

CAVERNDISH

NSG's NEWSLETTER

September 2007

The headlines that made Michael Brewer famous in Operation Brewer the biggest cave rescue in New Zealand history.

Cave Rescue

Long haul to safety

surface tension

SAR Crew the unsung heroes

Caver feared death

Caver fights pain in rescue bid

He's out after 2.5 days trapped in a cave

Cave system too risky for amateurs

Step by step recovery as caver returns home

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From the Editor:

Caving and Cave SAR has had a bit of a mention of late with some people getting trapped by rising waters in Waitomo and of course our very own Michael Brewer's rescue from Middle Earth. Fortunately he wasn't too seriously injured and remained in good spirits throughout his ordeal. The SAR team did a tremendous task at getting Michael out safely with no incidents. Well done to all those that participated. I would like to pass on the many thanks that Michael expressed at the NSG Meeting last Thursday.

Hope all is well out there. The winter is behind us and daylight savings starts this weekend, what a difference that always makes to a day. Hope you all had a great winter. I had the experience of digging a snow cave and spending the night under the cool blue colour of our shelter,, it was awesome ☺.

"Where am I?" last months answer: **Huia Cave**, well done Jane who guessed right again, and Michael who really was quite stumped.

I would like to welcome new member Andy Benton from Australia. Thankyou to Gary for your stories this month, hope you got to enjoy your birthday eventually.

Take care out there and hope to catch you at an entrance soon. Looking forward to y our stories too. ☺

Dawn ☺

From the President:

Well we have had heaps of caving done in recent times,

Michael worked hard to get as many Cavers and even retired Cavers underground.

(Once a Caver always a Caver).

Was good to see familiar faces again.

NSG and the National Caving community can justifiably be proud of their efforts in regard to the recent rescue. Well done.

Along with the eventful Middle Earth trip there has been other things happening in the caving world.

A de rig of Summit tomo was forced upon us as the ropes and equipment were required elsewhere, we were hoping that the seat would be ready, but we did get the Crocs down to the bottom of the last pitch.

A very successful "Caving for beginners" course was held at the Hut. Lots of useful stuff learnt. Thanks to Ian McG for his First aid segment and to Dawn for her Knots instruction. For some it was their first experience on SRT.

We rigged various rocks around the car park area and discovered that more often than not the best rigging is simple rigging. A keen and enthusiast bunch surveyed Skilton's Cave. The survey is already produced albeit a rough version so if anyone is interested a copy is available for viewing.

The Cave is home of many formations including the Jailhouse section.

Scallop fossils on the ceiling in many places and a very interesting square block area that feels tomb like. Huge square cut blocks form the floor walls and ceiling of this chamber. Quite different!

Real good to see people out and underneath.

Check out the list of up coming trips plenty to choose from and what about leading a trip your self?

Don't forget to get your NSG logo in. Competition ends and will be judged at our meeting at Greg's on October the 18th.

Big prizes to be won, 1st prize... A trip to Profanity, to collect your prize just contact Adrian Busby... But wait there is more... "Altitude" has donated some goodies also!

No limit on entries, but remember, that the Logo must look good in B&W. Keep in mind that the Logo will be used as a letter head as well as being tattooed to your left bum cheek.

Good luck.

Andrew Smith
President

Where Am I?

You may guess the Cave easily but where in the cave am I hiding.

A stormy entrance at 1139 ASL was easy to rig two bolts. I descended down till I found myself walking the golden path. Still further on down things just got a little groovy.

On my way through I decided to go travel past the lake and follow the underground gorge.

53 plus 53 is where I met Esau's brother.

Where am I?

Past Trips in brief:

Caving Course 8th-9th September. Although numbers were small a good time was had by those that attended. The weather was great for enjoying some sunshine while Andrew covered a wide range of topics from how caves were formed right through to SRT and rigging techniques. Ian gave a very informative talk on First Aid and Dawn talked of the different types of ropes and demonstrated knots tying. That night they practiced their SRT skills from the rafters. The next morning we all practiced some cave rigging in the driveway before finishing the course off with a trip to Summit Cave where we all abseiled the waterfall. What a great way to end a good weekend. Well done to all that participated.

