through three bottles of whiskey. At least that's what the evidence suggested when everyone else turned up...

Saturday morning had an early start with a presentation on how to do surveying with a Disto. Soon enough we were all in Victoria Arch surveying away in a neat little side passage. After a break for lunch, we finished the surveying for the day, and returned to the cottage for another presentation, this time on how to reduce survey data to put into Survex. Dinner was a mixed affair, ranging from gourmet cooking to leftovers and 2-minute

noodles. After dinner, we all got a wonderful introduction to the headache that is trying to reduce your survey data into a useable format!

Sunday was entirely spent drawing the maps up, using old fashioned pens and tracing film. While more modern ways to draw maps exist, they were beyond the scope of the course. With plenty of help from our instructors, soon enough we all had passable maps. It was very interesting that although we had all mapped the same chunk of passageway, the maps were all extremely different!

We all left with a much better understanding of how cave mapping works, and (hopefully) the skills to do it on our own. The weekend was

fantastically well planned and organised- thanks again to Phil, Mike and Jill, but also to Marilyn Scott from MSS who did most of the background admin work. There's a good chance SUSS will be running

another course in late October next year, so if you're interested have a chat to SUSS early in 2020.

The cost of the course was about \$100, for cottage hire and equipment, and comes highly recommended by me! If you're interested in surveying but can't make the course, I do have the course notes too, which provide much good information. I've included the map I made as hopeful incentive for other NUCCers to come surveying with me!

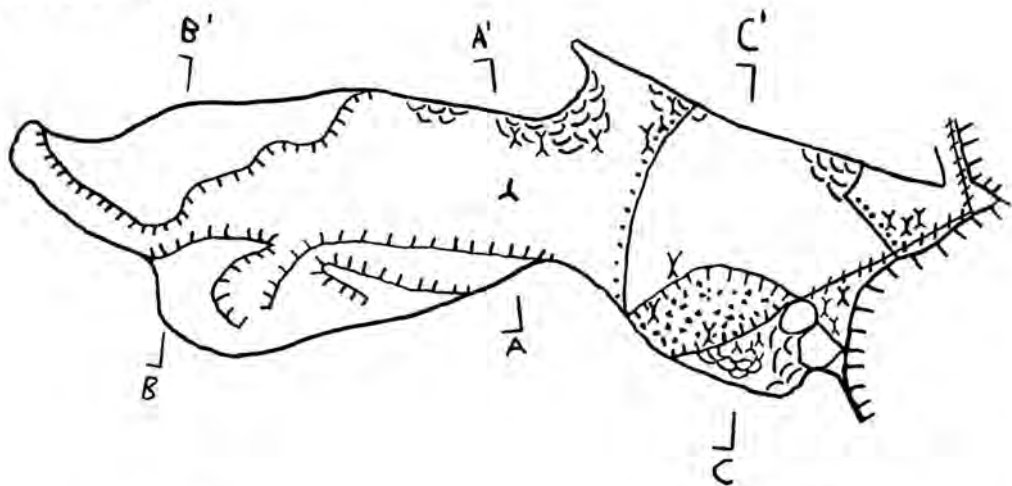


A photo that is almost, but not entirely unrelated to the weekend's cave surveying training. This is in another cave, on another trip, with different people, in a different year. It is Wombeyan though! (photo by Lachie Bailey)

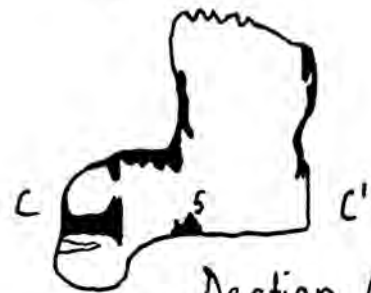
W150 Victoria Arch, Wombeyan NSW



Section B-B'



Section A-A'



Section C-C'

Map 2W150. NUC1

Lachlan Bailey, Anna Ossig Bonanno, Mike Lake
Surveyed on the 19-10-2019 with Disto X2
Drafted by Lachlan Bailey to ASFC grade 6.5

Sheet 1 of 1 (Plan)

