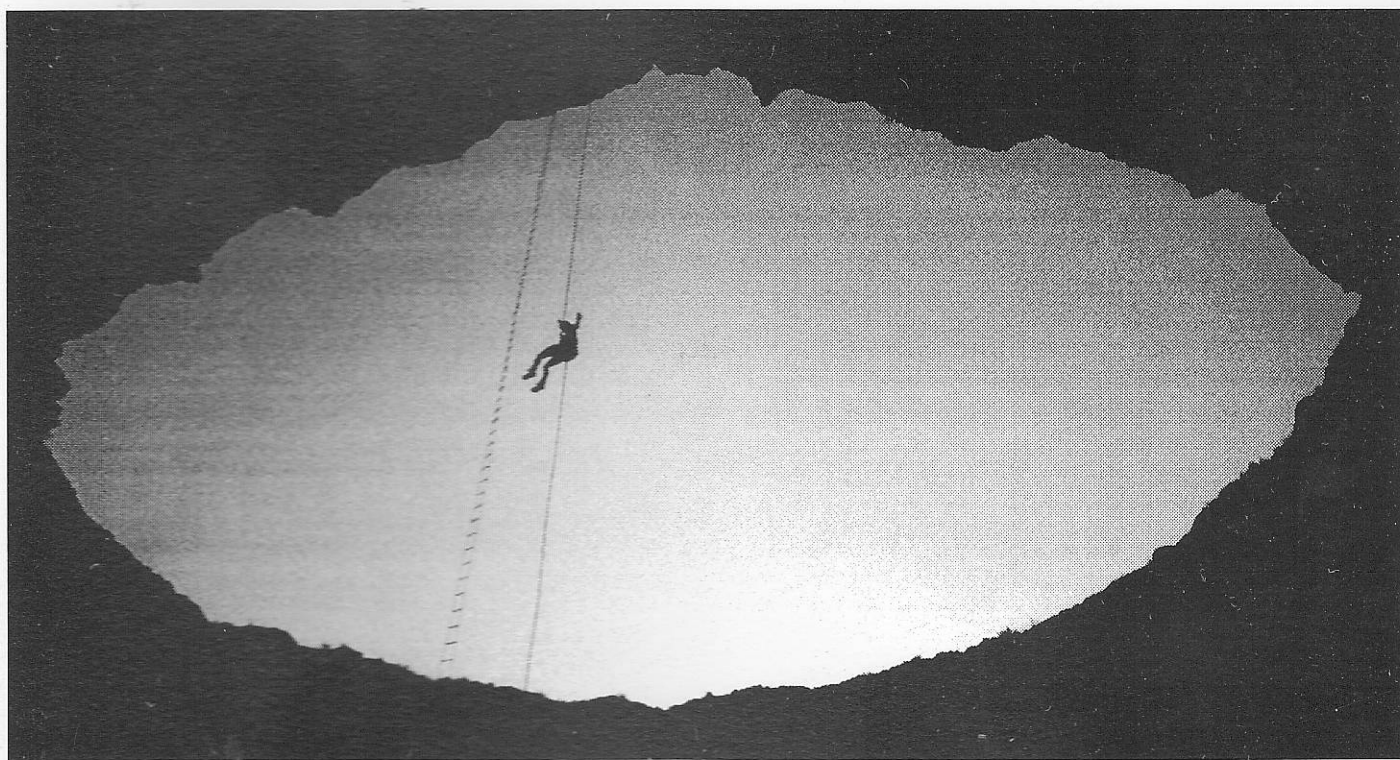




The Newsletter of the
National University Caving Club (NUCC)
GPO Box 4 Canberra ACT 2601

Volume 24 Number 1
30th Anniversary Edition
1964-1994.



A member of the Australian Speleological Federation.

30th Anniversary Edition

Speleograffiti 1994

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National University Caving Club.

Index

Editors Notes. Past and present committee members	2
1994 Presidents report	3
Caving with NUCC in its early days	4
Trip list	6
Trip Reports	
Dip Cave, Wee Jasper NSW.	7
Mt. Fairy, NSW.	9
Coolamon Plains, Kosciusko National Park, NSW.	10
Punchbowl, Wee Jasper NSW.	14
Blowfly, Bungonia State Recreation Area, NSW.	16
Big Hole, Deua National Park, NSW.	17
Wyanbene, Deua National Park, NSW.	19
Sizzlers and card night ACT.	20
Cliefden, NSW.	21
Punchbowl, Wee Jasper NSW.	22
Mamma's ACT.	23
Wombeyan, Wombeyan Caves Reserve NSW.	24
Narrangullian, Lake Burinjuck NSW.	25
Bendethra, Deua National Park NSW.	27
Argyle Hole, Acoustic Pot, Bungonia SRA, NSW.	30
Nullarbor Plains, Western Australia.	32
Prospecting in South Sulawesi and West Timor.	42
NUCC 1994 Financial Members.	45
The Back page	46

Front Cover: Jane Pulford abseiling into Kestrel 2 Cave - Nullarbor Plain,
November 1994. Photo by Chris Bradley.

Editors Notes

Thank God its finished!

I wish to thank all the people who took time to write up trip reports and articles for Speleo. Without the very valued help of the following people this edition of Speleograffiti would not have been possible.

Chris Bradley
John Brush
John Hellstrom
Gary Morris

Mark Bown
Toryn Chapman
Sherry Mayo
Jane Pulford

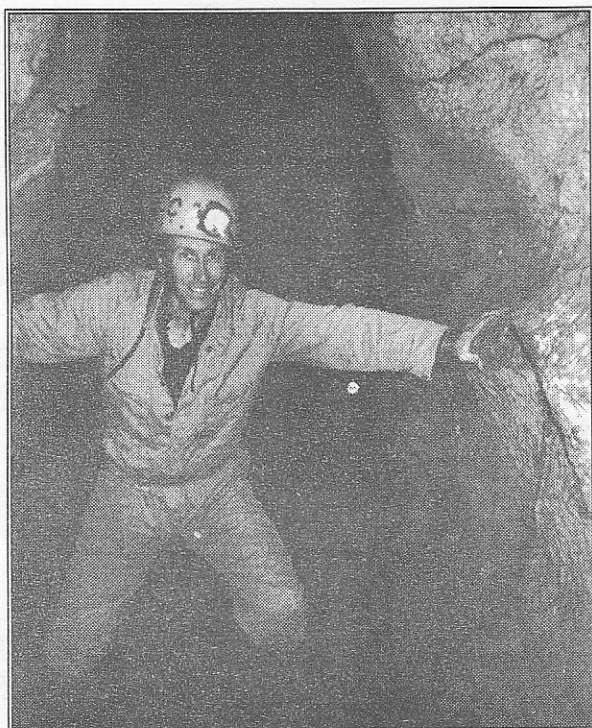
Ian Brumby
Wilfred Fullagar
Anna McKinlay
Andrew Wall

Plus the many others who supplied photos, comments or suggestions.....

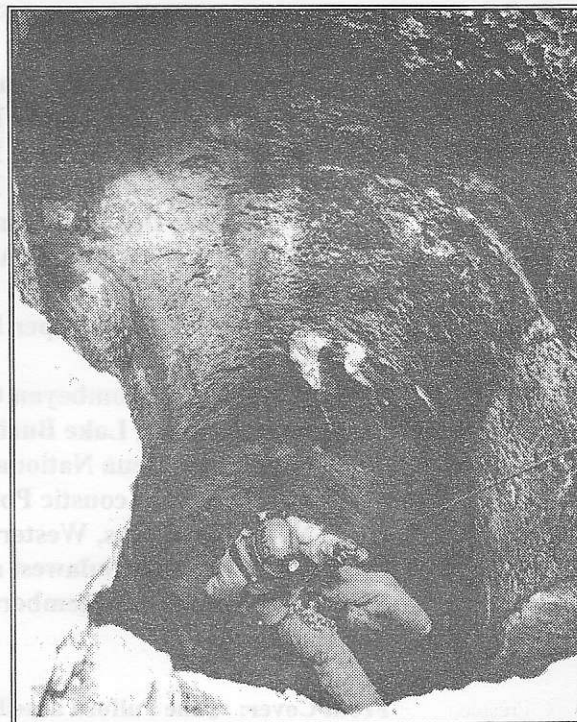
Tony Veness.
February 1995.

NUCC Committee Members. Past and Present.

	1994	1993	1992	1991
President	Lyle Williams	Cecilia Shlegel	Andrew Wall	Andrew Wall
Secretary	Wilfred Fullagar	Lyle Williams	Greg Lane	Tim Barrett
Treasurer	Cecilia Shlegel	Wilfred Fullagar	Cecilia Shlegel	Meredith Orr
Publications	Tony Veness	Andrew Wall	Tim Barrett	Jenny Dyring
Equipment Officers	Tony Veness	Tony Veness	Lloyd David	Doug Abbott
	Anna McKinlay	Imogen Fullagar	Meredith Orr	Chris Bradley
General Committee	Ian Brumby	Lindsay Irvine		
Members	Toryn Chapman	Mick Stuckings	Wilfred Fullagar	Jon Price
	Andrew Copping	Kenny Ang	Chris Bradley	Colin Taylor

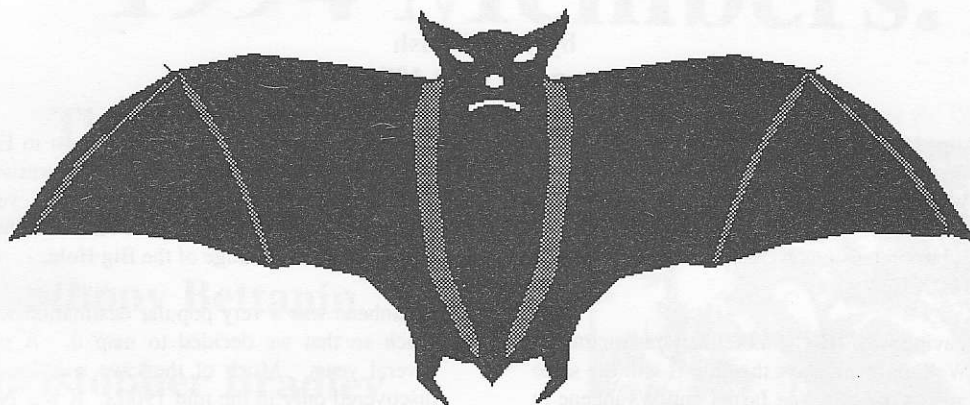


Mark avoiding a swim.



Rebecah avoiding gravity on the Nullarbor.

1994 Presidents Report.



Looking for a big year to celebrate our 30th birthday, NUCC embarked on a more active membership drive at Market Day, with numbers soaring to a terrifying 75. Part way through the day several club old-timers suggested that we should close up our stall and run before anyone else could join up.

Our larger than usual membership resulted in the need for three separate beginner's trips. These trips visited our regular beginner's trip haunts of Wee Jasper and Bungonia, along with a trip to the less often visited Mt Fairy.

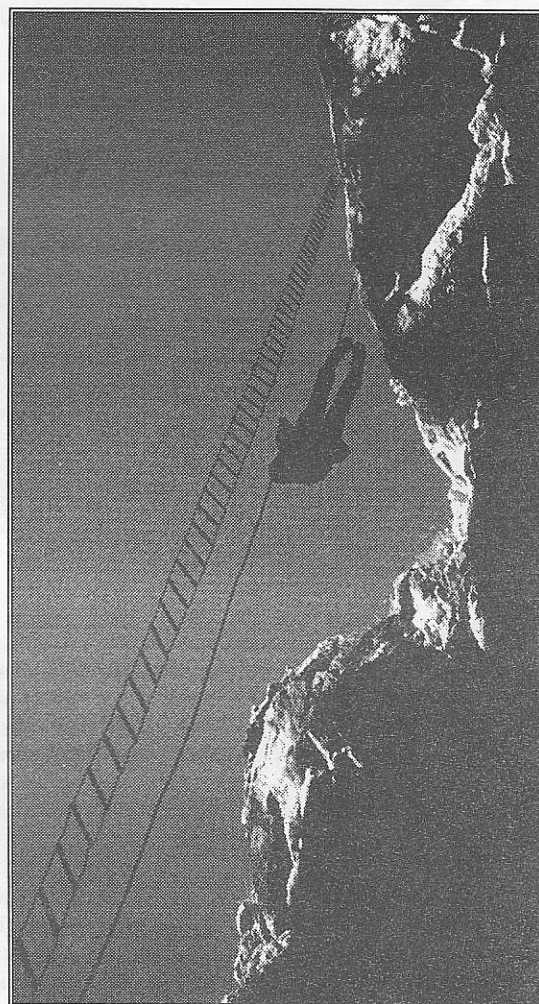
After these initial trips, the club's active membership settled down to more manageable levels, but we were delighted with the large number of fresh, enthusiastic faces for whom no amount of caving seemed to be enough. Additional enthusiasm was injected into the club by a number of experienced cavers who joined the club when they moved to Canberra from universities abroad.

Numerous trips were run, with trips visiting Bendethera, the Big Hole, Bungonia, Cliefden, Coolamon, Hamilton, Mt Fairy, Narrangullen, the Nullarbor, Wee Jasper, Wombeyan, Wyanbene, Yarrangobilly, (to name just the ones I can remember!) one or more times during the year. There seemed to be an increasing interest in more technical caving, with some new members spending time becoming well acquainted with vertical caving and SRT (Single Rope Techniques), and older members starting to consider that some overseas caving practices and equipment may well have some merit, even if practiced at times by a speleoterrorist element.

The year was not without its political dramas, with the ASF (Australian Speleological Federation, the peak body for caving in this country) taking unsuccessful legal action to try and conserve a cave in South Australia. Also contentious were the issues of Cave Leader Accreditation and the future of Australian Caver, the magazine of the ASF. Our thanks go out to those who ably represented NUCC's interests at meetings of the NSW Speleological Council and the Australian Speleological Federation's Biennial Conference. Special thanks go to Chris Bradley for being so easily conned into being the new editor of Australian Caver, breathing life into a publication so near to death's door.

NUCC would also like to thank all its members (with special thanks going to those who filled committee positions over the past year) for an excellent 30th Birthday year. We look forward to an even bigger and more active year in 1995.

Lyle Williams
NUCC President, 1994



Caving. Not always in the dark.

Caving with NUCC in its early days

**by John Brush
(member 1969-1975)**

I joined NUCC in 1969, four years after its foundation. Initially it was known as NUSS, but when the Sports Union threatened to withhold funding on the grounds that speleology was not a sport, the name was quickly changed. At first to NUCC, but pretensions were soon cast aside and it became plain old NUCC.

What was it like caving with NUCC more than one quarter of a Century ago? Well, in many ways the club is still the same as it was then. Fresher trips to Wee Jasper and Wyanbene in March; an annual flush of new members, many of whom went on one or two trips and were never seen again; meetings; regular trips to local caves; and detailed planning sessions in the nearest bar.

But there were also some differences.

Gear for instance. When I joined, the club owned 3 ladders and two No4 hawser-laid nylon ropes. We hadn't heard of dynamic or static ropes, SRT, jumars or whailetails. Petzls were just the things on flowers. But we learnt quickly. A crab and rudimentary sit harness of No1 nylon was much more comfortable for abseiling than the classic method. Cloggers were better than prussik knots. Oldham miners lamps (\$17 tax free in 1969) were less troublesome than carbides and harder to drop than a torch. A 30 year old air mattress explodes if you jump onto it from the mud bank at Frustration Lake.

Speleograffiti was published six or more times per year. But there was no glossy cover and no photos. Just a few pages run off on the Sports Union duplicator. In the early 70s we introduced sketches, maps and cartoons.

In the Faculties, continuous assessment was just being introduced and for many subjects, everything still hung on the end-of-year exam. This meant it was possible to avoid studying until late September. Also, as jobs were easy to find after graduation, there was less pressure than there is now. In short, it was possible to devote nearly every weekend to caving. Perhaps as a result, it was something of a tradition for NUCC members to fail first year physics.

The main difficulty in running trips was arranging transport. Few members had cars and fewer were keen to drive them on the rough roads leading to most areas. For example, the Snowy Mountains Highway from Kiandra to Yarrangobilly was narrow, winding and corrugated dirt. The road to Wee Jasper was all gravel. The route to Mt Fairy was a rough track through an active quarry. There was no causeway on the Shoalhaven crossing to Wyanbene, just a rough ford. At times it was also deep and more than once, cars became stranded in the middle with water pouring into them. At least it helped clean the gear! The track to the cave was also a challenge. It was possible to get just as muddy pushing cars through bogs as it was in the cave.

Although the tracks were often rough, we could often drive much closer to caves than you can today. At Yarrangobilly,

you could drive to Coppermine, almost to East Deep Creek, Eagles Nest and Bath House. It was permissible to drive all over Coleman Plain and there were vehicle tracks to Cheitmore (Cleatmore), Marble Arch (to the top of the hill anyway) and to the edge of the Big Hole.

Wyanbene was a very popular destination with members, so much so that we decided to map it. A project that took several years. Much of the cave was "new", having been discovered only in the mid 1960's. It was NUCC who made the breakthrough by finding a way past Sump 2. Beyond there, Rockfall Chamber, Gunbarrel, Caesars's Hall and Frustration Lake were found in quick succession by CSS, NUCC and I think SSS. A trip to the lake was a real epic. The NUCC President of the time believed it was a two day trip, camping at Barking Dog Chamber in the Meanders Section. We proved this was not so, but it still took a good nine or ten hours. Before long, we had the trip time from the lake down to less than 90 minutes. This was before all the hand and footholds became rounded off and slicked up.

Yarrangobilly was also a favourite. Our major feat was the discovery of Y58, later named Janus Cave, in 1969. From our bush camp (now the intersection of the Snowy Mountains Highway and the up-road from the tourist area) we drove and walked to North Deep Creek Cave. On the way we stopped to look at a small cave above the Y5 doline. We pushed beyond the known end of the cave and discovered a major extension. We climbed up a wall then down a fissure to Rawlinson Chamber (named after a former NUCC member killed in a car accident some years earlier). On our first trip we also discovered a strange skull sitting on a mud bank. Several months later, this was removed for identification. The CSIRO was very excited and proclaimed it a Thylacine skull. Despite an extensive search, no further bones were discovered.

Another Yarrangobilly discovery was the January Series extension in North Deep Creek. CSS was the first to push beyond the duckunders, but it was NUCC who did much of the exploration beyond. On a field trip following the 1972 ASF conference, we dragged a scaling pole through the ducks to gain access to a high level passage that eventually led back to stream level. I believe no one has since pushed beyond our terminal squeeze. The duckunders were fine if you had a wet suit. We didn't. Not even one between us. On the first trip we just pushed through and caved in wet overalls. Next time, to avoid exposure we stripped off, put our clothes in plastic bags and redressed on the other side. More comfortable in the end, but tough on exposed skin (ask to see the photos).

Most of our caving was done in the local area, but once or twice a year we would go to Buchan, usually at Easter. Expeditions to more distant places were rare. The first Nullarbor expedition was in 1972. Only three or four people could afford to go. At that time Eucla was several hundred kilometres beyond the end of the bitumen, although, all of the WA section was sealed. The first full blown NUCC

expedition to Tasmania was in 1975. Exit and Kubla Khan Caves were the main focus.

In the quest for new discoveries, NUCC also looked at small local areas such as Michelago, Rosebrook, Mt Fairy and with CSS, lesser known parts of Wee Jasper. Many caves were found, though large caves (ie those longer than 10 metres) were not common.

And so, back to the detailed planning sessions. The nearest bars in the 1960s were the Civic Hotel (at the corner of Northbourne Ave and Alinga St) and the back bar of the old Hotel Canberra (now the Canberra Hyatt). Then in the early 70s came the first on-campus bar in Australia. NUCC members were there in force to celebrate this important event. Unlimited free beer was on offer! At first, the bar was on the top floor of the old Union Building (now the Chancery Annex) but it later moved to the current Union to where Sullivan's Restaurant now is.

In the early 1970s members branched into other outdoor activities. Perhaps the most novel trip was the ascent of the north face of the Academy of Science. The Sports Union requested NUCC's assistance to remove a toilet bowl and

road barriers from the summit plateau. We were impressed that our climbing talents had been recognised. Only later did we discover the invitation was made because University Admin figured we were the only ones on campus who could have placed the items there. The Academy climb sparked an interest in climbing walls, as distinct from Climbing Walls, of which there were none. A critical eye was cast over many possibilities and several peaks on campus were bagged.

Before long members were climbing, skiing, walking and skydiving. This pursuit of several outdoor activities rather than just caving was a trend noticed in other speleo clubs. Today it is the norm. I guess the availability of specialised gear, better access to information, better technical skills and increased affluence make it easier to switch from one activity to another. It is also easier to get to remote caving areas.

When the club started in the 1960s, who would have thought that 30 years later several NUCC members would own newish 4WDs and burbling V8s, be running trips to Thailand and other far off places and have pictures of the latest expedition on the World Wide Web. Whatever that is. I mean, in 1969, we used to talk of the ANU's computer. Singular. Where will NUCC be in another 30 years??

And finally, a note of some historical (hysterical?) interest - an extract from an ASF Newsletter number 43, dated March 1969:

nucc national university caving club
The National University Caving Club was formed on 5th March, 1964, and became affiliated with the University Sports Union. Average membership is 30 and there's plenty of activity. For example, in 1966 there were 28 trips and some 19 areas were visited from 1964 - 67. Perhaps the best work has been done at Bunyan (Rosebrook) near Cooma, an outcrop largely ignored by the older clubs. "Speleograffiti" is a refreshingly original name for a club newsletter and has appeared regularly for over five years.



Happy Anniversary NUCC

The 1994 NUCC trips.

Wee Jasper	Saturday 26 Febuary
Bungonia	Sunday 6 May
Mt. Fairy	Saturday 19 May
Coolamon	Friday 1-4 April.
Wee Jasper	Saturday 16 April.
Bungonia	Saturday 30 April.
Big Hole	Sunday 22 May.
Wyanbene	Saturday 4 June.
Big Hole	Saturday 18 June.
Cleifden	Friday 22-24 July.
Wee Jasper	Saturday 6 August.
Wombeyan	Friday 26-28 August.
Narrangullen	Saturday 17 September.
Bendethera	Monday 19-23 September.
Bungonia	Sunday 23 October.
Nullarbor Plains	Saturday 26 -11 November

DIP CAVE - WEE JASPER. Saturday 26th February 1994.

*Chris Bradley, Ian Brumby, Andrew Copping, Stephen DeCosta, Richard Fahey,
Mirjana Jambrecina, Anna McKinlay, Alex McSweeny, Sonia McSweeny,
Miriam Middlemann, Raina Naulty, Werner Nickel, Jeppe Nielson, Robyn Preston,
Cecilia Shlegel, Tony Veness, Andrew Wall, Lyle Williams.*

First trip for NUCC for 1994. Beginner's trip to Dip cave, Wee Jasper.

No caving year would be complete without a beginner's trip to Wee Jasper and 1994 was going to be no exception. After seemingly signing up half the undergraduate population of the ANU on Market Day, with many new or potential members expressing an interest in the first beginner's trip, it was clear to the NUCC sausage and beer sub-committee that numbers could get out of hand. Big as they make Chryslers (God bless them), visions of seventeen bodies fresh from O-week socialising, packed into the rear seat for a hot drive to WJ was somewhat confronting. It was with some relief that we found only twelve keen souls sitting on the logs outside the clubhouse on Saturday morning. It would appear that many people's intentions to come caving early on a Saturday amounted to nothing after a week of good times (and wines) during O-week had left them drained!

After equipment gathering, beer and food stowage and brief introductions, 17 bodies left the tranquillity of the ANU. We drove to the WJ store in six vehicles (and the Chrysler). Caffeine and cholesterol fixes were obtained at the WJ store at approx 10:30am. One notable absence at the store was the large bench that had been under the front veranda for generations. It may well have been removed when they heard we were coming as NUCC attempted to demolish it on our last trip by squeezing too many cavers with finger buns and coffee onto it (Dec 1993). A large pile of phone books made an acceptable substitute seat.

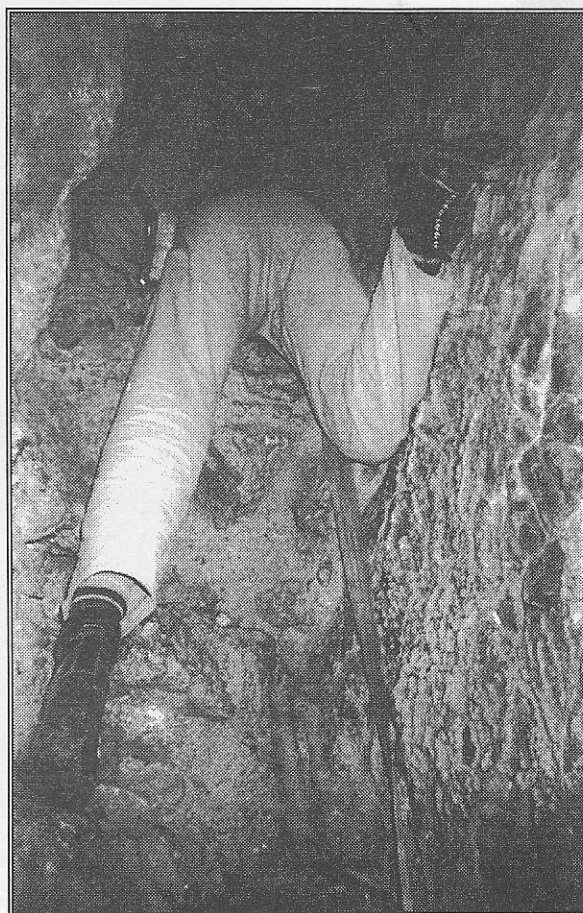
After making our way from the store to the cave entrance, it was obvious to the uninitiated that the NUCC machine was about to swing into action. Lead acids, helmets, harnesses and haul bags were duly distributed with many brave beginners beginning to realise that today was not going to be just another day at the office (bar).

With so many people possessing varying caving experience, the group was split into two. Some would abseil 65' into the main chamber in No.4 series whilst others would take the more challenging route, walking in through the main entrance over broken glass and laddering up through the rathole into No.3 series.

Chief Gear Freak Williams and Brew Master Bradley were dispatched to rig the 65' pitch and rathole whilst Andrew and Tony ensured the party had sufficient equipment between them (water, chocolate and teddy bears) to survive the expected rigours of Dip.

President Cecilia and Tony went with the abseilers whilst Andrew and Werner led the remaining beginners through the main entrance to the rat hole. All were in the cave by 12:30pm. Those who abseiled assembled somewhat sooner than those who laddered.

Groups split and reformed over the following hours with: the Western end of No.5 series; the Eastern end of No.3 series and Dismal Chamber all being explored in



Unknown caver!

time. All beginners displayed unique crawling and sliding abilities which most didn't know they possessed.

As entertaining as Dip cave is, the inevitable exit had to come and the party (after some chocolate) began to ladder, abseil and generally scramble out through the rat hole into No. 2 series. Bats were seen and felt as the first few laddered down. The joy of knuckle squeezing was experienced by some who now no doubt wish to try abseiling. Those who did try abseiling for the first time went very well indeed considering the awkward start from the rat hole.

A special note must be made of the efforts of the vertical boys; Lyle and Chris. Great personal sacrifice was shown when by prussicking up the 65' pitch (hand over hand we're told); they were able to have the BBQ well under way by the time the last stragglers left the cave. After removal of muddy overalls, the fun continued.

The BBQ afterwards was welcomed by all with much gourmet sausage and bread being consumed. Werner and Cecilia drove the BBQ whilst Chris introduced the uninformed to the delights of home brew. Many must have been unsure as to whether or not they liked the stuff as it took an Esky and a half of tall bottles for them to make their minds up. Hmmmmm? Lyle amused the masses with 'helicopter' tricks whilst Cecilia produced somewhat of a 'fish and loaves' miracle by feeding the amassed caving disciples with one watermelon.

Talk of past trips and plans for future ones were made as the cloudy amber liquid flowed. Many beginners threatened to participate in an upcoming trip to Bungonia but I suppose we'll really know if they've been bitten by the caving bug (or is that bat?) after a few more trips.

Tony Veness.



The traditional beginners BBQ at WJ.

**MT. FAIRY
Saturday 19th March 1994.**

Chris Bradley, Rebecah Dallwitz, Jody Evans, Wilfred Fullagar, Mirjana Jambrecina, Mark Jones, Greg Lane, Alison Machin, Alex McSweeney, Sonia McSweeney, Gary Morris, Jeppe Nielson, Jane Pulford, Gareth Sharp, Cecilia Shlegel, Kylie Tame, Linden Tilley, Tony Veness, Andrew Wall, Rebecca Whyte, Olivia Widjaya.

Ever tried putting a helmet and light on a wombat ?

We all met at the store room at the usual time of 8:00, but didn't get away until 45 minutes later. After the long drive to Bungendore we took a well earned rest and sat and ate breakfast outside the bakery. Then it was on the road again, to the parking area near the Mt. Fairy caves.

The main objective of the trip was MF1 so we all walked to the main cave entrance where we split into three different groups. One group went in via the MF1 entrance, another group went in via the mineshaft MF4 entrance. I gather they all met in the middle and had a wonderful time exploring the extension.

My group thought we would be different and, using the maps and our keen navigation skills, we headed on (back) toward 'The Maze' area. This area was on the map, and although I had never been there before, one of the caves, MF34, looked quite interesting. The caves are located on a different outcrop of limestone South of the carpark rather than East where the main cave is.

There were only a few caves in this outcrop of limestone. MF52 was just a hole in the ground, whilst MF53 and MF54 were two entrances on the cave called "The Maze". We had a bit of a look at this. However progress was impeded by the presence of a rather large and hairy wombat, a relation of the large and hairy wombat living in MF1. Please see the article "Wombats on the Internet" ("Speleograffiti" Vol 25) for further discussion on wombats in caves.

We rigged a ladder with a belay at the top of MF52 and proceeded into the cave. At the bottom, the cave continues West to a climb which leads into a fissure which contains a lot of pretty stalagmites. There were also some fossil bones in the ceiling.

After we all returned to the surface, we derigged and made our way to MF1 where we found everyone asleep outside the cave. It had been a hard day. We woke them up and sent them to look at MF52 while we decided to go into MF4 and through to the extension in MF1.

Everything was going fine - we went into the main cave from the mineshaft and three of us crawled along the belly crawl where the wombat normally sleeps. We had just stood up and I heard a growling noise. Alison thought it was her helmet scraping on the rock. Then we heard it again and then there was the large hairy wombat wandering toward us. We shouted at the other three to stay where they were and not do the crawl just yet.

The wombat came toward us up the narrow stream passage, so we bridged across the passage. (My leg still dangling for the wombat to gnaw.) It wandered under our legs and into a small hole. It obviously didn't like the hole, so growled and then reversed and went into another hole. From our point of view this was much better hole for it to be in, so we called for the others to come through. Meanwhile we were cursing that we had forgotten the wombat repellent.

We continued into the cave and crawled through the tight squeeze to the extension. We went all the way to the back of the extension and I was quite amazed at how much formation had grown in the last seven to eight years. I remember ten years ago, when all the stals on the roof were pristine white. Then, eight years ago, the whole extension had obviously flooded and all the stals were covered in brown mud. Now you can see a lot of stals covered in the mud, but there are also a lot that have grown in the last eight years and are pristine white, some are six to eight inches long.

On our way out of the cave, we neither saw nor heard the wombat. We returned to the cars, just in time to meet the other group which was returning from MF52. After an enjoyable day of casual caving, we drove the short distance back to Bungendore for some fine food, drink, sing-a-longs, dancing and pool at the hotel.

Chris Bradley.

COOLAMON.

Friday 1st April-Sunday 2nd April 1994.

Chris Bradley, Liz Brandon, Ian Brumby, Toryn Chapman, Brian Ewert, Lindsay Irvine, Anna McKinlay, Gary Morris, Tony Veness, Lyle Williams.

First overnight trip for 1994. Coolamon Caves, Kosciusko National Park, NSW.

Another Easter long weekend meant another overnight caving trip for NUCC. This year the NUCC marquee was set up at Coolamon Caves, an interesting caving area near Blue Waterholes on Cave Creek at the Northern end of Kosciusko National Park. Driving time from Cooma is approximately ninety minutes on sealed and unsealed road. Despite the published trip list's disclaimer regarding the moisture content of the caves at Coolamon, President Williams found nine other eager souls to join him for a long weekend of aqua-caving.

Friday.

After much equipment and vehicle shuffling at the clubhouse (on April's Fools Day no less) four vehicles left ANU at approximately 0845. Lindsay drove to Adaminaby via Boboyan Road (with a spot of fishing on the way) whilst Lyle, Garry and Tony took the more sedate route via Cooma. After stocking up with hot cross buns (HCB's) at Cooma bakehouse and stopping at Adaminaby for petrol top ups, all cars arrived at Blue Waterholes camping area by 1230. The thought of a full camp site crossed minds as tents were spotted kilometres before the turnoff to the camp ground. The actual site was fairly quiet when NUCC arrived although numbers did vary during the weekend. At no time during the weekend was the camping area crowded and no other 'organised' caving groups were seen.

A tent site acceptable to all (but Lyle) for the NUCC portable clubhouse was chosen and the marquee was erected. Said tent was promptly filled with sleeping bags, mats, bags, eskies and seemingly endless food supplies. Firewood was collected and the campsite appeared geared for the weekend. After all this activity, caffeine and chocolate were produced to restart the now worn out NUCC machine. Maps, notes and compasses appeared and the serious business of caving was about to get underway. Some easy aquatic exploration to ease into the weekend was thought wise and it wasn't long before everybody was geared up and heading off to Z cave down on the creek.

Z was found to be reasonably dry but its proximity to the creek plus the discovery of the odd puddle suggested that it would be a 'slightly moist' cave in mid winter. After negotiating 50 metres of passage and a couple of easy squeezes the cave became un-negotiable.



One minute after the egg incident.

Descriptions of the cave had indicated there was more to the cave but some vague searching and backtracking failed to turn up any leads. It was decided to leave Z cave and go in search of New Year's cave.

The location of New Year's was known approximately but 45 minutes of searching failed to locate the entrance, although many other tagged entrances were found. With the afternoon wearing on and the weather outside not looking promising, it was decided that Frustration cave would make an acceptable afternoon adventure. Frustration was visited by NUCC in 1992 (Lyle and Tony included) and at that time it was found to be a genuinely 'slightly' moist cave.

After the entrance pitch was rigged by Lindsay using a 30' ladder, the party began descending into the main stream passage. Comment must be made on Toryn's accuracy in showering Tony with debris from the inclined entrance scramble. With the ladder dropping climbers onto a floor above a stream passage running East-West, an immediate choice of upstream or downstream had to be made. Some went upstream, some went downstream, some did both, whilst Ian and Chris navigated around in circles. Downstream the stream branched into some sumps before the main passage turned into somewhat of a roof sniff. The

upstream route continued further with the final 20 metres being clear of the main stream passage. Much decoration was found in the upper reaches of the upstream passage.



Anna.

After approximately an hour of exploration the party began reassembling at the bottom of the entrance pitch and began to contemplate the virtues of the still unattempted roof sniff. Lyle decided it would be selfish of him to do the roof sniff twice in one lifetime and promptly volunteered to ascend and start the campfire. With Lyle and Brian half way up the ladder to freedom and the rest of the NUCC machine now somewhat low on steam, apathy took hold and the roof sniff was saved for another day. The party ascended and wandered through the dark towards the campsite in small groups. Some groups managing to see more of the surrounding valleys on the way home than others (Anna, Liz and Tony). By the time the stragglers arrived the NUCC marquee was bathed in the light from a blazing campfire.

NUCC has never been known for 'roughing it' on extended trips and soon sausage, eggs, bread and pasta were going in every direction. There's nothing like a wet cave to work up an appetite. The already drizzling rain began to turn nasty and the troupe retreated to the marquee for evening activities. Those worn out by the long day went to sleep. Those rejuvenated by dinner played or learnt to play 500. Lindsay took requests on his guitar and assured a pleasant night for all. Liz provided some entertainment herself by falling asleep with her head wedged between a tent pole and an extremely hot gas lamp. Strange girl! With concentration beginning to lapse and threats from Lindsay on an early morning wake up call for fishing, all retreated to warm sleeping bags as the rain continued to bucket down.

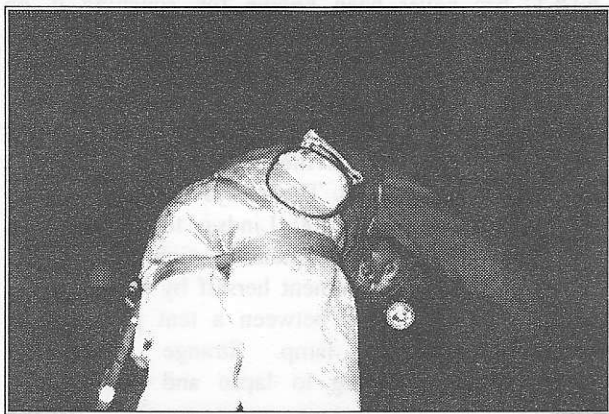
Saturday.

Saturday morning brought dry weather and from an overcast morning a glorious day appeared. Lindsay had indeed beaten everybody up and gone fishing for the elusive 'big-one'. All were up and eating by 0900. Lyle introduced the uninitiated to the making of 'egg jaffles' whilst Chris magically attracted all the smoke from the campfire, no matter where he sat, much to the amusement of others. HCB's and Easter eggs featured in everyone's morning diet. Our search for New Year's cave recommenced by 1030, again to no avail.

The tagged entrance to Clown was located and was rigged by Tony and Brian in lieu of New Year's. A 50' ladder was used for the mostly vertical drop into the main chamber, with a 30' ladder used for the final drop into the terminal chamber. The lower chamber was found to be highly decorated with wonderful examples of flowstone. Several intact skeletons were spotted on the cave floor. After a few group photos, the party ascended and had a chocolate break in the sun. The search for New Year's continued along the way back to camp.

Once back at camp, lunch was taken and plans were made for the afternoon. At Chris's suggestion it was decided to make the most of the brilliant weather by tackling River Cave. River cave, as the name implies, contains a river. A very wet and cold river. Spare dry clothes were packed and anything not completely waterproof was left at camp. After an animated discussion on the virtues of the various personal lighting systems available (lead acid vs. Petzl vs. Ni-Cad) all managed to organise themselves a suitably waterproof unit. Todyn's fixation on passing his helmet through a crack at the duck-under is still not understood.

After a 30 minute walk and a 15 minute search, the tagged entrance to River Cave was located. After jettisoning dry clothes and towels at the entrance, the



Mr. Bradley and his 'death harness'

party made their way through a tall vertical rift into the cave and continued through some easy crawls (each wetter than the previous) until the roar of the river below could be heard. At this point Chris briefed the uninitiated (unintimidated) on what was about to follow. There is always ambiguity when it comes to describing the moisture content of caves. Is it a wet one, is it a dry one or is it slightly moist? River Cave wins the 'wet' contest hands down as it contains a 'duck-under' - the dreaded "River Cave widow maker".

A duck-under consists of a length of passage whose roof is lower than the surrounding water level, ie. no air! To continue past this point requires a deep breath and some underwater swimming. The duck under in River cave is about two metres long.

The plan was to drop to the main stream passage, continue downstream for 20-30 metres before 'negotiating' the duck under, then progressing another 20 metres until a large sump is reached. At this point a hasty retreat would be beat before the cold took hold. Easier done than said you say? Wading through ankle\thigh\chest high water is one thing but actually diving underwater through a flooded passage sorts the caver from the occasional potholer.

One by one each caver approached the duck-under and dropped from knee deep water into neck high cold water. The expressions on peoples faces as their bodies responded to the quick immersion were priceless. President Williams went from Tenor to Soprano in seconds. All took the challenge (twice, as they had to get back) and loved it. A quick jog back to the surface and a hurried change into dry clothes at the entrance along with a liberal application of chocolate assured us of a comfortable return walk. A well deserved dinner was enjoyed and a night of guitar playing, star watching and general relaxing under a brilliantly clear sky unfolded. The rigours of the day's caving took their toll on NUCC and a soothing fireside massage session tried by both experts and amateurs continued into the wee small hours.

Strains of Happy Birthday echoed through the campsite at midnight as Anna turned twenty.

Sunday.

A leisurely rise on the final day ensured that everyone was well rested for the forthcoming activities. Liz told of some evening excitement involving Torny, the Easter Bilby and the campfire but the truth may never be known. After much egg swapping and HCB warming, all geared up again for another wet cave; White Fish Cave down on Cave Creek. With Lindsay's fly fishing rod in tow and spare clothes packed, the walk down the creek began. NUCC passed a group of people visiting Barber's Cave on a ranger lead tour. It is not sure which group looked sillier; NUCC wearing helmets, lights and overalls on a leisurely morning walk down the creek or the public group with multitudes of 'Dolphin torches' and baby carriers amongst them.

White Fish was reached after a 30 minute walk. Dry gear was stashed in the entrance chamber and with rigging gear in tow, the group dropped down over a three metre waterfall into the stream. Chris being the only participant who knew the cave's layout, wisely entered the cave last to make life interesting for the leaders: Brian; Lindsay and Torny. After 20-30 metres of scrambling along an inclined rift through which a great deal of water was flowing, a tape was rigged as a hand line for an ascent over a small waterfall. With the water level getting awfully deep awfully quickly, word went back to Chris for confirmation on the way to go. After a bit of note reading and searching, the way around the apparently unavoidable swim was found and the adventure continued. A 'white fish' was seen in the swim by some and it seemed attracted to the lights although what its reaction to ten of us swimming through its pool would have been, was not known. A further 20 minutes of excitement brought the group to the final physical challenge for the weekend.

Instructions for the cave detailed the requirement to navigate a particularly high, vertical, muddy chimney. Lyle spent some time squeezing\wedging and sweating his way up the chimney to find himself face to face with nothing but tight fitting rock. Hmmm? After some head scratching, it was decided to leave the remaining parts of the cave for the next trip. After further exploration by some into downstream side passages, the NUCC machine began its scramble back to the entrance. It was indeed a scramble in places with the ease of getting in being negated by the problems of getting out, caused by the extremely sticky clay around the lower stream passage. Many fine examples of shawls and suspended rimstone pools were observed in chambers within the cave.

All eventually made their way from White Fish into the receding sunlight. Some passing walkers asked Lindsay

how the fishing was in the cave as he was seen walking out of the cave in soaked overalls carrying a fly rod. His reply to their inquiry is not known although the walkers seemed somewhat amused as the washing of very sticky clay from cavers' overalls, haul bags and hair began.

The afternoon's activities consisted of squeezing everything back into the vehicles for the trip home. Why there was so much food left to pack after such a gastronomic weekend is unknown, although the large numbers of Easter eggs and HCB's consumed probably had something to do with it. Garry must be commended on 'volunteering' to take the garbage bag after it was jettisoned by a white Diahatsu driver.

The highlight of the packing process may well have been seeing Lyle get a chicken egg smashed over his head. The egg smasher can't really be blamed for the whole affair as Lyle was on his knees at the time with his head bent forward. The egg smasher shall remain nameless although it is known that the person with the

most egg on their hands after the affair had very recently had a birthday.

NUCC popped into the Adaminaby Pub on the way through to Cooma for a deserved Easter Sunday dinner. The weekend had challenged all and nobody went home disappointed. Many had had their first wet cave, some had completed their first duck-under, some had tasted their first egg jaffle, some had had their pillow stolen and some had even had their first 100 kilometre per hour massage.

A relaxing Easter was had by all and Coolamon once again provided NUCC with a selection of fine 'slightly moist' caves. No doubt, Coolamon will continue as one of NUCC's regular haunts be it for walking, cycling, caving or getting away from Uni. for a weekend in the bush.

Tony Veness.



NUCC after a very long weekend at Coolamon.

PUNCHBOWL -WEE JASPER.

Saturday 16th April 1994.

*Edwin Aplin, Toryn Chapman,
Andrew Copping, Rebecah Dallwitz,
Brian Ewert, Imogen Fullagar,
Wilfred Fullagar, Alix King, Alison Machin,
Gary Morris, Tony Veness, Lyle Williams.*

Punchbowl. Again.....

Eight a.m. Saturday morning. Shouldn't be up. Should be asleep. Shouldn't be rummaging through the NUCC gear store, about to go caving. All the same, this particular morning saw thirteen people, more keen on throwing themselves down holes in the ground and rolling around in clay than staying under a nice warm doona, meeting at the gear store for a trip to Punchbowl cave at Wee Jasper. A little more than three hours later saw the group descending into Pitch Chamber. Some discovered that abseiling in a slot in the limestone, then down an overhang, in the dark, with well placed ropes and ladders to tangle oneself in, was somewhat different to abseiling at the sports union (although not nearly as different as it would become later...). A slight technical hitch was encountered when it was observed that the entrance pitch was about 70 feet in depth, and we observed that the two thirty foot ladders that were rigged didn't quite reach.