Middle Earth 25th August. Michael Brewer did a recent trip to Middle Earth with Claire, Bruce and Jane.... And a whole lot of other people that turned up! Many thanks from Michael for their assistance. Michael established that a candle placed under a safety blanket really is warming. An extra 400 metres of nice passage was surveyed between Middle Earth and Green Link. Green Link's Wetter Inlet still needs surveying. Will Michael be there?? Hmmm!

Skilton Cave 15th 16th September. Andrew, Ian Macg, Barbara, Kathy, Yoni, Sarah, Leisha and Myself made up the team that returned to Skiltons Cave to do a survey, almost a year to the date. The Rileys were happy to have us back to their property beside the Aorere River Collingwood. We surveyed almost a kilometre of long straight parallel passages. We plan to return at a latter date to continue our mapping of a lower level.

Corkscrew 18th 19th August. Kevin, Seb, Andy (New Member) Andrew and Myself made it down to about the 5th pitch. Some bolting was done along the way to make the pitch rigging feel a whole lot safer. Andy, who is used to the flat

caves of Australia, surfaced red faced and totally jumahed out. All round a great weekend.

Ashton Villa See Trip Stories

Trip Stories:

Ashton's Villa

By Gary Willis

The phone rings one evening and Marina takes the call, Dion asks "do you want to go caving at the weekend?" She hands me the phone and says "its for you dear".

The plan is to go up the hut and try and push Ashton's Villa explains Dion and then proceeds to tell me who he has asked so far, when he mentions Leo and Steve Foote there is a silence at my end of the phone as I process this information, for some reason memories of how tight the cave is come flooding back. Apparently every one else who has been asked is like the both of us and reasonably small.

Jane picks me up on a very wet Saturday morning and we make our way to the hut to meet up with Dion, Seb and Claire, by the time we arrive it is really raining hard. The consensus is to have a cup of coffee and then for Dion to head off with Seb and Claire to rig the entrance and the next 2 pitches while we get organised and follow as we both know where the cave is (it moved in the rain). Fumbling around in the bush above the hut for an hour we are almost ready to give up having been past Earl Gray twice as well as Cows tag cave when we finally notice the blue tarpaulin that has been stuffed under the rocks as a marker.

By now we had expected someone to come looking for us but when we got down into the cave we had not been missed and the third pitch was only just rigged. Following the tortuous cave on its downward spiral through the squeezes we all find our way to the stream way. Dion remarks that there seems to be slightly more water than normal and NO breeze. The hammer and chisel is produced and after we have all had a go with them Dion manages to get his head around the corner and can now see down the next passage, this passage is duly named Far, Far Away passage.

Once we have decided that we are not going to get any further today we begin the ascent back through the cave the squeeze is now a totally different proposition without gravity to help and we all find it a bit of a struggle. Finally once again on the surface and it is still raining hard as we retire to the hut for drinks and food, a few games and more food. Andrew and Dawn arrive later in the evening too.

Next day Sunday and the rain is still coming down so although the cave is semi rigged no one is keen to go back down so after a leisurely breakfast and wander to the entrance and back to remove the rope of the entrance pitch we set of for home apart from Seb who is going to attempt to dodge the rain on his bike. Only he knows how successful he was.

Dion, Jane, Claire, Seb, Gary, Dawn & Andrew.

SAR TALE

By Gary Willis

It's 6.30am on Sunday morning when the phone ringing breaks through my unconsciousness, I roll over trying to ignore it when I hear the voice of Oz Patterson coming through the answer phone, hastily I grab for the phone and in my sleep addled mind reply. Oz informs me that Mike Brewer has had a serious accident in Greenlink, having gone down Middle earth passing through the connection but not the sumps. I arrive at Nelson Police station at 7.45am Sunday 25/08/07 to be briefed and put into a team.

Together with Steve Foote I leave Nelson with all the remaining rigging gear from the SAR store, we take Diane Bowering with us and meet up with Bruce Mutton and Claire Mcelwain at Mike and Sarah Brewers house in Riwaka. They were the ones who came out to raise the alarm leaving Jane Furkert in the cave to look after Mike.

