



CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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OCTOBER 2013

NEWSLETTER

WWW.CHILLAGOECAVINGCLUB.ORG.AU

In This Issue....

- Weekend caving
- Piano Tower Exploration
- ASF Insurance
- Visiting Schools
- New Zealand - January 2014

Weekend caving

Only six cavers turned up for a weekend of caving earlier this month. Ray had been in Chillagoe since Friday and visited Bubu Cave with Paul. Arriving late on Saturday, I had already missed the first trip out to the Queenslander System. With the day almost gone I took the chance to make a quick trip to CH526, located on Suicide Tower.

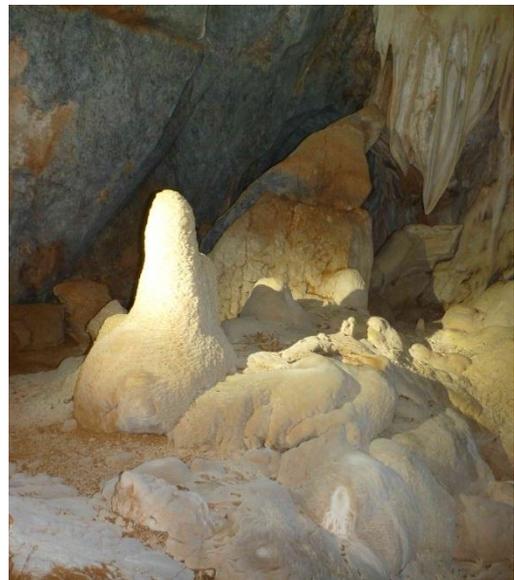


Ray at the 'comfy' squeeze

Though I had not been there in four years it only took about 10 min to find the entrance. A small low crawl amongst boulders, is not a very distinctive

entrance on such a large tower, so we were lucky to find it.

The cave just consists of one main chamber with some small decorated areas. A comfy squeeze gets you in the main chamber and I had the impression that this cave was about three times larger. We explored each section but could not find any other connections. We exited after about an hour and then climber to the top of the tower for a view of the sunset over the surrounding landscape.



Pristine formation

Saturday evening was great fun. We viewed a video on SRT which Ray has brought back from the UK. There was just too much information to take in but I was very impressed with the demonstrated rope tying and rigging techniques shown. I can only

recommend it to anyone wanting to practise safe caving and SRT.

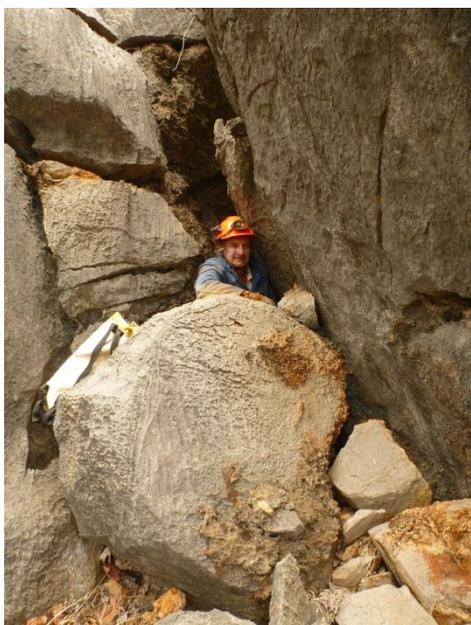
Sunday Peter and Ray went exploring on Piano Tower while the other contingent of cavers tried to drive to the Walkunder Tower, but were unsuccessful in getting there. All in all it was a great weekend, thanks to those who turned up.

Piano Tower Exploration

Ray Deasy and Peter B. took the opportunity to have another brief look around Piano Tower.

On a previous visit Peter had smelled the distinct aroma bat guano among boulders on top of the eastern end of the Piano Tower complex. They set out at 7:30am for a morning scout around. It was quite cool with high level cloud making the walk in quite pleasant.

Investigations started on the southern face looking at the base of the main cliff line. Small choked rock shelters were all that was found. Splitting up Peter, continued to move west, locating one small cave (10m deep), this looked to have low prospects. Ray then climbed to the top of the tower and began looking at suitable gaps in the rock piles. Between the rocks they pushed into a small rift near the top of the tower, which looked more cave like. It closed down after a few metres.



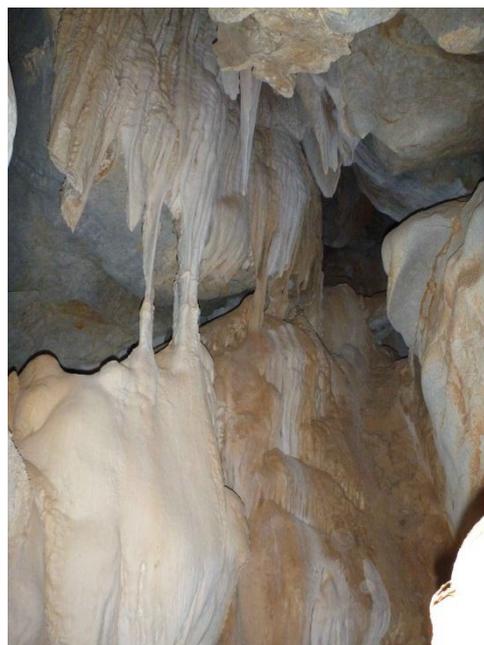
Ray at the cave Entrance

Disappointed Peter moved to where the bats smell had been detected the previous year but nothing was evident in the area this time. A small entrance high in the tower was located leading onto some boulders, a lower 4m climb was also evident but

from above looked to be obstructed and there was no air movement. