



CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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NEWSLETTER

WWW.CHILLAGOECAVINGCLUB.ORG.AU

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Broken River - The Bone Collectors

(D Irvine)

Part of this years Broken River expedition was a small party of dedicated cavers (The Irvin family), committed to spending their time supporting paleontological research into the fossil fauna present in the caves. Dr Gilbert Price headed the team, exploring the caves and overseeing the collection of more material. The breccia collected will be treated and the embedded fossils extracted, at the Queensland Museum.

On the first day saw a return to Robert Broom Cave where a huge amount of interesting fossils have been previously extracted. The team we were joined by Deb Hunter and Jess Burtels from Tasmania, to help survey the cave and collect material. A 30m rope was put down as a hand line and a ladder used for the last few metres of the descent. Deb and Jess started a survey of the cave while the rest of us started looking for interesting bones. A *Thylaco leo* incisor, a short faced kangaroo tooth, a *Megalania* tooth and osteoderem (a bone

associated with scales that grows underneath the skin), were found. The latter is a very exciting find. The *Megalania* were the biggest-ever lizard growing to 6m and weighing up to 700kg. Luckily now extinct.



© D. Irvin

Jess Burtels surveying in Robert Broom Cave

The next day work continued in Robert Broom Cave with Deb and Allison completing the survey. A large huntsman spider was seen deep in the cave and a draft was felt nearby, possibly indicating the existence of another entrance. A lot of good

material was collected and after lunch we used a harness and pulley to haul breccia out of the cave. There were many heavy bags to bring out and a good system of extraction was worked out. Allison was at the bottom attaching the bags and helping with hauling while I was at the top of the lower pitch, secured with a cow tail. The pulley made hauling very easy and as bags came up, I transferred them to a 12m tape and then Gilbert hauled them to the surface. Deb and Nick checked that the bags did not snag or get torn open in the process. The whole system worked quite well.

After a very frosty night, Gilbert, Nick, Mary Ann, Allison and I visited Tripot Cave, entering via Dodgey's entrance BR69 (Tower 4BR211). In the daylight zone there were signs of a recent bat kill by a feral cat, with pieces of bat wing scattered around. This is the first such kill I have ever seen in a cave.



Fragments of bat wings from a cat killing and eating bats.

Gilbert stayed in the Left Wing area to collect, while the rest of us went on through the cave. At the end of the long entrance passage there is a duck under to the right. This opens up to a chamber with a lot of small bats flying around. The bats all clustered together on the walls for warmth and I can't recall seeing this species of bats in this cave before. We went on to the next chamber which has a high daylight that is the main Tripot Cave (BR38). There were a lot of millipedes and a very small juvenile spider among the pebbles on the floor. The terminal chamber was warm with a few damp patches on the floor. Only a few larger bats were

observed here compared to the large numbers seen here last year. I heard one swiftlet. On the way back to the campsite we stopped at Geologist's Find (BR28). Nick found a Tasmanian Devil jaw in two parts. This is a first for a cave in NQ. The jaw of a large species of *Macropus* was also located. The plan of Geologist's Find Cave, shows where the bones were located. Gilbert planned to get a breccia shelf out later.



© D. Irvin

Gilbert and Jess Burtels sampling breccia

The next day a party of 13 went to Beehive Cave (BR188) with Gilbert, Nick, Jess, Mary Ann and I stopping in the Rock-on-a-Rock Chamber to collect. The others left with Paco as trip leader to do the through trip to Beesting. Another Devil jaw, a possible brush tail possum jaw and three skulls were found. Jess found one on the cave floor and two were in soft breccia very close to the wall. Is there an explanation for this? These two skulls had to be dug out. Two white bags and more material in packs was taken out. This was a lot harder than coming in and it took 45 minutes to exit.

In the last few days Paul, Deanne, Deb, Mary Ann and myself went to Trippers Delight for some surveying. Paul did some tidying up of missing areas. Mary Ann and I took the Disto and compass and re-surveyed for practice an area already done. Paul entered our data into his smart phone app and it compared our results to the previous survey. The results were within a few percent. The smart phone app is quite amazing as survey results are entered straight into it and it produces an instant map. The data can be easily transferred to a drawing program.

