



CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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NEWSLETTER

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New Southlander

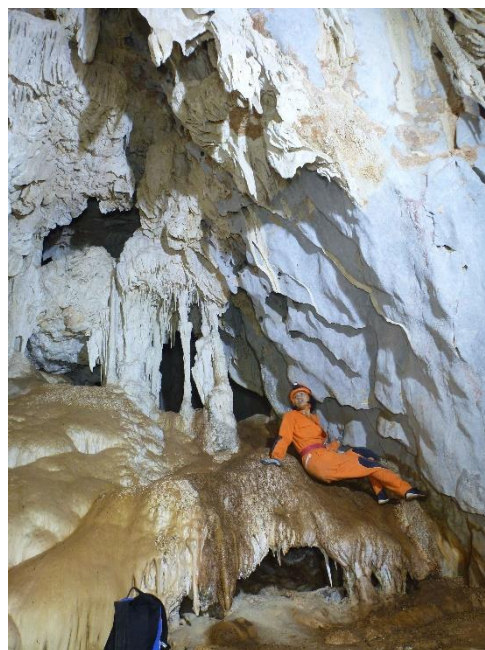
P. Bannink

A request for photo's of cave passages from the Queenslander Cave System got a small team of cavers out to the tower block in late April. Despite having not been there for about eight years, Peter looked up the locations of the most accessible system, which turned out to be New Southlander Cave. Although this cave does link into Queenslander Cave (Chillagoe's longest and largest cave), the connecting passage is hard to find and the New Southlander section is effectively an isolated system.

Peter, Emily, Robert and Goy were the first out there this season, with Robert's car wading through 2m tall weeds, on the small off-road track to the south east corner of the outcrop. While the map showed the three target entrances quite far apart, in reality all were within 30m of each other, only one did not require vertical gear to enter CH69.

The sloping entrance slot is very familiar to other caves in Chillagoe and leads down a deep sloping rift to a medium sized daylight doline. The route was quite wet and slippery after the recent down - pores in Chillagoe. Not knowing where we were going was quite thrilling, as it felt we were exploring the system for the first time.

A small chamber lead off the daylight doline, where there was evidence of nesting swiftlets. The nests and eggs had been washed off the walls, and lay littering the guano pile. Robert did some minor exploration in some phreatic passages at the back of the chamber but he ended up looping back.



Goy as the scale model!

© P. Bannink

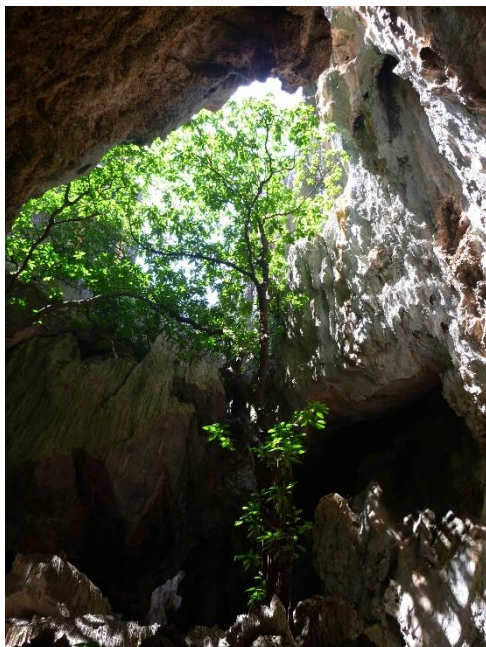
Back we all went to explore the way on, only when we were heading out did Peter remember the link, it is a small crawl just below one of the climbs down the rift. The crawl lead into a small series of formation chambers, probably the best to be seen in this area of the cave. We all spent a few moments taking photo's and enjoying the dazzling white displays.



© P. Bannink

Robert and Goy in a skylight link

It did not take long for the cave to link through to a daylight rift which descended rapidly into a large chamber filled with soil. The arches were spectacular linking into dark passage at one end and to a massive rock pile of daylight boulders at the other. We all explored this region for about an hour but could not find the link on.



© P. Bannink

Large fig tree fills the doline!

It took another 20 min to realise the way on was a climb up onto a massive boulder pile and scampering over the 'Broken Tower Block', doubling back and climbing 15m above where we had been before. Without thinking much Peter followed a route through the upper boulders and

scrub to another steep descending entrance. This was reasonably exposed with smooth slippery rocks, but it got everyone down into a massive doline chamber called Broadway. Open to daylight two large open dolines combine to create an enclosed area with sheer vertical sides where only moss grows in the flat floor. At one end a rock-pile marks the final exit, which requires a steep climb and an interesting squeeze out amongst the boulders.

March/April Caving

P. Bannink

The caving club hosted the Cairns Bushwalking club over Easter, accommodating 15 'Introductory Caves' for three days of action packed adventure.

Paul was well organised before I even got to Chillagoe on the Saturday, with five trip leaders taking trips to Haunted Cave, Spring Cave and Blue Sky. I tagged along on the new planned route through the Blue Sky/Link Up System. Only two Introductory Cavers took on this challenge, which involved several ladder climbs and a bit of constricted crawling.