Scale- 1:200
0 2 4 6 8m



Flooded Paradise: Viator Hill and Glenlyon Caves

22nd to 25th November 2019

By Lachie Bailey

Peoples: Lachie Bailey, Phil Maynard (SUSS), Keir Vaughan-Taylor (SUSS), Anna Ossig-Bonanno (MSS), Rod Smith (MSS), Garry Smith (NHVSS), Marcia Kaye (NHVSS), Penny Sze (MSS), Murray Dalton (NHVSS), Peter Downes (NHVSS), Rod OBrien (SUSS), Cathi Humphrey-Hood (MSS), Brian Reeves (NHVSS)

Glenlyon and Viator Caves (collectively Texas Caves) are south-eastern Queensland's most significant cave systems. Unfortunately, they were flooded by the construction of Glenlyon Dam in the mid 1970s. This was an act of blatant environmental vandalism that the local caving club, the University of Queensland Speleological Society (UQSS, since defunct), fought in vain against. The current drought has severely affected the region, with most of the catchment of Glenlyon Dam receiving 20-40% of mean rainfall in 2019, and 50-70% of mean rainfall over the past three years. This has caused an unusually low dam level, with under 5% storage levels for the past few months, and

a current estimated level of 2.5%. The low dam levels presented a rare opportunity to visit the caves. Cathi Humphrey-Hood took this opportunity, organising a joint caving clubs trip, with members from MSS, NHVSS, SUSS, and myself from NUCC all trooping up to Texas Caves. So a big thank you to Cathi for putting in all the hard work to make the trip happen!

But anyway, how did I end up on the trip? Well, Chris Bradley and I helped with part of the packing up of the ASF library from Canberra in August. In the process, I ~~pilfered~~ borrowed a bunch of bits and pieces on areas I was interested in, including a stack of UQSS journals, as I was going up to Queensland in November to get my car some pretty maroon plates. I'd discovered that Glenlyon dam was very low, and thought it might make an interesting stop. Cathi spotted me ~~stealing~~ borrowing the journals, revealed she had something similar planned, and invited me along. Thanks Cathi, you might even get the library material back this decade!



Part of the team of 13 cavers heading off to Viator Hill across the very dry Glenlyon Dam from the Tourist Park (photo by Lachie Bailey)

So duly we all congregated at the caravan park at Glenlyon Dam. Some had easier trips than others- Phil Maynard coasted down from Toowoomba, while most of the other Sydneysiders and Novocastrians had to slog their way up the New England Highway. I should have had an easy trip, as I was already in south-eastern Queensland, but got geographically embarrassed by my assorted GPSes. Typically, I had 4 GPS units, several different paper maps (and a compass), and still found myself at the end of a dirt track, in a farmers field, past several creek-crossings, looking at a double-padlocked gate obstructing the way on at 10pm. Obviously, I was late, and missed the Friday arvo pleasure-cruise up the dam to do a reccie.

Saturday morning was to be Viator Hill day, and started early with a tropical start, even though the Tropics are still 600km away. Who cares, with the drought and heatwave passing through, it was hot enough already. Gear was packed, and trucked down to the boatramp for a first shuttle run up the dam. Everyone else

had to walk, especially the stragglers who showed up on Saturday morning just as we were about to leave. Thankfully, we only had to walk part way on the true-left bank of the dam, as the boat came back to meet us, and soon we were all up to Viator Hill. It was punishingly hot by this point, so most of us dived into the first cave we found, which happened to be Main Viator Cave (VR1). Only after GPSing it though- about ½ dozen GPS units had made the journey up the lake, and all were being put to good (redundant?) use.

Main Viator was a mudfest. Imagine the muddiest cave you can think of, and then make it worse. Well, so long as that muddiest cave isn't at Jenolan, anyway. Main Viator is probably the lowest cave on Viator Hill, and is the former efflux of the system. It is large and predominately walk through, except for the bits where you have sunk up to the calves in mud and have to crawl. At a guess, I'd think the lowest parts of the floor were covered in an extra meter of mud caused by sediment from the dam. The lower entrance to Main Viator is almost always flooded and has numerous daylight holes, so I'd presume there is a constant and gradual sedimentation process as water slowly cycles through the cave from the dam.

After Main Viator, we all split up and wandered over the hill to do our own things. Some surveyed, others trogged around trying to locate the known caves, some photographed, others lurked in the cave looking for any excuse not to go outside in the sun, and some valiantly sat in the shade of the few meagre trees on top of the hill and fought off the meat ants. If you weren't on the trip, and can guess who-did-what correctly, I'll buy you a bottle of (very cheap) wine (look, I'm a uni student, what do you expect, Penfolds Grange?). Hint: there were 4 surface troggers, 2 surveyors, 3 photofaffers, 2 cave sitters, and 2 shade sitters.