Deanne, Grant and I then went off to Swift Cave, this is actually Fig Fortress BR24. We went in via the usual track which is a bit gnarly. No bone deposits seen. We went out via the way that Tim Moulds and I found in 2011 which is far easier. This most likely is Fig Fortress Extension BR25



Tasmanian Devil Jaw in situ.

© D.Irvin

On the last day Mary Ann, Allison and I went to the far end of Tower 272, to look at End Cave that Tim Moulds and I found in 2011. A rope was rigged at 9:20 and Allison went down. Then I noticed a tag behind some leaves. BR171, 3-10-97 Yabba's Spiral QWAC. The entrance goes straight down about 22m and ends in a small chamber (5m X 2.5m). A green frog was hiding in a slot a few metres from the bottom. After a look around we exited the area and then drove to the Robert Broom parking area and tried to find West 1. After some scrub bashing we went back across the Tower and Allison found a hole. As gear was needed it was only GPS'ed. Allison called it Gargarin Cave in honour of the first spaceman. Allison also got a glimpse of a feral cat.



Gilbert holding the Tasmanian Devil jaw that Nick Wiggins had just found.

© D. Irvin

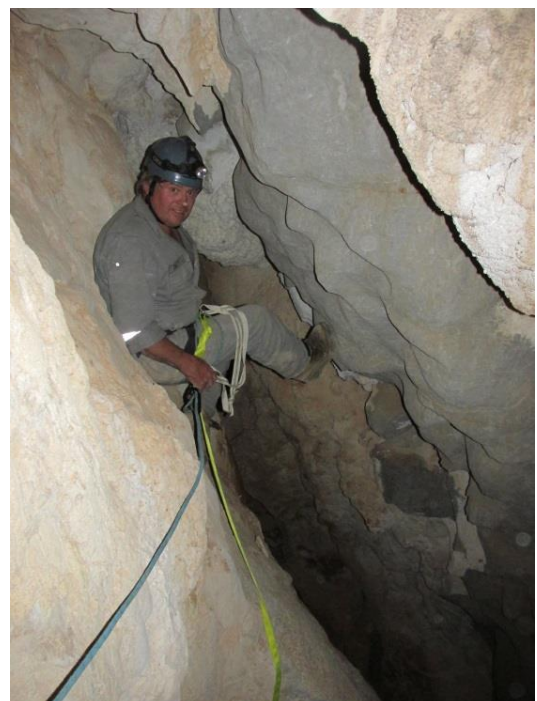
Allison and I went into Dry Cave. Photos were taken of many jaw bones observed in the cave, most are likely to be from kangaroos, none were collected. We then drove to Three Avenues and Allison and I went in. It is still as spectacular as ever. A few bats were seen with one on the floor. A parasite was plainly visible on it. The low passage that goes from Bum Hole to the Avenues has some small bones in the breccia. After a week of exploration and further paleontological discoveries we finally packed up and left for Cairns.

Traverse in Trippers Delight

(Paco Murray)

On the first of July 2014 a group of three cavers including Jess Bertels, Ken Higgins and myself entered trippers delight with the intention of connecting to the Bee Hive system.

The day before Van Christensen, Ken Higgins and Greg Gurnier had partially rigged the traverse to a possible lead at a high level. I went first on the incomplete traverse and manages to do a free climb/chimney on decent to bridge the final section of the traverse.



Greg Gurnier on the traverse

© D.Hunter

Once the traverse was rigged Jess and Ken came across to the lead. Once we all entered the daylight chamber on the other side of the traverse. After a quick look around I recognized the area to be a

section of the bee hive cave that we had had a close call with a boulder, after a little gardening and testing the boulder we went on to enter the system.

As Trippers Delight was the first cave discovered in the system, we have renamed the cave system to Trippers Delight System.

AGM

Members were e-mailed and (some) posted details of Special Resolutions (to change three clauses in the constitution) put forward by the executive. We would like to try to get a quorum together so we can hold the annual general meeting. Please make an effort to get to the Chillagoe clubhouse on the 4th October. There will be lots of caving planned for the long weekend as well.

Congratulations to Catherine & Mark

Congratulations are in order for two of our members Catherine Cummins and Mark Beattie, who are getting married on Saturday the 27th September.

