

Caverndish

NSG's Newsletter
September 2006

Letter from the Editor.

Hello fellow cavers (Ladies and children included)

Another month has past and boy was it a slow one for me.

For those that have asked about my moment of fame on Scott's Knob, the ankle is doing fine and the crutches fast posted back to Wairau Hospital. Hooray!! Glad to be rid of them. Thanks to those that sent well wishes and hopefully I will see you underground or hiking to a cave near you real soon.

Whilst recently surfing the web I noticed that NSG doesn't have a logo. I believe this has been brought up before to no avail. Let's get on to designing our club a logo. We appear to be the only sector without one. You don't have to be artistic as the end result can be made to look professional. Put some sketches down on paper or maybe use your computer to design one. Simplicity is often the most effective. Then bring them along to the next meeting.

I'm always on the hunt for new material and open to any ideas you may have. If there is something you would like to see featured in Caverndish, then I'm more than happy to hear about it. Or if you know of someone that has done some caving recently then drop me a line, don't be shy.

So get out there, get down and get dirty...

I want to hear all about it.

Dawn Wood
Editor

Contents

NZSS Mission Statement

Past Trips

Trip Reports

Hut News

Appointments

Cave Maps

General

Trip List

Contacts

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NZSS MISSION STATEMENT

NZSS is:

- to be the National Speleological Body
- to conserve caves and karst
- to represent the interest of it's members

By

- the collection and appropriate dissemination of information on caves, karst and caving
- advocating conservation and awareness to cave owners and managers
- negotiating access to caves for members
- the promotion of safe cave use
- operating a national cave SAR system
- encouraging cave users to join NZSS
- monitoring the effects of cave use

Through

- education and training
- development assessment of techniques and equipment
- liaison with other groups and agencies
- exploration and study of caves

PAST TRIPS

Derigging of Windrift Cave 19th 20th August

Bruce Mutton, Andrew Smith and Mike Brewer.

(See Trip Report)

Salvation Hall Via Overlander-Nettlebed Cave 2nd 3rd September

Andrew lead this trip with fellow caver Colin, Seb, Leo, Travis, Gary and Tony

After two days underground, with more water to tackle than on previous trips, the team surfaced late Sunday night safe, cold and tired leaving behind a nice shiny new ladder at Salvation Hall. The old ladder was taken out and may be cut up to use in another cave

Kahurangi Lighthouse Trip 15th-18th September

Andrew and Dawn, 2 motorbikes and a home made trailer.

(See Trip Report. History of the Lighthouse to follow in next edition)

TRIP REPORTS

Windrift Returns

By Bruce Mutton

We now have two new Windrift Slaves, although I'm not sure they will ever voluntarily return.

The campsite had 100-150mm of snow, and it had filled all the nasty holes on the walk up to the cave, many of which I found! All in all, fairly miserable conditions.

Mike Brewer and Andrew Smith were treated to the slightly Green Link side of Windrift. The entrance pitch was very drippy and all but pitch two had little flow. Lucky the forecast rain did not eventuate and the only potential extreme flood hazard was the pitch above the ropes that John and I had stored the last time. Mike braved the chamber full of waterfall spray so that we could haul up the gear in dry conditions.

There's now a large pile of ropes at the base of pitch six. The next task is to find a helicopter friendly place to stash the gear near the entrance and then find a fine day to haul out the ropes and rigging.

The Abyss

By Andrew Smith

Masses of white surging water boiled just inches from my feet. Bridging was never my strongest point but these new white gumboots held true. Full stretch, muscles screaming, where is that elusive handhold when you so desperately need it. One false move or one miss judged foothold would surely find me fighting for the breath of my life in the raging torrent.

The rope! I could see it now, only five meters away. Pulling myself up onto the ledge that elevated me above the water the rope was now within grasp, but my moral plunged as I glanced at the rope. Huge and enormous in sections but thin and thread like in others. The condition of the rope was dismal. I however was not the first to use this marginal nylon cord. Travis and the others had gone before. Taking the swing with the rope

grating coarsely across the rock my feet felt the rock on the other side. Steam vapour rising in large clouds as a combination of technique and muscle put together a successful result. I glanced up to the anchor point to discover not only was the braid that I now hung my whole 71 Kg's on dodgy, but the bolt to which it was tied was in an advanced state of rustiness and part of the fixing was visible underneath the hanger. The noise of the aerated water with its diving down and then bubbling up instantly intensified. The hanger moved from side to side with each movement I made. I swung my pack high up onto a shelf where several hands reached out for it as if it was the gold at the end of the rainbow. The Party had travelled all but 50 meters along the Northwest Passage. I had travelled this route before but this time the trip was taking a different shape. Half a meter of extra water in these tight and constricted streamways posed not only a high psychological requirement but was much more physically taxing also.

