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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAVING CLUB

Volume Three Number One

February 1966

EDITORIAL

Last year saw a substantial increase in the activities of our club in a number of departments: Two wire ladders were constructed of fifty foot each - mainly due to the considerable efforts of Graeme Chapman. A number of guiding principles regarding safety of club members were integrated into the rules and regulations of the society. Experiments in photography and lighting were undertaken.

Caving should be an adventurous sport, and a club which merely travels old paths repeatedly in its activities is sterile. In the department of club trips, an average of one every two weeks was sustained in 1965 - a substantial increase over the previous year. A good deal of new climbing techniques were tried in old stamping grounds - caves at Bungonia, for example. But few other caving techniques or really new caving areas were explored.

This year we have a number of promising trips ahead - for example the difficult exploration of Colong Caves. Let us hope that this trend continues and armchair caving is not our 'raison d'être'.

On page two of this newsletter, is an interesting statistical breakdown of last year's trips.

Michael Henry.

Michael Henry

From the Archives.

The following is a breakdown of all available trip data.

1964: Data is available from eleven official trips.

Average number of females /trip = 2.33; average number of males/trip = 7.44. These 9.77 people spent 4.85 hours underground, and a further 3.7 hours travelling by car to and from the caves.

In 1965 there were more trips, but less people went on them. Data from 24 official trips has been collected, and does not include the Fresher Trip. An average trip consisted of 1.33 females and 5.47 males, who, according to 1.6 watches took 1.86 hours to drive to the cave area in 1.62 cars (count Mini Minor as fraction of Station Waggon) and a further 3.7 hours walking to and from the caves and making 1.2 billies of tea. These 6.8 people (the other 0.2 is presumably still scattered amongst various squeezes) spent 6.05 hours Down Under, implying that club members are finding their activities in the darkness more attractive.

The ratio females:males rose from 1:3 in 1964 to 1:2.44 in 1965 despite several Dog Leg trips for Men Only. In 1965, also, the females sector was represented on the committee for the first time (12.5%). Is caving to become a purely feminine sport?

Longest underground spell was 16 hours at Wyambene, and shortest was Abercrombie, half an hour. Largest party was probably 1965 Fresher Trip, but as people are still reporting in, data is not finalized. Next comes the NUSS/CSS Mt. Fairy trip, on which 27 hopefuls set out. Number returned is not recorded. This is also the only known trip on which the trip leader stayed home in bed. The smallest party underground was the President's courageous assault on NUCC ONE, 27th July, 1965. (There were other lone assaults, however.)

Injuries have been very light, although upward of 200 bruises have been collected. Most serious injury was a fall in Thermal Pool Cave, resulting in brief loss of consciousness, so we cannot afford to sit back and wait for statistics to catch up with us (see essay on safety, p. 4).

Wee Jasper showed a decline in popularity, from 60% in 1964 to 43% of total trips in 1965. Orange and Mt. Fairy were not revisited, while several places, such as Bendethra and Colong were put on the NUCC map.

Most popular month for caving is May with 22.6% of all trips to its credit. No official trips are recorded for November. This implies an inexplicable relation with the academic year.

Predictions for 1966, based on observed trends:

A further decline in popularity of Wee Jasper with the notable exception of the Unlucky Cave, WJ 13, popularly known as Dog Leg Cave. November will continue to be a bad month for caving, as long as Virgo and Perseus remain in opposition, unless the Final Exams are moved to May, in which case Taurus and Aries are likely to have a head-on collision.

CAVE SAFETY

Caving is not DANGEROUS so long as caves are treated with the RESPECT they WARRANT. CAVING is a SPORT and like any sport has its own breed of casualties, its safety measures and first-aid measures.

Safety in caves consists of two parts:

- (1) adequate safe and reliable equipment;
- (2) using plenty of common sense.

2. A caver must always keep within his limitations of mental and physical exhaustion and never attempt anything beyond his capabilities unless under supervision from a more experienced caver and taking adequate care. It is important not to take risks: it is SELFISH to do so as a fall leading to injury can cause excessive worry and concern to the rest of the party, and vast inconvenience to others. It is also very important to remember that your capabilities become LESS the longer you stay underground and the more tired you become. It is up to the trip leader to make sure every member of his party can tackle each new section of cave. It is NOT a DISGRACE for a caver to tell the leader that he cannot go on or attempt a difficult section of a cave - he will not be DESPISED. If however he does not convey his fears to the leader he could endanger the lives of the whole party.

