

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAVING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Volume Three Number Three

May 1966.

EDITORIAL

Organized caving is a relatively safe sport. It is safe because responsible people are generally in charge, and all precautions necessary are taken.

But these, and infinite wisdom, are useless when the equipment we use is not PERFECTLY safe. Ladders, ropes etc, become unsafe when they are misused and abused. And someone's been misusing and abusing OURS!!

For a sport which requires absolute safety, the state of the Club's equipment is catastrophic! Ladders are not being hung properly; carbides are not being cleaned; ropes are left dirty and badly misused. It is essential that all members use their HEADS as well as their hands and feet.

There is serious talk about imposing fines upon experienced cavers, who cannot cave - and who carelessly endanger lives on future trips.

We must all develop an attitude of mind which ensures that NO mistakes are made, where ALL precautions are taken, no matter how inconvenient or retarding this becomes.

We may then enjoy our caving, as well as living to cave again.

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Amendments to the Rules, Regulations and Directives

About six weeks ago you all received a copy of the Club's Rules, Regulations and Directives. Well, the time has come to unearth them from the pile of lecture notes, Mad magazines or whatever, because they have been amended as follows:

A4 and B5, listed as proposed rules, have been confirmed.
B4 has been amended to read

'The trip leader shall enforce whatever safety measures he considers necessary and may not refuse any reasonable safety measures requested by any member.'

(continued over...)

Amendments (cont.)

B6 has been amended to read:

'The trip leader shall be responsible for cleaning of equipment within one day of a trip and shall return the equipment to the equipment officer within two days.'

The new Rules are in force:

A8 'The club shall have at least two complete First Aid kits as an integral part of its equipment. These kits shall be in the care of the equipment officer and must be taken on every official trip.'

B7 'The trip leader shall be responsible for the care of equipment from the time at which it is signed out from the equipment officer or his nominee until it is returned to the above officer. All defects in equipment must be notified to the equipment officer before replacement. No defective equipment shall be returned to the store before it has been repaired.'

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The accent in this issue is on equipment. This is because we have received a bad shock, and while shocks can be beneficial this one may prove costly in money and time. The equipment officer has found, in checking the equipment recently, the following amongst other faults:

A manila rope left wet - this rots the rope rendering it unusable.

A nylon rope dirty and not hung up - which weakens the rope and renders it liable to kinking.

Both steel wire ladder traces damaged by being improperly hung so the wire fibres are forced apart.

A carbide lamp uncleaned for so long that the carbide has set rock-hard.

Carbide lamps returned to the store so dirty as to be unusable - if they were needed for an emergency they would not be available.

A wire ladder damaged by being dragged through a cave - in future we will avoid this by carrying the ladders in soft packs.

Not a record to be proud of. The concern about equipment is overdue.

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Sunday Caving

by Bob Orreill

(The author of this amusing story spent several months in New Guinea. - Ed.)

The idea is born at 1.30 a.m. the same day, in an air of befuddled sobriety. It is generally agreed that this particular party has done more harm than good to the delicate lining of half a dozen collective stomachs and that the only way to retain some semblance of vitality and health is to put in a good Sunday's caving.

There is not a murmur of dissent as someone suggests Queen's Cave as a suitable culmination of the walk - though a ribald remark hints that this particular cave has certain related effects on persons visiting it, especially after several sorties there.

It always happens that if there is to be a caving trip anywhere, the little-over-an-hour's jaunt to the lengthy and (some feel) misnamed Queen's Cave is bound to be the choice. The time of departure is set down for six o'clock - by now a little over four hours away - because "if we don't start early we'll be sure to be caught in the rain!" This being the case, there is a general agreement that there really isn't all that much point going to bed, so all go home and change, returning after half an hour to the now revived party in their caving attire.

At six the same morning, the original six decimated to some four adventurers, the brave little party sets out on its trip. Headaches and queasy stomachs predominating over even the monsoonal rain-storm which sprang up 'from nowhere', little need for conversation is felt.

The first major obstacle on the route is a suspension bridge - once a noble and swinging structure, now a hazard for the stupified party-goers. Mumbled warnings to each other to keep both feet on the vines go unheeded and one more member drops out - wending his tired way down the river towards the Papuan Gulf.