Caving with a boat! (photo by Lachie Bailey)



Viator Main Cave (photo by Garry K Smith)

A range of caves and probable looking holes were found, some even with tags intact. Glenlyon and Viator both use a different style of tags to the ones we're all used to, with a long narrow strip of aluminium stamped with the cave name (but not number) held in place with a bolt (frequently steel) at each end. Most of them were badly corroded from immersion in the dam water, with the aluminium going soft and powdery, and the bolts being rusted. A large portion of them were missing, especially on the lower caves. These need urgent replacing before the dam rises, as for several caves, the only way we could positively locate them was due to the remains of the tags.

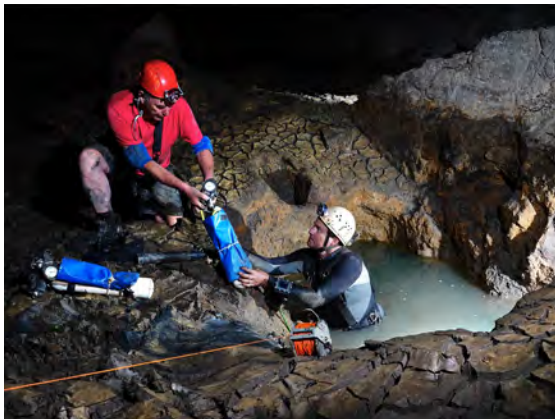
The dam water is evidently extremely aggressive, as much of the karren on the surface had dissolved or softened, and any surviving formation in the caves had a powdery, chalky consistency. Also, several tinnies were spotted that looked like they

pretty much had the hull corroded off them! This is what causes the urgency for with the tags, as not only is it destroying the existing tags, but also evidence of where the tags were.

Eventually everyone congregated back around the second major cave on Viator Hill, Russenden Cave (VR2). This was clearly marked for visitation by dam users, with many driftwood sticks jammed into cracks around the cave, surmounted by beer cans and bottles. Great pleasure was had in tearing these down, although it is suspected that they will return in short order. Russenden Cave is higher up on Viator Hill, and had less of the thick, gloopy mud in it. However, the back reaches of the cave do seem to have had a moderate amount of in-fill by lake mud. The going theory for this was that as the entrance is one of the higher points of the cave, it fills rather dramatically, forcing the first sediment-filled water out to the end of the cave. Sadly,

this once beautiful cave is being badly damaged by visitors now that the water levels are lower, with many signatures scrawled on the walls dated to 2019. Much more phototime was had nonetheless.

Following Russenden and lunch, much of the group returned to Viator Main to watch (or photograph) Rod OBrien diving into the lower level of the cave, which was still completely flooded. A splinter group of Rod Smith, Phil, Anna and me went wandering around to look at the other caves. Bevans Pot (VR4) was found and investigated, and Crystal Cave (VR3) was found to be completely choked with sediment. Phil and Anna tried a short dig there, but it revealed only more mud and was aborted. After this, the sun was starting to get to the group, so rather than go look for some of the other caves, we went and hid in the most shady hole we could find while waiting for diving (and photos..) to happen.



Keir assisting Rod gear up for the dive into a sump of Viator Main Cave. This sump was a major extension of the cave only discovered when the cave started flooding from the construction of Glenlyon Dam (*photo by Garry K Smith*)

Eventually the migration back to the boat for a lift back to shade, aircon, beer, cheese and crackers began, only to be slowed by a small problem- the boat wouldn't start. An hour later, our poor struggling ride sputtered into life, and we all eventually go a lift back. Except for Keir, who got tired of the whole affair and walked back around the dam on his own. Cold

drinks and a shower were definitely appreciated after a long (but successful) day in the sun.

Sunday dawned just as hot as Saturday, and was the Glenlyon day. We all loaded up the boat, and part of the group started walking. Glenlyon is just across the river to the north-west from Viator Hill, but this adds significant extra boat time. It was found to be quicker and easier to just ferry groups across the water on bends, walking most the way, rather than do long trips up and back. Because of the extra distance, we didn't all get out there until late in the morning.