Bruce fills us in with the remaining info about what happened. And we head off to Motueka SAR store to pick up yet more gear and for Bruce who is appointed team leader (he knew the way) to obtain our tasking from Greg, Oz having gone home to sleep. We assemble at the Middle earth car park and leave Dianne to man the entrance, Team three now consisting of five people Phil castle from Golden Bay having joined us we set off into Middle earth at 1pm. We are carrying all of our personal gear for a twenty four hour period including food, as well as several packs of rigging gear and a stretcher. Due to a misunderstanding in communications (nobodies fault) we did not know that a stretcher had gone in with an earlier team.

Team 3 arrived at the last pitch before the patient which is normally a down climb I believe somewhere around 6-7pm Sunday. Steve had had to turn back at the squeezes being unable to get through them; we had also passed Leo heading out having suffered the same fate. Meeting up with Mike Brien who is currently the underground controller he gives us the task

of rigging the haul ready to start moving the stretcher at 8.30pm. We are informed that Dr Brewer is in good spirits despite the accident and that he is sleeping along with his attendants. Meanwhile team 4 have arrived and together with them the haul gets rigged and also the preceding passage receives some attention ready to get the stretcher through.

At 9pm Sunday evening Danielle administers some Morphine and the long haul to the surface begins. The haul goes well but the stretcher will not fit through the next section of passage so Mike is removed and pulled through on his sleeping mat, it must have been extremely painful but Mike remains cheerful even being remonstrated for trying take over control of his own rescue. Back in the stretcher and the long slow haul, drag, push, grunt etc continues. Time now seems to disappear not having time to look at my watch means that I have no concept of when I need to eat or sleep. I can remember several brief halts along the way where Mike was eased into a sitting position at his request to allow him to move about a bit, he was always in pain at these halts and Danielle gave him some fluid by IV at one of these stops, it also allowed Mike to relieve himself.

Finally we arrive at the connection pitch to be relieved by two fresh teams they take over and haul Mike up the pitch and we leave him in their capable hands to make our way to Smorge's hall. Colin Campbell from team 2 is with us and after a brief halt to eat and re carbide I start to make my way out of the cave with him. The 10m pitch out of Smorge's hall reminds me that I am not invincible and that I am getting very tired and sore now (still nothing compared to the patient's discomfort). We gradually get slower on the way out, stopping to eat the last of my food I take a brief rest before setting off for the last pitch the big one. I look up its 40m with fear and trepidation can I in my tired and befuddled state even contemplate reaching the top. I set off and for some reason unknown to me this last pitch just seems to float by, I arrive at the top quicker than I thought and shout down to Colin "rope free" and make my way to the surface, in some places now I am so tired that I shuffle along on my knees not having the energy to stand up. Daylight I can see daylight, I must be there. Yes sunshine and warmth I have made it, I stagger out of the cave and up to the parking area at 12.30pm Monday afternoon.

Ian MacGregor greets me and helps me from my harness and some of my kit, I am exhausted, can barely stand let alone walk as my initial debrief starts. I drink 2 cups of tea that materialise in my hand and after tracking down my dry clean clothes I change and chase some food. I have been awake now for nearly 36 hours and underground for just shy of 24 hours. A land SAR member takes a group of us down to Motueka Police station for another debrief with Greg and we get waylaid by a researcher from the TV program Close Up. The media are crawling all over the place with cameras everywhere, just as we are leaving I see the Nelson mail photographer arrive I know it's him as his son used to be in my step sons class at school. I arrive home around 3pm on Monday and sleep, food, warmth, bliss ZZZZZZZ.

My only complaint has nothing to do with the rescue only with Peter Talley's helicopter hovering over the entrance just after I reached the surface. All in all in my opinion everything ran incredibly smoothly above and below ground. I can't thank everyone enough especially the food team at the entrance the food was delicious and much appreciated. Waking up on Tuesday morning I hear the news on the radio that it was all over bar the clean up at 1.15am Tuesday morning and that Mike is now in Nelson hospital recovering. Its now Tuesday lunch time as I sit here writing this report and still every muscle aches and I'm still a little tired but I would be back down there if the rescue was still going on even though I missed my own 40th birthday party on Sunday.

These are my own recollections of the rescue such as they are, and not an official history from team 3. I don't think I have omitted anything. Thankyou to everyone who assisted.

