



# CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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## AUGUST 2014

## NEWSLETTER

[WWW.CHILLAGOECAVINGCLUB.ORG.AU](http://WWW.CHILLAGOECAVINGCLUB.ORG.AU)

### In This Issue....

- Broken River Expedition 2014
- Three Moles to Outback Queensland
- Fanning River Karst
- **AGM**
- Clubhouse Maintenance

### Broken River Expedition 2014

(P Osborne)

Twenty three cavers from a diverse range of expertise and experience made for what I think was our best ever Broken River Mid-Year Expedition.

It was quite cold at night with ice forming on the tents early mornings but the campfire was kept blazing for all the time we were there. There was the occasional misty morning which soon burnt off to brilliant sunshine days with no humidity.

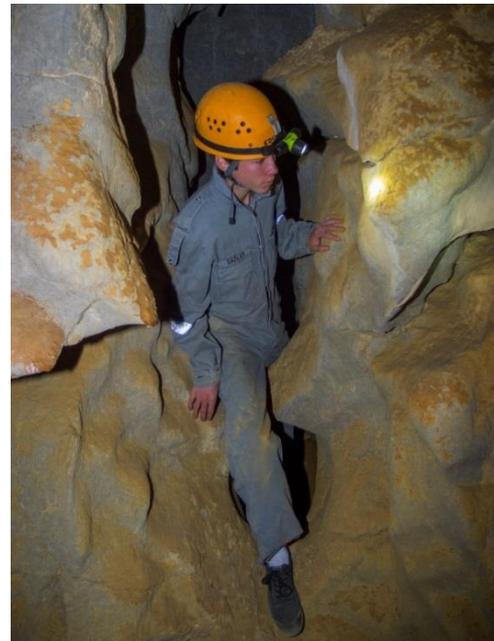


Expedition members

Lots of dingoes around this year although we heard them and saw where they'd been rather than saw

them. Wild cats were also in evidence in the caves as well. Swiftlets seemed to be a favourite menu item.

There were several projects being run parallel to each other. The Palaeontologists spent quite a bit of time in Robert Broom excavating more stuff to keep them busy for years while Deb completed the survey for it. Greg and his team were keen to tag and explore a cave they found a couple of years ago in the Gorge Creek region.



Phreatic wonderland

© P. Osborne

© P. Murray

My target was to survey the Trippers Delight system and con a team into rigging the "traverse

from hell”, a 15m high level traverse across to a hole we thought– lower chamber. That’s probably a story that others will want to write about but suffice to say it was achieved and allowed us to we could see in the upper survey into the hole and down into a Beehive survey point and so the system has just gotten a whole lot bigger. Now that we are getting some quality surveying done, we can see the possibility of linking more of the caves to a point where they may rival Queenslander as QLDs longest cave.

There was only one incident on the trip that we can add to our catalogue of self-rescue options. Coming off the top of the pitch in Trippers, I reached a little awkwardly forgetting about my weak shoulder and popped it out again. Grant and Deanne were on hand to assist me off the pitch (“dislocation slot”) and over to “relocation rock” where some gentle persuasion was applied to reduce the shoulder back into where it should be. Caving resumed as normal from then on with a little more thought into not using that shoulder too much.

I can’t **not** mention the night time meals. We could’ve run our own MKR out there with everybody trying to outdo each other. Some of the camp oven creations were fantastic. We ate very well and washed it all down with some great wine.



On top of the tower karst

© B. Willshire

23 chairs in a circle round the fire after dinner each night meant we had to have a pretty substantial campfire to reach everybody and there was no shortage of stories to tell. Not sure who won the bad taste joke award but it was either Brett or Van, fortunately late after more sensitive ears were in

bed. I remember going to bed laughing and waking up in the morning still chuckling. Thanks Van.



Van pushing another crawl

© P. Murray

Shane, the property manager called in one night after Paco and Van had met him broken down in his truck out on the road to Greenvale. Seems Murphy’s Law kicked in and his truck overheated at precisely the point where he had no radio coverage on a day he’d forgotten to bring the Sat Phone. Lucky it was the first day when cavers were arriving and carrying plenty of water.

All in all a very successful trip with three new caves tagged, two completed surveys and an A4 page of projects for next time.



Paco at the main gorge.

© P. Osborne

## Three Moles to Outback Queensland

(D. Hunter)

A trip to Broken River karst, hosted by the Chillagoe Caving Club (CCC) and organized by Paul Osborne (joint CCC president and MCCC member), was something exotic for Jess and me. Ken’s return to north Queensland as a caver rather than a skydiver was novel for him. The caving expedition was very different to the Bullita experience, although the karst had many similarities to other tropical karsts of Bullita and Chillagoe I’d seen.