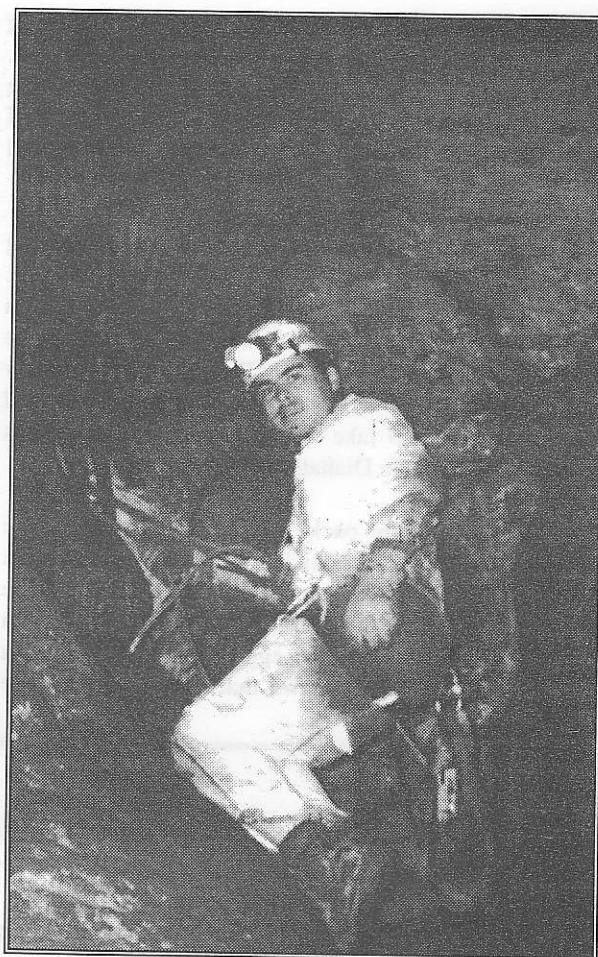
At the bottom of the pitch, club president Lyle Williams was mistaken for an information bureau by members of another party. Several minutes of fruitless directions later, a map was dumped on the questioners, and the NUCC party set off.

After a temporary navigational misplacement in the lower level of the cave, which resulted in a full circle being taken, and us ending up where we started, the party continued on the larger round trip of the cave. Expected duration: 5 hours.

A fruitless search was then mounted in Mud Crack Chamber for a small clay chamber filled with clay sculptures. Deciding that it had been filled with silt, bat guano, or perhaps just removed entirely, lunch was taken, where Gary found a dark, quiet corner where he thought he could eat his chocolate without the rest of us knowing. With the time ticking away, it was decided that we should move on.

A detour to the Crystal Pool was taken via the laundry chute, which became interesting at the bottom, where a nice piece of limestone juttied out, simply inviting a leg to be placed painfully on either side of it. President Lyle happily obliged on the way back up, disappointingly because no one had a camera at the time. Apart from Lyle, Brian, Edwin and Toryn who decided that a rope was a better way out than a ladder, the more intelligent members of the party waited for the ladder.

Shortly thereafter, we were treated to the impressive spectacle of Lyle attempting to lasso the bolts on Loxin Wall, whilst halfway up it. (Loxin Wall being a lovely smooth featureless



Lyle going up Loxin.

flowstone wall covered in the clay of thousands of pairs of boots.)

The abseil back down to Pitch Chamber proved to be quite interesting for many. To get to a small ledge on the edge of the 22 metre drop involved coming head first through a smallish hole, dragging your legs through and then descending a couple of metres, and hurdling Toryn, who was checking harnesses. The slack then had to be taken out of the anchor by leaning backwards over the drop. Simple really.

After this, people began to leave the cave, by remembering just how much work is involved in ladder climbing. (The earlier technical hitch having been resolved!) Meanwhile, Tony was on the other side of the cave wondering if the rope would reach the bottom when he doubled it over for the purpose of pulling it down after he abseiled. It was agreed that Toryn would wait for him at the bottom, and laugh at him if it didn't make it.

By the time everyone was up the ladder, it was after nine p.m., and a mammoth (for Punchbowl) ten hours underground! Despite its length, the trip was generally enjoyed. Special thanks to Lyle and Tony for their enthusiastic(?) rigging and removal of ladders and ropes.

Toryn Chapman.



The BEFORE photo from WJ. (White overalls are still white).



Not Wee Jasper.

BLOWFLY CAVE-BUNGONIA.

Saturday 30th April 1994.

Mark Bown, Toyrn Chapman, Sharon Fairclough, Don Glasgow, Mirjana Jambrecina, Sherry Mayo, Jeppe Nielson, Gary Morris, Tony Veness, Lyle Williams.

Sports caving for the vertically orientated!

After the usual practice of meeting at the club storeroom on the ANU campus, we headed off toward Bungonia in two cars. Lyle and Toyrn rode in Lyle's wheels and the rest of us rode in Tony's trusty Chrysler. We stopped at the ranger's station to sign the books and get some morning tea and then we proceeded onto the Blowfly Cave carpark. After getting off a group photo with us all in caving attire, we went to the cave entrances.

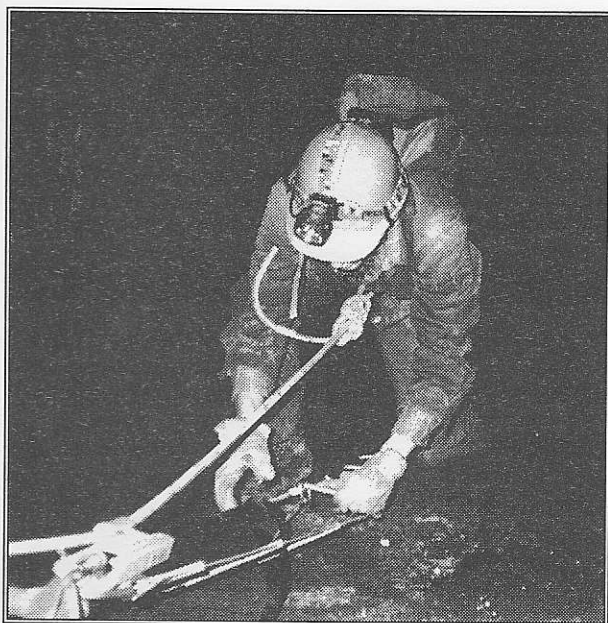
The plan was for Tony and Gary to rig the B51 pitch with rope with which to jumare out. The rest of the group rigged the B16 entrance and abseiled in. While the party was in the process of entering the cave, the three CSS/NUCC members (Mark, Sherry and Don) whom we had planned to meet up with sometime during the day, arrived. They joined Tony and Gary entering the B51 pitch and we all met up with the rest of the party who had made it into the main Chamber.

After spending some time rigging the Adytum, Lyle, Mark and Sherry all went down and up. While some of the rest of the group discussed who else was silly enough to go down it, Lyle took the others back past the base of the B16 entrance and further down a steep, tricky passage way which lead to a dig marking the furthest reach of the cave. Some have suggested that this dig may link up with the B4-5 extension. However, none of us particularly wanted to put the effort into finding out.

On returning to the bottom of the B16 pitch, Mark, Sherry and Don all decided to ascend out, all three using different ascending gear. That left Lyle, Sharon, Mirjana and Gary who crawled, heaved and struggled back through the cave and jumared out the B51 pitch. There was some talk of having a look down Acoustic Pot (if there was time), but we would decide that when we arrived at the surface.



Dressed for the occasion.



The author.

We recovered from the stresses of Blowfly Cave while waiting for Tony, Torny and Jeppe who had all decided to check out the Adytum. They ended up spending about one hour extra in the cave.

After derigging the pitch, it was getting far too late for Acoustic Pot, so we all headed back to the carpark. After an uneventful drive back to Goulburn, we found a nice pub which served "bloody good tucker" according to the blackboard menu which turned out to include a pretty good steak sandwich.

BlowFly cave is good value if you like vertical caves, sportyness, and really awkward tight squeezes. The Blowfly Adytum is the longest underground pitch on mainland Australia (155ft). One recent full cave rescue situation at Bungonia occurred during 1993 in Blowfly cave when a 155kg caver was stuck in one of the squeezes and had to be hauled out (see Speleograffiti 1993).

Gary Morris.

BIG HOLE I

Sunday 22nd May 1994.

***Mark Bown, Ian Brumby, Andrew Copping, Sharon Fairclough,
Mirjana Jambrecina, Alix King, Sherry Mayo, Anna McKinlay, Jeppe Nielson,
Tony Veness, Andrew Wall, Lyle Williams.***

The only cave where a parachute isn't such a silly idea.

Another year and another Big Hole trip. Whilst more a collapsed doline than an intact cave, Big Hole still attracts a full trip (or two) of NUCC thrill seekers every year. The thrill of Big Hole is the chance to experience the longest single abseil regularly undertaken by NUCC. A 95 metre free hang (almost) abseil into a very large hole in the ground!

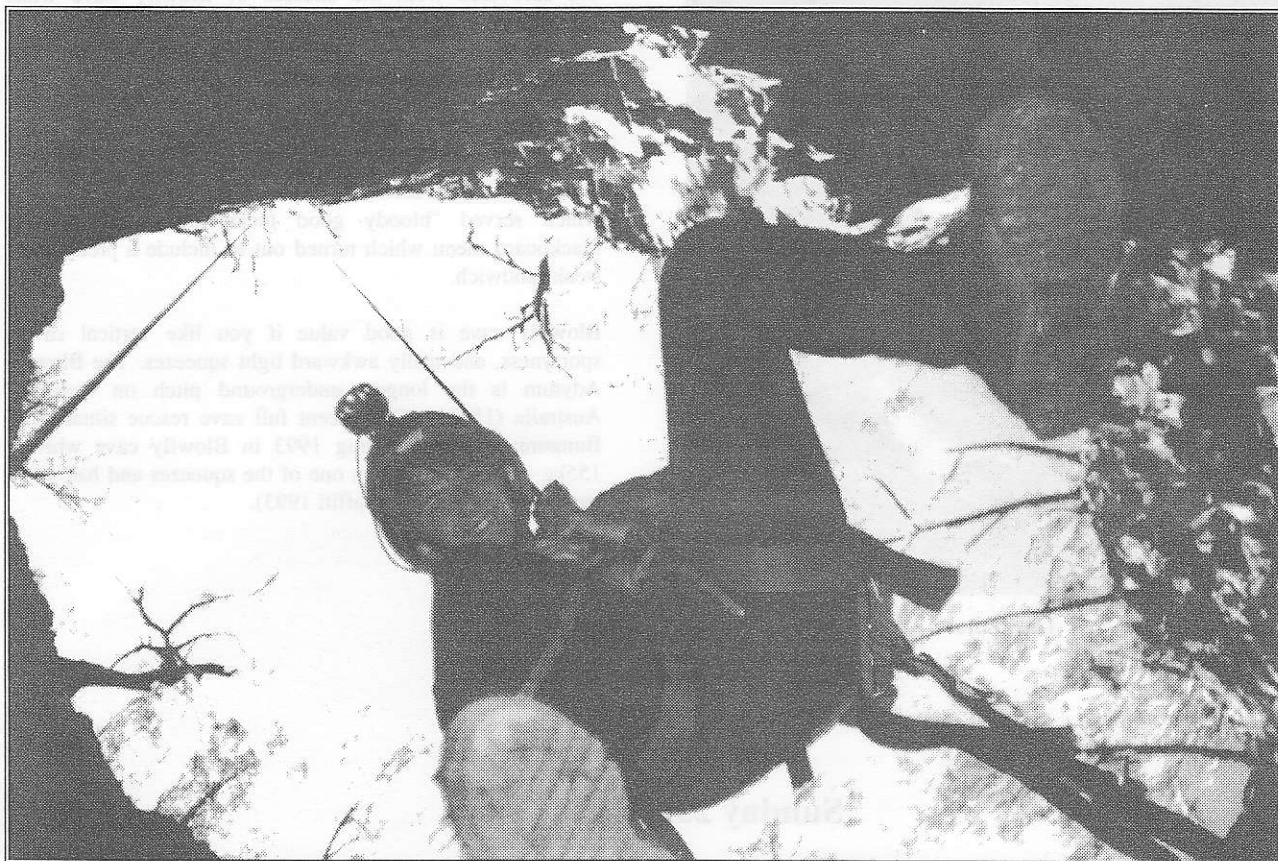
After a 0700 meet at the clubhouse on a strangely warm Sunday morning in May and an eventual 0720 departure in three vehicles, the thrill seekers reached downtown Captains Flat at 0820. After the traditional coffee\sugar\pie break, the party pressed on (now in four vehicles after AKW's arrival) to their rendezvous with the hole. Upon reaching the carpark, harnesses, metal bits, munchies and two 100 metre ropes were distributed and NUCC continued on foot. The expected chilly crossing of the Shoalhaven river was a non event due to lack of depth and those with wet suit booties carried them across. Comment must be made on Mirjana's extremely red jumboots.

With many rapidly overheating due to warm clothing and the extra weight from gear, NUCC finally reached the edge of the hole. A group of bushwalkers had their peace shattered as

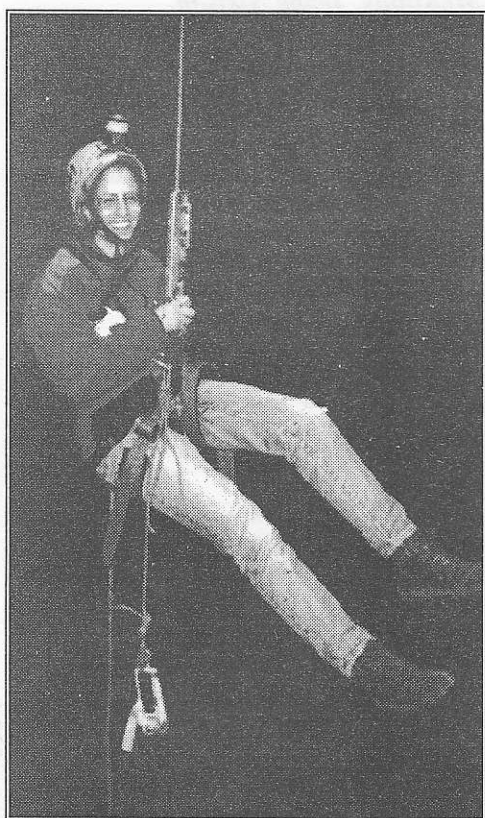
twelve sweaty NUCC'ers groaned their way onto the viewing platform and promptly dropped their bundles of gear. Peering over the edge into the now all too close hole provided a few minutes of entertainment as those who had not visited the hole before realised just how deep a 100 metre deep hole is.

The hole is a tad deeper than the ANU Sports Union Gym roof is high! Those who had been there before decided that the day was going to be a long one and ushered the uninitiated back to their bags and around to the other side of the hole; the highest side.

President Lyle and Ex-Pres Andrew made short work of rigging the pitch using two 100 metre ropes with many of the knots used being tied correctly first go! Lunches, cameras and butterflies were organised and the fun began. The 100 metre abseil is interesting enough but getting onto the rope at the top of the pitch is a challenge in itself. That first step\scramble over the ledge is a moving experience (down) for most. Andrew checked and calmed new-comers as they launched themselves whilst the 'oldtimers' pretended not to be overly phased by the impending drop.



Sharon, half way down.



Alix after the full 100m.

Pair by pair they went: Sharon and Tony; Anna and Mark; Mirjana and Sherry; Jeppe and Alix; and Andrew and Ian. A 100 metre drop looks deep from the top but a 50 metre drop is still daunting enough when you are dangling 50 metres down on a seemingly wimpy piece of plastic rope. The first couple of abseiling pairs had an audience on the viewing platform as the adult bushwalkers presented the exercise to their offspring as something not to do!

Exploration of the bottom began. Fossils, frogs and frisbees were found in abundance as we circumnavigated the hole. The log book was signed and group photos taken. A crunchy frog entertained Sharon whilst Mark's amazingly elastic hair was moulded into various forms by Sherry to entertain the rest. V.Strange. Anna produced a mountain of musli bars for the troops. Chocolates were swapped and flattened sandwiches eaten for lunch. Whilst all this was happening at the bottom, Lyle was placing the required rope protectors and Andrew, calling on past Big Hole experience, began collecting firewood. After further mirth the prussick out was began.

A 100 metre abseil gets better and better but a 100 metre prussick gets worse and worse. Those who learnt their prussick skills in the gym the week before put them into use and had 100 metres to perfect them. All made their way to the top with no mishaps with the final pair out at sunset. All released themselves from their SRT paraphernalia and enjoyed a brew in front of the fire.

The pitch was derigged and gear stowed. The walk back to the cars began (now seemingly longer) as yawns began to appear. A trip to the Captains Flat pub followed. Food was eaten, darts were thrown, dart boards were sometimes hit and a few lemonades sampled to celebrate the conquering of the Big Hole. Special thanks to Andrew and Lyle (the surface party), and to Mark and Sherry for their expert help during the SRT training night leading up to the trip.

Tony Veness.

**WY1-Wyanbene, NSW.
Saturday 4th June 1994.**

Mark Bown, Wilfred Fullagar, Mirjana Jambrecina, Sherry Mayo, Lyle Williams.

Wet caving at an old favourite.

At about 8:30am one Saturday morning the aforementioned soldiers of the NUCC brigade ventured West, in search of pipe light batteries and a place called Wyanbene. A single vehicle served our transport needs, and a sign reading "caves" was all it took to inspire speleological enthusiasm.

At about 11am, we lowered ourselves into a hole in a hill which led to a stream passage, then back up to a breezy constriction with a combination locked gate. On the other side was a drop of perhaps 20' back down to the stream, with which we soon became quite intimate; we followed it until the muddy maw of Rockfall Chamber finally rescued us from drowning. The entrance to Caesar's Hall was quite a gluggy episode in the trip, and a few slips were had by those in sneakers, fortunately without injury. With the mud-mound mastered, our intrepid leader Lyle helped us to decide that the "Meanders" and the famous "Gunbarrel Aven" (apparently nearby) should be visited on the way out. Climbing up, through, down and around a boulder pile led us into the second part of Caesar's Hall, where the stream was rediscovered and (with the inconvenience of a few 20' ladder

climbs/drops) pursued as far as Frustration Lake. This was a beautifully clear blue pond that marked the far end of our subterranean expedition and a good spot to stop for a lunch of chocolate, celery and assorted snacks. The chamber containing the lake had a couple of small, though intriguing helictitic formations, which were admired by all.

With tummies no longer rumbling, we retraced our steps as far as a muddy section of Caesar's Hall, where a left turn was taken into a previously unnoticed side-passage. A straightforward but potentially hazardous traverse was negotiated, followed by a descent into an unstable jumble of large splintered boulders. We soon squeezed through a narrow crack at the bottom of the rockpile and into the bottom of Gunbarrel Aven.

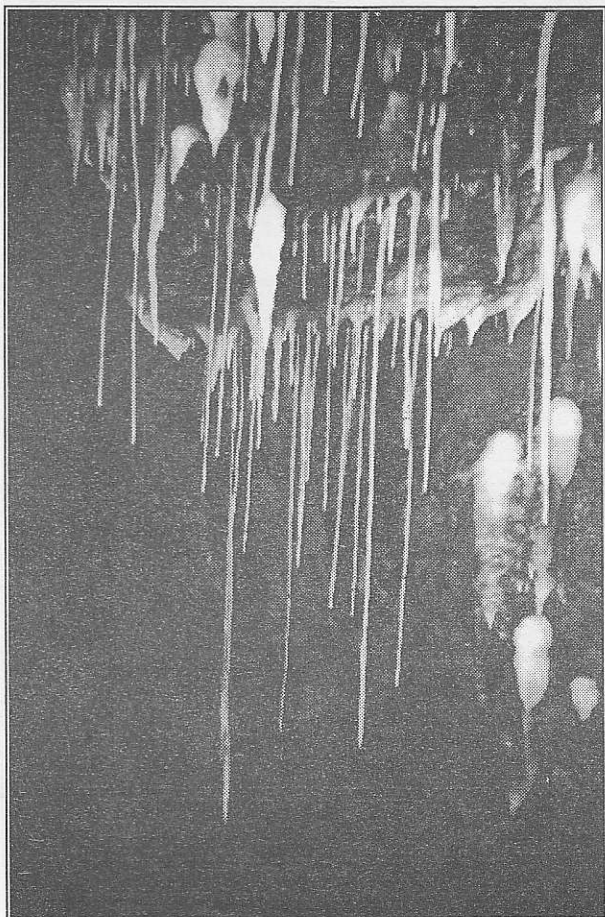
Gunbarrel Aven is big! The bottom half could be roughly described as a slightly elliptical cylinder about 15 metres in diameter with a bit of stream disappearing into the floor at the rock-jumble end. The top half seems to gradually taper to a point, but is basically too far away to see properly (someone on an early mapping expedition is supposed to have measured a height of 110m using a helium balloon)! Getting out of Gunbarrel proved to be a bit of a problem for the less experienced members of the party (myself included), and when it came to re-negotiating the tight crack in the rock pile, quite a while was invested in trying to find a position which our inflexible bodies would deign to adopt. Those who made it without difficulty are probably closet "Twister" freaks.

The "Meanders" was next on Lyle's list - this is a beautiful section of still, blue-watered stream passage which weaved its way through the rock until things got narrow enough and the day got late enough for us to decide that a celebration was in order.

The NUCC machine was promptly put in reverse gear and we all trooped out the way we came in - via Rockfall Chamber, back along the stream passage, up a 20' ladder, through a padlocked gate, down along a bit more stream passage, then (finally) up and out. It was about 5:30pm when we eventually got our heads above ground. Daylight was fading fast, and the weather didn't look too promising. Back at the car, muddy overalls and other contaminated clothes were exchanged for pristine raiment, and we were soon on our way into Braidwood to discover the atmosphere of the local pub.

A vote of thanks is due to Tony Veness (our much revered Eqpt. Officer) who cleans NUCC's ladders, ropes, etc; he no doubt comes close to Nirvana when we get back from trips like Wyanbene.

Wilfred K. Fullagar.



Pretties.

SIZZLER - CARD NIGHT **Saturday 25th June 1994.**

Tim Barrett, Mark Bown, Chris Bradley, Liz Brandon, Wilfred Fullagar, Mirjana Jambrecina, Joanne Harland, Alison Machin, Sherry Mayo, Oksana Melnyk, Anna McKinlay, Jeppe Nielson, Tony Veness, Andrew Wall, Lyle Williams.

Gourmet caving.

Abandoning the usual clubhouse departure, it came as a great surprise upon arrival at the location to find that not only had everyone seemed to find the place but that the turnout was so good considering especially the poor weather conditions and the difficult nature of the activity.

Sizzler provided a challenging evening - the negotiation of a long and tiring queue made the relatively simple seating arrangements a welcome relief.

Exhaustion was setting in and a unanimous decision to restore waning energy at the All-You-Can-Eat Salad Bar was made. A few of the more adventurous members of the party tried tackling the Main Menu - with varied success.

The expedition turned into a bit of an epic with the last members of the party staggering out of the exit/entrance and into the rain at close to 10pm. Not to be daunted though, most of the party decided to try another location - after much rigging of tables and chairs and securing of card decks we enjoyed the less sporty wander through 500, euchre and the Burgmann Bar.

