



CAVERNDISH

NSG's NEWSLETTER

May 2009

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From the Editor:

Here it is... the long overdue Caverndish.

Many thanks for those that have sent in stories. It always makes for a good read.

Welcome to new member Nicolas Bath and welcome back to past members Brian Beuke, Jonathan Ravens and Simon Houston. NSG Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month at a club member's house. Every 2nd month we like to have a slideshow presentation. If you wish to present a slideshow for a future meeting please contact me for an available date.

If you are interested in becoming a Member of the Nelson Speleological Group then feel welcome to attend one of our meetings. Details of the meetings are on NSG's Website Trip List. <http://www.nsg.org.nz/index.htm> or alternatively go to the NZSS site and download a form today <http://caves.org.nz/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/NZSS/Welcome>

Recently I attended a training session at Andrew's Live Life tower in Richmond.

Andrew, Seb, Greg, Bruce, Bruce's daughter and friend, Leo, Ian McG and myself played around with ropes and rigging. Kevin, Liam and Glennis joined us for a BBQ at lunchtime.

Leo and Ian were caught in a very compromising position stating they were practicing a crossover on the same rope.

That's their story; I have pictures to prove it ☺

Bruce found himself precariously balanced whilst being hauled up the tower in the stretcher.

Some good tips came out of the session. All up, a good day of fun.

Dawn ☺

Did You Know?

"**Therion** is a Swedish symphonic metal band founded by Christofer Johnsson in 1987. The word "**therion**" comes from the Greek **therion** (θηριον), meaning "Beast," ..."

Where Am I?

Who am I?

Or rather it should be **what am I?**

I am sometimes known as "Klumene or Ethire"

I have a density of 0.92

I am C₂ H₂

I am an "Endothermic" compound.

I was formed exothermically

I am a liquid at -82deg.

I instantaneously combust at 480deg.

Edmund Davy first made me in 1836 from a compound produced during the manufacture of Potassium from Potassium Tartrate and charcoal.

This compound was found to be Potassium Carbide.

Further experiments found that I could be produced from Sodium Carbide.

But it wasn't discovered until 1862 that I could be produced from Calcium Carbide which water decomposed into what I am today and lime.

Past Trips in brief:

FEBRUARY

Chillagoe Caving Group.

Our Australian visitors thoroughly enjoyed their caving experience in NZ. Some of the caves they visited were Nettlebed (Thru Trip), Summit Tomo, Little Harwood and Harwood Hole/Starlight Cave. A group of NSG Cavers are planning to visit Chillagoe in late August/September this year.

Hodge Creek.

This area had its fair share of visits over the summer. Lot's of interest in this area particularly to Greg, Oz and the Cohens.

Parapara Peak

Dion lead a mystery trip to this area of many dolines, good drafts and potential signs. Congratulations to Bruce on finding his 2nd cave ever!! Well done Bruce, unbelievable!☺

Greenlink trip

Danielle, Geoff, Claire & Bruce took a trip into Greenlink. DANGER WARNING! Loose scree climb out of Kanga's House is becoming decidedly dangerous. A 20 to 30m rope is required for a hand line on a new route.

MARCH

A number of trips were cancelled or postponed in March, due to bad weather.

Middle Earth.

Michael Brewer and Geoff Miles had a good trip into Middle Earth to test the new drill.

Harwood Hole and Summit Tomo

Kevin took a group of American Cavers through these caves.

APRIL

Easter at Patarau

Caving, caving and more caving! The clubs celebrated 20 years of caving at Patarau.

Moira went underground into Echo Valley Palace. Lead by Alison Pickford, this day marked a turn around for Jane's recovery as being her first trip underground since her accident. Well done Ladies ☺

Greg and team revisited Gryke Cave for further exploration and some surveying.

Andrew, Dion and Team also did some surveying in Tradesman entrance of Creighton's Cave.

MAY

Nettlebed Thru Trip

Andrew, Seb, Kevin and Colin had a successful trip through Nettlebed 2nd May. DANGER WARNING! Loose boulders, 10mtrs above the Knee Trembler. Beware in this area.

Trip Stories:

Blunderback. By Ian McGregor

"Would you like to go to Blunderback?"

"Yes please!!"

"There is an area which has not been explored which I want to look at. We will go to the Grid Iron Shelter on Friday night, and then up to Blunderback first thing Saturday morning."

Wow! What an invite and what absolutely superb manpower planning and associated energy conservation. With most of the walk in on Friday done we would get a lot of exploration knocked off on Saturday. Something I had always realized was an excellent approach. I spent all Friday morning carefully packing. Each item was weighed to the nearest 0.01gm. Could I decrease its weight? Was it even necessary? (He who is so weight conscious would have been proud)

I waited for the 5.30pm pick up. At 6pm the phone goes. The weather forecast is not good. Both bivvies face the south from whence the bad weather was coming and the river (crossing) would most certainly be up on Sunday and possibly even Saturday morning. The trip would have to be postponed and he would ring me in the morning with an alternative.

Now I knew that the leader really was a leader. A man of great acumen, judgement, and of course experience. And so obviously up to hard decision making. Indeed a General.

We met in the morning. General Cohen and troops, and self, were now additionally joined by President Smith, Dawn, Tony Stephens, and Ryan. Apart from holding the very honourable position, the President brought considerable flood hydrology knowledge from Nettlebed and elsewhere. The President and the General conferred. *Two* top heads now. What to do? It was agreed that the weather forecast made Blunderback out of the question. More joint command consultations, the decision was unanimous and fully accepted by the troops. Green link!!

And so to Huia. ☺

This was a new cave for me and a pleasant experience with good company. Nice entrance. When looking back from the downstream end of the entrance pool there was a slight aura effect from the diffused sunlight coming through the bush. It was just after midday and I wonder if there are even better times of the day to see this. The glowworms here were good as well. Just around the corner from the end of the pool and on the right hand side, the dip of the rock layers is very pronounced. One of the layers is quite recessed and I wondered why. Could it be a softer limestone? Shortly afterwards there was a patch of rock that had been eaten away phreatically, and then almost straight away a section of the ceiling surface was smooth and steep. Vadose sculpturing of the rock. I am glad I was not there when the water was charging through the cave. (But, of course our leaders would not have gone there under those conditions.) Phreatic virtually next door to vadose. This sort of contrast and complexity is one of the things I like about caving. And while I'm speleologizing, Andrew's adeptly defining the way forward. Onwards and downwards, into passages and out again. Then the sump is reached so it's the turn around point. Another side passage is looked at on the way out. Near the exit the female Arapiles climber nimbly negotiates the smooth slab above the entrance pool. The next in the queue baulks. Andrew produces a rope from his pack, quickly rigs it, and with a hand line in place and a big straddle the deep part of the pool is passed, and it's back to the entrance and the scramble back to the vehicle track. But the speleology is not over! Somebody saw a pool of water which would be below the sump. As we proceed down the valley to the cars we sight several more such pools - all looking somewhat stagnant. It would appear that there are some vertical "pipes" from the sumped cave stream before it resurges. All round a jolly good day.

Party members: Myself, Dawn, Andrew, Tony Stephens, Ryan, Sarah and Yoni.

Tales of Bulmer MkI By Bruce Mutton

Michael Brewer and I are the proud and entrepreneurial owners of a Disto-X.

Mike Allen supplied the Leica Disto A3 at a reasonable price, and Bruce bravely soldered the -X onto it, and it seems we now have an electronic gizmo that produces 'tape, compass, clino' measurements with a single click. Less than a \$1,000.

So far, so good. We did a little surveying in Bulmer and it seemed to work fine. Well, we are looking for a better dry bag that doesn't defuse the laser quite as much.

The next step is to find a kind donor for cave proof pda, as the Disto-X is intended for paperless cave surveying. The survey data is Bluetooth-ed to the pda as soon as it is collected. The survey appears on the pda and you sketch around it with a stylus before you move to the next station. Get home and save your in-cave sketches of plan, elevation and cross sections directly to your computer. No writing the numbers down, no typing them into a computer. We need a pda to turn this dream into reality.

On the Bulmer front Michael Brewer, Paul Corwin, Geoff Miles and Bruce Mutton spent five days in April checking climbs and other leads in the Beautiful Bulmer Series. In general they yielded only a few metres each so we derigged the major pitches, partly to make them available to the rest of the cave and partly to limit tourist trips. Access to much of it is still available via a slightly more convoluted route.

We had a look at the Midnight Express area, got lost in a soupmix like area, then descended a couple of pitches that we assumed

undescended, although there were footprints at the bottom of one. It leads to another pitch that we didn't go down due to lack of rope. It's hard to out-explore Kieran and Neil.

With mixed feelings we exited via the new shortcut (had to really as Memory Lane and castration Corridor have been derigged). It seems to cut an hour off the transit time for a fast team, and probably double that for slower teams. It's reasonably sporty, a nice narrowish rift with a number of short pitches. A bit much mud by Bulmer standards. Almost makes up for the loss of the Lions Den.

Tales of Bulmer MkII By Michael Brewer

On Saturday 18th April Michael Brewer, Paul Corwin, Geoff Miles and Bruce Mutton went into camp 2 in Bulmer cave for 5 days. Using the new bypass to Castration corridor they easily took an hour and a half off their normal commuting time although still arrived feeling fairly stuffed around 7pm. The next 2 days were spent looking at potential leads in the Beautiful Bulmer and Late 08 series but only about 100m of new passage was found and most of that was in crawling passage. With most of the likely leads closed down they decided to partially derig the series to reclaim equipment and also to make it more difficult to access this unique but very vulnerable area. Who-dares-sins was derigged making access to the series still possible but via a more circuitous route. The Canyon pitch was also removed.

The third day of exploration was spent in the Midnight express area looking at potential connections to the Awesome aven and Texas pots. The way there was through yet more amazing passage. Pitches were descended and rifts pushed with still some possibilities left to look at. The day was capped off with yet another brilliant meal provided by Paul and his dehydrator.

The day out started with the traditional 0400hrs rise and a staggered departure so that the first team could get up the Awesome aven while the second team cleaned up the campsite. It took just over 5 hrs to get to the surface to be greeted by a clear fine day.

Wasps are starting to reappear on the track and despite the recent snow 3 nests were seen on the Bulmer creek track and one on the Hume highway with Paul being stung twice.

Twenty years of Easter camping & caving out west. By Darryl Ware

Maybe, as a newer member of NSG, I'm still not quite down with the play in the sociology of speleology, or even spelunking, because when you're asked to a party, since when did you have to bring your own toilet? Or, having done that then set to and dig a third? Isn't that taking the urge to go down under a little too far?

Alright, at the Great Easter Caving Camp, if you don't know the ropes, you are soon taught them, and taking your harp to this particular party, though welcome, isn't quite enough. Sooner or later, if lots of eating is going on, you are going to have to make room for more. And at the regular Patarau gathering, on the South Island's West Coast, just south of Westhaven Inlet, the regulars know that one long drop is not enough. So thank St Portaloo for the two green plastic poo palaces towed in this year. They helped ease the load, so to speak, but nonetheless a new long drop was dug as well. And the Great Easter Caving Camp was fully functional – complete with 'the usual offices'.

The Paturau Easter Camp is an institution now. Cavers from all over NZ have been attending for twenty years. So this year's camp set out to mark the occasion with a little more than the regular bonfire, regular caving, mountain-biking, kayaking, fishing, beachcombing, photography, reading, and all-round full on family fun. This year, a special anniversary dinner was laid on. Every camping family was asked to contribute a dish for the Saturday night hooley in the woolshed. Succulently supplementing these offerings was a complete spit-roasted sheep, rotated lovingly over the fire for five hours.

Things really start on the day before Good Friday, with those first out of the starting blocks (aka getting away from work early) arriving in the woolshed paddock just metres from the remote West Coast beach sometime on Thursday. They begin the tent/caravan/campervan 'city' on the farm, which grows as cavers arrive from all points south, east and north, pulling up in a plume of road dust. This is South Island remote we're talking about here! Pretty soon the kids are out, whizzing round and up and down the steep but ideally smooth grass-covered sand hills on all sorts of devices from high-tech bikes and sleds to low-tech nikau fronds and pieces of cardboard. The fun has begun! Mums & Dads spread out, catching up with old friends and new, fishing, cooking, sharing thirst-defeating moments, and finding out What Each Other Left Behind. Yes, no matter how long you've been camping, it's always possible to forget something essential, like a main food ingredient, a sleeping bag, or (as I once did, years ago) a tent.

But such little inconveniences are mere bagatelle to this lot. They're here to go caving. The area is rich in caves, and the special and valuable relationship with the landowners who, through twenty years have generously allowed cavers – and *only* them, to converge here at Easter – is a treasured and respected privilege. This year, the farm manager was presented with a special work of art, a painting created by one of the NSG cavers. And, of course, as a bonus, the farm got that new long drop dug beside the woolshed. What better way to express thanks (and relief)?

The Easter Bunny was particularly fecund this year. I even found one of her (?) eggs amongst the stalagmites deep in a cave. So who doesn't go for the gourmet mix of sausages, pre-cooked mince, pasta – and chocolate? Plenty of this year's attendees did.

Friday's caving was followed by Saturday's caving, and then the Anniversary Communal Dinner with the spit-roasted sheep, done to a turn (as they say) with all the trimmings – and pudding too. The lessons of Pink Floyd were well-learned. "If you don't eat your meat, you don't get any pudding. You don't get any pudding if you don't eat your meat." This was followed by the presentation of the artwork to the farm manager, and then that *iconic* (Finally I got that favourite cliché word in!) NZ dance form, the woolshed dance!

The weather was fine throughout, but oh yes - there was a spot of wind on one day, which deconstructed a few canvas erections (*and only that sort, I hope – Ed.*) However it was back to caving on the Sunday, the last opportunity for many, though some of us squeezed an Easter Monday below-ground experience in too.

Now some of our readers may be wondering just what that Darwin-inspired silhouette accompanying this article is all about. This is a specially-posed panorama of the Evolution of Man to Cave Man. The more picky of you may quibble that it is Devolution, but hist! It is not so! It shows the development, from left to right, through all the recreational urges, to the lowest possible form – the fully-equipped caver. We call it "The Descent of *Homo subterraneous*". In eons to come, archaeologists, yea, even palaeontologists may come across this representation and wonder what the hell it means.

Fret not, O men and women of science. It means only that we were having a good time on and under the coast!

Hut News:

The hut has had plenty of use over the summer period. Whenua Iti uses the hut regularly, usually on a Wednesday. We suggest you contact Oz if you intend staying at the hut mid week, otherwise you could find yourself amongst a lot of people.

The driveway has had an upgrade thanks to Dion, Andrew and Leo.

Stainless Steel inserts have been installed around the stoves and there is plenty of firewood at this stage.

Many thanks to all those that have helped with maintenance in the past, it's much appreciated. At a later date we plan to have a working bee/spring clean and hope to see many hands to make light work.

Hut Fees:

Members \$4.00 per night

Non Members \$6.00 per night

Harwood Hole Statistics

By Dawn Wood

On the 25th January Michael Brewer replaced the Log book in Starlight Passage after a really superb trip through the cave. The book was certainly quite damp and falling to pieces and in need of replacement.

Michael had the honour of putting the first entry in the new book. (It didn't seem a lot of point in putting an entry in the old book then removing it!)

I have put together a spreadsheet containing all the names, dates and information from the musty damp speckled pages.

Copy available by request

Here are some interesting statistics:

Since December 2003 to 24th January 2009 there have been 106 trips recorded and approximately 458 names entered into the log. There have been Caving Club trips of NSG, CCG, ASG and Waitomo, overseas visitors from United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, France and Australia. Group visits with the Police SAR Team and the Army.

Three photographic trips are recorded, one being with German Photographer Max Wisshak the author/photographer of Inside Mother Earth, a beautiful picture book of caving. See www.speleo-foto.de

Our very own President Andrew Smith is the most frequent visitor, with 14 entries; he can also recall more trips that weren't logged. I am proud to say my name appears 5 times in the log, each one a fabulous trip.

There have been only 4 Search and Rescue entries over the 5.5 year period.