Upper Silurian and Devonian limestone towers outcrop in the Broken River area on the western side of the Great Dividing Range, towards the Gulf Country west of Townsville (Webby, 2008). Karst extends discontinuously over at least three large cattle stations. CCC has negotiated continued access to explore several square kilometres of the karst on one of those cattle stations. Unfortunately, some people have given cavers a bad name out here.

Similar to other tropical karst, bedrock towers and ridges contain the caves, which are dry in the dry season. These outcrop across undulating country of savannah woodlands. In the tropics, the exposed limestone surfaces become etched with razor-sharp rillenkarren, so you cannot afford to slip while accessing entrances and climbing down to the cave below.

The towers are not as large or high as those at Chillagoe, but the style of cave development is similar: there are lots of ups and downs to negotiate the caves. There are also some vertical pitches, since the limestone is generally steeply dipping. The caves contain some great rift passages and plenty of ceiling pendants, remnant of the phreatic phase of the karst's development. Some extensive caves have frequent daylight holes like some of the caves at Bullita.



The paleontological team with breccia samples.

© D.Hunter

This large expedition (23 members) organized itself on a more or less *ad hoc* basis each day, around sightseeing, exploration for new caves and ongoing projects. Projects that I was involved in included helping the University of Queensland's paleontological researchers and in linking Trippers' Delight Cave with Beehive Cave. Sub-fossil

discoveries of thylacine and Tasmanian devil bones from pitfall caves caused the group much excitement and jubilation, while the linking of Trippers' and Beehive via an exposed high traverse and pitches gave the many cavers involved a profound sense of satisfaction.

Paul Osborne was data keeping as we surveyed using a Galaxy device. We used a Disto X in the cave linking, whereas in the paleo cave I surveyed, data was recorded manually from a normal Disto and a Suunto compass. Paul is now left with the tasks of linking the new digital data to incomplete surveys from the previous (2011) trip for Trippers' and other caves plus mapping the previously unmapped booty cave for the palaeos.



© D.Hunter

Pitch into the vertical link between Beehive and Trippers Delight.

Every cave I saw there had something special, and overall there was everything you'd want out of a tropical caving trip. The caves are sporty enough, some vertical work is required in pushing caves and there are frequently formations, even some heligmites. Of course the caves host bats and birds called swiftlets. While it is apparent that feral cats have devastated some cave swiftlet colonies, Paul and I saw one intact breeding roost in the back of Trippers, complete with one late-nesting bird who was extremely put out by our presence. We had one "Death March" during the trip, a late-start 7 km each way trudge along the river sands in the sun, to

visit Bushman's Cave and to rediscover Oddysey Cave. The latter had really nice gour, pearls and sawtooth shawls. Bushman's had some history associated with it, someone hiding from the law and eeking out his survival.

Viruses and flu plagued this trip, with some expeditioners suffering during the stay at Broken River, and some coming down with an even worse bug afterwards. This is what laid Deb low after the trip and actually put Paul into hospital, where he was faced with the dreaded food porridge for breakfast. The thought of eating porridge cured him and he is now out and recuperating at home.



© D. Hunter

Van and Paco climbing a narrow rift in Beehive Cave.

## Fanning River Karst

There is word that the Department of Defence has purchased the station covering the Fanning River Karst Region. This has implications for anyone wanting to visit the area, but has the added benefit of hopefully protecting the area from any future development. (ie mining).

The club assisted a fencing consultant who is required to put fences 1km around any cave entrances, to prevent accidental damage by defence personal. We will have to wait to see what management plan is planned for the area.

## AGM

The date for the AGM is only one month away. The meeting will be held at the Chillagoe Clubhouse on the 4<sup>th</sup> October, starting around 7:30pm. The executive would like all members to attend, so three Special Resolutions can be considered by members for changes to the constitution.

Members will soon receive notification of the changes, access to the clubs current constitution is available from the clubs website, and is found within in the Club's Membership Manual.

## Clubhouse Maintenance

Work will soon begin on fixing a blocked grey water pipe connected to the clubhouse and caretakers residence. The executive will inform club members when this work will be carried out.

Recently Alan, Bruce Dane and Casey have spent two days working out at the clubhouse to try to complete the New Amenities Block. A great vote of thanks for the additional work these members and ex-members have done, this work had been languishing for the past two years.

## Up and Coming Events

### August

- 9/10<sup>th</sup> August - Club Weekend (expressions of interest for a Trip Leader)

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### September

- 9- 12<sup>th</sup> – Mundoo High School at clubhouse.
- 13/14<sup>th</sup> - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe

### October

- 4- 6<sup>th</sup> – AGM & Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe. AGM starts at 7:30pm 4<sup>th</sup> October.
- 22- 24<sup>th</sup> – Babinda State school at clubhouse.

### November

- 14<sup>th</sup> - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe

Go Caving!

Peter Bannink & Winfried Weiss (Secretary)