The risk of being engulfed in the broiling water below was ever present. Decision time was nigh.

As we got together on a rocky point high above the stream we attempted to communicate regarding the progressing onwards. Shouting above the violence that was below, we each voiced a view and it was clear to all that the only course was that of retreat.

There was a certain sadness and disappointment in the decision but all knew in their hearts that the choice was a good one.

Passage back was slow; every one worked well together passing/hauling packs. At times a large rock might be dislodged by the party and a crashing, rumbling sound was heard echoing above the cascading water ending in a good hearty hollow sounding splash.

It was a solemn party that made there way back up through the glistening black but all knew that the decision although a hard call was a good one. The return route back to Salvation Hall was not straightforward. We navigated an area of wetness and tightness and found the passing of the heavy overnight packs hard work especially as the journey took us up and up against the flow of the water. Sharp spiky things seemed to reach out and grab at me as I ascended. Just making that move that would release me from a constriction my pack strap or a wrinkle in my overalls would catch and pull me back. Tossing packs ahead of me became common, climbing and then to toss once again. Once back at Salvation Hall the moral of the group lifted, the wailing tones of Leo's Harp echoed throughout the caverns and pitches.

We were on our way home.

The Pearce was flowing swift and strong as I watched bodies linked together, stumbling but defiant against the current. Tony got a little wetter than most but this was probably due to the huge weight that he carried.

We had carried the Jacobs Well rope all the way. He had already done more than his fair share in the cave but yet here he was doing it again outside the cave.

Gary, Seb, Travis, Colin, Tony, Leo, Andrew

A Response to The Abyss

By Peter Entwistle

Your little story of that rope brings back memories on my last trip past it (minus the extra water), circa 1986, I chose to climb up and over the flow it's attached to rather than commit my life to the few strands that were left then. I must have been soft!! A couple of others on the trip swung across it with style.

We had extra packs full with Sal hall rubbish, all those useful little things that got left in the camp during the previous major expeditions. At a point just passed that rope, one of the rubbish packs went for a serious tumble, from then on the trip smelled of cinnamon. A welcome relief to our five day old polyprop odours.

Seems that among those camp treasures was a container of the spice that some hardened expedition caver needed for their double decaf skim milk cappuccino. I'm sure Oz will point out that this reflects the influence of having the media in camp. Previously I had heard that the only creature comfort during those early expeditions was a large jar of Vaseline!

It will be good to get the streamway back into a functional and safe condition, as this is a wonderful section of the cave.

Good luck next time.

Kahurangi Lighthouse

9.30pm Friday night we arrived at the Anatori River. No body else in sight so we unpacked the van of its 2 motorbikes and home made trailer. I had a quick crash course on how to ride a motorbike and away we went with torches strapped to the front of our bikes and Andrew towing a trailer that resembled a white coffin on bicycle wheels. Trail biking over the rough gravel farm roads in the dark was no easy task for a beginner. Many times I stalled and many times Andrew would find him self a mile up the road alone. With the mending ankle I wasn't able to kick start the bike so Andrew would have to come to the rescue. As the journey progressed my gear changing became more proficient. During our journey one of our lights failed so I was left to follow closely without a light. At times I would let Andrew get a bit ahead so I could have a

speed trip to catch up, a couple of times losing control behind him as I fumbled with the gears and brakes almost colliding, with him oblivious to my skillful handling. Andrew rode cautiously, route finding his way through the sea mist. His torch lighting up the mist like he carried a giant light saber. It was so exciting I found myself chuckling at the sight of what appeared to be Andrew on a tricycle resembling something out of a comic book. We reached the Big River at 1.30am and found the tide was already in too far in to cross, so found a nice spot in a bank, with an overhanging thicket and snuggled down for the night.

The next morning woke to the sounds of munching sheep. Soon after the beauty of our surroundings greeted us. White sands and nikau palms, we could have woken in Fiji, it was fabulous. We had a leisurely morning as we waited for the tide to retreat enough out of the estuary. We parked up the bikes and continued on foot.

Big River was deep and cold and funnily enough wet. We waded to our waists before we reached the shallows. After a half-hour walk along the beach we arrived at our haven, a large hut nestled in the trees just off the beachfront. We settled in and went exploring our surroundings. Catching sight of the lighthouse from the beach, we decided then to get a closer look in the morning. We hunted around to find the remains and sites of the old settlement that was destroyed many years ago in a landslide/earthquake.

Back at the hut we lit the wet back fire, ate dinner and settled in to a nice hot bath and mulled wine... heaven.

