



CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to another year of caving, It's been a very hot dry summer, devoid of the lovely cool wet weather we usually experience. Dust off your gear and get ready for more caving adventure in 2013!

Another new cave - Piano Tower!

The December Christmas gathering was rather small, with only five cavers making the journey out to Chillagoe. With so many experienced cavers, there was an opportunity to explore something new. Peter's suggestion of exploring a new entrance on Piano Tower was taken up after much discussion the night before.

The walk to the cave was very hot due to a later than expected start. Axel had forgotten his gear and motivation is hard in 30°C at 9.00am in the morning. Peter was a bit concerned that the prospective new entrance rift would lead to nothing, with all the effort it took to get there it would be difficult to engage an alternative plan.

It did not take long to locate the new entrance and Alan set to work rigging a ladder around some spindly looking shrubs. Winfried volunteered to descend first, the entrance was rather narrow and sharp. First report where disappointing and after checking another lead he confirmed it was worth us all coming down to explore the rest.



CH Catherine helping Alan to rig the slot P.Bannink

It was a slow process getting everyone down, while fighting off some angry ants, who were disturbed near the top. The main rift opened slightly upon decent to a flat floor, then descending slightly into the outcrop as the rift enlarged. A slight dogleg to the left entered another narrow rift. Passing some nice formation, the second rift opened into a small chamber with smooth sculptured walls. Multiple leads were evident as other phreatic rifts and slots intersected the chamber. A wide flattener (60cm high) extended up to 15m to the left, with the occasional roof slot. Winfried bolted down to this area and grovelled around looking for ways on but many of the leads he jammed himself into just tapered off.

At the far end of the chamber the faint glow of daylight was evident. Climbing up over a boulder pile revealed an easy walk in entrance, just on the other side of the outcrop. While Peter explored a parallel rift which did not go far, Alan found a small solution pit (3m deep) with a lead at the bottom. Entering this was difficult without some rigging (to assist self extraction), as there were no handholds.



CH Winfried starts his decent P.Bannink

Peter meanwhile returned to the wide flattener and noticing some faint airflow, followed a small passage at the far end. This reached a junction, ahead Axel appeared indicating his branch did not go and that Catherine was exploring the other branch. A few calls later and Peter slithered through to find a small round chamber with a 6m aven, which seemed to lead towards the surface.

Catherine reported that the cave did not continue in this section and that a nasty narrow crawl (continuing from the base of the aven) continued another 10m to a small slot in the floor. No water was reported, although it was evident from the stony floor that water may flow in this part of the cave at times of flooding rain.



CH Winfried pushing a few crawls P.Bannink

While Peter completed a basic sketch of the cave, Alan continued to explore his lead, eventually Catherine (the smallest member of the team) joined him and was able to negotiate the difficult squeeze at the bottom. She reported it go too much further and was too small to negotiate.



Veteran caver Alan Cummins P.Bannink

With all obvious leads explored, the team exited the cave via the walk in entrance. The walk back was

pretty tiring and Alan suggested driving to the area from the north. Winfried took on this challenge, so we tried to drive to Piano Tower from the North but Red Dome mine has placed a locked gate on the road from the northwest. Thanks to the cavers who participated on the trip, it was a worth while little cave to explore and hopefully more will be discovered in the area.

SRT Training

Greg Gurnier has planned an SRT training day to be held at Alan Cummins house near Gordonvale. Currently they are 8 attendants. Anyone planning to catch up and get directions to his house please contact Alan Cummins on Ph 4056 1083 (h).

AGM Weekend

Cavers please note that the AGM is the weekend before the beginning of May and will be held on **Saturday 27th April**. It has been brought forward as quite a few members had other plans for next weekend.

Club House Clean Up

Peter Bannink is planning to travel out to the clubhouse to begin cleaning up the old school - after the wet season. The rain has been late this year but there is quite a lot of work to clear the dust, dirt and leaves off everything! Any assistance is welcome!



Tower karst over Royal Archway Cave CH3 P.Bannink

Club House Insurance

Members please note that the clubhouse insurance bill is \$3700 this year. The clubs finances are low and 'The Executive' have decided that this level of insurance is unaffordable. The executive are currently negotiating to reduce this insurance cost and will discuss this issue at the AGM.

Up and Coming Events

March

- SRT training Sunday 17th
At Alan's house
- Clubhouse Cleanup 22nd
Old School, BBQ's

April

- Cave Camp 8th - 13th
- Savannah Guides – Thur. 18th – 21st
- **Caving Club AGM**
Saturday 27th 7.00pm

May

- TAS camping! - 30th April to 2nd May

Go Caving!

Peter Bannink & Winfried Weiss (Secretary)