The log book will now be handed over to Oz Patterson, Archive Officer for safe keeping.

From the Archives:

By Oz Patterson.

1969, 40 years ago... in January Club members were part of a collection of 23 cavers from around the country that met at Metro cave, among them a youthful Ian MacGregor. The group entered the cave via the logging road, cutting off the chain and lock on the way. Some damage was noticed to formations in the Hall of Refugees, thought to have been caused by the previous years Inangahua Earthquake. Easter saw club members at Paturau, staying in the woolshed at Sandhills creek. Cascade Cave, Twinforks and Wetneck were visited. Also at Easter another group of club members spent the weekend at Wangapeka and took the opportunity to prospect the nearby limestone, "Blue Bluffs". A club trip at Anzac w/e saw trips to Starlight and Gorge creek Caves. At Queen's birthday a return trip to Paturau discovered and explored Echo Valley Palace cave. The report notes that "this cave deserves extra protection to preserve its beauty". Directions were also given to a new find on the Cowan's property (south of

Sandhill creek) “a cave with a tight entrance that opened into a passage of massive proportions”

1979, 30 years ago ...in what has proven to be a milestone for New Zealand caving, NSG members Fred Kahl and Graham Slow using chemical persuasion opened the squeezes in Nettlebed in February ... the rest is now history. What was thought to be the sound of rushing water was the roar of the wind later measured reaching up to 50kmh. Over the next month further trips explored and surveyed passages through to the mainstream way, the “Spillway”. Wetsuits were taken on the next trip and the stream way explored up stream as far as an impenetrable boulder choke. The word soon got out and at Easter cavers from Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch joined Nelson cavers and exploration began of the Meltdown and Oubliette areas. Also in February 1979 a strong group of Cavers from around the country joined NSG members to push further into Greenlink Cave, another 250m of new passage was discovered. At Patarau new caves were found by NSG members over the summer included Graveyard Grotto, The Devil's other Nostril Cave, Pretty short Cave and The Headless Chook Cave? (Ed's note: does anyone know where any of these are?)

1989, 20 years ago...from the NSG March newsletter. A busy summer for club members. The previous November during the NSG pre-xmas trip (17 club members for 8 days!) Falcon Cave discovered by club members Kathy Lynch & Pete Bragins was further explored down to -500m. On the same trip Tomo Thyme cave after a lapse of 17yrs was rediscovered. Previous exploration had stopped at the top of the 2nd pitch due to the danger of rock fall. During the summer of 1979 NSG had a trip each month to continue the exploration. Other NSG trips were to Breretons Cave, Aquarius cave, Nettlebed and a novice?? Club trip to Perseverance Cave. The March newsletter had plans for building a cave brew kit, and the club bought bulk pink Cynchilla material for thermal under suits. (Which is why NSG members were easily identifiable in a crowd for many years).

1999, 10 years ago...from the April Caverndish, Lots of caving with trips to HH, Middle earth, Blue Creek Cave, Bohemia and Bulmer Cave, and a push trip down to look at the squeeze at the bottom of Legless Cave. The editorial reported problems with some club members not looking after club hire gear. A Managing Search Operations course for cavers was run at the NSG hut by SAR consultant Ross Gordon; a lot was learned by everyone including Ross who discovered he enjoyed the caver's novel way of eating Tim Tams. The newsletter reminded us of the ancient club rite of presenting personalized pottery plates as a wedding gift when members “tie the knot”, it was noted that the club tradition is rarely enacted due to the lack of such occasions.

SAR News

Cave SAR Management Forum is to be held at Whenua Iti on the 8-9th August 2009.
For information on SAR contact Greg Pickford

Library

Please contact Jane if you are interested in having a browse at the library. A list of books is available to view on the NSG Website <http://nsg.org.nz/mainpages/library.htm>

Ian MacGregor has recently donated the book "Edmund Hillary - The Life of a Legend", by Pat Booth; and various NZ Alpine Club Journals from 1970 to 2005, to the NSG Library

Next Meeting:

Ian Millar's Place
Thursday 18th June 2009

See you there
Dawn Wood
Editor ☺