Early Sunday morning we headed to the lighthouse, the weather at times blowing in rain showers then breaking into long calm sunny spells. The 103 year old lighthouse is a monolith of white painted steel, streaked with bleeding rust colours, which give it great character. I think it's a shame there are plans to repaint. There she stands over looking the raging seas, giving guidance to the ships that pass in the night. Now powered by solar panels, no longer needing the lighthouse keeper to keep the light aglow. Time to leave this beautiful place, pack up and head back to catch the outgoing tide. Had a great ride back on the bikes, wow the difference daylight can make to the now mastered skills of off road biking, even managed to do my own kick starting, yahoo!

Such a fantastic trip. Another trip is in the planning. I highly recommend it. Contact Colin and Marianne if you are interested.

Just like to mention that the Kahurangi Tides are the same times as the Nelson Tides and that it is best to cross Big River through the estuary 1 hour after low tide.

New Zealand Recreation Summit - Te Papa Wellington 16-17 September 2006.

By Debbie Cade

On the way home from the New Zealand Recreation Summit hosted by DoC over the weekend, I couldn't help but feel enthusiastic, if a little tired, and encouraged about our future use by all New Zealanders, of our conservation lands.

Put two hundred people from fifty to sixty organisations together, including back country users, hunters, front country users, commercial interests, conservation groups, education & health, local authorities, cavers, kayakers, trampers, alpine, universities - to name a few, all wanting to push their own causes, barrows and selfish points of view. Ask them what they think of how recreation on public conservation lands should be directed over the next 20 years and you could be forgiven for thinking it totally unworkable!

Yes, there was some very robust debate! However, the outcome reflected overall common ground that there needs to be a national outdoor strategy to determine what the values of recreation are to New Zealanders and how they should be managed going forward for the next twenty years.

Over the last two days, we have heard from some amazing people including Graeme Dingle, Robin Judkins. And to cap that off a panel of politicians from all the major parties on Saturday night putting forward their views of outdoor recreation.

Right up there in importance was:

- è That the outdoors is our place, not only the place, but a sense of place. It's where we go to recharge, extend ourselves, play with friends and family, or just simply enjoy our country in our own way.
- è That every New Zealander has right of access ahead of commercial interests and tourists.
- è And preservation of the wilderness that is managed for environmental sustainability

A final paper outlining the challenges, opportunities and trends in managing the use of public conservation lands will be presented to the Minister of Conservation, Chris Carter in mid October.

We will receive a copy of the paper. In the mean time, a summary is due out in the next week and will be available for your interest. I will let you all know when I receive the email copy.

It was also a very useful weekend in that NZSS made contact with many other outdoors people and gave us an opportunity to talk caving. There was a lot of interest in what we do. It was a good result and well worth the effort.

CAVE MAPS

Oz would like to remind those that are taking part in the Deep Cave SAREX next year that maps are still available of Tomo Time Cave System. This is a 1.5 metre long map and a vital tool for doing some

homework to familiarise you with the cave. Also available are maps of the Bulmer and Nettlebed cave systems. Contact Oz if you would like to order one. This is a great opportunity and a great price of only \$10.00. Laminating extra.

HUT NEWS

From Oz

More maintenance is planned for the hut, with Leo to do a bit more tinkering on the solar panels and Yoni plans to do a bit of painting around the place. Thanks guys.

It was agreed upon at the last meeting that we increase our hut fees to help cover our Insurance costs.

The new rate for hut fees is as follows:

Members \$4.00 per night

Non Members \$6.00 per night

New Appointments:

Secretary: Ian MacGregor

Treasurer: Seb Head

A note from the President:

Hi All

I'd just like to squeeze in a paragraph of thanks to Bronwyn for the truly good work she has done as Treasurer over her time. The Club really appreciates your efforts, thanks.

And

Thank you to Seb for putting up your hand for the job.

Thanks also to Ian Mc who will be stepping up to fill Seb's shoes as Secretary.

There is a good feel in the air regarding the Clubs future, with Membership growing and trips a plenty. Lots of things happening out there so get down and get dirty.... Yeah!

North Island SAREX Date Change

Dave Smith

The date for the next North Island Cave Sarex has been changed to 10-11 February 2007.

Normally it is held on the first weekend in March but has been shifted to avoid clashing with the SI Sarex. The North Island Sarex will again focus on a day of vertical skills.

GENERAL

Welcome to new members:

Shane from Ireland

Darryl Waie

Last months meeting at Steve and Jenny's was a good turn out, 18 members. It was good to see so many faces and Jenny's baking went down a real treat, mmmm thanks Jenny.

Next month's meeting is at Mike and Sarah Brewer's house.

Be nice to see you all there.

The Editor

Dawn Wood