1. With regard to equipment there are three essentials to be thought of:

- (i) CLOTHING. Clothing requirements for Australian caves are not very stringent. Old clothes which are strong

enough to stand up to hard usage will do, but a boiler suit is recommended as it contains strong pockets, does not roll up on long climbs or crawls, and protects the inner layers from snags and the worst of the mud. For wet caves where one can be immersed in water for long times and then stand for periods while ladders are rigged or photographs taken, one can become excessively cold and in these circumstances woollen underclothing is essential, e.g. in Dog's Leg Cave, Wee Jasper, or Wyambene Cave. There have been many deaths (overseas) due to exposure, so adequate clothing is essential.

The best footwear for cavers is boots, preferably rubber soled (well serrated). A safety helmet is essential to protect the head from stalagmites, and stones falling down pitches.

A caver never goes caving without a complete change of clothing!! After a day's caving a caver will be covered in mud or may be soaked through and the change of clothing is not only welcome when one emerges from the cave but can provide much needed warmth.

(ii) FOOD. It is essential to take food with you on an extended exploration in a cave. However in most of the caves we shall be entering it will not be essential to carry food - members on a trip shall be advised if it is necessary.

ABSOLUTELY NO ALCOHOL SHALL (OR SHOULD) BE TAKEN ON ANY CAVING TRIP. It is a commonly believed fallacy that alcohol will warm a cold person - in actual fact it chills a person as it lowers the blood temperature and therefore the body temperature. This is not the only reason for the above rule as a drunken caver is a disaster.

(iii) Equipment.

LIGHTING. The most effective form of lighting for caving is the Carbide Lamp, but a waterproof torch is adequate. The miner's lamp using a Ni/Cd storage battery can be used, however it is found that the battery can be a nuisance when squeezes are encountered or long crawls are undertaken. Whatever major source of light the caver uses, he should also carry a candle and matches in a waterproof container as a reserve light. If a carbide lamp is used a pricker should also be taken.

ROPES, LADDERS and any other equipment should only be handled by experienced members of the club, and be checked regularly for any faults. If any are found they should be repaired or in the case of ropes, the rope should be destroyed.

BELAYING should only be carried out by experienced cavers under the direction of the leader who should satisfy himself that the method used is satisfactory for the particular circumstance. The leader should also make sure that a BOWLINE knot is used to tie the safety rope around the person being belayed. It is ESSENTIAL that EVERY caver knows how the BOWLINE is tied, and be able to tie it!!, as it is the only acceptable knot to be used with safety ropes. If a BOWLINE is NOT tied correctly then a deadly slip knot may result.

The rigging of ladders should be carried out by experienced cavers ONLY and then only under the supervision of the trip leader.

There is a right and wrong way to climb a free hanging cable ladder and can be learnt only through practice under the guidance of an experienced club member. A pitch over twenty feet should not be attempted until one is conversant with the correct way to climb a cable ladder. It is a general rule that no caver attempt a ladder pitch without being belayed with a safety rope.

On long pitches it is advisable to wear a waist sling and karabiner as one can hook onto a ladder rung and have a rest without any fear of falling off the ladder.

ACCIDENTS. The necessary measures to be taken in the case of accidents cannot be fully dealt with here, however if an occasion arises where a member of the party does happen to have an accident, the rest of the party must remain CALM and not PANIC. In the words of C. H. D. Cullingford 'rescue underground is one-tenth knowledge of first-aid and nine-tenths of common-sense measures'. The advice of a doctor who has attended many cave rescues (in England) is 'Get the injured man out as quickly as possible with the LEAST FUSS. The niceties of first-aid can be carried out where it is warm, dry and clean. Caving victims die from exposure, only rarely from their injuries.'

Quotations and further excellent reading can be found in the standard caving text: BRITISH CAVING by C H D CULLINGFORD, available in the S.G.S. library.

Summary

Adequate safety measures can only be learned from the example of more experienced cavers.

SAFETY IN CAVES IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH MEMBER OF THE PARTY

Graeme Chapman

My First Caving Trip

The title seems to be somewhat high schoolish, but then I first went caving when at high school, or I should say, the English equivalent of it. Some years ago now, more than I care to admit, I had the good fortune to spend some months in England with relatives on the English-Welsh border and attended an English grammar school. It was only by accident that I went caving. A friend of mine was an ardent 'potholer', and when one member pulled out of a trip I was asked to make up the number. After a small amount of persuasion I was off on my first caving trip.