CCC - New Zealand Expedition 2015

Trip outline in brief: In the week before Easter 2015 we will partially rig a cave called Legless, and visit other caves in the Takaka Hill area. At Easter we will join NZ cavers for their annual family camp at Patarau. Following Easter, we will bottom and derig Legless, do a Harwood Hole trip and then spend time in the Nettlebed system. The caving for the week before Easter will be easier than the caving the week after Easter and people may wish to join for either part or both.

The caves in a bit more detail: Legless is a cave with 16 pitches and is 362m deep overall. The mid-section of the cave includes longer pitches of 40m, 60m and 70m. Our aim will be to rig to the 70m pitch over two days in the week before Easter. All other caves that we might visit in the Takaka Hill area will also involve some vertical work. All cavers for the week before Easter will need to be competent with SRT.

The caving at Patarau is “easy” by NZ standards. The bottoming trip in Legless will be a full on

tough day. The Harwood Hole trip involves a descent of the 176m entrance shaft and then the through trip following the streamway to exit at Starlight Cave, and then a long haul up the mountain back to the Harwood Hole entrance. The Harwood Hole descent involves a rebelay at about 30m down, and then a free hang from there of about 140m. Cavers need to be rock solid with their SRT skills as it is rather daunting crossing the rebelay over such a deep shaft and you are very much on your own.

To get an idea on what the Nettlebed system is like, check at the following on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyCnxytq-Dc>
(Two days to Soft Rock Café documentary)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtFFqB7xrOk>
(Deep, the story of Stormy Pot)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvcQcay4MAU>
(News release on the connection of Nettlebed and Stormy Pot)



© P. Murray

Cavers descent into Harward Hole (2012)

Our plan at this stage is to do a 4 day trip to Soft Rock Café which will involve three bivouac nights in the cave. Access to this part of Nettlebed is through the Hinkelhorn Honking Holes which is a testing twisting squeeze. Cavers for the Nettlebed

trip will need to be of such a stature that they can fit through this squeeze, and also independent and dependable for the demands of four days underground.

Trip in two parts: The trip is in two parts, and some may wish to come for the week before Easter and Patarau (arrive the week end of 28/29 March 2015), and some may wish to come for Patarau and the week after Easter (arrive on Thursday 5 April 2015).

Caving conditions: All caves we will visit will have similar conditions – cold and wet. Temperature is around 6°C. You must have a waterproof trog suit and several layers of thermals underneath to survive.



Expected conditions cold & wet, muddy – NZ (2012)

Accommodation: Our base will be the Nelson Speleological Society hut at Takaha Hill. Check out the Hut tab of <http://www.nsg.org.nz/>

Travel and transport: Access to the area is by flight to Nelson airport. The areas we cave in are around a one hour drive from Nelson. Transport on the ground is by hire car (we can get high km vehicles at quite reasonable rates).

Terms and conditions:

- All participants must be ASF members.
- All participants must have their own kit including full SRT kit, expedition size cave pack, trog suit, thermals, etc.

- All participants will be asked to contribute to equipment costs.
- All participants will be asked to contribute to transporting equipment which may involve excess baggage.
- Other costs will include hut fees, share of hire car, etc. Participants will be asked to pay an upfront deposit towards these costs.
- The trip organiser reserves the right to refuse any person who for any reason is not deemed suitable for this trip.
- There is a practical limit to the number of people that can be accommodated on a trip of this nature and the trip organiser reserves the right to declare the trip fully booked at any time.
- Unless there are extenuating circumstances, all participants will be required to attend some pre trip training/assessment activities.
- The finer details of the trip will be worked in due course based on expressions of interest.

Expressions of interest and more information:

Contact the trip organiser Steven Morgan on 0418 882 817, steven.morgan61@gmail.com

Up and Coming Events

September

- 9- 12th – Mundoo High School at clubhouse
- 13/14th - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe (Peter, Winfried and Paul will be there).

October

- 4- 6th – AGM & Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe.
- 22- 24th – Babinda State school at clubhouse.

November

- 15/16th - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe (last official club trip for the year).
- 29/30th Rockhampton Caving - mostly SRT please contact steven.morgan61@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Go Caving!

Peter Bannink & Winfried Weiss (Secretary).