Finally, weary and footsore, the group made the final difficult exit out into the downpour and content with a full evenings socialising - went home.

Anna McKinlay.



NUCC at play.

**CLIEFDEN-NSW.
Friday 22nd July - 24th July 1994.**

*Chris Bradley, Liz Brandon, Ian Brumby, Toryn Chapman, Lloyd David,
Imogen Fullagar, Drew Dietz, Anna McKinlay, Brendan Allen, Tony Veness, Andrew Wall.*

Caving with cows.

We arrived at Cliefden well after sunset, after a longish Friday night drive from Canberra. After grabbing necessary keys from the local farmer/cave caretaker, we made our way to the old shearers quarters which were to be our bed for the night. Whilst prepared for camping, the majority of us decided to sleep inside next to the fireplace as it was shaping up to be a very cold night. After losing Ian temporarily as he surveyed the nearby fields, we soon had a warm fire going as we cooked dinner. The long drive took its toll and we all retreated to sleeping bags as the fire continued to burn.

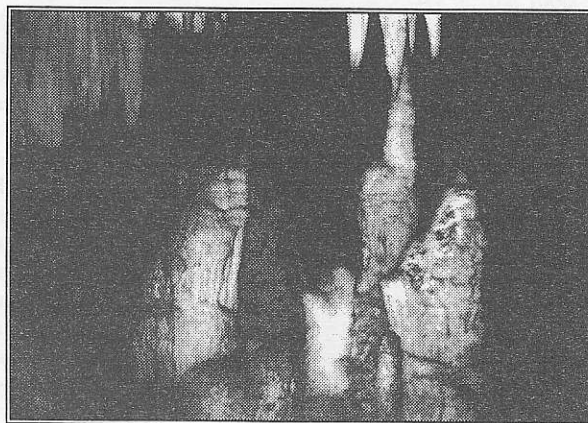
Breakfast in the Sun on the large veranda started the morning off before we packed lunches and set off for Swansong Cave. After abandoning the Calais, Volvo and Valiant, we all piled into/onto Andrews Toyota for the river crossing. A short drive to some shade, left us with only a short walk to the cave entrance. After an hour's search, during which we found more goats than caves, the entrance was eventually found and the cave explored. Andrew and Chris, having been to a Cliefden cave leader weekend, were familiar with the cave and showed us the way. Returning to the cars for lunch gave an excuse for a lie down in the shade followed by a mass game of Frisbee.

After lunch, we recrossed the river and drove to Yarra Wiggah Cave. We 'dug' the entrance and were all soon into the cool cave and out of the heat. Spending two hours in the cave gave us plenty of time to see many of the beautiful formations present. After a quick look at Transmission Cave near the river, we returned to the cars and then back to 'camp'. After a hot dinner and a cold lemonade or two, a birthday cake appeared and all did their best to embarrass Lloyd who was having a birthday (yes, he really is ... years old). After frivolities, we braved the icy cold night in search of another cave for the day - Mallongulli.



Found the cave. Lost the keys?

Mallongulli is a very sporty cave with many squeezes, crawls with a 50 foot ladder pitch at the entrance and it also contains many pretty formations. Chris commented that the level of the water in the main sump was about 50 centimetres lower than it had been three months previous. After two and a half hours in the cave, we returned to the frosty night and made our way back to camp at midnight. The frosty ground giving Liz somewhat of a start as Chris's 'petrol-head' special lost traction more than once on the grassy slope leading back to the dirt road.



The Cliefden Clowns.

With a late rise, we packed and set off for Cliefden Main Cave at the crack of Noon. After a few problems in unlocking the gate at the upper entrance, we made our way in and spent over three hours exploring the cave. Using Andrew's and Chris's memory and a map or two, we explored the main chamber, the Laurel room, the Boot room, the Clown room (see picture elsewhere) and Helictite Wall. The helictites seen were the longest and most complicated that many of us had seen.

We eventually had to face the heat of the day, and after relocking the cave, we walked back up the hill to the cars. After returning the keys, we began our long drive back to Canberra. Special thanks to Chris and Andrew for their forthought in attending a cave leader weekend at Cliefden organised by Orange Speleo. Club some months previously and enabled NUCC to visit Cliefden caves for the first time in a long while.

Tony Veness (From Chris Bradley's notes).

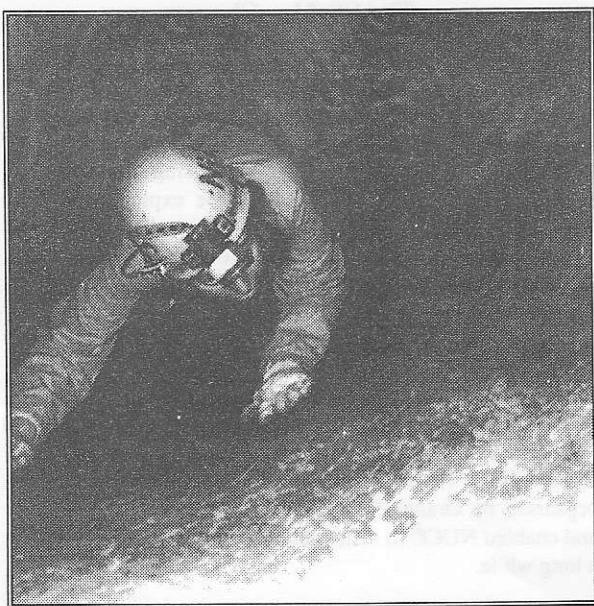
PUNCHBOWL-WEE JASPER.

Saturday 1st August 1994.

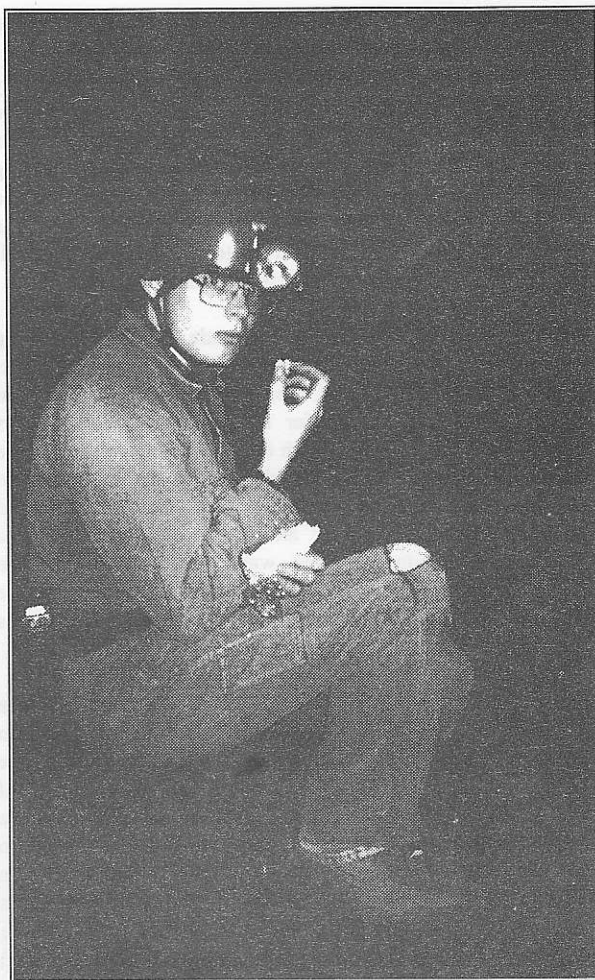
*Lyle Williams, Tony Veness, Chris Bradley, Wilfa (Wilfred Fullagar),
Gazza (Gary Morris), Macca (Anna McKinlay), Brum (Ian Brumby).*

Spent the day in Dip, Signature and Dogleg- very helpful indeed.

This story starts the same as just about all the others in this book. Caving clubhouse, gear, cars - you know the deal. Wee Jasper by 10am, the shop, hot drinks, fresh air, old couch still missing, new telephone-directory-couch had been reduced to a 5 directory footstool. We split the big party into two; 6 in one, half a dozen in the other and the open mouth of Punchbowl gobbled us up. Having survived a delayed abseil cos another group was descending, leader Lyle didn't lead us through to the Fossil Wall or into Far Chamber, cos he wasn't there. Wilfa and Gazza led instead. We stopped for little lunch in Far Chamber before taking on Strawberry Shortcake and entering Locksdon Chamber. We then headed for the Laundry Chute and enjoyed sliding down the slippery dippery biteries on the way. Bradley, the clown of the trip, shone with maturity as he rocketed down a slide and crashed into Macca to slow himself down. Lunch was near the Laundry Chute, and Macca and me played throw Brum's sandwiches around to soften 'em up and make them tender and juicy. Post lunch entertainment was the Chute with Bradley free-climbing back out cos the over eager equipment officers folded the tape up too early. Through the Window and onto more slippery dippery bits, although they were a little too dry and safe, so Clown Bradley modified the ride down the slope for Veness and Macca. Clown Bradley took a second slide and once again crashed into Macca who crashed into Veness who didn't appreciate the joke. Strawberry



Anna coming up the Laundry Shute.



The rarely spotted chocolate monster.

Shortcake, Locksdon Wall stick- insect style with Brum, descent back into the first chamber and just so we weren't a NUCC group exiting before dark, we sat and watched another group struggle with the final pitch. No wonder they were struggling; Clown Bradley kept throwing our rope down on them as they climbed up. Finally we clambered out into the cool, black night, and drove to the pub. Wilfa's culinary preferences left us all amazed as he gobbled up two poor defenceless quails - they looked so cute too. Back to Canberra, back to house, back to bed, goodnight.

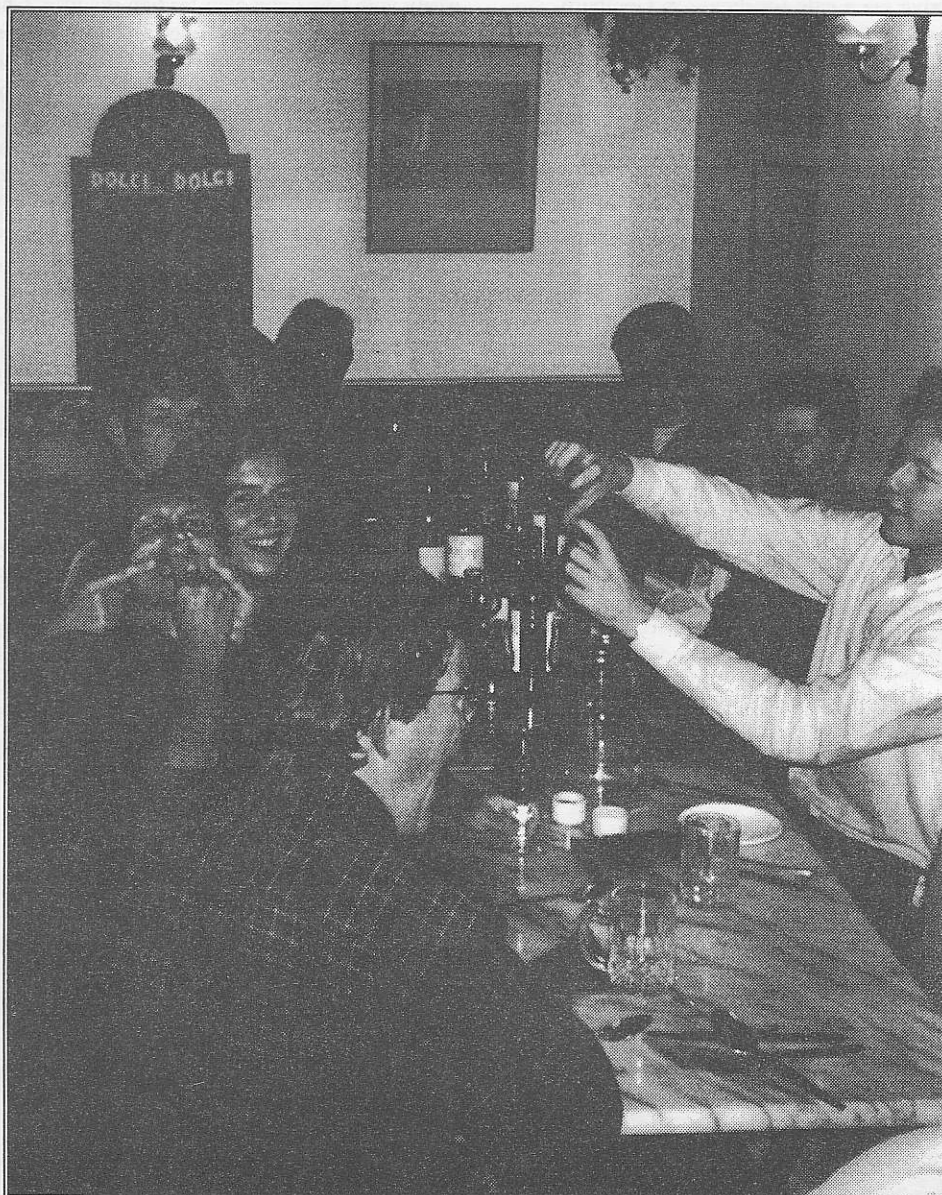
Journalist =B+R*U(M).

PS Please ignore spelling and punctuation, I did.

**NUCC dinner at Mamma's Trattoria.
Friday 12th August 1994.**

*Tim Barrett, Mark Bown, Chris Bradley, Andrew Copping, Lindsay Irvine,
Mark Jones, Alison Machin, Sherry Mayo, Tony Veness, Andrew Wall, Lyle Williams.*

Night out for Cavers Anonymous.



So many wines, so little time.

Friday 26th- Sunday 28th August 1994.

***Neil Anderson, Mark Bown, Chris Bradley, Sharon Fairclough,
Mirjana Jambrecina, Sherry Mayo, Tony Veness.***

A visit to an old CSS-NUCC stomping ground.

After a Friday night drive via a cafe for dinner in Goulburn, we arrived late in the evening at the campground. Choosing what appeared in the dark to be a reasonable campsite, we set up tents and after a bout of cave stories around an imaginary campfire, we tottered off to bed dreaming of adventures untold.

After a leisurely rise from the tents, we made use of the wonderful amenities at the Caves Reserve. The traditional Bown-Mayo breakfast of bacon and eggs was constructed in the gas powered group kitchen though Neil showed great resolve by eating a somewhat more dietary recommended breakfast. Mirjana and Sharon tried very hard not to feed the Kookaburras and chuffs which had gathered around for a free feed. The days caving consisted of a couple of hours in Glass Cave (W9) where after some squeezing, cave pearls and the remains of a calcified bat skull were found.

We had a brief and distant inspection of the open cut marble mine which is South of the campground. It's huge pulleys and cutting cables had been dormant for some time and rust had well and truly set in. After a lot of lying in the sun and a bash at water divining, a cooking fire was organised and we enjoyed a cooked dinner and a couple of cold lemonades.

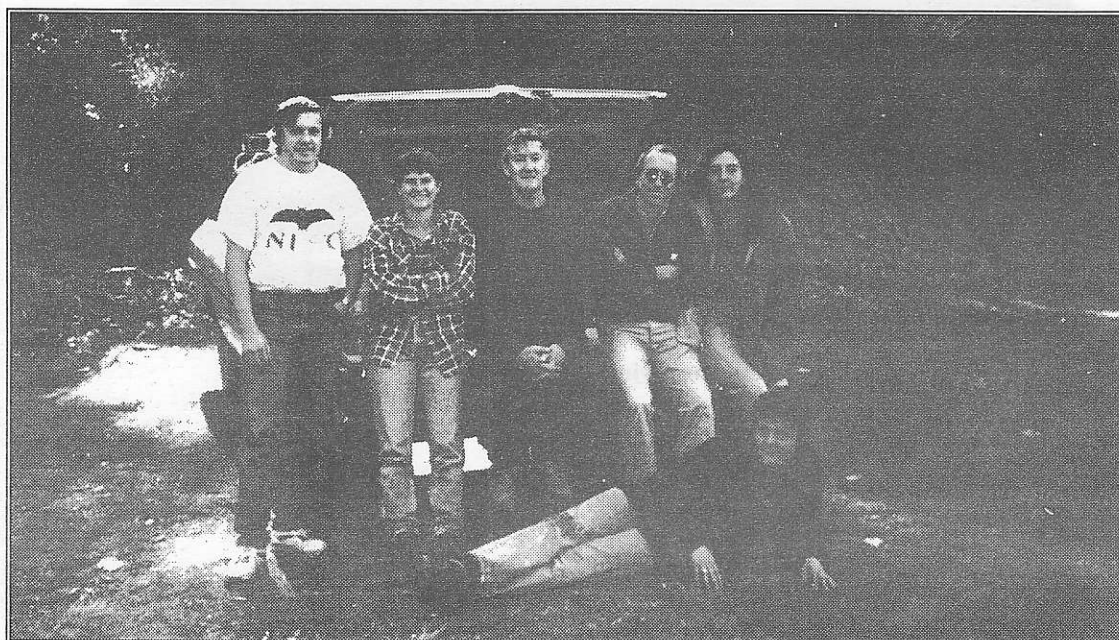
Another late rise set the pace for the day on Sunday. After organising ourselves and our gear, we began the 30 minute walk to Bullio Cave (W2). The doline was found relatively

easily with Chris and Neil leading the way. Chris dropped in via the vertical upper entrance and met the rest of us at the mud bank within the cave. After rigging the ladder, the rest of us clattered our way up the mud bank (the only real obstacle in the cave) and into the cave proper. With Chris and Neil leading, we made our way around the rest of the cave, taking note of anything suspicious or of scientific interest for the trip reports which were to be submitted to the National Parks Rangers. We eventually called it a day and headed back to the daylight.

After having a look in Tinted Cave (W11); which was once a show cave complete with wire ladders and iron handrails, we traversed along an old water pipe which ran past the 'wet' end of the cave. Each person's traverse was handled differently with those among us more vertically challenged than others, having to show 'spiderman-like-skills' to get through dry.

After saying goodbye to the resident rangers and taking a self-guided tour of the Figtree Cave we packed and headed back to Canberra. It was the first time NUCC had visited Wombeyan in some years and although the caving part of the trip was fairly light due to permit requirements for cave entry, we all had a relaxing weekend at in a very scenic area and added another area to our list of once-a-year destinations.

Tony Veness.



Valiant Space Cadets.

NARRANGULLEN- Lake Burrinjuck.

Saturday 10th September 1994.

*Carol Anderson, Neil Anderson, Chris Bradley, Liz Brandon, Jenette Dunkley,
Imogen Fullagar, Anna McKinlay, Tony Veness, Lyle Willaims.*

A day on the high seas in search of caves.

The majority of the caving areas around Canberra visited by NUCC involve a drive to the caving area followed by a short (sometimes not so short) walk to the entrance. However, the caves around Lake Burrinjuck near Yass NSW are much more easily visited by boat. The majority of the caves regularly visited at Narrangullen are within 50 metres of the water's edge and a pleasant boat trip from Good Hope is followed by only a short walk. The availability of some caves for 'dry' exploration is dictated by the amount of water in the lake. Lake Burrinjuck is an artificial lake formed by damming the Murrumbidgee river downstream of Yass. Its water level varies according to the present and past seasons. One cave entrance is currently only metres above the current water level (Sept, 1994) and will in time once again disappear!

After the usual 8 am meeting at the clubhouse and a quick stop at the bakery for the essential sugar-based post caving nourishment, NUCC made the trip up the highway to Yass on the way to Good Hope on the shores of Lake Burrinjuck. The CSS members participating in the trip were already there when NUCC arrived and after hiring two six berth aluminium boats the fun began. A day's worth of food and caving toys were squeezed into the 'speedboats' and the flotilla set sail at about 10 am.

Heading upstream, the first cave to be visited was 'Don's Hole'. Although a complete survey of the cave is yet to be mounted, the approximate passage length is 2000-2500 mm and about 750-1000 mm in width and height. Chris and Tony clambered up the lake shore to complete a 15 second round trip of the cave! During this time, the women's ANU Rowing

Team hijacked one of boats and took President Williams for a brief row across the lake. Don's Hole was found and named earlier in the year during a CSS trip.

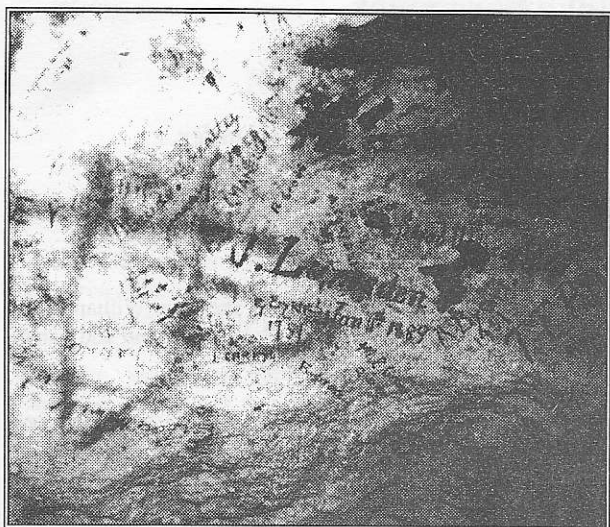
Still heading upstream, the next cave to be conquered was Fish Cave (TN 9). The entrance to Fish Cave is located on the water's edge and you step from the boat almost straight into the cave. All party members entered the cave and newcomers to Narrangullen scrambled around the two sumps at the end of the cave. The origin of the caves name is obvious when you are standing at the cave's entrance, but you'll have to visit the cave to find out. No secrets given away here!

The expected highlight of the trip was to be the next cave on the list; Cat's Hole (Waroo 5) and it certainly did not disappoint. Waroo 6 and 8 were passed on the way to Cat's Hole and were found to be putrid as usual.

After a lunchtime cruise upstream past Good Hope, during which the ship's rations were skipped in favour of a lunch consisting of food from the three basic caving food groups (Pizza, TimTams and Caffeine), Narrangullen Main (N1) was reached. Leaving President Williams onboard to conduct an osmosis experiment with his skull and a very heavy textbook, the NUCC/CSS buccaneers stormed up the hill to the entrance to Narrangullen Main. The sump was soon reached and any further exploration halted by the water. Future plans to drain the sump were devised, but with the sun well past the yardarm, a quick voyage around to the other entrances to Narrangullen Main, N2 and N3 seemed wiser.



SS CSS.



Graffiti in BD1. Speleograffiti?

Leaving President Williams and the CSS crew members to person the vessels, the remaining crew made a short through trip into N2 and out of N3. Cave yabbies were spotted in the stream within the cave; one approached ten centimetres in length. Another unusual aspect of the cave was the collection of very old graffiti at the extreme end of one of the cave's branches. Many very old names testified to the cave's close location to the old towns in the district and the ease of exploration of the cave.