Glenlyon was a major shock: out of all the caves visited, Glenlyon River Cave (GL1) was the lowest, and was only just above the water level. It is possible we were the first group to enter the cave since it was flooded- the dam has been down to 5% before, but never as low as 2%. The cave was known as a major, walk through river passage, with 30 entrances. Instead, we found a series of heavily silted dolines, and crawling passages that were nearly full of thick, waterlogged black mud. Any streamway in the cave more closely resembled puddles trapped behind banks of mud, perched potentially on meters of mud. It was horrible. This is what a dying cave looks like, and is the future that awaits all the caves on Viator Hill and at Glenlyon. It is only a matter of time, rather than destiny.



Marcia forcing a ford of a very, very muddy streamway in Glenlyon River Cave (*photo by Garry K Smith*)

Disheartened by the caves, heat, and long trip back, we retreated to the cabins to drown our sorrows in an early and extended happy hour. The boat performed admirably this time, with no motor troubles at all. Morale was regained with the discovery the Kiosk sells cheap and tasty icecream (the macadamia comes highly recommended). Showers were had, the museum visited, and the first people departed south.

Most of the group stayed the night, and departed on Monday, with a splinter party also visiting Ashford Caves on the way home. Ashford Cave (AS1) was rather interesting, but bears the scars of receiving too many visitors-broken formation, scrawled signatures, the usual. Garry enjoyed taking photos for his book. There is actually a significant amount of limestone at Ashford, but much of it is on private land, and the area would be well worth another, more prolonged visit if access permission to trog this could be arranged.



Ashford Cave has received too much attention from tourists. Some are particularly disreputable, like the example pictured here (photo by Garry K Smith)

After Ashford, we all went our separate ways, and I headed back to Canberra via Gunnedah, scoring a 6th flat tyre in 2 years about 10km east of town (five out of the six have been on caving trips). It was a total writeoff (catastrophic sidewall puncture), and likely has done nothing to improve my driving reputation.

The trip was an excellent opportunity to visit some caves that are rarely visited by organised speleos now. We got a lot done, and made some excellent progress towards updating the documentation of Glenlyon and Viator Hill caves to a modern standard. There is however, much more that needs be done there, and barring a wet summer, I think it very likely someone will be making a return trip in 2020.

A shortlist of tasks that need be undertaken at Glenlyon Caves and Viator Hill would be:

- GPS references for the caves need to be verified, as several caves are yet to be relocated
- Accurate cave entrance height data needs to be gathered, as well as for features around the dam wall
- All the caves need to be re-tagged with marine grade stainless steel tags
- Several extra features need to be tagged, and possibly dug
- Some sort of notice could be placed in Russenden Cave asking visitors not to graffiti the cave
- Four smaller limestone outcrops separate from the two main outcrops need to be trogged
- Several smaller caves seemingly don't have maps, and making a record of them could be useful
- New maps of Russenden Cave and Glenlyon River Cave would be very valuable, to document the effect of the dam on the cave passages
- Cavers could investigate landholders on either side of the dam to see if it is possible to establish 4WD access within 1-2km of the caves

Bungonia Main Canyon

15th December 2019

By Lachy Deakin

People: Lachy Deakin, Chris Bradley, Lachie Bailey, Michael Larkin (SSS)

There was a thick haze of smoke as we departed ANU at 7am which seemed to worsen as we approached Bungonia. Fortunately as we descended into the canyon the smoke seemed to clear (or we just got used to it). The area was extremely dry and there seemed to be no flowing water at all. I suspected we might not even get wet, but I was very wrong.

The trip started off like a bushwalk without much climbing and we were moving at a quick pace. The canyon eventually started to narrow and we found some pools of water which required some thought to pass. Chris and Michael had a swim in one of the larger pools we found. Lachie and I tried to stay dry (for the challenge) and managed to avoid the water by

crawling along a small ledge. Luckily for us the only thing that fell in was a drink bottle (easily retrieved) and we continued on.

Eventually we got to the first abseil (about 30m) which had a spectacular view from the top. At the bottom was a large body of water which ended up being impossible to pass without going for a swim! We had a few more pitches as we progressed through the canyon and stopped for lunch.

A pitch was scramble-able so I made my way down while the others set up the rigging. The last few metres were very sketchy. I swam to the other side and spotted a goat family (with two babies). We saw them a few more times as we made our way through the canyon but could never get close.