After a short train trip, and a walk of some twelve miles, all uphill, we were on the Derbyshire moors - a high limestone plateau.

If you think England is crowded, take a trip up onto the moors. Nothing but treeless emptiness, bare rock, short tufty grass, a few forlorn sheep, stone walls and the road stretching endlessly to the horizon. That is, when there is a clear day and you can see the horizon. Normally, visibility is limited to a few hundred feet; all around is a prevailing wispy mist, weaving eerily across your path. Disembodied sounds come mysteriously out of the mist - the solitary bleating of sheep, the phut-phut of a diesel engine from some hidden farm, the soft keening of the breeze in the telephone wires high in the weird, eternally moving mist. Desolation on an open, sunny Australian plain is paradise compared to the moors. Every few miles we crossed a small stream emerging from nowhere, cascading on over broken rocks into some dark abyss. Eventually, after several hours, and several blisters, we reached our destination and made camp. Ever tried to pitch a tent on ground with 1" - 2" of top soil, or make a fire on a treeless plain? I still vividly remember scouring the surrounding neighbourhood for wood and coming across an old signpost at a disused crossroads which must have been there in the days of the stage coach. Needless to say it isn't there now.

The next morning the great moment came, the ladders were unrolled and dropped down the first pitch into Oxlow Cavern - 60', but I didn't know that at the time, so full of enthusiasm I started down. About halfway down I began to have second thoughts about caving. Not that I was frightened but the ladder was shaking furiously and rattling, the shaking being transmitted from my knees, which just would not keep still. Further encouragement from the top and I was down, sitting in a pool of cool water thanking every saint I could

think of. A short scrambling climb down a rock slope 'midst a growing stream of water and we were at the next pitch, a free fall one, starting from a small circular hole in the floor. Down a swinging ladder and I was on the floor of the chamber below. The noise of the water was deafening as it cascaded over the edge of a limestone buttress, the crash of it hitting the bottom reverberating around the chamber. A rope around the waist and I was sliding over the buttress to the bottom through a curtain of cold water. The water going down the back of my neck and out through my boots. On again and then we stopped at a sump. The small stream had now swollen to a full sized underground river completely filling the cave. Where did the river go? Probably on for miles to emerge triumphantly into the light at Castleton or Burton. So back we went, up through the waterfall and the ladders, the last climb being the longest and most difficult of all, so long in fact, that I called down to ask how far it was to the top and was rewarded with a quiet 'you're here'. It was night. I had been underground for twelve hours.

So ended my first caving trip.

David Fenn

WAITOMO

Waitomo, situated about 150 miles south of Auckland, is New Zealand's best known caving area. The surrounding countryside is partly grazing country and partly natural forest, with just an occasional limestone outcrop.

The three tourist caves are quite large in parts, with chambers up to 50 feet high, but elsewhere you have to make your way along narrow passageways, carefully avoiding precipitous drops down to lower levels. In one place the eerie quiet is broken by the amplified rumbling of a large underground stream, which emerges from the depths of a narrow tunnel and disappears into the darkness a little way further on. In places the formation is particularly good, with large rock faces glimmering with crystal, and occasional helictites, but in the main the caves are quite dead and unattractive from this point of view.

The real feature of Waitomo is the famous "Glow-worm Grotto". This natural wonder is accessible by dinghy across the surface of a small underground lake. The canopy-like ceiling is lit by myriads of phosphorescent points of green light - almost enough to see by. The glow-worm itself is greyish-white in colour. It uses the green light in its tail to attract insects, which are then snared by a thread which dangles, like a tiny fishing line, from the worm's mouth.

Judging by my brief impressions of Waitomo, I would say that it compared unfavourably with certain Australian caves - notably Jenolan, although some New Zealand spelios assured me that they knew of some caves of exceptional beauty.

However, for those who intend joining me on the NUCC trip to Wyambene on Saturday, 16th April, I can assure them that I saw nothing in New Zealand to compare with 'Cleopatra's Bath' or, especially, the 'Witches' Cauldrons' in the great chamber, both of which are to be seen on this particular trip.

Geoff Marchant

Caving in N. Z. (Waitomo)

It was a moment of great pride and joy when NUCC delegated me to carry out the epic assignment of investigating the speleological potential of Australia's off-shore islands to the East - of course at my own expense. Here follows a brief account of my adventures in these strange lands.

