



CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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NEWSLETTER

WWW.CHILLAGOECAVINGCLUB.ORG.AU

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Keefs Cavern

(P.Bannink)

Van Christensen, Peter B., Peter English and Marta del Pozo Fonseca – 21-22 March. Three club members headed out to Chillagoe in late March with Spanish caver Marta del Pazo Fonseca (who was visiting Cairns).

Marta is fluent in four languages, so there were no communication barriers to overcome. She is a member of the Spanish adventure group 'Madteam' who caved in Cataluña, the Pre-Pyrenees and the Pyrenees. Having excellent vertical caving and rock climbing experience, there were no restrictions to where we could go.

Marta was very keen to see what Tropical caves in this part of the world looked like, although many Australian caves are on a much smaller scale than anything in Europe.

Consensus on the first morning got the team out to do a Keefs Cavern through trip to Ryan Imperial Cave. The cave is not that technically challenging but only Van had been there before and he knew the route through.

We all got out there by 10.30am and headed into the entrance chamber, Marta keeping an eye out for

her greatest caving fear (meeting one of Chillagoe's large cave spiders).



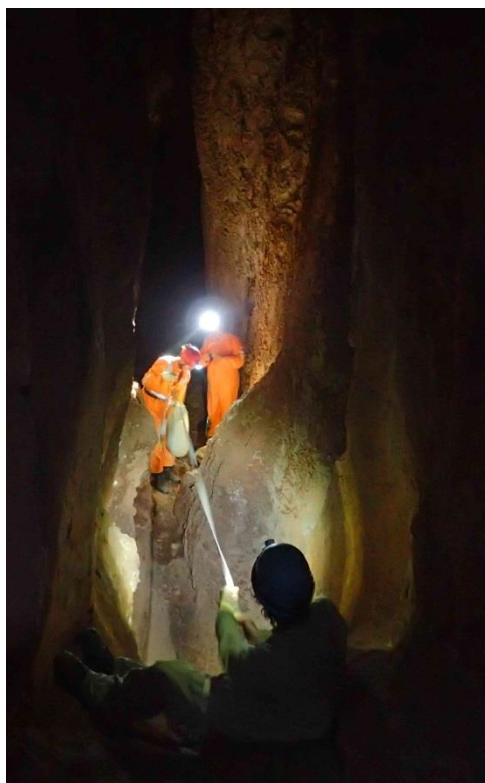
Marta and Peter B. at the main entrance

© P. English

The first obstacle is a 5m deep pit, with no belay points it took a little time to organise a system for everyone to cross safely, then all the bags of gear. The second obstacle is called 'the guage', where larger cavers are restricted from continuing on. Peter E. gave it a good go, but 15 years of sedentary life looking after kids, had added a little too much to his waist line.

The two Peters returned to the main entrance, so Peter could walk around and enter Ryan Imperial Cave and meet the team at the junction. We continued on, climbing up a very narrow rift to an upper junction. There were three alternative routes, each with its own challenges. The Birth Canal was one squeeze Peter did not want to repeat so the least challenging 'Laundry Shoot' was chosen.

I got a bit lost at this stage but we found ourselves in a deep rift system with one branch leading up to the link into Ryan Imperial Cave. The tall narrow rifts are very impressive in this section of the cave. No swiftlets were evident however there were a few nests on the ground after being washed off the walls above. Van rigged the 14m pitch with a doubled 30m rope, so we could pull through once down the other side.

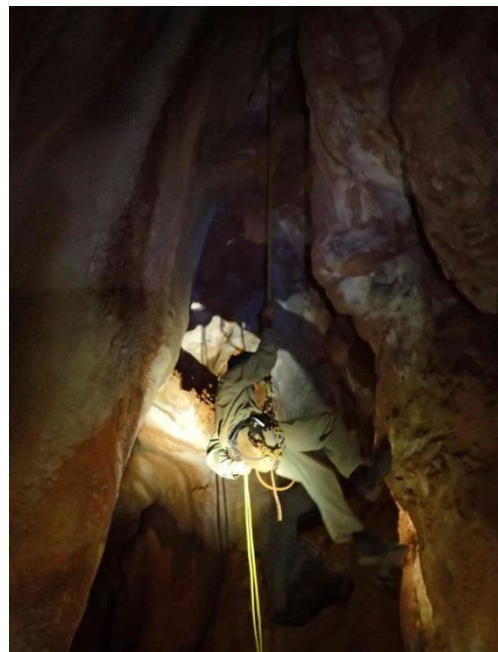


© M. del Pozo Fonseca

Transferring bags over the pit

A short walk got us into the old tourist section of the Ryan Imperial system with the wooden walkways and ladders all still in very good condition. After a quick look around we exited and walked over to Markhan Tower for a trip through Markam cave via an un-tagged back entrance. Marta was relatively impressed with the decoration, daylight chambers and old graffettii, despite a lot of the old formation being taken as souvenirs long ago.