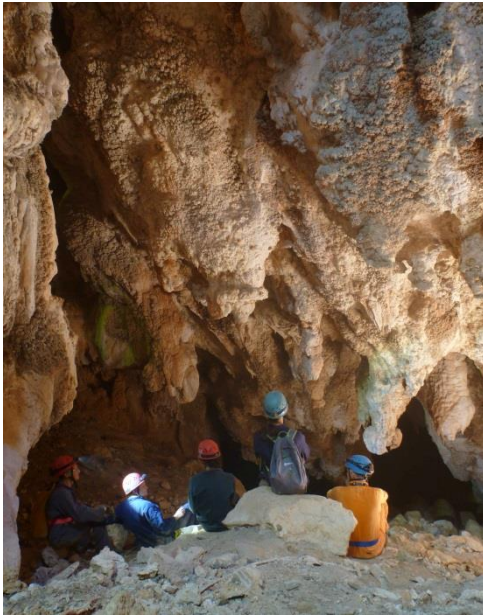
© P. Bannink

Max and Jesse at the first ladder climb

Max and Paul had rigged the climbs the day before so the route through was very streamlined. Conditions were however very hot and humid, and the rocks very slippery. It took about 4 hours to get through the system, from one side of the tower to the other.

Jesse and Belinda were hilarious and took to each vertical challenge with renewed enthusiasm despite

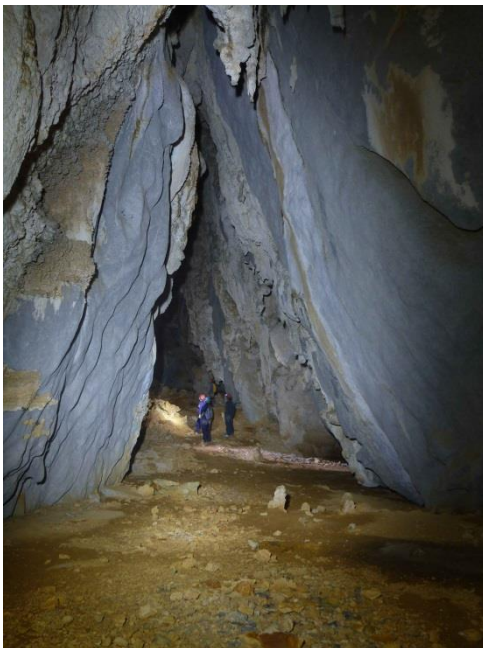
the conditions in the cave. I for one was very happy to see the end of the day, lack of fitness and a pulled muscle, the major cause of my miseries



© P. Bannink

First rest stop after getting into Spring Cave

The April ANZAC long weekend was just as busy with Kimberlee bringing another 12 extra adventure cavers from the Cairns Region. I got to go in a trip to Spring Cave which I had only recently visited for the first time in January (with Paul). Spring cave is really an adventure cavers paradise, being a very large horizontal maze cave with some really spectacular features. The cave was a tourist cave at the turn of the last century (1890 - 1930), when mining was booming in Chillagoe and the place to try to make you fortune!



© P. Bannink

Walking up the first long rift, Spring Cave

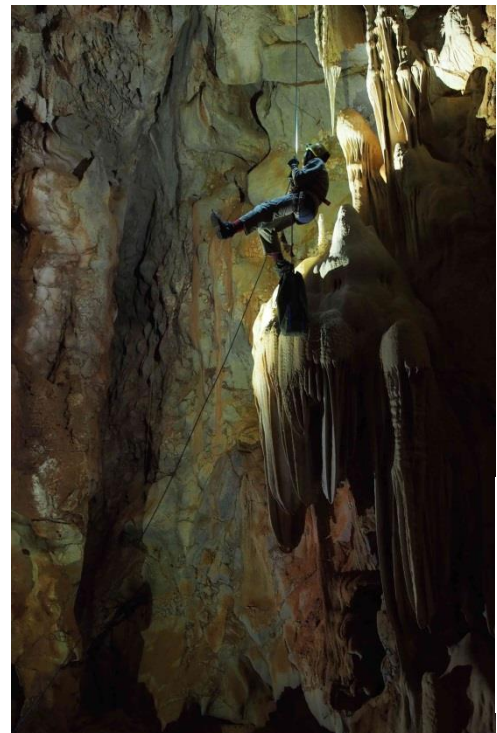
Grant and Kimberlee were the official trip leaders even though we had quite a small group. Peter tried several new photo opportunities as the large passage and rifts were quite spectacular. On the whole this was a fantastic trip, with quite a large amount of walking and climbing through boulder piles. Paul and Grant have a set route to follow through the system, which takes about 3 hours with rest stops. There are a lot of daylight sections but the light trickles in from above creating spectacular sights as reflective light highlights features in the passages below. There are also several entrances to visit as well as the old tourist section which contains a fantastic formation area.