Having hired the swiftest craft available at the time, our journey to the remote islands 40° S and 175° E in the South Pacific Ocean was accomplished without incident. Being anxious to carry out my mission in the shortest time, I inquired of the local natives whether there were any caves in the area. Ignoring their reports of 'bottomless pits' as too sensationalistic to be authentic, I journeyed further to the district known as Waitomo.

Here I was directed to what appeared to be an amusement park but I was assured by all the inhabitants and tourist brochures that this was the crowning glory of my trip and that I would be "enchanted by this trip no

matter how sophisticated I was" (quotation is excerpt of QANTAS brochure on New Zealand). At the 'amusement park' entrance, after paying a small fee I was permitted to join an expedition venturing into the caves.

Having brought all my caving equipment with me I then set about getting into my trog suit, putting my sling and karabina and pitons on, helmet on my head, 60 feet of rope coiled so diligently over my shoulder, my hobnailed boots which clattered terribly on the cement floor and lighted my carbide lamp. Then I was ready to set off. My first big surprise came when I first met the other members of the party.

A feeling of awe swept over me as I trudged to the assembly point and my mind wandered back to the many enjoyable hours spent underground in my own district with my own cobbe s. The rest of the party however did not seem to be awed by the fate awaiting them; in fact they showed a nonchalant indifference to the whole affair. Indeed, dressed in evening clothes after a gala banquet the night before they had not even bothered to change into trog suits.

As any good NUCC caver knows it is essential to carry three independant sources of light on any caving trip, and this I had, carbide, candle and matches. I was shocked to find that the rest of the party, apart from four very portly gnetlemen who smoked cigars, had no source of light at all - no, not even a match.

My fears were heightened when I was told to leave my rope behind as it "weighed too much" in the words of the leader of the party, who was so old he could have been my great grandfather. But eventually, when remembering that my assignment must come before all else, I finally plucked up enough courage to carry on.

With my carbide burning brightly I plunged into the unknown. I was beginning to wonder when we would get into the cave after wandering through various concrete passageways lit by ELECTRICITY overhead. To my amazement, when I asked the leader he replied that we had been in the cave for half an hour. I then knew why I hadn't seen any formations - the lights were so bright I was dazzled and could see no more than the dark haze of a dinner-suited gentleman (I think) in front of me.

A little later someone up front yelled out "water!" and my mind went racing back to the many river crawls and siphons I had been through. I wished I had brought my wet suit and underwater diving gear with me. My fears were heightened when I was told to extinguish my carbide. I

asked the leader how many ducks there were in the river section of the cave, but to my surprise he said there were none and that I had to extinguish my carbide so I would not set the wooden boat alight.

After boarding the boat and shoving off we drifted towards what? A tourist brochure described it as "you suddenly enter a vast cavern where a canopy of millions of glow-worms shed a celestial radiance to the glossy waters below" (quotation from tourist brochure of New Zealand Tourist and Publicity Department). Well, we did drift into a large chamber with millions of tiny lights in the ceiling. The leader informed us that the light was emitted from the tail of the female glow-worm who is wingless. He also went on to say (very learnedly) that the male had wings and glow-worms were coleopterous insects.

However the light was somewhat meagre and I wished I still had my carbide lighted, as it would have done the job much better. I was disappointed by the limestone formations in this chamber - at first I thought I saw myriads of fine pencil stalactities on the roof but closer examination, which was rather hazardous operation as the boat rocked precariously when I stood up, revealed that they were long threads suspended by the glow-worms for the purpose of catching insects for food.

After digesting this information for several seconds I was forcibly restrained from taking a sample of these creatures. They would have been ideal for catching flies at the entrances to caves back on the mainland.

Drifting further into the unknown I noticed some side-passages in the eerie gloom, but was restrained from exploring these by our leader, who anxiously wished to press on through the main stream.

I was deeply moved by the momentous journey on which I had embarked, but my hopes and expectations were soon dashed for the trip was over before it began. A faint glow, a ray of light, and we found ourselves in dazzling sunlight once again. How such a trip, showing great promise at first, could prove so fruitless was impossible to comprehend.

If this was a typical example of a New Zealand cave, I have little faith in there being much prospect of extensive cave systems in this part of the world. This contention is supported by the general attitude of the local speleologists who have only the most primitive caving techniques. They use no ropes, ladders, karabiners etc. - in fact no artificial climbing aids at all. Safety techniques are non-existent.

I therefore recommend that no further trips be made to these areas; the club would do much better to confine its attention to well-known cave systems on the mainland.