We got back at 5.00 pm for a swim at creek and a local pub dinner, washed down with a couple of beers. The next day we decided to head out to Bubo Cave with the possibility of visiting Geck Cave as well. Bubo Cave (CH215) is in a small tower at the far western end of Spring Tower complex. The site is near the old abandoned Red Dome mine site (which has long since been dismantled).



© M. del Pozo Fonseca

Van abseiling the 15m pitch (last down)

Heaps of mining rubbish still litters the landscape. Van did not take long to find the main doline entrance and we were all soon exploring the main series of passages. The main drag follows the deepest section of the cave, which is quite well decorated. Great care was taken in the lower section not to make a trog route as there was still moisture in the lower section.



© P. Bannink

Peter E. in Bubo Cave entrance

Peter B. found a small population of Plant Hoppers but they were not adapted to cave life, the adults having large eye's and the body a grey colouration. Various sections were discovered and explored, after about 2 hours we found time had really run out and we headed back to the clubhouse to head back home.



© P. Bannink

Marta admiring formation in Bubo Cave

With three cavers carrying cameras, a large number of photo's were taken on the trip and quite a few turned out to be quite stunning. Many thanks to the team for making this a great weekend, and thanks to Peter English for driving most of us out to Chillagoe and back.

Club AGM

The date for the clubs annual AGM has been set for Saturday 2nd May. It's time for members to think of paying their membership fees for the 2015 – 2016 year. A flyer will go out advertising the AGM and the executive expect just about all full members living within 300km to attend. Please, we do not want a repeat of last year.

New Caves Australia Website

There is now an opportunity to check out a new version of the Caves Australia (Journal) as the ASF moves towards digital production. I found the site easy to use and it enabled articles to be read with full colour photos.

The site can be accessed from <http://cavesaustralia.com/>. Remember to indicate your support for the site if you want to see it stay online.

Up and Coming Events

April

- 3rd - 6th April (Easter) - various members caving.
- 1st -14th April. Club SRT Expedition to Nelson, New Zealand. Five major vertical caves including Stormy Pot/Nettelbed Cave through trip.
- 11/12th - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe.
- 13-18th – Student 'Cave Camp' - occasional use of the clubhouse (**Note: Not a club caving event**).

- 28th - 1st May – TAS Student Camp - use of the clubhouse (**Note: Not a club event**).

May

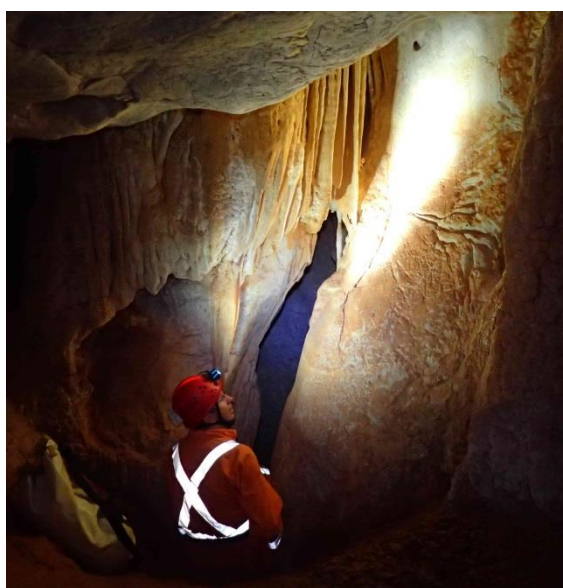
- 2nd May – Club **AGM**
- 5th - 8th May – TAS Student Camp - use of the clubhouse (**Note: Not a club event**).

June

- 6/7th - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe
- 21-26 June ASF Conference at Exmouth, WA
Ningaloo Underground 30th ASF Conference.

See Web Site : <http://ningaloo.wasg.org.au/>

Peter Bannink & Van Christensen (Secretary).



© M. del Pozo Fonseca

Peter B. somewhere in Keefs Cavern upper rifts



© P. Bannink

Juvenile Plant Hopper in Bubo Cave