The three determined cavers then come to what is generally considered to be the toughest section of the whole trip - a solid forty minute uphill on hard-packed, wet, slippery clay - the first section of which would be easier if it were a sheer cliff.

After five minutes of attempting to impress the other members of the expedition with our fitness the whole team degenerates into sighs, grunts, groans and promises never,

never to do it again. As chests heave and legs become leaden, one poor fellow succumbs to temptation and turning in shame from the party, to use a revolting colloquialism, chunders. The green-faced duo, their stomachs twitching nervously (and possibly expectantly) move on - unwilling to observe the come-down of a fine man.

The summit of our walk finally reached, there remains the downward slide through a once-flourishing sweet potato garden on an impossible slope ($\sim 50^\circ$). Two hard-working women (have they never heard of the sabbath in the Chimber?) shake their fists at the fast-disappearing pair - rapidly descending the slope on their backs.

The descent is completed and neither member of the team is very happy. In fact we are both dirty, tired, sweating and thoroughly cheesed off with the whole effort. We sit down, contemplate the cave and the walk back, and reckon we might have lunch. It is not yet noon - but our day is well-nigh complete.

"Oh, what wouldn't I do for a beer!"

"Well, all we have to do is walk back to the pub."

"God no - please. Anything but that."

So saying, we turn our backs on Queen's Cave and start the long, desperately thirsty journey home. After all one must play safe - it may be true what they say about Queen's Cave!

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Trip Reports

Bendethra, 23rd - 25th April

Thesmosh the trip were Michael Henry, David Moore, Ross Neville, Ian Raine and Lester Walters. About four hours were spent caving.

The most rugged part of this expedition was the five hour walk into the Deva Valley where the caves are situated. This hard work begins about five miles along the track through Khan Y. unie property.

We set off in an ESE direction, carrying three days food and the usual caving gear. To say the least, the two-hour walk to the top of the range west of the Deva River was one of intense, yet subtle beauty. From green, warm, open forest country, across sunny, moist marshes, and low, rolling hills of brown casuarina ankle-scrub; the ascent to

the range is gentle. The descent of 2000 feet into the Deva Valley is not.

There are two ridges down which it is sensible to walk: Con Ridge and the next really long one south (which extends two miles east-west, probing into the valley's heart. The former is best for cavers since Con Ridge leads straight to Flagpole Flat, at the edge of which is Waterhole Cave. To reach the Flat, the distance of one mile covered takes two hours.

This immense, rugged valley is really a series of steep, thickly wooded ridges entering from all sides, threatening to engulf the few flat areas there are. We reached such an area only on the next day at noon.

After threatening to repeat last year's efforts at Bendethra, the two parties of three eventually found each other (plus an English chap separated from his Sydney Bushwalking friends), and spent a tolerable night at an angle of 30°. Breakfast lasted four hours the next morning, and after twenty minutes walking and one-and-one-half hours map-reading, we reached Flagpole Flat.

From here we set off on our two caving explorations: on Sunday to Bendethra Cave (via a track most of the way) and on Monday to an 80' pot-hole discovered on Saturday. Waterhole Cave near our camping spot was looked into before setting off for the long climb out of the valley at about 10.30 am.

By a supreme effort the ridge was reached in two hours, and in two more hours we accurately reached the cars on "the tic of dark", as Lester Walters remarked. This comment was typical of the brilliant sense of the ridiculous which Lester has mastered, and crystallized into words.

We arrived in Canberra tired but satisfied.

Michael Henry

Wyanbene, 16th April

All but three of us went through the usual wet routine of Wyanbene, from 11 am to 3 pm. Meanwhile Vicki Rincic, Ian Raine and Mike Henry 'found' the so-called Ridge-Mine Pot - a pitch of 80 - 90 feet, almost sheer, with small caverns at the bottom. This is located on the south side of the limestone cliff, and about 60 feet down the other side near where the limestone stops outcropping, and in line with Wyanbene Cave.