The last pitch was a lot longer than we expected as the water level had dropped so significantly. We dropped halfway down the pitch and then pulled the rope and continued



Lachy making a splash falling into the water while attempting to stay dry (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)



Chris abseiling down Bungonia Falls (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

from another anchoring point. Traversing the canyon from here was quite tough as the boulders were all quite enormous. After already feeling quite exhausted we reached the “trail” to take us out of the canyon. It was more like a rock fall/slippy dip and we found ourselves stopping a few times just to recover (it was steep!) and avoid overheating.

Overall it was a great trip and we all thought the gorge was... *gorgeous*.

Photo Gallery!

Details and authors of photos in order presented, starting p61:

Photo 1: Daniel Sun and Tom Donda in Dip Cave. Photo by Lachie Bailey

Photo 2: Jordan Fenech (SUSS) in the Chevailier Extension of Glass Cave, Jenolan on a SUSS trip. Photo by Lachie Bailey.

Photo 3: Ashford Cave - Lachlan Bailey & Marcia Kaye. Photo by Garry K. Smith (NHVSS)



Bungonia Main is extremely dry; Lachy Deakin (green shirt) would normally be treading water in an obligatory swim (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

2019 Equipment Purchases

By Lachie Bailey and Britt Brockett

After many years being frugal, the committee has decided to splurge and replace old equipment. This means new racks, harnesses, helmets, tape, 2p tents, and maybe a Disto will come over the next 4 years... In 2019, we have bought:

- 6 Tech Rock 8mm steel maillons (\$57.36)
- 1 Garmin GPSMAP 64s and GPS accessories (\$422.96)
- 25m of 25mm Edelrid X-Tube tube tape (\$59.99)
- 4 Aspiring racks (\$460)
- 1 Aspiring rack bar set (\$70)
- 60m 9.8mm Edelrid Parrot dynamic rope (\$225.00)
- 1st Petzl P50 rescue pulley (\$80.95)
- 2nd Petzl P50 rescue pulley (\$89.96)
- 3rd Petzl P50 rescue pulley (\$109.95)
- 7 Princeton Tec Apex headtorches (\$1059.60)
- 3 Petzl Ok Oval krabs (\$78.18)
- 4 Petzl Ok Oval krabs (\$79.80)
- 100m Bluewater II++ 9.5mm rope (\$460)
- 5 Black Diamond Icon headtorches (\$589.50)
- 4 Petzl William HMS krabs (\$120)
- 1 Petzl William HMS krab (\$28.95)
- 1 DMM Mantis belay device (\$35.96)
- 1 Edelrid Turn pulley (\$31.96)
- 6 DMM Ultra-D krabs (\$153.36)

By my calculation, this all adds up to \$4213.48. This is a lot of money, and equates to 843 people paying a \$5 trip fee. With an average of about 6 people on each trip, this is somewhere in the vicinity of 150 trips worth of trip fees. Seeing as we aim for a trip every fortnight, this is 6 years' worth of trip fees. I thought you might all like to know where that \$5 you pay on each trip goes. Yes it's small, and yes it would be nicer not to pay it. But over time, it adds up, and allows us to buy new equipment like the stuff in the list above.

NUCC Library

By Lachie Bailey

Fun fact: NUCC has a library. We didn't for many years, as the old one burnt down, along with most of the rest of our storeroom a few decades ago. Its small, but it's there for members to browse and borrow items from. Come see me about it, as I'm the Equipment Officer and have custody of it. Here's a short list of the main print items we have or have digital copies of (I've bolded the digital ones). We also have digital copies of a range of cave maps and club journals, which is gradually growing. So if there's a cave you want a map of, let me know and I'll see what I can find.

- *Mount Fairy Caves* (2009)
- *Tuglow Caves* (1998)
- *The Australian Karst Index* (1985)
- *Proceedings of the 8th Biennial Conference* (1972)
- *Papua New Guinea Speleological Expedition* (1974)
- *Wee Jasper Caves* 1st ed. (1985)
- *Wilderness Caves of the Gordon-Franklin River System* (1979)
- *The Exploration and Speleogeography of Mammoth Cave, Jenolan* (1971)
- *Bungonia Caves* (1974)
- *Wombeyan Caves* (1982)
- *Caves and Karst of Wombeyan* (2004)
- *Timor Caves* (2008)
- *Wee Jasper Caves* 3rd rev.ed. (2010)
- *The New Zealand Cave Atlas Volume 2: South Island* (2004)
- ***Life on a Line* (2003)**
- ***Skulls of the Mammals in Tasmania* (1983)**
- ***Vertical* 2nd ed. (2007)**
- ***Vertical Caves of Tasmania* (1984)**
- ***Alpine Caving Techniques* (2002)**
- ***SUSS Map Library* (2008)**

There are a few notable items missing, but if you want something we don't have let me know. I might be able to buy it or borrow a copy from someone.