Hut News:

Spring is here and with that comes "Spring Cleaning". The hut is in need of a bit of attention. It is hoped that a "Working Bee" can be put together to give the place a bit of a spruce up before the busy summer season. Andrew is to contact the Quarry regarding some gravel for the drive and Leo has a tractor on stand by to help spread. We will let you all know when this is happening and maybe you would like to be a part of the tidy up. The hut is need of some elbow grease inside and outside too, especially to one wall that got a splattering from a recent carbide bomb. Pyrotechnics and explosions should be kept at a safe distance away from the hut. Thanks.

Oz would like to know what has happened to a box of dehydrated food that has disappeared from under one of the bunks recently. If you know anything of its whereabouts please contact Oz.

The hut fees are as follows:

Members \$4.00 per night
Non Members \$6.00 per night

SAR News

Greg tells me nothing much has been happening in SAR ☺ Only joking of course. The Cave SAR team can feel very proud of themselves for the smooth operations that took place in Middle Earth recently. Well done to you all. SAR is looking to purchase a Confined Space Stretcher.

If you have lost gear from the rescue then please contact Ian Macgregor as he has some unclaimed items.
Email: idmacgregor.ir@clear.net.nz or 021436224

If you are interested in knowing what's going on in the SAR side of things and would like to be kept informed then please contact Greg Pickford by email pickford@tasman.net

The Civil Defence team at the Nelson Fire Station have offered us some places on their Foundation Ropes course being held 9/10 Feb 2008. We will have about 8-10 spots, so if you're keen please contact Sarah Brewer. This is an inter-agency co-ordination, so you must be sure you can attend before putting your names forward. At this time the course will be held at the Nelson Fire Station. Sarah contact: 035287541 or m.brewer@xtra.co.nz

General:

NSG Logo Competition: A long time ago a competition was forwarded to find a Logo for NSG. Not much has happened and since there's no time like the present... If you have a design then now is your last chance to submit it. We have 2 entries so far. Bring your design along to the next NSG Meeting and let's get this Logo happening. There's a box of tapes and carabiners up for the "Chosen One".

Special Feature:

This months special feature is a CCG Trip Leader's Guidelines and Checklist. Same guidelines apply for NSG only the contact details will differ.

Canterbury Caving Group Trip Leaders Guidelines & Checklist

These guidelines are intended only as a guide and memory-jogger, not a rigid set of rules. Do not hesitate to contact the Club Trips Coordinator or a committee member for assistance.

BEFORE THE TRIP

Assess your abilities

- Is the chosen cave well within your own capabilities? You can't be in charge of a group if you are not prepared for most situations.
- Prior knowledge of the cave, and certainty of its location, are normally prerequisites for leadership of an official club trip. Alternatively, you may be able to use a reliable team member for knowledge of the cave and its location.
- Be competent in techniques required for the proposed cave, especially if SRT or ladders are required.
- Be aware of the contents and implications of the NZSS Ethical Guidelines.
- Have local knowledge of land ownership, land access concerns, and restrictions of land access.
- Understand the effect of rain on the caves to be visited.

Things to do

- Obtain permission from appropriate landowner if necessary.
- Set maximum and minimum numbers, depending on the type of trip, vulnerability of the cave, accommodation and transport.

- Consult maps, books, and knowledgeable cavers to find out all you can about the cave including the difficulties involved and the equipment required.

- Decide what group gear (eg. ropes, etc.) will be needed and who is going to bring it.
- Obtain a weather forecast and decide whether or not to choose another cave(s) or cancel.
- Arrange a **Contact Person**, whose responsibilities are described in a subsequent section.
- Take names and the following details of people who want to go on the trip:
 - Telephone numbers.
 - Who can take a car.
 - Ability and experience of each member of the group, in relation to experience required in the caves to be visited.
- Provide these details to the Contact Person.
- During the week before the trip phone/email the participants to tell them:
 - Personal gear needed, and any other special equipment.
 - Food.
 - Accommodation details.
 - The name, role and phone number of the Contact Person. Ask them to pass on the details of the Contact Person to family/friends/flatmates.
 - Where and when to meet, and transport arrangements.
 - Approximate time of return.

A couple of things to remember

- If any participants are under 18 years of age, trip leaders have a duty of care towards minors. If parents are present on the trip, then they are responsible (this would be the usual case for the club). If under 18s wish to participate on a trip without their parents, they must have parental permission. You must ensure that parents are fully aware of all aspects of the trip.
- It is normal practice for club trips to be available to any club members, plus other interested people (e.g., friends or new members). However, in some cases the leader may have to make a decision as to the optimum number of people on the trip, particularly in vertical caves where smaller parties are preferable.