Michael Henry

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Bunyan, Sunday 24th - Monday 25th April

Michael Webb and Byron Deveson went to Cloyne Cave to collect samples for the Botany Dept., (see April issue) but all specimens had disappeared. We did some climbing in Hope Cave and Five Ways looking for tunnels parallel to East Passage, but didn't find any. I also spent a little while tracing tunnels at the end of the most uncomfortable S-bend it has ever been my misfortune to gethung up in (i.e. Lunar Grotto), and took a trip to Chandelier.

While we were taking pictures in Hope Cave, we noticed that the formations fluoresced: for at least 30 seconds everything was perfectly visible after the flash had been fired. I am not open to the conviction that this was afterimage, and would be very interested to know if other spelios have noticed the same phenomenon.

On Monday we spent an hour or so arguing with a seven-foot snake (type unknown - we didn't get that close) over possession of BU 7 shaft, from which we wanted to retrieve a length of rope, left there a couple of months ago. We eventually left him there and spent the rest of the day wandering over the limestone looking for shafts, and numbering a few of the better known ones, getting home about 9.00 pm.

Michael Webb

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THE DOG LEG SAGA

The Assault on WJ 13 Carried out in May, 1966.

The Characters, in order of appearance: David Fenn, David Moore, David Nicolls, Anne Felton, Joanne Fisher, Robert Orreill, Peter Aitchison, Jan Butland, Janet Arthur and Ian Raine.

On the evening of Friday, 6th May, the First Five Characters gathered around a campfire and a jaffle iron at Wee Jasper. Three Davids and Joanne 'went under' at 10.30 pm, and spent about three hours digging out the sand-trap. Up the Opera wall and along the right-hand fork to the Peanut Chamber, for those who remember it. Three Davids spent about an hour trying to get one member up a crack while two stayed at the top of a slippery slope.

The party came out about 6.15, watched the sunrise, and 'flaked'.

The next four arrived about 9.30, and went underground at 10.30. About 11.00, those on top discovered Bob's car had a flat tyre, and David Fenn went underground.

The first assault on Anderson's Squeeze was made. This is in the left-hand ~~Sore~~, at the top of the short slope, and directly over the ten-foot drop. Janet got up, and David Fenn followed. David climbed the crack a considerable distance and gave a most optimistic report. The crew came out at about 8.00 pm, Saturday.

On the way back to Canberra, they met the rear-guard, Ian.

Up and away early on Saturday, April 14th for DM, JA, JF, DN and IR. They surveyed up Punchbowl Hill in an attempt to locate any surface expression of Anderson's Squeeze. One promising rock-fill pipe at the surface and another about fifteen^{feet} in from the surface were found and dug for about three feet, neither sealing off.

Lunch at about 4.00 pm, and DM, JA, DN & IR went underground to look at the chamber from below. Ian was the only one who got up the squeeze, and he was rather pessimistic about the chances of it surfacing. However, magnificent formation abounds, pure white helictites being most common. They came out 10.30 pm, and made slow time back to Canberra due to thick fog.

Early again on Saturday 21st, the hardy band wends its way Dog Leg-ward. Bob Orreill and David Moore led renewed assault on Anderson's Squeeze while Joanne instituted a piece of folly called 'bailing out the third water trap'. The second has been dry all month, but the third is silted badly, and the water level is rising at about a foot a month.

John Christie suddenly appeared at the top of Opera House, having come with Nancy Moppit and co., who were off to The Dip. John made a valiant to get a siphon going, but the big one has been chopped fair in half, and the two smaller one are buried deep.

Leaving bodies wedged securely in Anderson's Squeeze, half the party returned to the surface where a magnificent demonstration of car-breaking ensued in the hope of silencing Joanne's chattering teeth.

The squeezers were forced to report no new developments, their only conclusion being a foregone 'the squeeze is just too small'.

The whole Saga has been captured by a painting entitled 'Cavers Emerging From Dog Leg' by Anne Felton, which is placed most appropriately on the big tree closest to the fire-place. This spontaneous, almost unplanned, work conveys, with its subtle use of green, brown and black, the frustration tempered with optimism of the weary spelios as they leave the primeal depths of the cave for the soft evening gloom.

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