Glenlyon Dam Levels

By Lachie Bailey

Glenlyon Dam rarely gets low enough to allow visits to all the caves at Glenlyon and Viator Hill- it has only once been down to 2% before, in 1994/5. This level is only necessary to visit the lowest caves in the landscape, particularly Glenlyon River Cave. However, many other caves can be accessed at higher levels. Based on observations on the trip, and photos online, it takes 9-12 months after the water level drops for the caves to stop being a muddy shambles. So keep this in mind: just because you can access a cave, doesn't mean you want to actually do so! However, as a guideline for any future cavers contemplating a visit:

- 100-65% storage: everything is underwater, don't bother
- 65-50% storage: the highest caves at Viator Hill, like Mikes Pot, are out of the water, but likely still have water in them. Probably not worth a visit
- 50-36% storage: some of the mid-height Viator Hill caves emerge. Worth visiting if you're going to the dam for a fishing trip
- 35% storage: Russenden Cave should be accessible, along with a range of other smaller caves. Worth a detour for the dedicated caver, but you'll need a boat
- 34-26% storage: Not much change, just the water level dropping
- 25% storage: Most of the caves on Viator Hill will be clear of the water, except for Main Viator Cave
- 10% storage: Main Viator cave becomes accessible, but you'll also likely get very muddy and wet going into it. It is also now possible to walk to Viator Hill on the true left bank of the dam. Glenlyon is emerging from the dam, but all dolines are swimming pools- don't bother visiting
- 5% storage: Everything at Viator Hill should be reasonably accessible. Glenlyon is likely still very muddy, but worth a visit



Cracked and dry mud plains looking across the floor of a parched Glenlyon Dam toward Viator Hill. At 10% dam level, the water reaches the base of the limestone on Viator Hill (photo by Lachie Bailey)

- 2% storage: All caves at Glenlyon and Viator Hill are accessible, although parts of Glenlyon River Cave are flooded
- 1% storage: I expect that everything would be accessible, and walking to both sets of caves along the true left of the dam should present no issues to the moderately fit (5km walking each way, with some ups and downs, and no shade)

Based on the dam level data recorded at the Kiosk (1988-2019), the dam has:

- Never been at 1%, and only been at 2% twice
- Gone to 10% or below 3 times, dropping to 2% two of those three times
- Only dropped to a level where there is major cave exposure during drought
- Generally remained above 80% outside of drought periods, but can go down to 60%

- A water level that rises very rapidly with cessation of drought
- On average, a higher water level in October, and lower in March and April (but there's not a huge difference)

So, if you want to visit Glenlyon, I recommend you do it in a drought period. You might not get to see all the caves, but you will get something. Otherwise, forget it- the dam will be too high, unless you're content to go fishing as a possible alternative. If the drought breaks, it's not worth rushing up afterwards, as the dam can rise very quickly (50-60% in a month).

Queensland is generally dryer in winter and early spring, so you can risk sitting on a low dam level going into winter. Late winter or early spring is probably the opportune time for a visit: not so hot yet, before any risk of summer rain, and the dam isn't yet at its usual highest point. Avoid summer so that you don't bake to death on the exposed limestone!



Mud-filled doline in the Glenlyon cave system. The doline is part of Glenlyon River Cave, which is rarely above Glenlyon Dam. Many of the cave's entrances were suffocated by gloopy mud (*photo by Lachie Bailey*)

