

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAVING CLUB
NEWSLETTER

Volume Three Number Two

April 1966.

From the President

I would like to thank the members at the Annual General Meeting for electing me as their President for the coming year. I hope that I will be able to perform the tasks as well as previous presidents.

The outgoing executive has set a high standard which I am sure the new executive will maintain and even, if possible, exceed.

The club has started the year with a varied and interesting programme of caving which next term will be carried on with a seasonal decline in third term as the exam^t draw near.

I would like to wish all the members of the club an enjoyable year's caving and especially an accident-free one.

Graeme Chapman.

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Out-going President's Report

From January last year activity in the caving club remained consistently high. An average of one trip a fortnight was maintained - including approximately a six-week break over November/December.

Cloyne, Abercrombie and Colong Caves were explored for the first time by our club. Also for the first time, a substantial amount of research was carried out into the history and some geology, of a cave system - Colong caves.

For those interested, this information is available from Graeme Chapman; and statistics on our trips for the past twelve months can be found in the newsletter Vol 3 No 1.

One hundred feet of wire ladder was constructed - probably the safest of its kind available anywhere - due to the efforts of mainly one man - Graeme Chapman. We have, or hope to have enough material for another 200 feet of ladder. A request has been made to the Sports Council for 300 feet of manila rope.

Our efforts in Orientation Week were the biggest yet. Three meetings were organized and attracted sizable audiences to the slides and films on caving.

Comparatively little attention is paid to the objects of our caving club; and club policy on caving is non-existent. However the enthusiasm and approach to caving by all club members is very satisfying. Safety techniques practised by the club at present at least cause no need for concern - two sprained ankles (both at Colong Caves) being sustained only.

Future trips have been planned up to the end of first term - three months ahead. So if this type of foresight and activity continue, a far more interesting and energetic year of caving is ahead.

Michael Henry

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From the Treasury

Financial Statement for the period 1/3/65 - 28/2/66

Credit		Debit	
Balance brought forward	£1.14.7	one cwt. drum of carbide	£4.16.0
Membership Subscriptions	£8. 5.0	materials for ladders	£20.15.9
Donations	5.0	Subscription to 'Helictite'	£1. 0.0
Sports Council Grant - stationery and ladders	£23.5.0	Bolts and Loxins	13.8
Trip fees	£1. 6.0	Stationery	£1.13.6
Carbide Sales	£1. 2.6		
Bank interest	1.10		
Balance carried forward	+£7. 1.0		

The above statement does not include equipment supplied by the Sports Union - carbides, helmets, ropes etc., to the value of approx. £70.

Neville King

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the National University Caving Club was held in the Main Lecture Theatre, Chemistry Department, S.G.S., on Tuesday, April 5th. Twenty-two bodies presented themselves, and got down to business at 7.45 pm.

After the minutes had been dispatched, the Outgoing President's Report and the Financial Statement were read and accepted. Then it was time for Special Business, and Graeme Chapman took the floor to propose a complex and slightly bewildering set of amendments to the Constitution. These were duly accepted by the club, and it was time for the next item on the agenda. However, our guest speaker had arrived by this time, so the meeting broke off for a fascinating and informative talk on the caves of the Nullarbor Plain by Mr. J. Jennings, Reader in Geomorphology in the Institute of Advanced Studies.

Came Question Time, and came the questions, thick and fast. Finally a halt had to be called or we would have gone on until morning lectures, and the meeting proper was resumed.

A glance at the clock cut the agenda to merely Election of Office Bearers.

The Executive for 1966:

President:	Graeme Chapman
Vice-President:	Michael Henry
Secretary:	Joanne Fisher
Treasurer:	Ian Raine
Equipment Officer:	David Moore
	(Robert Orreill
General Committee Members	(Norman Stokes
	(Michael Webb

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Caving in the Nullarbor

Talk given by Mr. J. Jennings at the A.G.M. of N.U.C.C. on April 5th.

Mr. Jennings first showed the film 'Under the Nullarbor', then supplemented it with slides and a talk. He explained the geological history of the area, which consists of two limestone layers and was formed under the sea. It ends in sheer cliffs at the present sea edge. In places the two limestone layers have different coasts, and cliffs drop from one level to the other.

The caves are formed by water trickling through fissures in the limestone, or in the case of porous limestone, seeping through the entire material, which forms a network of tunnels somewhat resembling a giant sponge. Caves can be formed in either of the two levels, and are classified as shallow or deep.

Deep caves can be located from the air by the characteristic sink holes of the entrances which enlarge and collapse over periods of time. Pinpointing them and then travelling over and to reach them is far more difficult, and some caves in thick scrub are considered inaccessible.

Mr. Jennings discussed location and exploration of these caves, particularly the deep caves which are generally larger and more extensive. Some of the slides showing the sizes of some of these caverns were truly staggering, many caverns being 90 - 120 feet high. The caves may also be very long - tunnels being up to one mile in length. Formation is rare although some of the caves are wet, and underground lakes are known.