The voyage was deemed to be a success. One of the more unusual caving areas close to Canberra being conquered. With the steam running out of the crew's boilers, the flotilla turned for home and the short drive to Canberra. It will be no surprise if it becomes a more regular feature of the NUCC caving calendar for the potential sailors within the club's ranks due to it's close location to Canberra.

Tony Veness.

Finger Cave - Taemus.

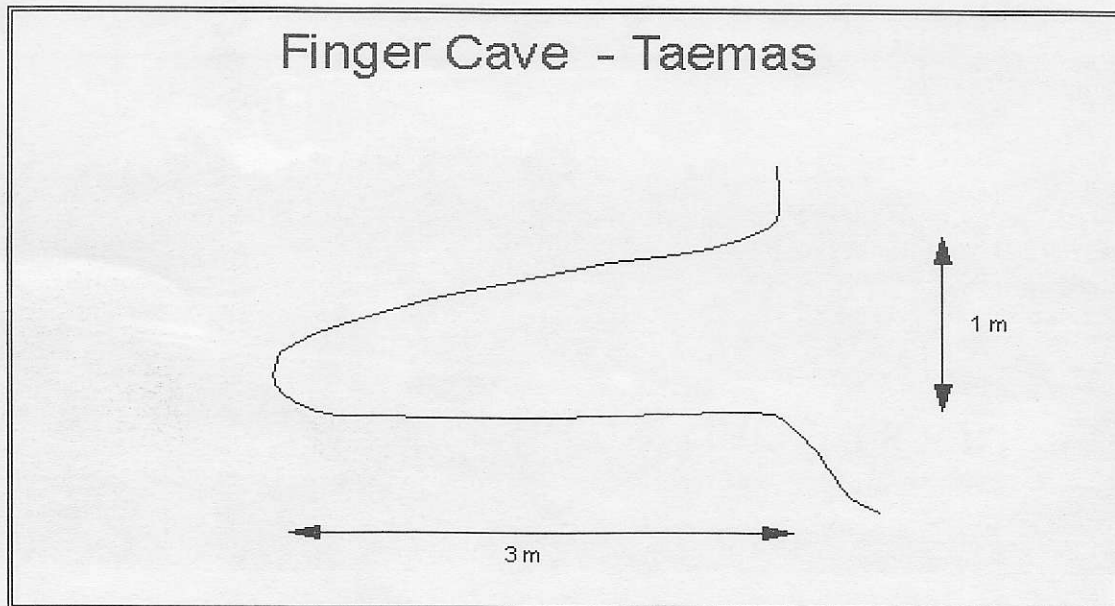
Finger Cave (formerly Don's Hole) was first spotted by Don Glasco on a CSS discovery trip to Taemus - Waroo area in June 1994. The impetus for this trip has been an impromptu CSS trip to the area a month earlier after Wee Jasper had been found to be overrun with scouts. On the June trip, four new caves were tagged, TM10, TM11, TM12 and WO13. Finger Cave was spotted from the vessel, but not visited. NUCC had another trip in the area in September 1994 and Finger Cave was 'extensively surveyed'.

Finger Cave is located on the Western side of the Burrinjuck Dam almost two kilometres North West of TM9. It is situated at the base of the exposed limestone near the top of the cliff. The entrance is about one metre in diameter and the cave extends back horizontally into the limestone for three metres (Figure One). The floor and ceiling are calcified and there are small calcite formations toward the rear of the cave. Tagging of the entrance will hopefully be done on the next trip and it is expected it will be numbered TM13.

References:

Brush, John (1971) Caves of the Goodhope, Taemas, and Warroo Areas on Burrinjuck Dam. *Speleograffiti* 8 (2): 10-13
Brush, John (1977) Taemus Caves Checklist. *The Very Latest* 9 (3):28

Chris Bradley
21 Jan 95.



Extensive mapping trip?

Bendethera-Deua National Park. Monday 19th-Friday 23rd September.

Chris Bradley, Toryn Chapman, Anna McKinlay, Tony Veness, Betsy the Wheelbarrow.

Caving with a wheelbarrow! (Ed: Trip from Hell)

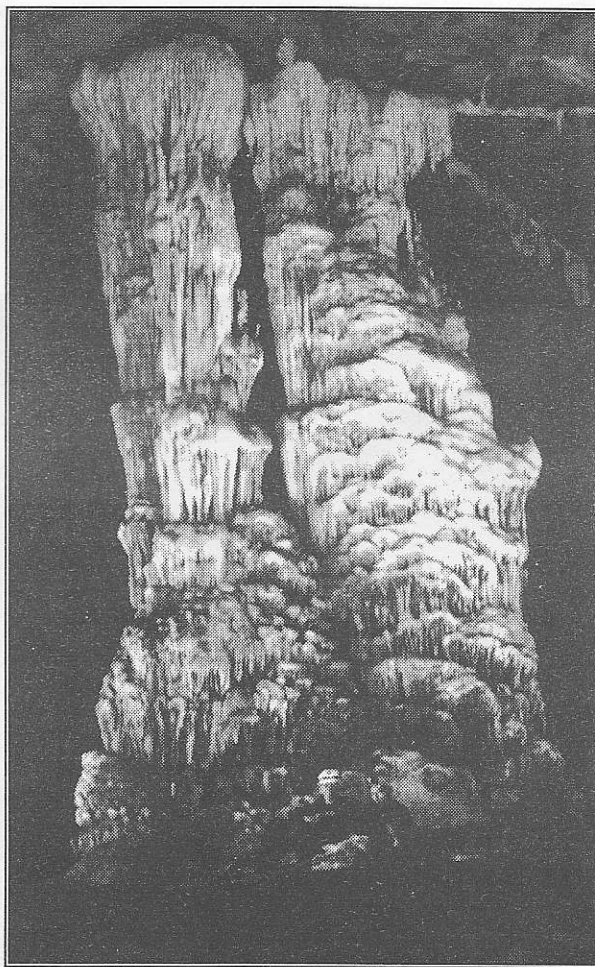
The Bendethera trip this year was to be a cave exploration trip to pin-point the locations of as many of the caves as we could in this rugged area (the Moruya side of the Deua National Park on the south coast of NSW). In order to determine the (more-or-less) exact location of the caves a Global Positioning System (GPS) handset was obtained by Tony. This device uses the GPS satellites which were originally placed in orbit by the American military to allow submarine captains to determine their exact position in order to launch their ballistic missiles. Our purpose being much more benign, we quickly warmed to the idea of being completely unable to get lost (unless we wandered off the maps completely, or the GPS handset ran out of batteries...). Tony originally promised us an eight to ten kilometre walk, mostly on the flat, as his Valiant was unlikely to be able to negotiate the four-wheel drive conditions. Unfortunately, the story was to get a bit longer. The next thing we knew, a wheelbarrow was included in the party in order to transport the heavier and more cumbersome caving gear. That wasn't too bad, as wheeling a barrow along a flat road couldn't be all that hard, although it promised to look extremely funny. Then, Andrew Wall pointed out that the Val might not be able to get back up the last part of the track we were intending to drive on, as it was quite steep, and had some vicious storm drains dug across it. So we were to walk down this as well, still with Betsy the Wheelbarrow.

Day 1

The morning of Monday the 19th dawned with beautiful clear skies promising a great day ahead. After being picked up by Tony in his trademark blue Valiant (with Betsy upside down on the roof, possibly so that if the Val broke down, we could simply tip it over and wheel it home...) we made our way to Bateman's Bay and Moruya before heading bush. After negotiating some particularly difficult fire trails in the mountains we loaded Betsy up and set off. Three kindly senior citizens in a Subaru offered to take Anna down the daunting hill in front of us, but ended up carrying Chris's and Toryn's packs (importantly, containing their warm clothes) down the hill. Unencumbered, Chris and Toryn took on the task of getting Betsy down the hill. About halfway down, the weather began getting decidedly colder, with the blue skies disappearing rapidly. Shortly afterwards, in the middle of Australia's worst drought in recent memory, and on the same day as bushfires raged around NSW, it began snowing. Quite hard. Chris and Toryn, now wishing for the warmer clothes that were at the bottom of the hill, literally bolted down the hill with Betsy, whilst Anna and Tony followed slower (and warmer). By the time the bottom was reached, however, there were again no clouds in sight, and brilliant sunshine streamed down. Several hours later, after dragging Betsy through half a dozen creeks, and upsetting one wombat and quite a few 'roos, the exhausted party stumbled onto a likely spot to camp, swearing that for the next Bendethera trip, Betsy would be traded in for a large four-wheel drive.

Day 2

The day again dawned clear and blue, and the four of us wandered up an old trail (put through in the early 1900s, and now somewhat overgrown) to begin our task of finding and GPS-ing the caves, with the odd bit of caving thrown in on the side. Fortunately, it appears that in the not-too-distant past, a pragmatic caver had wandered through with a chainsaw, allowing us to follow a clearly defined trail (something that was sorely missed over the next two days). That day, we managed to find and pin-point seven caves, exploring two of them for a few hours: Pipe Cave, a very enjoyable 100 foot drop through a rift-type cave; and Figtree cave, aptly named for the large fig above it, the roots of which cascade down over the entrance, giving a jail-like appearance.



Toryn and Anna in BD1.



Betsy and the boys.

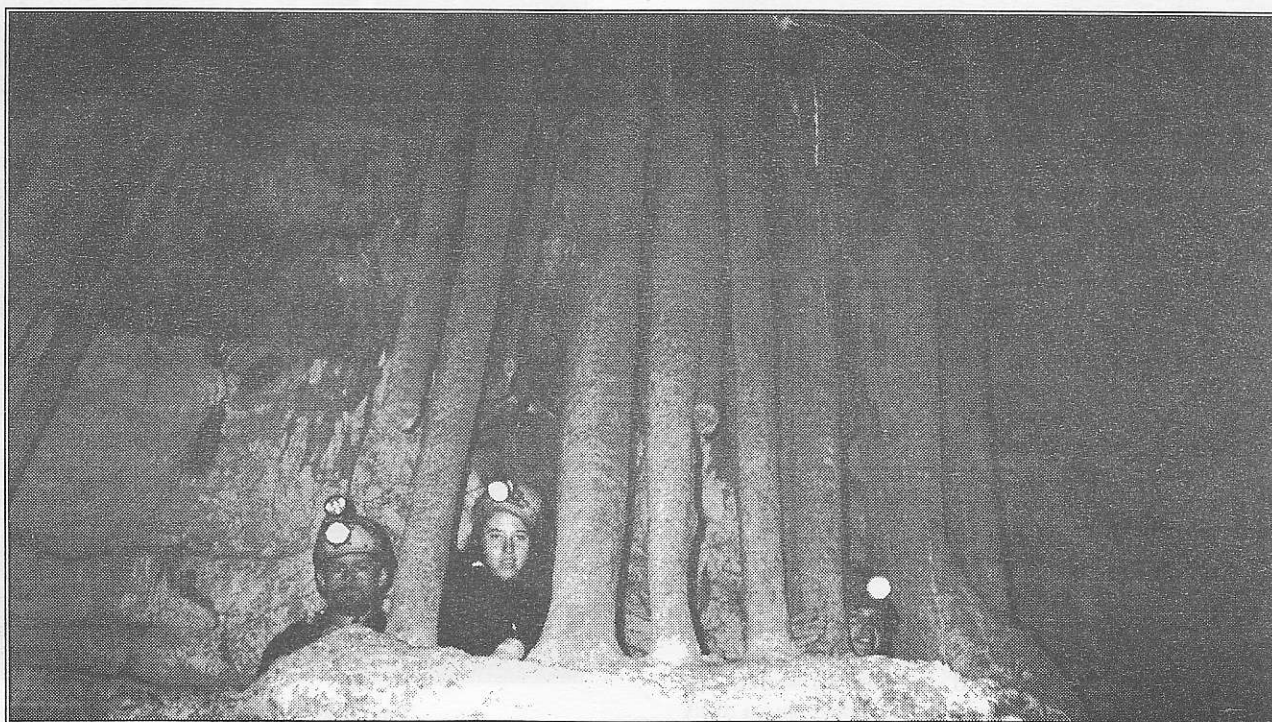
Day 3

Despite waking ominously to an overcast sky and drizzling rain, this day turned out to be a beauty (well, the weather did, anyway). First stop in the day's festivities was to be Bendethera main, a photo of which appeared on the front cover of the 1993 Speleograffiti, complete with a beaming Tony Veness. This is a very impressive cave, and it was worth the whole trip just to see this cave. A bigish cave, it has big chambers, with the roof sometimes 15 metres away, and the chambers themselves sometimes 50 metres long, and bearing huge decorations (the front cover of SpeleoG showing one of the most impressive formations). Plenty of bats live in this cave, as is evident from the smell in the deeper part of the cave. After an enjoyable couple of hours

inside capturing the highlights on film, we turned our attention to the approximately 70 metre deep pot that allegedly lurked relatively nearby. After lugging ourselves (and a 100 metre rope!!) through unimaginable wattle-scrub for several unrewarding hours, we decided that the cave would not be found without a major bushfire, and beat the retreat to camp.

Day 4

There was some debate about whether any searching for caves should be severely curtailed today in order to get part of the way out (after the exhausting effort on Monday, and considering we would be going up the steep hill at the end...). This would have meant that we needed to be back at camp at 2 o'clock, so we ducked off up a creek which Chris assured us would be "easy going". At 1 o'clock, after having spent hours rock hopping and limboing under trees in the creek, it was obvious that this deadline would not be met. Chris directed us onward to a gully, claiming that the map showed that the cave was there (the GPS happily telling us that we were only 1500 metres away, then 1000 metres, then 900 and so on). Upon investigating the gully in question, it became apparent that the map (or Chris, we weren't actually convinced it was the right gully) was wrong, as one vital element for limestone caves was missing: limestone. Realising that the lush temperate forest and tree-ferns we stood in didn't hold much hope for caves, Chris and Tony did a quick (hour long) dash up to the top of the ridge and back, whilst Anna and Toryn decided to make sure the cave didn't turn up in their absence. Chris and Tony found some very promising limestone with plenty of potential for the next trip, and a small cave. Upon their return, with the light fading and Anna and Toryn reporting no change to the place where they'd stayed. It was time to head back to camp for the last night.



The NUCC Organ Pipe Choir in BD1.

Day 5

Friday dawned a beautiful day, reassuringly because there was some doubt as to whether the Val could make it through a few bits of the road in the wet, and we began to break camp and load up the wheelbarrow. Suspiciously, the packs of Chris and Toryn were lighter, whilst Tony's and Anna's packs were heavier... (Chris and Toryn would be doing most of the wheeling of Betsy). Disregarding this, the four of us set out and the walk, which we suspected would be torturous. Disturbing the same roos we upset on Monday, and finding more wombats, rapid progress was made, with Betsy being carried across creeks rather than wheeled through. Following numerous snake trails, and Betsy's undisturbed track from Monday, we arrived at the base of The Hill. Where we realised just how isolated we were, and Tony found some change that had fallen out of his pocket on Monday, lying quite happily in the middle of the road. A rather nervous lunch was had, and then we launched ourselves up the steep slope. Chris and Toryn escorted the wheelbarrow up the hill, taking turns at pushing from behind, or pulling from the front via a long tape. Tony's heavy pack took its toll, causing some to wonder if we shouldn't tie a tape to him as well and pull him up the hill. Exhausted, we made it to the top with the

weather again closing in, as it did on Monday before it snowed. The car was quickly packed and we made good our escape before Mother Nature decided to keep us there a few days longer through wet roads. Stopping for pizza and beer in Moruya on the way, we made it home to Canberra by a NUCC record - 8.30 pm, after a physically exhausting but very...interesting week.

The main object of this trip, being basically to scout out the area for further exploration trips, was a success. The GPS-ing of the caves we found is a first at Bendethra, and has only been very rarely employed elsewhere. This will make it much easier for future visitors to the area to find the caves (well, the ones that we found, anyway). The Bendethra region, apart from being very scenic, contains great potential for new discoveries, and many of the entrances that have been found haven't been mapped or named. Another expedition (four-wheel drive and chainsaw equipped!!!) will surely be mounted next year, and anyone keen on leaving their own mark on Australia through their own cave would do well to pop along.

Toryn Chapman.



You had to be there!

**Argyle Hole and Acoustic Pot - Bungonia.
Sunday 23rd October 1994.**

***Brendan Allen, Chris Bradley, Mark Bown, Mirjana Jambrecina,
Sherry Mayo, Gary Morris, John Hellstrom, Tony Veness, Lyle Williams.***

Some vertical caving to finish off the year.

Abandoning the format of the last few trips (ie, horizontal) a trip to Bungonia State Recreation Area for some vertical work was deemed necessary. The party members met at the usual time and place, the usual people drove the usual cars in the usual time to the usual carpark at Bungonia. What ensued for some of us however, was not your usual slap and tickle caving trip!

The nature of vertical caving at Bungonia limits the party numbers. After filling in the log book at the ranger station, the group split into two groups: those that would take on the single large pitch of Acoustic Pot with the associated scramble at the bottom and top; and those of us who would attempt the multiple pitches of Argyle Hole.

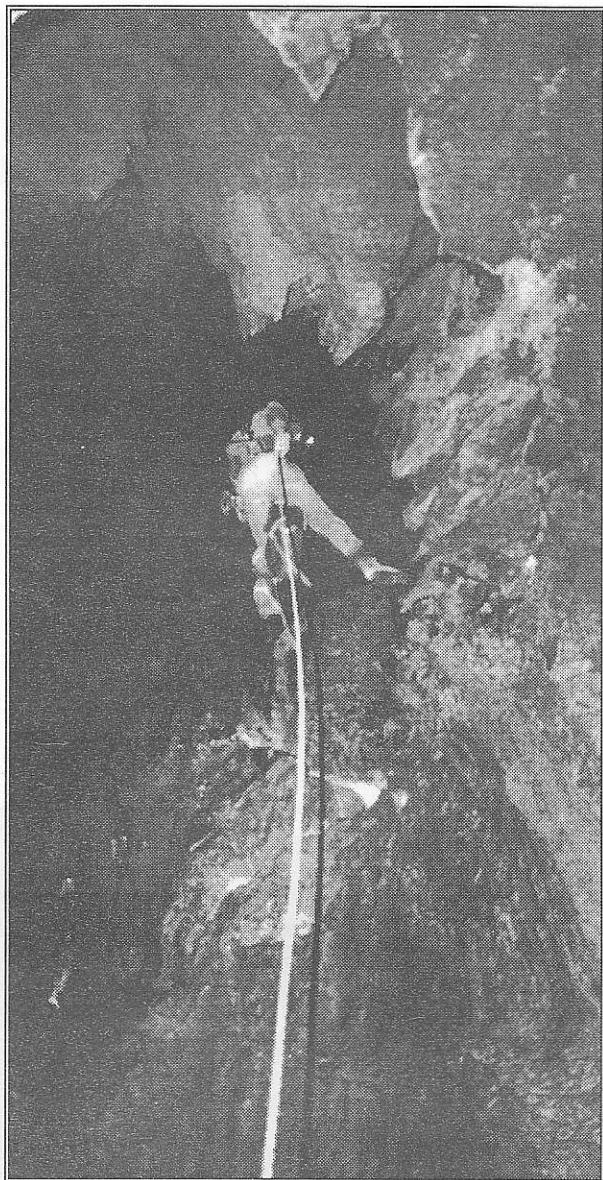
Chris and I thought that after a long year of organising gear, permits, transport and bodies for the seemingly endless number of NUCC trips throughout '94, we deserved some vertical indulgence so, along with Brendan, we tagged along with NUCC's vertical cave subcommittee: Mark, Sherry and John. Lyle led the remaining trip members through Acoustic Pot.

I should have suspected that this trip through Argyle was going to be different when I asked Mark and Sherry what length ropes and slings were required. They appeared set to go caving but only had two haul bags between them. Hmmm? Some mental calculations during the drive plus past experience at NUCC's occasional vertical trip had led me to believe that six very full haul bags between the six of us would be necessary to carry all the rigging required. I was assured that all the required gear was already packed and that we should get on with it. Off we went!

Our progress down to the head of the first pitch was momentarily slowed as a group of scouts scuttled down the first inclined flat squeeze on their way to fun and games in one of the upper levels of the cave. By the time Chris, Brendan and I made our way to the first pitch, the other three had seemingly disappeared over the edge on a very thin looking handline. It was at this point that the secret ability of Mark and Sherry which enabled them to pack so much rope into so little space was faulted. We were to discover that all the major drops were to be rigged with eight millimetre rope. This was how so much rope squeezed into two haul bags.



NUCC poised to cave. Almost.



"I'm sure this rope was thicker when I started"

Much shouting down the pitch confirmed our suspicions and it was either down the eight millimetre rope or a quick bolt to the surface to join the other party in Acoustic. NUCC has two types of static rope: 11mm BWII and 11mm BWII. Abseiling on anything less was to be quite a novelty although the fun content was limited by the large pitch you were about to ease yourself into. Led by Bradley the Daring, we clambered over the edge and began our abseil. Whilst the eight millimetre rope you are dangling off is more than capable of supporting all party members and their associated paraphernalia at once; hanging off a little rope instead of a big'un will still take some time to get used to!

The ensuing four or five pitches went smooth enough although we never caught sight of Mark, Sherry or John as they blitzed ahead rigging the cave. Many creative rebelayes were used to prevent excessive rope wear. Not a bad idea when using 8mm. Chris and I reached Sherry on her way up from the lower sump at the top of the last pitch. We struggled on, to find Mark and John sitting around the sump resting in the light from each other's carbide cap lamps.

Chris produced a camera and some happy snaps were taken. The sump level appeared to be quite low if the water marks on the walls are anything to go by. Small calcite rafts were seen on the water's surface, although not covering the complete sump surface. It was at this point that Chris and I, exhausted from our previous adventures on the way down, and possibly delirious from chocolate overdose (or oxygen underdose), offered to go up last and derig the cave.....Big mistake.

Mark and John took advantage of our temporary insanity (courageous generosity) and bolted up the rope. Chris and I organised ourselves for the derig and were going OK (slow, but OK), pitch by pitch when the old expanding rope trick meant we had rope and haul bags hanging off us in all directions. Progress continued at a slower pace until we clambered up the final pitch. After a brief but very very necessary pause at the top, we began removing harnesses etc; for the inclined squeeze out of the cave. Not easy to do when you are flat on your back. At this point, an angel appeared from above.

Lyle, having some concern for our well being (ie; having gotten sick of waiting for us to return so the BBQ could get underway in earnest) had scrambled in from the surface to meet us. Taking a couple of haul bags, he lead us out of the cave. Fresh air and daylight raised our spirits and we moved over to the Grill Cave carpark where a BBQ with the rest of our party and those from Acoustic Pot were getting ready to start.



The boys at the lower sump.