Takaka Hill- Lessons Learnt

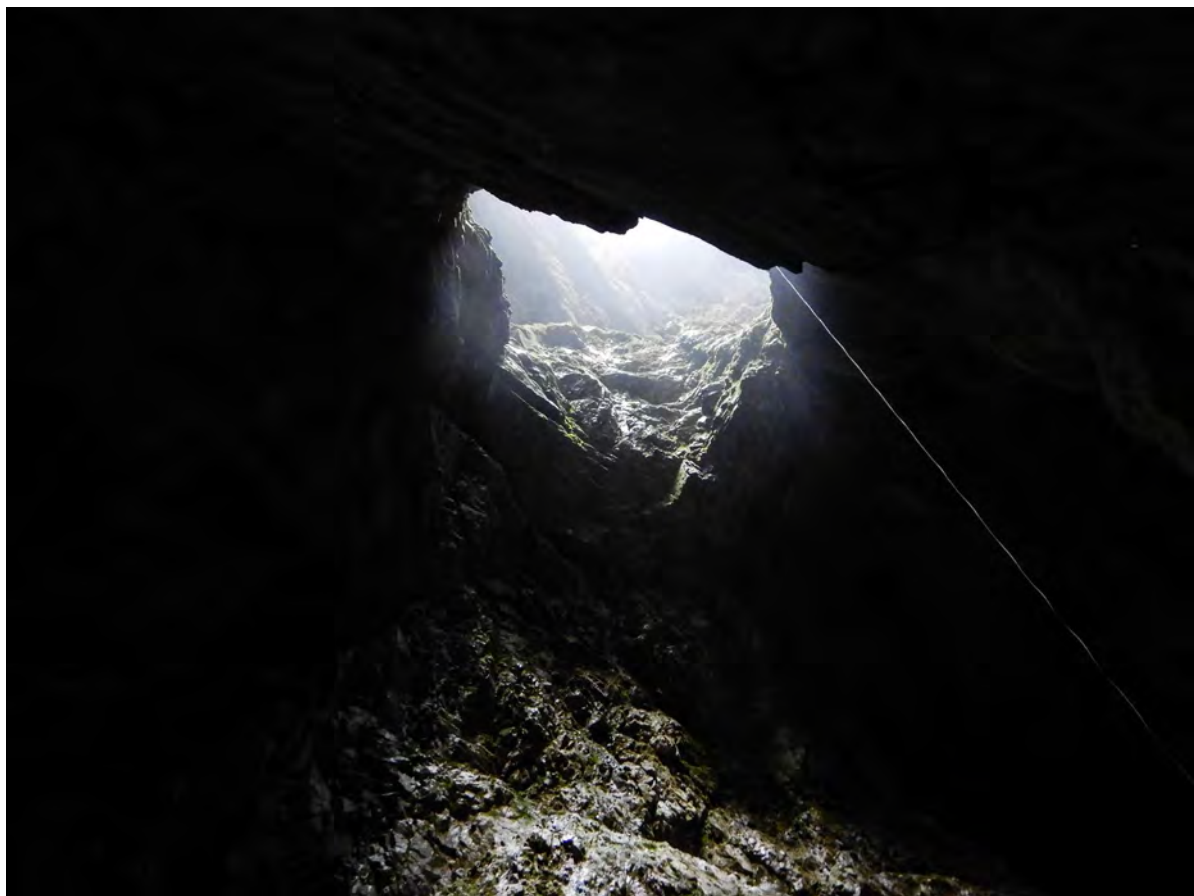
By Lachie Bailey

If you've gotten this far, you've probably read about our adventures in New Zealand. This was the first large expedition that NUCC has done for a long time, which made it quite a learning experience! I wanted to quickly jot down some of the things that we learnt on the trip as a note for future NUCCers going overseas, so that you don't have to learn it all over again...

- Be careful setting days in big caves- the maps are deceptive, and you won't get as far as you plan. We were regularly planning and heading out to do more than we did, and getting close to our call-out time
- Our SRT drill is very good, but it is optimised for singular short-medium pitches into a larger horizontal system, usually with beginners. It's very safe and methodical, but slow and not very adaptive. In large alpine caves with many successive pitches, we found that our

slower SRT caused problems. Go into the trip ready to adapt your style, preferably having practiced a bit already.

- The same is true for NUCC's rigging. Safe and bombproof, but slow. Practice fast and light rigging before you go, but don't sacrifice safety for it. 9mm rope is a godsend, but if it's gnarly you'll be glad you bought that 11mm stuff too.
- Consider your first aid kit before you go: what will you do if you're benighted in the rain, away from a car, with a wet and hypothermic caver? Do you have the skills and equipment to deal with this? We didn't have this happen to us, but weren't far off it on the Harwood Hole excursion, and would have been underprepared.
- What sort of call-out procedure will you use, and will local cavers be a part of it? How does this interact with their attitude towards cave SAR? How will local mobile access (or lack thereof) affect you? We never truly managed to establish an



Looking back up Harwood Hole from the bottom (photo by Lachie Bailey)



Chris outside Summit Tomo, our first New Zealand cave (photo by Lachie Bailey)

acceptable call-out system, as it would have been days before anyone looked at the log in the NSG Hut and realised we were missing.