Exploring these caves presents many problems, the carrying of supplies being one of the most important. Water is carried on trucks in large iron tanks, and even firewood has to be brought to some areas, as could easily be seen from some of the photographs. Underground photography in such large volumes presents problems, which were at least partially overcome by using what sounded like a lethal weapon similar to a military flamethrower as a flash gun.

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TRIP REPORTS

1. Fresher Trips

Two very successful trips were held on Sunday 6th March and Saturday 12th March. About twenty people went on each trip to the Wee Jasper Caving Area, where they were introduced to the hardships of caving in Punchbowl Cave and The Dip No. 4 Extension. The parties left Bruce Hall about 8.30 - 9.00 am and returned at 9.00 pm or a little later. As usual, John Foster was first on the scene with a load of Lennoxians, the main party following much later. On each occasion a party went to Thermal Pool Cave independently of the main parties. The expeditions ended in traditional manner with hamburgers in Yass.

Thermal Pool Trip, Sunday 6th March.

This was an exploratory trip. Four cavers carried out the assault - Joanne Fisher, Alan Duff, David Moore and Ian Raine. Time underground: four hours.

Leaving the meeting place by WJ 13, where some fifteen freshers were waiting excitedly or apprehensively for their first trip underground, for NUCC-ites went in Ian's car to the Thermal Pool Cave with a ladder and rope. The rope was slung and left at the entrance for lowering and raising bodies and equipment, and the party went to the first pool. The water level was very low - most of the pool floor was dry, and JLF investigated the sump. It runs horizontally, and is wide enough for a person to enter, but there is no indication that any breathing spaces lie beyond. The walls of the lower part of this chamber are thickly covered with calcite crystals, washed pale brown by the mud.

The forty-foot mud slope beside the pool was climbed, a slimy trip leader requesting that the ladder be slung because she could only travel downwards while dripping muddy water. About two-thirds of the way up this slope David noticed some white grass-like plants which appeared to be growing there.

To the right a twenty-foot slope (slippery when wet) leads without warning to the brink of a ten-foot drop. The fifty-foot ladder looked out of place slung here, but nevertheless proved invaluable. At the bottom was a chamber with the second pool, about ten-by-twelve feet in area, and four feet deep with an additional two feet of ooze on the bottom.

After JLF was persuaded to stop practising breast-stroke she located the sump in a corner of the pool in one foot of water. It slopes downwards and rapidly narrows. The water levels in the two pools seem approximately the same and they probably connect via a lower level. The temperature is the same in both - about 70° F.

Under a ledge near the foot of the ladder a small gap was noticed so the party squeezed through. This led tortuously to a small chamber. Ian reports that a passage leading off here goes on, but narrows and looks doubtful. The air in the second pool chamber became bad very quickly, suggesting there is no through passage from it. The humidity is extremely high, and sweat poured continually down our faces. There is some formation at the top of the slope and in the pool chamber but it is all dead.

The party then left the cave and returned to the meeting place for lunch.

The following Saturday Mike Webb took a party of four others into Thermal Pool Cave and investigated the possibility of forcing the first sump. Lack of equipment prevented him doing so, but he is hopeful of achieving this in the near future.

Joanne Fisher

2. Weekend Trip to Colong Cave, 25th-27th March.

The Gorge is 150 miles from Canberra, of which 80 miles is bitumen and the other 70 gravel road in good condition. Caves entered were Lannigan's Cave - The 'Grill' - Woof's Cabin. The caves are dry. Members on the trip were: Graeme Chapman, Janet Arthur, Jan Butlind, Laurie Curtis, Joanne Fisher, Neville King, David Moore, Sue Nicolls, David Nicolls, Robert Orreill, Ian Raine, Kathy Robinson, John Tilley, and non-members were: Kathy and Peter Aitchison, Mary Burns and Lester Walters.

The main ^a party of 14 left Canberra in GVC's car and Lester Walter's Landrover at 7.00 pm on Friday. IR's car with JB, KR and LC left at 8.00 pm and made the Abercrombie where they camped.

GVC's and LW's party, after feeding ⁱⁿ Goulburn, arrived at Batsch Camp at 11.35 pm. After preparing to walk to the caves we set off circa 12.20 in drizzling rain. On the way down the slope one member, PA, lost a water container. After it being stopped further down the slope, the following conversation ensued:

PA: "Where is the bottle?"
 Reply: "It is by the tree with the shiny square on it."

(The track is marked with thousands of shiny squares of aluminium nailed to trees.)

Arriving at the creek we made our way to the Grand Arch cave, rousing sleeping Bathurst cavers on the way, where we bedded down at circa 2.30 am.

6.45: light and end of sleep - breakfast after getting people moving - Joanne did an extra good job of getting people up with a piercing scream: "HELP! I'M FALLING!" After falling (controlled) 6" she reached the floor of the cave.