DURING THE TRIP

Before entering the cave

- Before leaving camp, introduce people and make sure that everyone has all the gear they need.
- Before leaving the car(s) for the cave, everyone should know where the car keys are hidden.
- Remind everyone to try to remember the route from the car to the cave (in order to negotiate it solo in the event of an emergency, or in the dark if necessary).
- Before entering the cave, briefly describe the cave to the group, approximate length of time inside the cave, and cover risk management:
 - What hazards participants might expect to encounter
 - Procedure to follow if someone gets lost
 - Procedure to follow in the event of an injury, or if someone is feeling sick, unconfident or outside their comfort zone
 - Conservation issues/impact on the cave
 - Other ethical issues to consider when in the cave

In the cave

- Keep newcomers or beginners in the middle of the group.
- Decide on regular stops for water, food, carbide, and regrouping.

- At any potentially dangerous place, such as fast-flowing water, traverses, climbs, or abseils, make certain that nobody is alone and everyone knows what to do.
- Advise less-experienced members of the party when to put on more clothes, etc.
- Watch for people tiring, stumbling, etc. Be alert for hypothermia, and, if necessary, stop before it is too late. Know what to do if someone becomes hypothermic.

AFTER THE TRIP

- Tell the Contact Person that you have returned.
- Hired or borrowed gear should be washed and returned.
- Calculate fuel costs, and pay out petrol money to drivers.
- Ensure that one member of party writes a trip report, and submits it to the Cavity Editor.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONTACT PERSON

For all CCG (NSG) trips, trip leaders are required to appoint a Contact Person in Christchurch (**Nelson**). The Contact Person may be a partner, flatmate, or a committee member, but should preferably be an experienced caver. The role of the Contact Person is to be available by phone in case of contingencies. These could include a cave search and rescue, a vehicle breakdown or road accident, sudden illness, or simply a change of plan.

The trip leader should give details of the Contact Person to all party members for them to pass on to family/friends/flatmates. Concerned family/friends/flatmates should phone the Contact Person **FIRST** before phoning the Police or DoC.

Likewise, the leader should have provided names and contact phone numbers of friends/relatives/flatmates to the Contact Person for each member of the caving party.

Because we run most of our club trips outside of Canterbury, trip leaders may also wish to contact as a **liaison person**, a caver in the destination area to let them know that a party will be using caves in the area (see below). Ideally this caver in the destination area should also know who the Contact Person is.

There are two scenarios in which the Contact Person should act:

- (1) If there is concern about the non-return of the party
- (2) If a member of the party, or a caver in the destination area, reports an emergency.

At that point the specific responsibilities of the contact person are as follows:

- If the party is overdue, consider the gravity of the situation. For example, if the weather has deteriorated you might expect a delay, so there is no cause for undue concern. Perhaps they have been delayed by the hot pools at Maruia?
- Phone our local search and rescue ("SAR") coordinator (details below), **or** phone a CCG committee member, to discuss the situation.
- If they haven't already phoned you, phone the friends/relatives/flatmates on your contact list to let them know the situation, and to inform them of the actions you plan to take. Reassure them that procedures are being followed if they phone in an agitated state.
- Try to contact DoC (or the appropriate landowner) to let people in the area know the situation, or ask the caver contact in the destination area to do this.
- Phone the police **only** when it is time to lodge a missing persons report (thus initiating a full-scale cave SAR), preferably after having discussed this with the SAR co-ordinator or a CCG committee member.
- Should a friend/relative/flatmate contact the police directly, the police would still expect to contact the Contact Person, and the SAR Coordinator, for their comments before taking any action. Therefore be prepared to give your opinion on any action to be taken; for example, if you are prepared to wait 12 hours before initiating a search, say so.

Search And Rescue (SAR) Co-ordinator

Currently the Canterbury Caving Group's search and rescue coordinator is John Atkinson, whose contact details are:

Work phone: 338 1106, x 750

Home phone: 325 7234

During work hours you can email John at: john_a@macpac.co.nz

NSG contact Mike or Sarah Brewer, Oz Patterson (Details below) or Greg Pickford 03 5447085 pickford@tasman.net

Liaison people

The following people have agreed to act as liaison people (cavers in the destination area).