N. L. R. King
G. V. Chapman

Editor's Note:- Information received from usually reliable sources indicates that the authors have never in their lives journeyed outside the boundaries of the mainland; therefore the Editor on behalf of the magazine will not be responsible for any views expressed in the above article.

TRIP REPORTS

1. Report of a trip to Punchbowl Cave, Wee Jasper, on 19th February, 1966.

The trip leader was Graeme Chapman. Members on trip were: Neville King, Michael Henry, Ian Raine, and non-member Richard Johnson also went. Neville was underground for six hours, while the rest of the party stayed under for ten hours.

The party went out on Friday night and got up early Saturday morning for breakfast followed by a day's caving.

Cave photography, especially of ladder on daylight pitch into Pitch Chamber of Punchbowl, was main reason for trip. Some formation was also photographed. Lighting for photography was provided by a 1.5 KW Generator and and four fifty watt floodlights.

Three of the party entered Signature and proceeded to Punchbowl carrying, shoving, heaving and pushing lighting equipment which included floods, leads and other paraphernalia such as cameras, film, tripods etc. to be used for photographic purposes. GVC and IR went to the top of the pitch and rigged ladder and belay rope and tied IR to column (not to be shot). The generator was put in place at entrance in open air and a lead dropped to the eager men below who eagerly connected it up to the floods and started shooting - oops sorry shouting for the gene to be started which it was and we then had light, glorious light. GVC was then belayed down the pitch by IR but had to stop several times for the eager beavers below who wanted to photograph someone on a ladder (or maybe they were

waiting for an action shot of someone falling off). The flies were bad.

At the bottom GVC took a flood and reclimbed the ladder positioning same on a convenient ledge to light the upper reaches of the ladder. Again he descended and photos were taken.

Then the others who were clambering for their turn on the ladder had their turn. Eventually IR was released from his column and MLRK replaced him.

Much ladder climbing and many photographs later the floods were turned on various formations for more photos and eventually we decided it was dinner time. After ladders up and cable up and packed up we returned to daylight and eats.

After lunch all except Neville returned to Punchbowl and had a quick turn around to familiarize ourselves with the route for freshers and also to show RJ what REAL CAVING is like.

P.S. The photos turned out well - in the words of our indomitable president 'Holy Mackerel'

Graeme Chapman

2. Report of a trip to Colong Cave on 4th - 6th February, 1966. The distance is 145 miles of which about 70 miles of road are gravel. The road is in the process of rejuvenation by the relevant authorities. The trip leader was Neville King, and club members on the trip were Graeme Chapman, Michael Henry and Peter Swan. Three non-members, Vicki, Sue Smythe and James Smythe also went on the trip. The party spent eight hours exploring Lanigan's Cave, King's Cross, Low Tunnel, Shark's Mouth Cave and passages beyond.

Notes: (i) Colong Caves lie in the catchment area of the Warragamba Dam. Permits to enter this area can be obtained from the Sydney Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, 341 Pitt Street, Sydney.

(ii) According to the brass plaque attached to the grille, applications for a key should be addressed to The Secretary, Colong Caves Trust, 89 William Edward Street, Longueville, N.S.W. The club now has a key thanks to GVC.

After belatedly departing from the home of a de facto committee member on Friday evening, and successfully resisting a strong temptation to invade the Scots' Ball at Taralga, the party arrived at Batsch Camp at midnight. Three hours later the walk and descent to the caves was accomplished and we all slept under the glow of a rising sun. Upon entering Lannigan's Cave and arriving at King's Cross, the party made a series of interesting but unnecessary detours through the reticulate system of passages with which we were confronted. Several hours later we regained our bearings and arrived at Shark's Mouth Cave. After returning to the surface, only the four club members could muster sufficient enthusiasm to resume the search for the fabulous Wolf's Cabin. Pushing past Shark's Mouth Cave, however, we soon had the dejecting and demoralising experience of finding our way barred by a locked gate. According to a plaque attached thereto, the gate had been locked only a week before by a Sydney University Rover Crew for the Cooranbong Speleological Association, which has now disbanded. Thanks to GVC the club has now obtained a key from the Colong Caves Trust. We explored some side passages and recorded some caustic comments in the visitor's book at King's Cross on the way out.

Neville King

Any Correspondence to the EDITOR will be most Welcome - Any caving, news, views etc. to be published in later newsletters should reach the Editor c/o M Henry, CHEM DEPT, SSS, ANU, a week before publication date.

The committee wishes to express thanks to Joanne for the typing of the stencils for this newsletter and also prodding members into writing contributions