- The ASF Library is a great asset, and try to get information from it about your area before the trip. However, local cavers are completely indispensable to an efficient trip, and we would have been up shit creek sans paddle without the help of Chris Whiting and Kieran Mckay.
- Caves in New Zealand aren't tagged, so you'll need a grid reference, verbal description, map, or GPS waypoint to get there. Ideally, you want both that GPS waypoint and a verbal description from a local caver. Even better if they'll take you through large, deep caves.
- Some grid references can be obtained from combing the NZSS material in the ASF library, but they're not always accurate. Also, make sure you know what grid reference system it is using. New Zealand

has changes systems in the past, so you'll need to convert any older NZMS1 or NZMS260 references to Topo50 references to use with the current topographic map series. Don't forget to convert these to UTM to plug into your GPS either! There are online tools to help you with all of this.

- Regardless of all tech, buy a paper topo map of the area **before** you go! At the least, the overview is handy.
- Be flexible. If you plan anything like me, you won't get to do everything you wanted on the trip, and will come home with a new list of things to do that's now three times as long as the one you left with. Something will be unkind to you (in our case, the weather), so roll with it and plan to come back another time.

Having said all that, the NZ trip was a cracker, and I'd go back and do it again in an instant. Thanks so much to the rest of the crew who came, and everyone else who was involved in making the trip a success!

2019 Trip Listing

This is all the 2019 NUCC trips, covering all known trips that at least 1 NUCCer went on. If the trip was organised by another club (ie, we were gatecrashing), the club that did all the hard work is noted. Well done everyone for a busy year with 30 trips!

13. Bungonia
14. Buchan (ROC)
15. White Rocks
16. Jenolan
17. Mount Fairy
18. Jenolan (SUSS)



A breadknife-style helictite in Wyanbene Main Cave (photo by Britt Brockett)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Jenolan (SUSS) | 19. Wee Jasper |
| 2. Cooleman | 20. Wyanbene |
| 3. Wee Jasper | 21. Yagby |
| 4. Bungonia | 22. Takaka Hill |
| 5. Wee Jasper | 23. Jenolan |
| 6. Jenolan | 24. Yagby |
| 7. Wee Jasper | 25. Yagby (SUSS) |
| 8. Mount Fairy | 26. Wombeyan (SUSS and MSS) |
| 9. Mount Fairy | 27. Abercrombie (MSS) |
| 10. Cooleman (SUSS) | 28. Yagby |
| 11. Abercrombie (MSS) | 29. Texas (MSS) |
| 12. Wyanbene | 30. Bungonia Canyoning |

2020 Trips

Our upcoming trip plans are currently very loose due to fires and park closures. For updates, keep an eye on the mailing list, website and Facebook page.

February

- 6th: Committee Meeting at ANU Sport, 6pm
- 8th: Wee Jasper surface trogging
- 11th: SRT resumes for 2020 at 6-8pm by the Old Climbing Wall at ANU Sport
- 19th: Market Day, volunteers welcome!
- 22nd: Beginner's trip (Bungonia, sporty caving)
- 24th: Semester 1 begins
- 29th February: Macquarie Pass canyoning trip (previous vertical experience needed)

March

- 1st: Wee Jasper Clean Up Australia Day trip to Dip Cave with ANUMC, FREE vego BBQ
- 7-9th: Wee Jasper vertical caving (Sat-Sun only will be an option)

- 21-22nd: Bungonia vertical weekend, canyoning possible!

April

- 10-12th: Easter long-weekend at Cooleman and Yarrangobilly in the Snowy Mountains
- 25-27th: ANZAC Day long-weekend at Bendethera Caves

May

- 9th: Possible cave rigging course at Bungonia
- 23-24th: Wyanbene and the Big Hole

June

- 5-8th: Queen's Birthday Long-weekend at Buchan in Victoria

- 20-21st: Jenolan Caves, if reopened

Later

- Late November/early December 2020: Possible week-long expedition to Kempsey mid north coast NSW (cave then relax on the beach!); *Tassie is also an option*
- April 2021: ASF Conference in Ceduna, South Australia and Nullarbor caving (epic roadtrip)



Andy admiring the excessive aragonite in the Chevailier Extension of Glass Cave (photo by Lachie Bailey)