Food was welcomed by all and everybody had their fill of BBQ fair as well as NUCC lemonade. It wasn't long till Mark continued his ongoing research into the reliability of water divining although his results at this BBQ were less convincing than those collected at Wombeyan.

Argyle Hole is not your typical NUCC cave and this trip was the first club trip to the cave in some years. The lack of serious vertical work in some of the years previous club trips was more than made up for and neither Chris nor I will feel guilty if we decline to derig the cave on any future trips. Many thanks to Mark and Sherry for their fine example of light rigging techniques and to Lyle for leading the contingent through Acoustic Pot.

Tony Veness.

Nullarbor Plain, Western Australia. Saturday 26th November - Sunday 11th December 1994.

*B1, B2, Chris Bradley, Andrew Copping, Rebekah Dallwitz, John Hellstrom,
David Inglis, Mirjana Jambrecina, Anna Pulford, Jane Pulford, Cecilia Schlegel, Tony Veness.*

A Big trip.

Once a year, NUCC tries to escape Canberra and leave Uni behind for a big trip. NUCC's 1994 big trip was to the Nullarbor Plains in Western Australia. An area of limestone containing some of Oz's most well known and photographically recognisable caves. This years trip started out big and got bigger and bigger as the days passed by. We were ten big people squeezed into two big cars, destined to travel 6000 big kilometres to visit 13 big caves in the big state. A big trip indeed.

Day 1- Saturday 26 Dec. Liftoff!

As with all NUCC trips, we all met at the clubhouse on campus at an uncivilised hour and tried to squeeze too many people and too much caving gear into the finite number of assembled cars. With so many people going on such an extended caving adventure, it was important that there wasn't too much doubling up on gear. We hardly needed multiple hair curling wands or duplicate stuffed toys. Pre-flight meetings during the week had hopefully ensured that we all brought only the essentials although duplicate stuffed toys slipped in somehow.

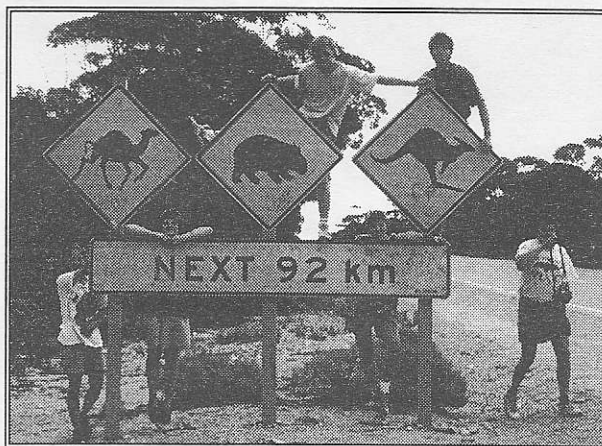
Chris took on the task of packing all things soft and squishy into the newly acquired All Terrain Tarago (ATT) which was empty and appeared to contain caverns immeasurable. All things hard and pointy and slightly dangerous (Andrew and John ?) were packed or had already been packed by David and Tony into the Valiant mothership the night before. With bodies packed, the NUCC caving machine appeared set to launch. After farewells from the gathered throngs of wellwishers (well there were two) we were off. With the Sun rising behind us, we turned West, headfirst into day one of the big trip.

Morning tea was at Gundagai, where those few unacquainted with the canine on the tupperware came face to muzzle with the first of the many Australian legends and icons we were to visit over the next sixteen days. After the first of many driver changes, we pushed onto Narandera for a late lunch. It was the first of our trip lunches and in retrospect, was typical of all our lunches to follow; it was late and it was hot. Finding some shade, we had our fill of oranges and biscuits (and greasies for the less strongly willed) before fuelling up and hurtling West again.

The second stint of driving took us across the Hay plains, though Hay and Euston and onto Mildura for the night. It was to be one of the hottest afternoons of the trip. Those cruising in the Toyota Boombox were blissfully unaware of the outside temperature; those travelling in the Valiant weren't as lucky. Mirjana, Andrew, John and I were rudely introduced to the hot and dry weather which was to continue for the first half of the trip. Whilst some '74 Valiants had aircon. the big blue bus in question didn't and the russin'

airconditioning and a squirty bottle of water was all we had. Whilst very effective, the few seconds of relief quickly went as the water evaporated at an alarming rate. The temperature gauge was on P for perilous all the way across the plain.

After a spectacular sunset at the fruit checkpoint on the VIC\SA border (and a quick orange or seven to eat) we made our way into Renmark. Sending the Tarago crew to find some bread, the Valienteers searched out the caravan park manager to annoy. Suffice to say she was annoyed as it was getting late but the NUCC fortunes were flirted and we bought our way in. After listening to the riot act (five boys and five girls sleeping in tents in the same state worried the nice caravan park lady) we promised not to make any noise or cut the heads off live chickens etc. and set up camp. Day one ended with a fine meal of gourmet sausages and fresh bread. One down, fifteen to go.



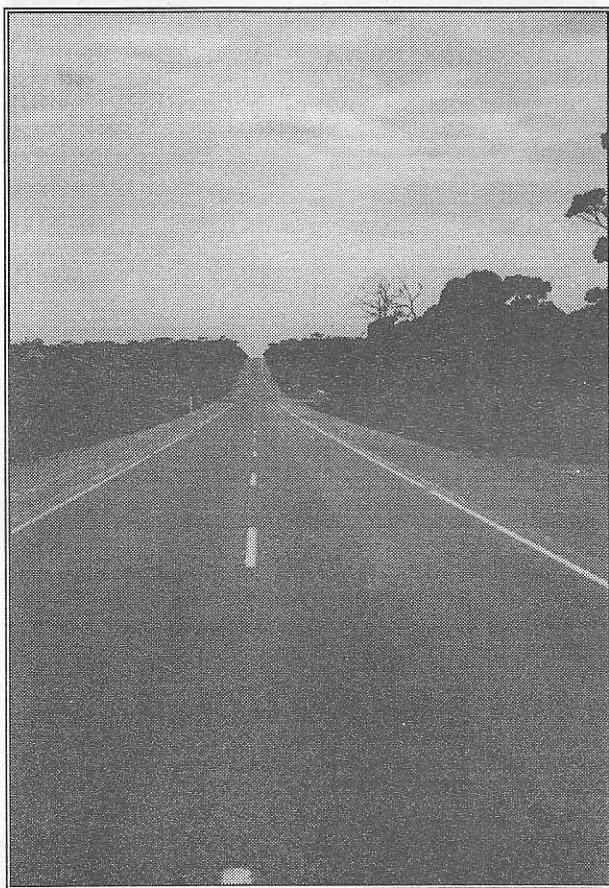
Same sign, different people, different year.

Day 2- Sunday 27th Dec. Still driving.

Despite having set tents up close to the nearby highway, we all managed to sleep in later than we should, no doubt helped by the long day previous. Despite the expanding gear effect, we squeezed everything back into the two people movers and after a wave to the nice caravan lady NUCC was on its way. After fuelling up and some map scanning, it was off towards Waikerie. Passing the first of our big things along the way; the Big Orange at Berri. It looked decidedly more peachy than orange when we passed and some paint could be in order. Continuing on, the Nut House at Waikerie provided an excuse for a leg stretch and an opportunity to stock up on dried fruits and nuts. Crossing the Murray River by ferry was a new though short experience for some and after slipping the ATT into 4WD for the first time, we took a shortcut on an unsealed road to Burra.

With the heat of the day stretching on, lunch was called early(ish) and we stopped by a creek at Murray Town. Rebecah showed great restraint in not throttling Chris after some creative driving in the Tarago left the somewhat less manoeuvrable Valiant flustered. After lunch and a mass game of hand tennis, we once again piled into the cars and started our drive to Port Augusta. With many dropping in and out of slumber, we dropped down through the range and into Port. Armed with shopping trolleys and EFTPOS, NUCC stormed the fruit and veg. section of Woollies. After collection of the essential supplies: fresh fruit and veg.; plastic balls and Soy milk for the Pulfords, we parted with more of the NUCC fortunes. The stash was stashed into the already full cars and after the usual petrol investment we continued West onto Kimba.

Kimba was our campsite for the night, arriving there just on dusk. After a small dance party, to Bjork, next to the towns claim to fame, The Big Galah (it was huge), we made ourselves comfortable at the somewhat deserted caravan park. After a fine BBQ dinner, plans for the next day were contemplated. A brief search for a shampoo bottle left in the showers on NUCC's trip in 1993 failed to show up anything and it was given up as lost. One by one we drifted off to our tents and bivvies, soothed by the infrequent sound of a passing road train and looking forward to a sound night's sleep in preparation for another big day.



Ten green bottles.....

Day 3- Monday 28th Dec. We go bush at last.

After breakfast, a second run around the shower for some (make the most of it), and a quick game of volleyball to fire us up for the day, we set off. Slipping the Tarago into 4WD to negotiate the short section of unsealed highway, we set off West once again. After an uneventful drive, we arrived in Ceduna for lunch. After warning people that this was the last point to be able to purchase any of life's little luxuries (fresh bread, affordable chockie, milk and stamps), we stocked up on the essentials at the bakery and tottered off down to the pier. After a nice lunch and a quick snooze we filled up again and headed West again. Not however, before we spotted another big thing; The Big Oyster which is by the side of the road on the way out of town.

The road West of Ceduna was the beginning of our 'outback driving' and the surrounding land began to lose any apparent farming qualities as we entered the wide flat expanses of the Nullarbor Plain. After a leg stretch and perusal of the aboriginal artefact shop at Yalata, we invested in icecreams and cold drinks. A brief photo session at a nearby roadside followed and we were soon on our way.

After pushing on to Nullarbor roadhouse for a petrol topup and a driver change, we turned off the highway and visited the Great Australian Bight; one of the highlights of the trip. Whilst we were there at the wrong time of the year to spot the Southern Right Whale, the big big big views from the cliff edge made the detour very worthwhile. Photos were taken, Bananas were flown and John contemplated death by a sudden stop at the bottom. We pushed on.

With the sun beginning to set as we approached the SA/WA border, we left the highway and set up our first bush camp next to the old unsealed highway which is some kilometres from the current road. The first night in the bush was very successful and everybody pitched in to organise camp. Chef David organised us, and a deserved dinner of chicken was prepared and devoured as we all began to get used to balancing dinner plates on our knees. After Bradley cranked the campfire up, a night of stargazing followed and we all began to realise that we were truly beginning to get away from it all. We all drifted off, realising that we only had one more long day of driving to complete before the caving started in earnest. Mirjana had her first, and last night in a Bivvy bag.

Day 4. Tuesday 29th Dec. NUCC finally makes it to a cave.

The previous days 2500 km drive was beginning to take its toll so after a leisurely rise, the now not-so-fresh NUCC machine returned to the highway. After swapping our rubbish bag for petrol and saying a quick hello to surely the worlds biggest fibreglass kangaroo at Bordertown, we continued West again. Continuing past Eucla, a long hot drive and a long hot conversation on the CB's took us to Madura Pass. After a topup (petrol and lemonade), we moved the cars into the limited shade and made use of the phones. Madura pass was to be the last contact with 'civilisation' for a few days as we were to head North onto Madura Station and onto the caves. Hooray.

After phone calls East and postcard perusal, we appeared set to leave when Chris and I were approached by a gentleman who inquired whether we were cavers. The gent didn't look like a disgruntled land owner so we admitted that we were and to our surprise, he admitted that he was too. Terry was on his way to Canberra to start a new job and on his way over, he was popping into some of the more easily accessible caves in WA.

With the day dragging on, Terry joined the NUCC convoy and we left the asphalt (4WD again...) and headed North to Mullamullang Cave. After some initial embarrassment on the dirt roads (they had moved since last year) we clattered our way on to a spot of dirt which Chris decided was the Mullamullang campsite which we were assured was close to the entrance doline. Not knowing any better, we all agreed and whilst battling with a strong cold wind, began lighting a fire and setting up the tents. After dinner and lemonade, the planned trip to the nearby cave was postponed in favour of a slightly more relaxed day. It was unlikely we'd all be up early enough with sufficient energy to tackle the Big Cave-Mullamalang-but Chris promised us a fun filled day elsewhere. Lucky us.

Day 5. Wednesday 30 Nov. A gentle start to caving, three caves in one day.

Day one of the caving trip proper was about to begin and after a quick breakfast, we organised our caving gear for the first time. Thankfully, everything was still intact in the haul bags packed five days earlier so, after unhitching the trailer, we were off. The plan for the day was to visit three caves: Kestrel One and Two and Spider Sink. All three were located on an approximate North-South line, North\East of the camp. Passing Kestrel One and Spider Sink, we continued on toward a bore which had provided much relief on past NUCC trips and hopefully would do so this trip.

The bore was working when we arrived with the nearby open topped tank full of cool 'cleanish' water. After exploring the nearby windmill and cattle yards, led by Andrew we cautiously dived into the tank. Very cautiously as it had a sharp looking metal lip which worried most (particularly the boys). After all those who wanted a swim had made themselves as clean as they were going to in the now murky water, we filled the solar showers and headed off for Kestrel Two.

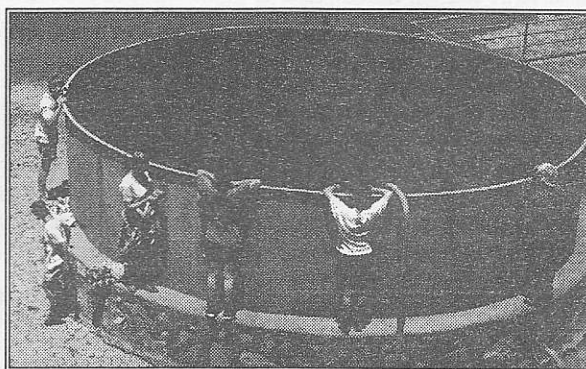
Using a Fifty metre rope attached to the portable belay bar as a handline, we carefully made our way down the loose entrance 'pitch' and into the cool of the cave. Spending three hours in this, our first cave for the trip, showed the newcomers what the remaining eight days were going to hold - dust, dirt and the dark.

Lunch in the shade at the bottom of Spider Sink was a relief at 3pm as the hot driving and the clamber out of Kestrel Two had stirred up a thirst and hunger in all. After a rest, we clattered up the rockpile and back to the cooked cars. We arrived at Kestrel One at about 5pm for what was to be the highlight of the day.

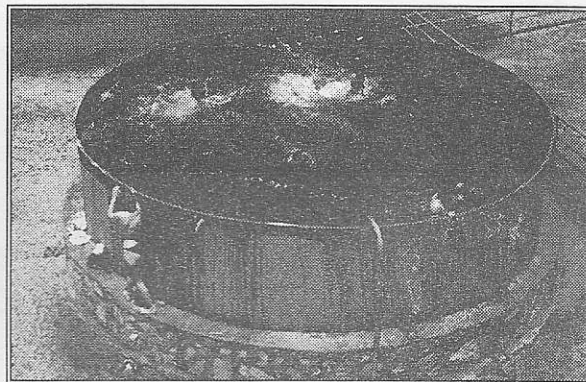
Positioning the Valiant close to the Eastern side of the hole, meant two fifty foot ladders would just reach to the bottom of

the hole. After rigging a rope off said belay, (much to Johns amusement), we were off. Getting nine people down such a pitch takes some time and the sun set as the last few abseiled in. Exploring part of the cave itself took about an hour although Chris, Cecilia and myself managed to squeeze ourselves down into the wrong hole more than once.

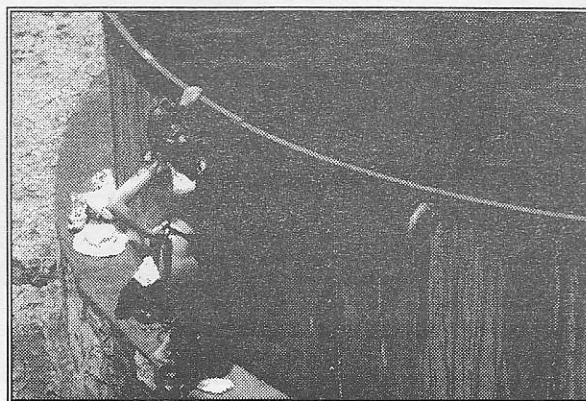
With time getting on, John set up a top belay and we started the ladder out. Cecilia, took the opportunity for a bit of SRT practice using Chris's rig and made it to the to the strains of Crowded House, echoing across the plains from the Toyota Boombox. After derigging in the dark in the now quite cold night air, we returned to a cold camp at 11pm. The fire was relit and a hearty dinner was prepared by David and others. The first day's caving was a success with all three caves conquered during what turned out to be a very long day. The first of many!



Going.



Going.



Gone.

Day 6. Thursday 1 Dec. The big cave.

Despite the long day before, we rose early and after breakfast and careful packing of: spare lights, spare Bananas, swimmers, lunch and nibbles, we were off. A quick walk 200 metres to the South West took us to the impressive double doline of Mullamullang Cave; which was to be the most arduous cave of the trip. Whilst the majority of the passage in the cave was large enough for the NUCC clubhouse to levitate through, the long and steep boulder piles which had to be negotiated in the cave would no doubt take their toll on cavers.

After a short walk\crawl, we made it down the large entrance doline and into the cave. We soon made it to the first large feature of the cave; The Dune. The Dune is a large conical sand dune formed by the large air currents in the cave and situated on a bend in the main passage. Cave beetles and larvae were active around The Dune as we passed. After some happy snaps, we continued on past the turnoff to another well known feature of the cave; The Easter Extension and the Salt Cellars contained within. After topping up water bottles with the jerry can which Anna had been volunteered to carry this far, we started on the chocolate nibbles which were to be our continuing 'carrot' for the trip.

Beginning to appreciate the shorts and teashirts we were wearing, we made our way to the One Mile Cairn- 1600 metres into the cave. We rested, and read some of the historical articles contained in a folder at the cairn. One article referred to a NUCC expedition years before which had found a human body in the cave (See Speleograffiti 1994). On this sobering thought, we carefully moved on and eventually, after climbing some seemingly endless rockpiles, made our way to the caves first and most substantial body of water; White Lake.

The rockpile before the lake had flustered some and a quick dip by David, Andrew, Mirjana and I amused the others as they collapsed onto the boulder pile. Continuing on (ever slower) we came to The Kitchen. An area in the cave which served as a kitchen and dining area during the large mapping expeditions years before. We almost stopped for lunch, but in keeping with NUCC's soon to be notorious policy of late lunches, we continued on along the main passage of the cave past Lake Cigalere and towards the end of the passage. We abandoned extra packs at Lake Cigalere and started the short scramble over boulder floored passage to the end of the Northern passage of Mullamullang; The Dome.

With lethargy being felt and the now somewhat battered NUCC machine slowing down, we made our way toward The Dome. The group split into two with only the first making their way up the slope of the final rockpile and onto the base of The Dome. It was with a great deal of relief that Chris, Andrew, Mirjana and myself collapsed at the bottom. A log book and some information sheets are provided at the base, and after a much needed rest and chocolate break, we added our names to the list of dome visitors. We were very proud to be the newest members of the 'Domers Club'. With hunger overtaking pride, Chris set up his little tripod (one of many) under his big camera and captured the moment on film. We returned to the dozing non-domers and continued back to the lake and our packs.



Horizontal caving.

With half the day's distance down, we enjoyed a cool but very refreshing swim. We all took to the cool water and after Mirjana produced the NUCC volleyball, the games began. In the crystal clear waters of the underground lake, we enjoyed a quick game in the light of a pair of carbides. With the cool water becoming cold, we dried, dressed and headed back to 'The Kitchen' for lunch.

Despite being 6:30 pm, 'lunch' consisted of the usual fare. A round of chocolate and peanuts was followed by crackers with jam\peanut butter\vegemite and all the combinations thereof. Apples made a fine desert and the food carriers very happy to see the majority of the food eaten and therefore their packs lightened. We followed all this with lashings of Staminade. Under the glow of Chris's new found love - carbide light, we weakened to gravity and assumed horizontal positions.

Knowing that the trip out was certainly going to take longer than the trip-in, NUCC eventually got going again and started the long stumble out. With concentrations beginning to lapse, we made our way down the long passage and eventually were met by a wall of hot air as we exited the doline. Though past midnight (it was one of those days), the air temperature was very warm and we could only guess at what the temperature would have been during the day. After dropping our caving essentials in a heap, our fire was relit and the serious business of fluid replenishment began. Most staggered off to sleep fairly soon after dinner though some stuck around for a post cave brief with a lemonade or three. It had been a very long day for the NUCC machine.

Day 7. Friday 2 Dec. Back to civilisation. Almost.

Woken by the sound of flapping nylon, people began emerging from their pressure cookers and out into a breezy morning. Yesterday must have been a very hot day and today wasn't going to be any cooler. After a leisurely breakfast, the NUCC barbeque was picked up and carried into the cool entrance doline of the cave. The doline was an ideal place for pancakes and one by one bodies dawdled over with pillows and novels in tow.

Jane, John, Chris and myself felt sufficiently stupid to return into the depths despite contrary thoughts in the wee hours of the morning. Leaving the others to cook pancakes on the now

three legged BBQ (long story), we grabbed the essentials and once again scrambled into the depths. After some minor geographical embarrassment and the loss and retrieval of a caving pack, we made our way to the entrance of the Easter Extension; a part of the cave we did not enter the day before.

Following reflective track marking, we visited sections of the extension containing formations known as Coffee and Cream and eventually onto the Salt Cellars. The Salt Cellars containing formations which aren't seen in abundance anywhere else in Australia. After some happy snaps- very careful happy snaps because of the confined quarters- we made our way back to the main passage and back to the surface. Finding the others immobilised by an overdose of pancakes and coffee, we sampled the leftovers before coaxing them back into the heat of the day. We slowly packed and began our dusty drive back to the highway.

Arriving back at Madura Pass one hour later, we found that we weren't able to buy any petrol. We had the cash and they had the petrol but alas the pumps wouldn't pump. The petrol man informed us that the pumps don't pump when the temperature was above 40 degrees. It had apparently been 46 degrees during the day. We gave up and settled on the pub as a suitable refuelling point.

After tents etc; we enjoyed much deserved showers before hitting the dining room at the hotel. Whilst, thanks to David, we had been eating very well for the last few days, it's nice to have someone come up to you and ask you what you would like to eat. The majority stuck to cooked cow sandwiches with some dithering with chicken or vegetable derivatives. The inevitable session of pool followed before we left the locals to it and headed to the sinks to do some much needed clothes washing before bed.

Day 8. Saturday 3 Dec. A little asphalt, a lot of cave.

After an early rise due to the heat, people went in search of breakfast, most making due with the usual fare supplemented with cold or sugary things from the service station. Some however, felt they deserved a cooked breakfast (preferably by someone else) and dragged themselves into the dining room again. A feast of bacon, eggs and snags washed down with caffeine and Coke started the day off just fine.