2016 AGM Weekend

P Bannink

Participation at the AGM excelled expectation this year with 16 members heading out to Chillagoe for the event. Controversial proposals slowed progress during the night but we got through it all in the end.

Surprisingly Paul and Peter were voted back into their positions with Winfried Weiss, as the new Secretary. The controversial issues surrounding Trip Leader certification have been delayed, pending membership feedback from those affected by the proposed changes. The caving however was fantastic with numerous trips being lead for those new introductory members who made it out there.

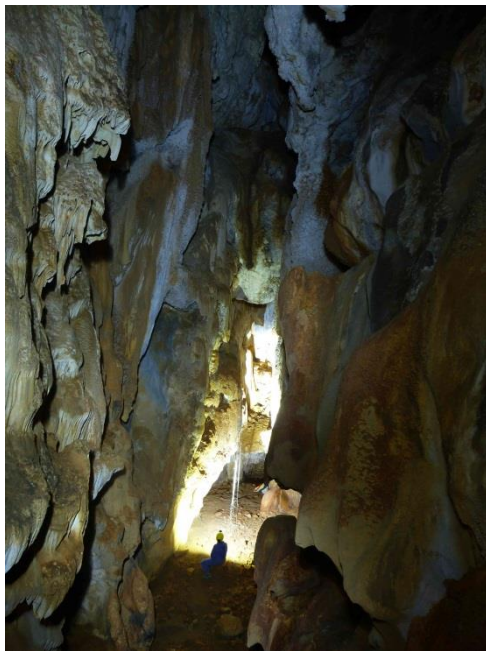


© W. Weiss

Sue descending into the main chamber of the SRT cave

Winfried got some fantastic photo's from a rarely visited SRT cave, and I got to visit CH273 (Rolley's Choice), another cave I have never been too. The cave was located in the 1980's, however graffiti in the cave dates back to the 1930's.

CH273 is on Pinnacle Tower and Grant had located the entrance the day before, so lead a group of four straight up to the entrance. The cave links into CH274 via a 8m ladder climb and is was our objective to explore the system as described in the caving guide book.

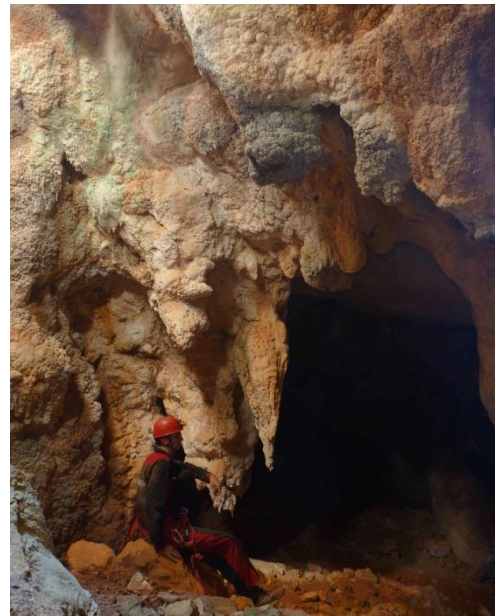


Sue lighting up the main rift in CH273

© P. Bannink

The climb down was relatively easy and the entrance opens up into a wide rift leading off perpendicular to the tower. It did not take long to get to the other end, where we explored small climbs and holes looking for the elusive link. One rift was particularly squeezezy, and despite climbing up about 8m, the passage just doubled back to the rift. Grant found a very nasty squeeze following a sink in the middle of the rift. Despite blowing air, no one was willing to slither in, and over a nasty sharp knob in the middle of the tunnel. It was heading in the right direction though.

We then began a thorough search on the sides of the rift, clambering in and out of tiny passages and between boulders that simply went no-where. Eventually Peter located a small lead through rock pile, just to the RHS of the entrance. In a small upper alcove, a narrow rift dropped away looking very promising. Grant rigged and then re-rigged the ladder, as the drop was deeper than expected.



© P. Bannink

Pete relaxing in the CH274 entrance

Peter climbed down to find we had finally found the connection to CH274. A quick look around did not reveal much and it appeared to be just another dead end rift. As time had run out for our 12:30 deadline, we all left for the day. Grant and Deanne returned the next day to fully explore this section and finally found the upper section described in the guide book.

Up and Coming Events 2016

A number of trips are in the planning stage for 2016. An expedition to Broken River and Mitchell –Palmer Caving Region are just about underway.

June

- 25th **June** - 3rd **July** - Broken River Caving Expedition.
- 23rd **June** - 12th **July** - Mitchell-Palmer Caving Expedition. Private club trip.

July

- 16th – 17th **July** - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe, (surveying in Markham Tower).
- 9th – 16th **July** - Mike Tarburton and Max Emeny studying swiftlets at Chillagoe.
- 22nd – 24th **July** –Long Weekend Club Caving at Chillagoe.

August

- 6th – 20th **SUSS** caving at Chillagoe (proposed!)
- 13th – 14th - Club Caving Weekend.

September

- 10th – 11th - Club Caving Weekend.

Peter Bannink & Winfried Weiss (Secretary).