Nelson: Mike Brewer or Sarah Brewer: 03 528 7541 M.Brewer@xtra.co.nz

Oz Patterson: 03 547 7395 John.Patterson@xtra.co.nz

West Coast: Russell Bromley: 03 789 5251 Cave_Inn@xtra.co.nz

RECOMMENDED GEAR TO BRING

Things for inside the cave

- Cave map(s)
- Small backpack or cave pack
- First aid kit – minimum one per party
- Survival blanket
- SAR form
- Clothing: overalls (or something snug-fitting, as loose clothing can catch on cave walls); with polypro long johns and tops OR woollen trousers and jerseys OR polar fleece garments top and bottom; woollen or warm socks; gumboots OR light-weight tramping boots OR heavy track shoes; rubber gloves or heavier kitchen gloves.
- Spare clothing in waterproof bags
- Spare carbide in waterproof container and carbide waste container, if appropriate
- Extra batteries (fresh ones!), spare bulbs
- Small pocket knife
- Whistle
- Food in waterproof container
- Water bottle
- Compass
- Helmet: a caving/climbing helmet, safety or bike helmet (with light source attached).

- Three light sources per person are essential:
 - Electric light or torch (securely attached to helmet) OR carbide unit
 - Spare electric light source
 - Another spare light source such as a small Maglite around neck, or a spotting torch

Things to have after caving

- Complete change of dry clothing (almost always necessary)

- One or two large plastic bags to put your dirty gear in
- A towel (optional)
- Thermos with milo etc (optional)

General trip gear

- Sleeping bag (tent and ground sheet if camping)
- Personal toiletries/medications
- Maps (of region)
- Food for eating at camp
- Cutlery and utensils

- Camera and film
- Insect repellent
- Tramping gear where appropriate, e.g., Mt Arthur or Mt Owen trips

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

As a trip leader you have an ethical code of conduct and responsibility to the cave environment. It is recommended that you communicate this code to all members of your party before entering the cave.

You should be familiar with the New Zealand Speleological Society Handbook (3rd Edition 1995). This book details everything you need to know about cave ethics. Below is a summary of the information on pages 20-24 (you received a copy of this book when you joined NZSS, take the time to read it. It's good! If you've lost yours, get one from Lindsay Main).

Conservation and Protection of Caves:

- Take all care to avoid destruction or disfiguration of cave decorations (speleothems), and any other natural feature of caves. Follow tracks carefully. They are there to protect formations/cavers. Do not disfigure or mark caves in any way.
- In areas of clean flowstone floors, muddy clothing and boots should be removed to minimise impact.
- All rubbish (spent carbide, lolly wrappers, human faeces/urine) should be carried out of the cave and disposed of appropriately.
- Take carbide out of the cave in an unsealed container e.g. plastic bag. In many overseas caves, carbide is banned as a light source, and if we do not dispose of it carefully the same will apply in New Zealand. Outside the cave, don't leave it where stock can eat it or it can be seen.
- Do not interfere with, force or damage a legitimately erected gate or barrier.
- Do not remove any deposit, speleothem, sub-fossil remains, flora or fauna, or any other naturally occurring thing from a cave or karst area without first obtaining permission from the administering authority.
- When camping in natural areas or on farmland carefully observe the established Minimum Impact Code and rules of good camping conduct, especially in lighting fires and removing rubbish. Bury faeces when camping.

Cavers and Landowners

- Seek and confirm specific approval in advance from the owner before entering a cave or crossing private property. DO NOT take access for granted.
- Respect the privacy of landowners and restrictions placed on access to caves, eg during lambing season. Ensure all gates etc are left as found.
- Always carry your current Society membership card to show the landowner or DoC when necessary.

DoC Permits

Most caves on the DoC estate are "Open Access" to cavers, but a permit is necessary for Metro Cave (Paparoa National Park) and Honeycomb Hill Cave (Kahurangi National Park) in the South Island. Examples of permit systems are attached at the back of these guidelines.

Canterbury Caving Group Trip Leaders Guidelines, Version 1, May 2001

Next Meeting:

18th October @ 7.30pm

Greg and Alison's
Sutton Street
Richmond

See you there
Dawn Wood
Editor ☺