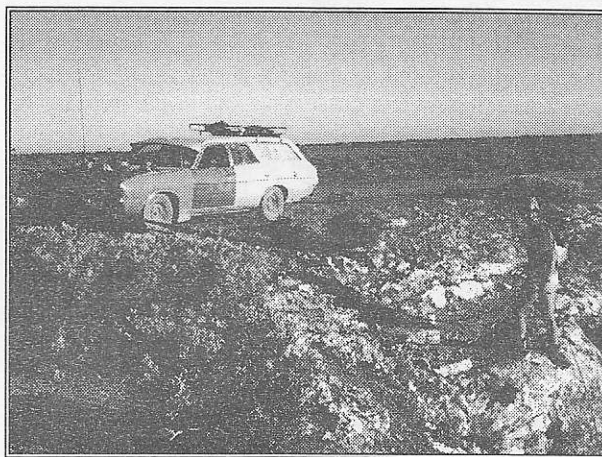
With partly filled water cans (hmmm) and partly charged car batteries, we fuelled up and started the drive East, back the way we had come some days before. Stopping to fill the remaining jerry cans at a rain collection tank along the way gave us an opportunity to meet an organised 'outback' travel group. There appeared to be about ten people packed into a monstrous air-conditioned go anywhere Land Bruiser machine which was travelling from tourist site to tourist site. Nice to have money. Our twenty year old Valiant and two month old Tarago sort of equaled their tank. Sort of. After a small distraction with the water tanks (something to do with Jane and dykes) we continued East down the highway towards Mundrabilla Homestead.

After a brief stop to chat to some nice (and very big) policemen, we left the highway and arrived at the homestead. After leaving a note at the deserted homestead, we stoked the boilers of both the cars, slipped the Tarago into 4WD and

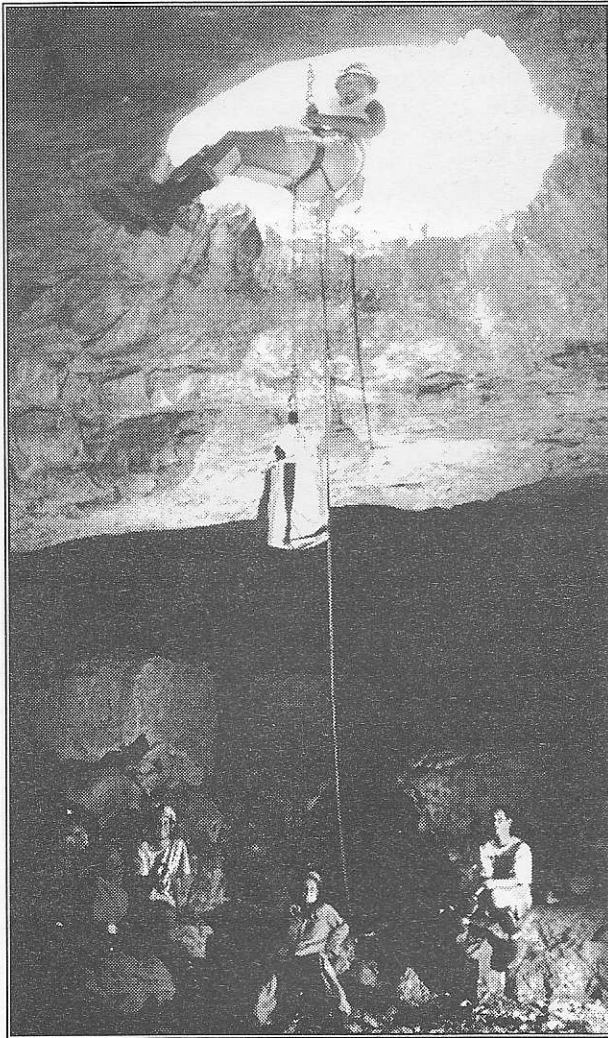
began the steep and bumpy road which cuts the escarpment. The Tarago boombox made it with watts to spare, despite what the nice menfolk in the Land Bruiser may have thought about its capabilities. We were once again in the land of bulldust and saltbush. Relying on Bradley's photographic memory, we made our way to Witches Cave with minimal embarrassment. After finding some rather limited shade for the dusty vehicles, the NUCC kitchen was moved into the shallow and flat entrance doline of Witches Cave. It was already 3PM and beginning to get very hot. The eleven of us had our fill of bickies and staminade (ten big people + one ex-sheep) before spending a pleasant few hours exploring the cave.

Witches Cave is one of the most decorated caves we visited and lent itself to the staging of many fine photos. The final chamber had a flat floor and a flat ceiling joined in many places by impressive columns. After a brief lie down and giggle session, we collected our eskies from the entrance and returned to the very cooked cars. Next on the agenda was Purple Gorenge. A cave visited by NUCC for the first time in 1993. We made our way up smaller and smaller 'tracks' before arriving at the double doline entrance of Purple Gorange. Leaving David to start organising dinner, we donned overalls once again and dropped into the darkness.

Letting time get away from us, we spread out and investigated the many unusual formations in the cave. These included many made of salt. More pickies and horizontal stationary caving followed before, running low on steam, we clattered our way out of the shallow cave and back to the surface. David was well on his way to organising another wonderful meal for us all. The evenings entertainment consisted of the usual tall stories about life the universe and caving. Chief engine officer Bradley and myself fiddled with batteries, fridges and bits of fencing wire in the forward compartment of the good ship Val in an attempt to get the fridge working again. Success was sweet when it came at 1 AM and we were assured cold lemonade and set cheesecake. Phew!



The NUCC portable belay.



Chris and dog - Thampana Blowhole.

Day 9. Sunday 4th Dec. Aerial stunts with B1 and B2.

Blah, blah, blah got up, ate, etc. The plan today was to visit three very different caves: Thampana, Thylacene and Webbs Caves. After the usual preparations of the essentials (beer, water and chocolate), we unhitched the trailer and headed North West up to Thampana Cave. Along the way, the effects of the drought were very evident. The land around all the active bores was similar in appearance to a moonscape; the few stock about had grazed or trampled on everything for a radius around the water points. Not finding any suitable bores for a swim, we pushed on in the heat to Thampana Cave.

We were welcomed at Thampana by its traditional cool breeze; blowing out when we arrived. Most made quick work of getting gear together before sitting down around the circular blow hole, waiting for their turn to abseil down the short smooth pitch. After abseiling in with items of clothing flapping around our ears due to the tremendous breeze, we spent some time exploring the spacious main passage and trying to match up the map with reality. Not an easy thing for us Aussies to do according to John (NZ). With some encouragement from Chris who had been here some years before, we clattered down into 'The Drain'. It is a smallish squeezey crawly sort of passage and goes for some kilometres

without too much improvement. NUCC, given time constraints was unfortunately only able to study, carefully mind you, the first tens of metres of passage. Not a brilliant effort but we were on holiday.

We left The Drain and after a small chocolate break, clambered out way through to The Tube; a circular length of horizontal passage resembling a stormwater drain (we imagine!). From there, following track marking, we saw many beautiful and unusual formations. Chris suggested some formations appeared dislodged from their rightful places and will in the fullness of time compare photos taken with those taken some years earlier. Not wanting the day to become too much of an epic, we made our way back to the entrance pitch for some fun and games.

One of most wellknown features of Thampana is the large air flow which can go in and out of the cave through the small entrance pitch. It was blowing hard when we went in and was blowing even harder when we clattered out up the ladder. During a 1993 NUCC expedition, the direction of flow changed whilst we were in the cave. Volley balls and Bananas appeared and after strapping them into toothfloss harnesses (the bananas, not the balls), the antics began. The air velocity is such that any light item dropped down the entrance pitch could: go up; go down or hover about in the middle. The ball was about right for hovering whilst the bananas were more aerobatic; diving down into the cave before being blown right back out. These bananas were not your usual stuffed toys. These were NUCC stuffed toys. With tummies rumbling and the evaporative airconditioner running low on squirts, we derigged, packed and made our way down the road to a large shallow doline for lunch.

After a liberal application of: staminade and biscuits for tums; sticking plaster and bandaids for toots and lemonade for Chris and I, we moved the Toyota Boombox and Prince Valiant South to Thylacene Hole. Rigging from the portable belay unit, we were able to rig the pitch with one ladder with an inch or two to spare. Much to our surprise, a birds nest with two or three fluffy noisy birds was about two metres down the pitch. Visions of mummy bird diving down out of the Sun ensured we were all into the first decent sized chamber fairly quickly. Once assembled, we pushed on through the first low roofed flat horizontal chamber and into the first of many highly decorated chambers. The variety and number of tites and mites was astounding. Chris spotted a 'red devil' formation he'd been looking for whilst others admired the more anatomically inspired giant stals! We all made it to the dusty low roofed terminal chamber just in time for some piccies and our afternoon nap. ZZZZZZ.

We made our way out of the cave just as the sun was setting. We were greeted by a wonderful purple, pink and orange sunset which no photo did justice to; it was to be our best for the trip. We drove via Snake Pit (with a quick look) on our way to Webbs Cave. Donning gear and going from the warm dark outside to the cooler dark inside of the cave, Chris and I came to the conclusion we had come to on past trips; Webbs was very nice but very very smelly and dusty. The advantages of going last in a cave party, were negated as the hordes in front kicked up dust clouds. SCUBA next time. Mushroom formations were spotted in an old pool within the cave. Apparently starting life as calcite rafts, which due to varying

water levels, develop into mushroom shaped domes. After waking Andrew up, some continued to poke around whilst others left for the entrance. With everybody just about caved out for the day, we piled into the cars for the short trip (about 5 songs) back to camp.

Problem number one: Valiant had a flat battery. Bigger problem number two: It was pointing nose down into the cave. Bummer. With half a dozen bodies pushing onto the belaybar, the Big Blue Bus was coerced backwards onto level ground. A pushstart had us on our way and we returned to camp at about 9 PM. A low cholesterol dinner of bacon, eggs and goulash prepared by Chef David sent us off to sleep dreaming of the one day of caving left to go. Thank God.

Day 10. Monday 5th Dec. Wee Bubbie, here we come.

After packing the cars and trailer; not an easy exercise when everything has gone in all directions for the last few days, we set off again. With the sun beginning to cook everything in site, we started our long dusty drive East to Eucla via Abrakurrie and Wee Bubbie Caves. Another cursory look at Snake Pit confirmed it was still full of dead snakes and we continued on past No. One Bore and out of the cattle areas and back into open land. After contemplating losing John to gravity at Chowilla Landslip, we made it to the large doline of Abrakurrie Cave.

After a feast of the usual fair plus damper left over from breakfast and some very warm lemonade, we began assembling the essentials. Overalls and Helmets were exchanged for frisbees and sparklers and we quickly walked the short distance down the side of the doline and in past the visitors. If you've never been to Abrakurrie Cave then the best way thing to do is to try bushwalking on a starless night. With passage widths up to 40 metres and heights up to 30, the average Petzl Zoom headlamp doesn't cut it. Only Dolphin torches and flash guns reveals the huge dimensions of the cave. The NUCC clubhouse could do aerobatics and still not touch the sides or roof. After much talk of F-stops, apertures and slave units (NUCC committee's) the usual collection of optimistic shots were taken. A sparkler giving a new twist to the usual big cave photos. After mentally adding a gas lamp to our equipment list for next time, we strolled out to the cars and back onto the dusty road.

After some brief navigational problems at the Eucla golf course (roads had moved again) we clattered up the shocking road to the microwave tower above Eucla. We eventually made it to Wee Bubbie for the night. With a swim and a much needed bath in mind, those with nylon tents began setting them up whilst those with steel ones collected firewood. After strapping a jerrycan to John and encouraging him go fill it up in the cave, we battled the strong wind to start a campfire.

Using water brought with John's return and a propane assisted cooking campfire, we managed to organise a deserved meal. Tonight was a cheesecake night. With time getting on and the night not getting any warmer, the fire got bigger and it can be said the NUCC machine 'let its hair down' somewhat. Plans for an evening swim were abandoned, those conscious vowing to get up early for a morning bath; we teetered of to bed.



Cave driveway.

Day 11. Tuesday 6th Dec. Caves, piers and Nulladogs.

Cancelling breakfast, we organised our gear for this specialised cave trip and headed off down the fixed steel ladders and into the cave. After trundling down the rockpile, we found ourselves facing the largest bathtub NUCC had seen in quite a while. Swapping our already fairly casual clothes for speedos and abandoning Petzls for Dolphins and Carbides, we inflated the NUCC flotilla and set off.

Wee Bubbie Cave (for non-SCUBA'ers) is about 100 meters long, 20 meters wide and up to 15-20 metres high in sections. The wet section is in the traditional 'upside down rowboat' shaped chamber but opens up at the end into a circular high roofed dome. Sharing Dolphins and lilos, we all made our way to the end of the swim. The novelty of a facemask, snorkle and diving torch amused most, with visibility being limited only by the power of the torch. Chris made a somewhat late arrival to the dome as his lightsource, a premier carbide lamp strapped precariously to a floating jerry can, had to be handled with some care. After a brief search for a wire placed by SCUBA divers many years before, we concluded it had either been removed or had rusted away. Returning to 'shore' we found a Pulford diving contest in full swing. With the cold water beginning to cool more than just the cockles of our hearts, we donned clothes, wrung out the bananas and headed out. Cursory glances for a pump and motor which had been in the cave years before for pumping water down to the town of Eucla turned up nothing.

After packing and watching Andrew attempt a very poor highland fling at the rubbish tip with the rubbish bag, we dropped down the last bit of bush dirt road for the trip and

into Eucla. We filled up the cars, filled up the tummies and planned our afternoon. Essentially having too many things to do and only so many hours to do them in, we did what we'd been doing for most of the trip; we ignored the time and set off to have some FUN. It had worked so far so we saw no reason to change out plan.

Slipping the ATT into 4WD, we drove down past the 'Eucla International Airport' and on to the old Eucla Telegraph Station. We had our 'much looked forward to' swim in the fresh ocean and found it surprisingly warm compared to Wee Bubbie. John managed to get stung by the only stingy thing for miles around (they can smell NZ flesh) and after a brief sand castle lesson from the sisters Pulford, we walked down to the old Eucla Jetty. Those with good balance walked as far as they dared on the now very rickety pier whilst those less endowed crawled their way across the narrow beams. We had a look at the ruins of the old telegraph station on the way back to the cars. Not however, before an energetic minority took turns in rolling down one of the smaller dunes. It had been a long day. After stopping at Eucla again for junkfood and a little see-sawing, we headed East for pizza on the pier at Ceduna.

With Ceduna looking somewhat optimistic as we began to realise that travelling East meant less daylight, we had a final look at the Bight before heading onto Nullarbor roadhouse for fuel. Our fuelstop turned into a dinner stop when a bar was found and after some refreshing lemonades (for the non-drivers) some tried the infamous Nullarbor hotdog; the Nullardog. Woof. After a few games of pool we debated what to next: to drive on into the darkness, to camp out the back, to open a shop selling only Elvis records? Who knew? We ended up having showers next to the pub, before hurtling off into a stormy night, using the Valiant as a long range bullbar for the Bubblebus.

We eventually camped at a roadside rest area at 1230 PM along with three caravans. With the weather threatening to turn nasty for the first time on the trip, we set up tents and were lulled off to sleep by the occasional sound of a roadtrain blasting its way down the highway.

Day 12. Wednesday 7th Dec. A pleasant drive East begins.

The imagined aroma from croissants and sticky buns at the Ceduna bakery had us up, packed and driving by 8:30 AM. Food always playing a part in motivating any NUCC trip. After a quick look at the windmill farms at Penong, we checked ourselves in through the fruit checkpoint and on into Ceduna central. Sticky buns with raisin bread was breakfast and after stocking up on food and lemonade and posting the obligatory postcards we were on our way again. We continued retracing our steps, until turning South and following the coast around the Eyre Peninsula. After a fun (there were bends in the road) and very picturesque drive, we reached our lunch spot; Streaky Bay. After foodwalkies and sleepies on the pier, we continued on to Coffin Bay National Park on the Southern tip of the Eyre Peninsula.

After another small episode of where are we, what are we doing and why did aliens take Elvis, we made our way to one to the campsites accessible by 2WD. The Tarago, having been retired from bush bashing duties, was not up to anything major. After setting up camp, we grabbed nibblies, lemonades and warm clothes and drove to a high point which overlooked the ocean and the setting Sun.

After a brief rock throwing contest, we all blew back to camp for dinner. The availability of fresh vegetables meant it was time for a Chinese meal and a concerted effort meant we had another large hot meal to send us off to sleep. Sitting around half a dozen Petzls is not quite the same as a large campfire a la Bradley (Nat. Park meant no fires) and with the wind continuing to blow, we retreated to warm tents/bivvys and Valiants.

Day 13. Thursday 8th Dec. National Parks and soft campsites.

Arose. Drove. Went back through Coffin Bay National Park and onto Port Lincoln. Bought petrol and nibblies before turning South for a trip to Lincoln National Park. We ended up at Stanford Hill, about half way into the park, looking



Ceduna warf.

back across the bay towards Port Lincoln. After some beach combing and a walk up the hill to visit and traverse The Flinders memorial, we returned to Port Lincoln for lunch.

Stocking up on more fresh food at Woollies meant we were able to have a picnic lunch on the grass next to the esplanade. Cecilia had a watermelon. Whilst most were able to behave themselves, Andrew, Chris and Rebecah found it necessary to fiddle about with water bottles and the Valiant airconditioner. After drying, we packed the eskies with ice and headed North to Port Augusta. After stopping to: get out of the way of a house travelling down the highway; enable Cecilia to get rid of the watermelon she had eaten at lunch and for a beer at Cowell, we continued onto Whyalla. We stopped to rescue a couple whose progress West stopped when a passing kangaroo removed part of their car's radiator. We saw the first traffic light we had seen for ten days. It was red. Continuing on, we reached Port Augusta by 11PM.

Braving the wind again, we set up tents on the lush green camping area at the caravan park which was in contrast to our dry and dusty camps only days before. David delegated cooking tasks as we huddled around the gas BBQ behind a wind shelter. After making the most of the endless hot water on the showers, we tottered off to bed after a long but cave free day.

Day 14. Friday 9th Dec. A clean Boombox and a trip to the vineyards.

Chris and I got up early(ish) and after sticky buns at the bakery in town, we went in search of a pressure blaster to enable us to return the once pristine Bubblebus to its former glory. My mastercard was beginning to itch. After giving up on the only blaster in town as a cruel joke, we purchased sponges and returned to the now dozing NUCC machine. Rags and sponges were issued and after some concerted washing and scrubbing, the Bubblebus appeared fresh from the factory. After packing, we drove on to Port Pirie and from there, to the Clare Valley. The much talked about vineyard tour was set to get underway.

We pulled into the first recognised vineyard (Jim Barry) and whilst most enjoyed a solid picnic lunch in the shade outside the vineyard, others went straight for a more fortified lunch. Ably assisted by Cecilia, Andrew and Chris tasted and purchased many fine wines. Next stop was Seven Hills vineyard where the trend continued. Those not interested in grapejuice were able to marvel at the architecture of the surrounding buildings and church. With the NUCC machine sufficiently oiled and the back seat of the Tarago looking like a bottleshop, we drove the short distance to Burra and then Burra Gorge on the other side of town.

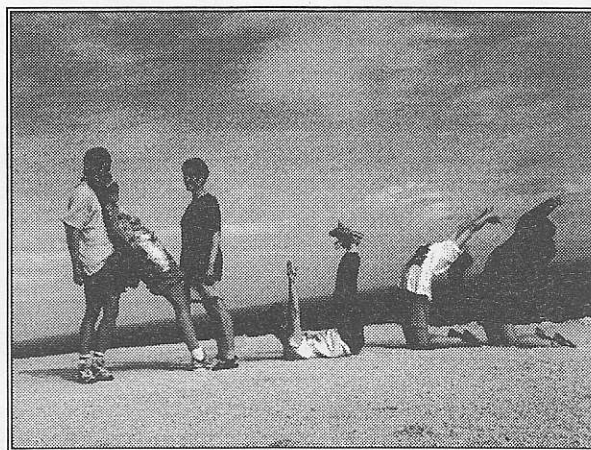
Burra Gorge provided a fine campsite next to a pleasant, if not mosquito free creek. A brief walk up the Gorge past some steep cliffs provided pre-dinner exercise and a chance to collect some fallen wood for the campfire. This night was to be the last chance to have a campfire so Pyro, calling on years of experience, built a large, warm, but controlled campfire. With Rebecah practising haircutting on Anna, the rest prepared our low cholesterol burger and beer dinner. This was to be our last 'bush camp' so throwing caution to the winds, Mirjana constructed the last of our cheesecake

kits. An after-dinner 'spotlighting' session proved unsuccessful though gave us an excuse to walk off a calorie or three. With the mosquitoes assembling for the night, we retreated to our Nylon, Gortex and steel for a good nights sleep.

Day 15. Saturday 10th Dec. Getting close to home. NUCC cuts loose.

After a breakfast of light yogurt and grapefruit juice, (correction, after a breakfast of Bacon and Eggs and lots of greasy things), we eventually packed and headed down the unsealed road to Morgan. At Morgan, we had a brief look at the railway and steamboat museum set up on the Northern bank of the river. The size of the wharf gave an indication of the amount of trade which would have come though town some one hundred years earlier. We crossed the Murray by ferry as we had done fourteen days earlier and began to feel as if we were beginning to get closer to home.

After five or six circuits of town, (roadsigns had moved we're sure) we continued on to Monash for a play at the playground. We were disappointed to find on our arrival that the playground had been closed for some time and wasn't due to reopen for some time yet. Bummer. We continued onto to Renmark and had a pleasant lunch in a park on lush green grass. A soccer, frisbee and smooching session followed lunch and, after adding the large nearby concrete dinosaur to out list of Big things visited, we set off.



N U C C.

Not wanting our last day to be too much of a driving epic, we pressed on towards Euston. Stopping at Euston more through good luck than good planning; we decided this was going to be our camp for the night. After scoping out the dress requirements for the local club, we scrubbed ourselves up in the carpark and tottered off into the large and new looking Euston Club. Well, who said Euston had nothing to offer? All of us I think. Before our eyes was an oasis closely resembling NUCC's watering hole; The Workers Club in Canberra. Bars, Pokies, bars, pool tables, a restaurant (with a bar) and EFTPOS. What more could we ask for?

After a few quick ones in the cute beer glasses they use down there, we talked our way into the restaurant. A local trio, 'The Good Ol' Boys' were playing loud 60's and 70's music between advertisements for their new album. They continued

to play for the rest of the evening. Those who were not on the trip will have to ask those who were what ensued over the next few hours. Suffice to say, it involved: jugs of beer; swapping of earrings; beer; crash dancing; green smarties with icecream and a serious attempt to get individuals of NUCC lynched by the conservative locals. A fitting night out to celebrate the successful end of our long trip. HmMMM. At midnight, we made our way out of the club and drove the 200 metres down the road to the camping ground.

