



CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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NEWSLETTER

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SUSS/CEGWA Camooweal Trip

D. Johnston

Between June and July, a group of eight intrepid cave explorers travelled to Camooweal Caves for 14 straight days of intensive exploration and mapping. This included 7 members of the Sydney University Speleological Society (SUSS) who drove from Sydney in three cars, and one member of the Cave Exploration Group of Western Australia (CEGWA) who made the 50hr+ journey by car from Perth.



Doline leading to Kooairlabah Cave C27 © D. Johnston

Three of the trip participants are also active cave divers who explored the underwater sections of the caves using both side mount steel dive cylinders and a prototype side mount re-breather. Each day the group split into teams to achieve the trip objectives; exploring surface features for new caves, exploring difficult leads in known caves, exploring extending and mapping underwater sections of cave, removing tar drums from one cave doline, and documenting cave fauna.



Deborah prepares for a dive in thick mud © R. Obrien

This trip was conducted with the support of the Traditional Owners and local land managers and would not have been possible without the countless

hours of research, coordination and preparation completed by the dedicated trip leaders Paul Hosie (CEGWA) and Rod Obrien (SUSS).

Camooweal Caves are very physically demanding and very vertical with many involving complex rigging. On an average trip the group helped each other carry seven bags of dive gear weighing 7-27kg each.

The temperature recorded within the caves ranged from 25 to 34 degrees, with up to 100% humidity. The water temperature recorded during this trip ranged from 26 to 30 degrees also.



Rod Obrien rigging in Common Cave © D. Johnston

Highlights of the trip were the additional underwater passages explored and surveyed in several of the caves, documenting the cave fauna and locating the surface positions of underground cave passage using pingers. Extensive exploration of known dolines in the region proved rather disappointing with many features proving to be nothing more than mud filled depressions in the landscape.

SUSS and CEGWA would like to thank the Chillagoe Caving Club who provided assistance

with the planning stages of the trip, in the form of maps and feature locations.



Rod Obrien, first ever dive in Little Nowranie Cave © D. Johnston

Detailed trip reports are being published in the SUSS BULL (available online) and Caves Australia next month.



Denis and Natalie at doline leading to Jurutu Cave © Paul Hosie

Centenary Cave

P.Bannink

Last weekend four club members explored Centenary Cave, located in the south eastern end of the Markam Tower complex. I had personally not visited this cave for over 10 years, and had all but forgotten what this cave looked like.

Ray and Bryn Deasy are new members keen to explore all that the Chillagoe caves have to offer.

Conditions were dry and hot when we entered an untagged entrance to the south east of the complex. The start was a near vertical climb down for about 20m, before heading into a high phreatic rift.



Ray descending the steep entrance © PBannink

The exit from the rift was narrow horizontal squeeze under some old flowstone. This required breathing out for broader chested cavers, fortunately it was not shoulder jamming as well. Past this physical obstruction the cave opened up into a large chamber. There is some impressive formation in sections. Van could not remember the way on so Peter explored a sump passage, which lead to another large rift (8m high). This turned out to be a dead end.

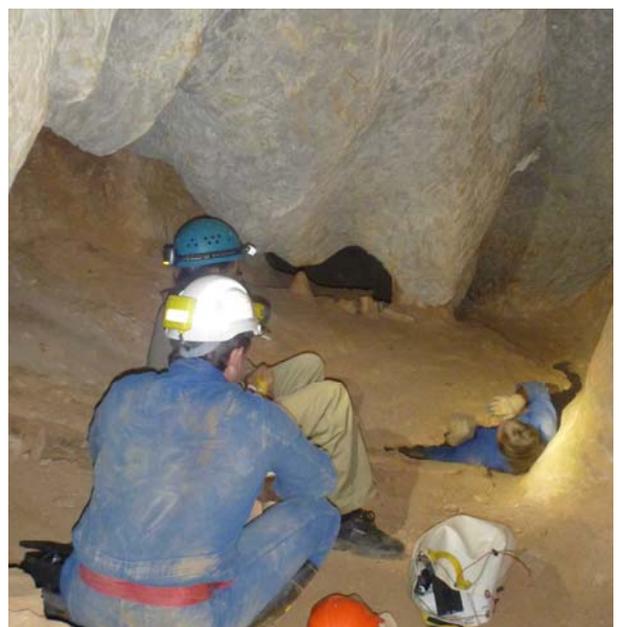
After consulting the map, our group moved in the right direction and arrived at a large junction with multiple daylight links in the upper sections of the karst.

Moving north into another large rift we climbed through to another daylight junction with massive boulders. This lead to the 'Lake' area which turned out to be absolutely dry. It seems after extensive rainfall in 2011 and a failed wet season this year, the water table is back to a very low level.



Bryn Deasy negotiating a phreatic rift © P.Bannink

The way on was a difficult vertical climb up a dry mud bank (above a 4m pit). Van put up a hand line to assist, though for most members it was not required. This section of the cave is also quite interesting, leading to a small maze of large rifts with daylight often filtering in from above.



Ray squeezing through! © P.Bannink

The exit climb up to CH501 was not much fun. A reasonably exposed climb 14 metres up some very large boulders. Personally I would have been happy to use a ladder, but everyone managed fine.

The worst part of the trip was the midday walk out. CH501 is located quite far into a complex section of Markham Tower. The way out was hot and scrubby, with rubble and boulders being very difficult to negotiate. It is going to be a very hot dry summer out there.

Slide Show

Members lucky enough to get out to Chillagoe on the August weekend trip were treated to an old fashioned slide show by Ray Deasy. Ray was one of the first cavers to explore and document Carpentaria Cave with Vince Kinnear back in 1967.



An old 1970's projector, still working fine

It was really interesting seeing Chillagoe back in 1967, a real dusty outback town. Ray also entertained us with photo's of his tin mining days in the Herberton area in the 1960's. There were shots of setting up and digging mine shafts, hauling out ore, all done with logs and very basic equipment.

Membership Cards

Peter has made all the membership cards, they have only recently been mailed out to members. Please let Peter know if you have not received yours.

Clubhouse Cleaning

It has come to the attention that there is no one available to clean clubhouse before visiting school group. Visiting school groups are complaining about the general dusty nature of the old school. Due to the open nature of their facilities everything gets dusty and dirty, even in a week.

As visitation to the clubhouse is occasional at best, the executive have decided that whoever organises the use of the facilities by a group must ensure they

organise cleaning of the facilities prior to the arrival of a group and clean up as best they can afterwards.

Up and Coming Events

September

- 14th - 15th September – Possible Club Caving Trip. (Contact Peter Bannink) - Karst exploration and more mapping.
- 16th - 18th September – TAS may be visiting the clubhouse but are not camping.

October

- 12th - 13th October – Possible Club Caving Trip. (Contact Peter Bannink) - Karst exploration and more mapping.
- 14th - 18th October – Jubilee Christian College will be camping at the clubhouse
- 19th - 20th October Rockhampton caving involving a rescue exercise. Interested cavers contact Steven Morgan for updates on the event. Stevens e-mail address is steven.morgan61@gmail.com.



Ray and Bryn in Markham Cave © P.Bannink

Go Caving!

Peter Bannink & Winfried Weiss (Secretary)