Ten of the party (GVC's) then took off for the cave, Lannigan's, just as IR's party arrived. Expert guidance by NLRK brought us to Amber Cave in 45 minutes, where JLF, not feeling so well, decided not to endanger herself or the rest of the party and return to the surface. GVC and NLRK accompanied JLF to the entrance where we were met by a group of Sydney Rovers just coming in - King's Cross, Colong version, was worse than the Sydney version on Saturday night. We also met up with the two Bathurst cavers again and apologised for disturbing their sleep.

With Lester now in the lead we went to the gate - the key worked and we piled through and on. Formation the likes of which we have never seen before started from fifty feet beyond the Grill and increased in perfection, size, and quantity until in Woof's Cabin it was unbelievable. GVC especially and NLRK went snap happy.

In the meantime Rovers and NUCC members were fraternizing to their hearts' content although the two groups did more or less stay as separate parties.

Approximately 4.00 pm we started back, GVC and NLRK stopping every few yards to take photographs, which kept Bob happy as he could lie down and rest.

Back to the cleft and fun and fun and games. A lamp was dropped to the bottom so Bob kindly offered to go and retrieve it - well he did after sliding (accidentally) to the bottom of the cleft. JT, JO and JA all then had to be bodily hauled out by rope - block and tackle would have come in handy.

Amazingly enough we still had the key for the grill, so duly opening it we passed through. Up the cleft to the terraces and so out, getting back to Grand Arch Cave at approx. 6.30 pm, having spent $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours underground in one go.

A hearty tea, a 'concert' from Kathy and most of us were

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ready for bed which we made at about 9.00 pm.

Sunday and up again at 6.30 am - no help from Joanne needed this time. Breakfast and people on the track by 8.45, with NLRK, IR and myself leaving approx. 9.30 PM and LW entered Lizard Cave to King's Cross before walking out.

Up THAT HI L - it gets higher every time I climb it.

I received a holed petrol tank outside Goulburn but patched it up with soap and got home safely at 6.00 pm. IR and LW followed.

Graeme Chapman

Editor's Note: GVC was not the only car casualty - Ian noticed Lester had a 'flat', so on their return to Batsch Camp RO, DM and sundry others changed the tyre with two jacks, both too small.

3. Cloyne Cave and Bunyan One, 2nd April

After finally managing to cram $\frac{1}{2}$ ton of blythe and boisterous types into a 4' 5" wide car, we set off for Cloyne at 8.41 am. with four out of our normal seven inches of ground clearance. We asked Mr. Pfeiffer for permission to go on up, finally having the ropes set up at 10.45 ack emma. We then spent the rest of the day wandering through assorted caverns, taking pictures, and showing the tourists the sights.

The local pools were found to be overflowing, posing the question as to where does the water come from, since it hasn't rained in the area for a month or more. In addition, Helen Finlay discovered a form of plant in the Crystal Grotto, growing 90' down, in the dark. I later found and collected a further specimen in the North-West Passage. This is at present in the Botany Department, S.G.S., A.N.U. for identification. (See attached report) Further specimens were found in abundance in other parts of the cave by Helen Finlay, Byron Deveson and myself.

At about 1.45 pm we were joined by Lawrence Ingram and Byron Deveson, plus his computer-sized camera and three atomic bombs that he calls PF100 flash bulbs, with which he then proceeded to attack the rest of the party in Hope Cave, bringing out beautiful red and green afterimages in everything.

At last I came out at 6.35 pm, ropes coiled by 7.00 into Cooma for tea, and eventually returned to Canberra, arriving at Burton just on ten.

Michael Webb.

The attached report describes a white stem with a yellow-green head (swollen tip) and brown roots. It appeared to grow on mud of depth greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ ", but less than 2", into which it sent, in this case, 16 filaments. The mud is limestone type, containing quantities of iron, manganese, and a little copper.

When exposed to carbide light (colour temperature 2400° K) the stem wilted. The cave temperature is 65° F and the humidity approx 70%. The plant grows to 3" in length.

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COMING TRIPS

Bendethra Long Weekend, Saturday 23rd to Monday 25th April.
Leader: Michael Henry Chem Dept Ext. 2019
This is a cave at the bottom of a gorge, and involves an interesting bush walk. Not all the caves have been located yet, so interesting discoveries may be made.

Dog Leg, Wee Jasper Saturday 7th May
Leader: David Fenn, Chem Dept.
Dog Leg Cave has three sumps, which, due to an inconsiderate habit of filling with water, prevent further exploration. However, there may be a way around, or over these sumps, and what lies beyond is very promising.

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Members are reminded that trip reports are supposed to be written on Trip Report Forms and handed to Committee Members. These form a record of trips, and therefore are valuable. Forms are available from Joanne Fisher, Graeme Chapman and other committee members sometimes.

Articles are needed for future newsletters. Would budding writers please give their efforts to Michael Henry, Editor, or another committee member for Safe Hand Conduct. Anything cavinglike is acceptable - past trips, interesting caves, unusual techniques or flora or fauna.