Day 16. Sun 11th Dec. Touch down in Canberra. Back to reality.

Not unpacking for breakfast, we wrote a thankyou note to the extremely large caravan park manager who at this stage was still in bed, before hurtling down the road towards home. We had breakfast at Balranald where we had had afternoon tea many days earlier. The Hay plain was bearable and the Valiant airconditioning was officially retired for the trip.

Some leadfoot driving by the Pulford race team sucked every last drop of fuel out of the Big Blue Bus which ran out of steam short of Hay. After milking the last few drops from a jerry can, Chris managed to start the big girl and we limped sheepishly into the petrol station at Hay. After petrol and nibbles, we drove onto Narrandera for lunch. Lunchtime entertainment was provided by a local cricket game which was underway in the park. It was coffee and cherries at the Dog on the Tuckerbox as we continued our long drive home. We arrived in Canberra safe and sound at sunset.

In retrospect.

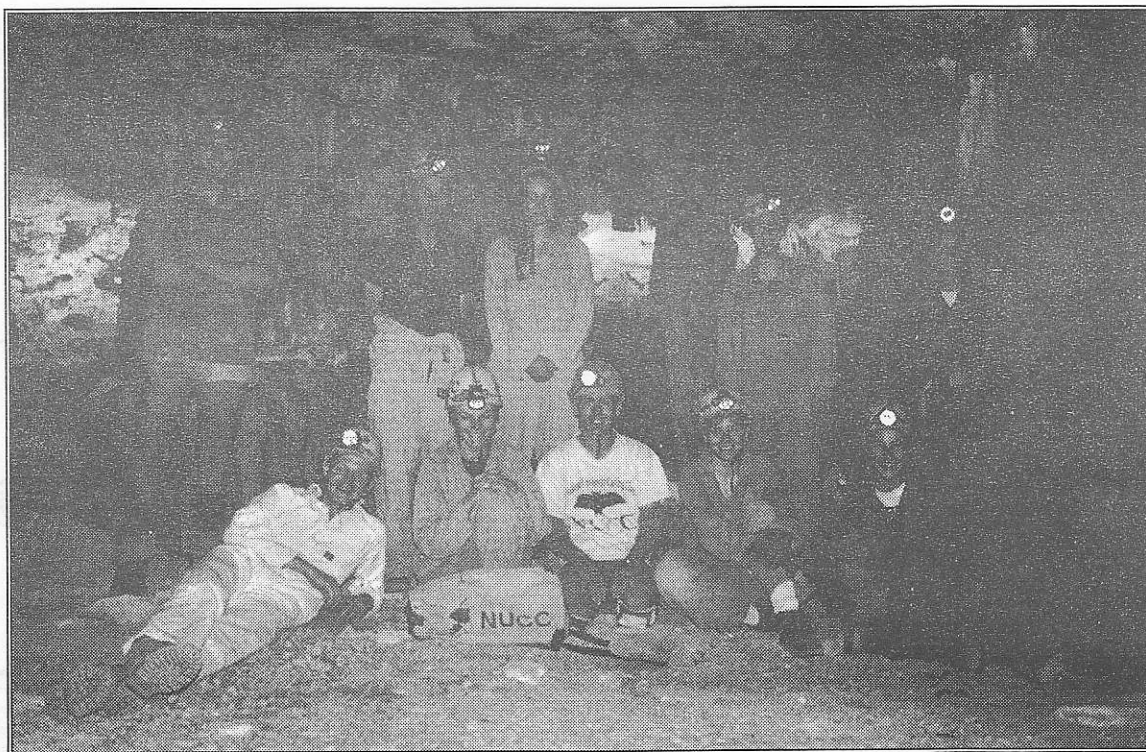
We left Canberra 16 days earlier as a group of ten NUCC cavers eager for an end of year adventure in the West. Not everybody knew everybody else very well. We weren't sure of the number of people or exactly what cars we were driving until some days before we were due to leave. We had travelled over 6000 kilometres, visited 13 caves and saw a good deal of Australia that many of us hadn't seen before. The early starts and long days tired all of us at some stage during the trip and the prospect of another long day and a cave or three was not always greeted with unstoppable enthusiasm. All was made worthwhile however by what we saw and the experiences we had.

We saw everything we set off to see, and in the process made new friends and got to know old ones better. NUCC once again manages to have a good time.

Tony Veness.

A comment from Chris.

Unlike Tony, my Mastercard wasn't on the line. After Wee Bubbie I didn't want to stop caving. There were so many caves and so little time. The food had been excellent and although none of us ever got to bed before midnight, I still wasn't tired. So, on the way home, I made a mental note to return. When we finally arrived in Canberra at 9 pm Sunday night, most of us wished we were still on the Nullarbor caving - it had been an excellent trip.



John, David, Rebecah, Anna, Chris, Andrew, Mim, Tony, Cecilia, Jane.

Prospecting in South Sulawesi and West Timor

Mark Bown and Sherry Mayo.

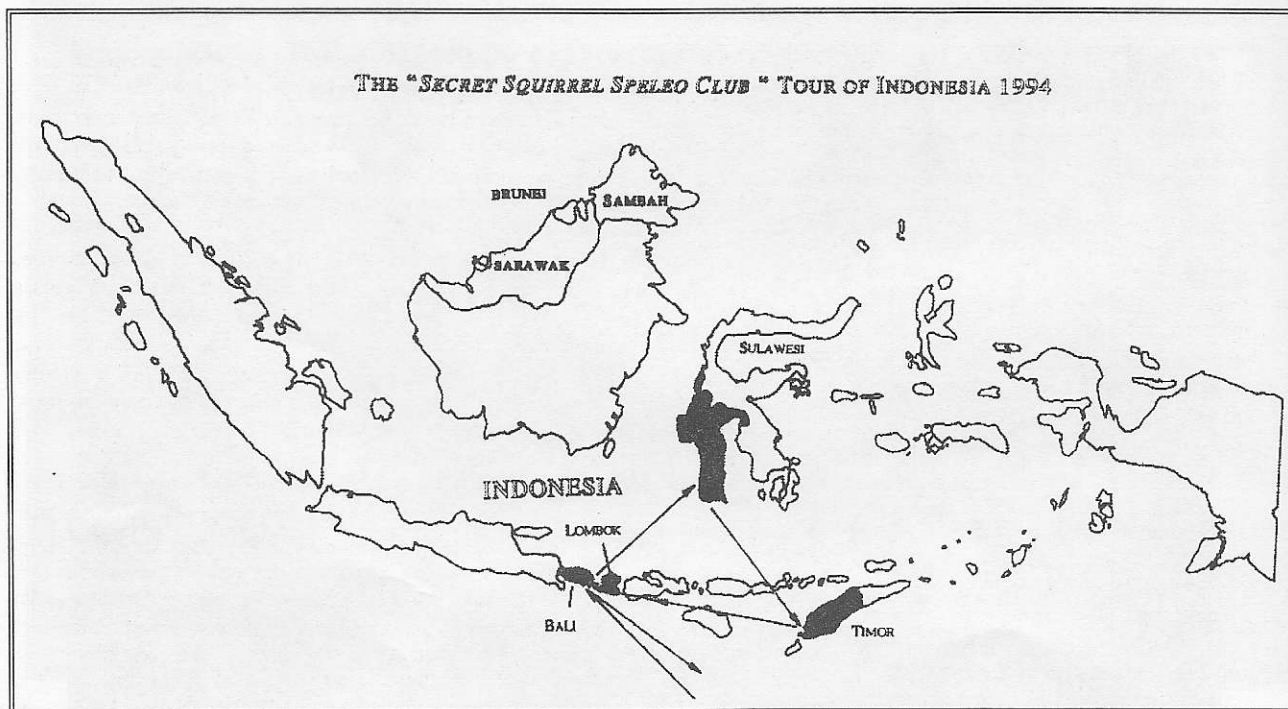
Over the last two decades Indonesia has been the scene of many important caving discoveries. Whilst many of the Indonesian islands, including Java and Irian Jaya, have been the location of many caving expeditions there have been few reported visits to Timor (Janicke, 1970). Timor contains large areas of limestone and resurgences have been reported in the interior. For these reasons we decided that W. Timor was a good prospect for a speleological recce. We also planned on visiting the Torajaland region of Sulawesi. Although Sulawesi has been the site of a number of French speleological expeditions (Assoc. Pyrenees de Spel (APS), 1985 & 1986) these were largely confined to the Maros region and there remain many other significant areas of limestone (such as the Torajaland region) which have received little attention from cavers. Torajaland had been visited very briefly by two members of the APS Thai-Maros expeditions in 1985 and 1986 when the well known burial caves at Londa, Kete and Tilanga were visited. A small team from the Top End Speleological Society (TESS, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia) visited Torajaland briefly in 1990 and found a number of small caves near Kalosi. Their expedition report indicated that the area had further caving potential.

Although there are regular flights between Darwin and Kupang in W. Timor the pricing of internal flights within

Australia and within Indonesia made it considerably cheaper for us to visit the areas of interest by flying from Sydney to Bali and then take advantage of the Garuda Indonesia/Air Merpati "Visit Indonesia" package (three internal flights for US\$300).

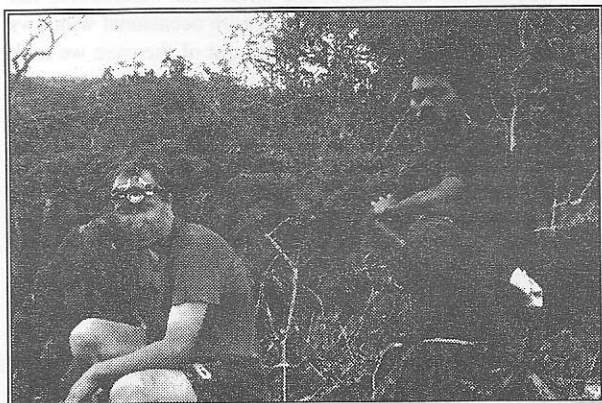
After three days touring in Bali we flew to Ujung Padang in Sulawesi. A long bus ride took us to Torajaland, where we stayed a night in Makale before retracing our steps slightly to Kalosi, the same village where the TESS cavers had stayed a few years before. When we arrived, our intended accommodation appeared to be closed, but the owner materialised and opened it up for us. It transpired that visitors to Kalosi, especially foreigners, were few and far between.

The TESS report had suggested that it would be easier to find caves at the river level rather than trying to enter sinkholes high in the mountains that were blocked with earth. Consequently our first cave hunting foray involved following a tributary of the main river upstream in the hope of finding some resurgences. Apart from one very small fissure in the side of the river we found no other entrances. Further upstream the river had been extensively diverted into paddies, and the original river course was almost completely obscured by rice terraces.



The area visited.

On returning to the hostel we asked the owner and his family (and anyone else who sat still for long enough) if they knew of any caves in the area, making the best of our rudimentary Indonesian. They mentioned a number of caves, most of which we knew about from the TESS and APS reports, although they also mentioned caves in Tontonan, a village a few kilometers down the road, which weren't mentioned in the reports. We visited these caves with the help of a local man called "Jeri" who took it upon himself to guide us there.



Mark Bown (with Petzl).

In contrast to massive reef limestones which form the hills to the west of Kalosi, the caves at Tontonan were in the smaller limestone lenses which lie to the east. The caves were situated in the cliffs to the west of the village of Tontonan, ca 50m above the river. There were a number of caves, most of which didn't penetrate more than 10m into the cliff and some of which were closed by bamboo gates (indicating the presence of a "fresh" corpse). Some caves had been used by the Japanese during WWII, one of which contained the skull of someone who'd been shot in the head. There is also an impressive burial site at Tontonan, with a number of bone filled sarcophagi perched on a ledge in a high limestone cliff.

It became evident that what caves there were in the area were either filled with silt or were under developed. We decided to head north to Rantapao where the limestone lenses are larger. We spent several days prospecting the karst to the north of the city. Several cave entrances were located at the base of the outcrops, all were short (ca. 10m) and either blocked with mud or sumped. Most of the caves and rock shelters in the area are used as burial caves, however the locals did not seem to mind our wanderings and quite happily directed us to them.

West Timor- a recce of Karst between Kupang and Dili

Timor contains large areas of limestone, the majority of which comes in two forms, the mountainous Maubissi limestone (Fatu formations) and the lower lying Coralline limestone. East Timor had been visited briefly by cavers from Western Australia in 1969 (Janicke, 1970), but to our knowledge no-one had visited W Timor in search of caves.

We landed in Timor, devoid of Indonesian cash, after the banks had closed. Our attempts to change money that evening proved fruitless and we were forced to spend the night in unusual luxury in the Hotel Sasando, the only place that took

credit! The next morning we intended to head straight to Camplong where the guidebook indicated there were caves. En route to the bus station, however, we couldn't help but notice three cave entrances. Mark entered one that went into a large chamber, but didn't appear to continue. We made a note of them and decided we'd check them out when we returned to Kupang.

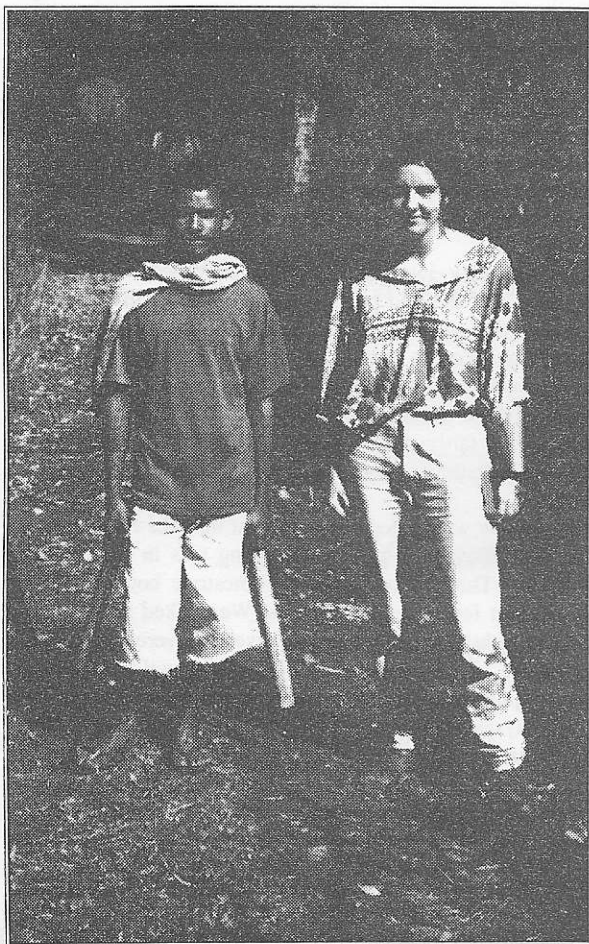
After a sweaty journey in a bus crammed with people, chickens, and the odd pig, we were deposited in Camplong. Due to a distinct lack of success in finding accommodation we continued on to Soe on the next bus. The next morning we returned to Camplong to look for the cave that was reported. After asking directions a couple of times we found the cave; a fairly small chamber with two entrances in a crumbly limestone outcrop.

The next day we headed out to look at the area North of Soe. This area, like Camplong and Kupang was in the coralline limestone. There were plenty of limestone boulders at the surface, but few massive outcrops. We walked north of Soe and after asking the locals about caves we were shown some man made tunnels from WWII but no natural caves. There didn't appear to be any sinks or resurgences in the area. After a two days touring (visiting the king of Boti) we headed further east to Kefamenu, or "Kefa" as it is known locally. Our curiosity was piqued when a trader in one of the hostels we stayed in mentioned that he'd come to the area to buy birds nests, and that the swallows in question nested in caves near Oelolok. The next day we headed out for Oelolok, stopping to visit Gua Santa Maria (Santa Maria cave) en route. Santa Maria cave was around 60m long and consisted of two large chambers with "skylights" illuminating them. The cave was used as a chapel by the locals who are largely catholic. It was in a Maubisse outcrop, a much more massive kind of limestone than the coralline variety, this Maubisse limestone usually occurs as large isolated limestone crags or mountains. There was a second, smaller cave behind the "chapel" cave that contained a concrete angel and an equally tasteful concrete Jesus, lying in state inside.

As we headed towards Oelolok we noticed a sign for Gua Maria, another cave. We tracked it down with help from a local man, only to find that it was an artificial cave built by the locals of the next village along for use as a shrine (consequently it was full of virgin Marys and similar paraphernalia). Time was pressing on and it wasn't until the next day that we reached Oelolok.

Rising up behind Oelolok were large limestone crags of the Maubisse type. We headed towards them across the paddies and asked a man working in the fields where the caves were. He said there were caves in only one of the crags and he took us up to see them. It was quite a bash through the bush as the path was very indistinct but eventually we reached the top. The rock on top of the crag was very karstified, but unfortunately the few caves were very small. We asked if there were caves in any of the other surrounding mountains and were told that apart from Gua Santa Maria there were no other caves.

We headed further east via Atembua to Dili in East Timor. Despite rumours of trouble the week before, we had no



Sherry Mayo.

trouble getting across the border. We had a brief detour to Maliana to look at what was reported to be a limestone area in a Western Australian caving report, however there didn't appear to be any limestone there, so after a night in Dili we headed back to Kupang.

We both came down with heavy colds when arrived at Kupang, but nonetheless went to look at the caves we'd noted

previously. We found another two entrances en route. Of the five caves, one was no more than a pit, three were boulder filled chambers, 10, 15 and 20m long respectively, and the fifth was a man made cave with 2 entrances that looked as though it had been inhabited at one time. The next day we went to Baumata, a village near Kupang to look for a resurgence we'd heard about. In typical Indonesian fashion, two friendly locals offered to show it to us. The cave had a gate at the entrance as it was a water supply, but we went inside and quickly surveyed it. The surveyed length was just 60m through the dry part of the cave. The watercourse ran parallel to this route at a lower level with occasional windows between the two routes. After getting out of the cave we took a dip in the "swimming pool" fed by the cave water, and headed back to Kupang.

Our time in Indonesia was coming to a close, and we flew to Lombok to spend our last three days snorkelling on the fantastic reef around Gili Trawangan. Although we didn't find caverns measureless, we had a great time looking for them, and it was made all the better by the hospitality of all the Indonesian people we met, especially those who showed us their local caves. There may be bigger caves to find in Timor, possibly in the higher Maubisse outcrops in the North of W. Timor, or possibly in the eastern extremity of East Timor.

Thanks are due to Andrew Wygralak of TESS, and Jim Campbell of Canberra S.S. for furnishing us with information about the earlier trips to Sulawesi and Timor. Thanks also to Michael T for helping us find carbide in Ujung Pandang, and to "Jeri" Sammu, Freddy Masu, Joni Lasfeto, Tonny Sanit and Agustinas Humau, for showing us their local caves.

Sherry Mayo.

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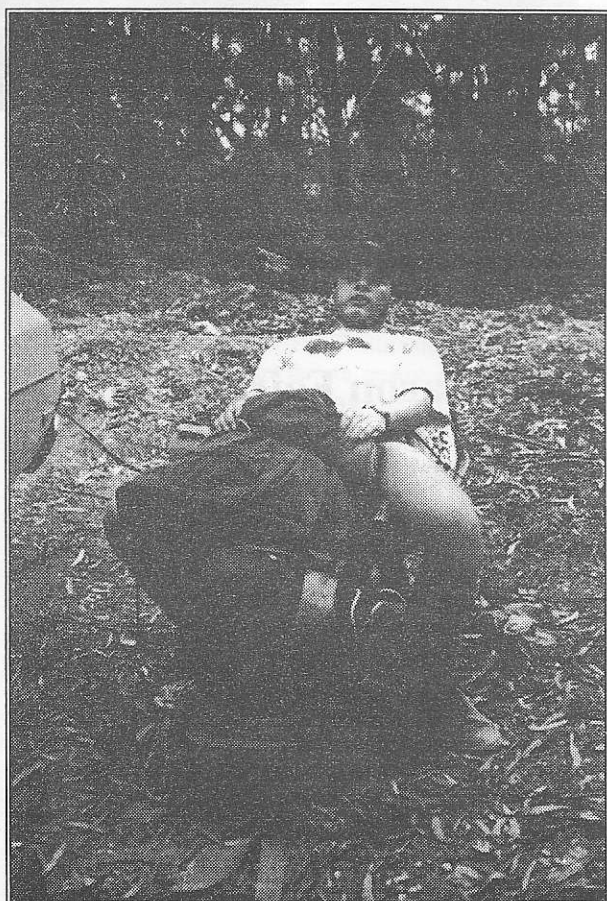
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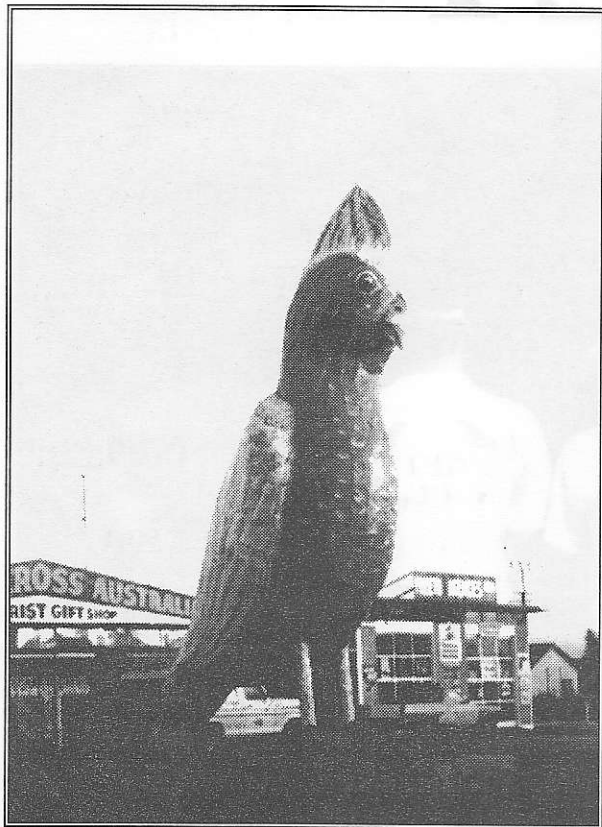
Gareth Sharp

Daniel Shiels

Cecilia Shlegel



Toryn and Betsy.



Big Galah as seen on the Big Trip.

Raymond Singh
Linden Tilley
Tony Veness
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Teeth!

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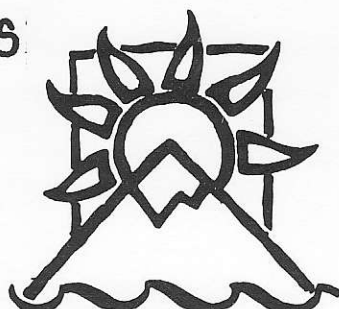
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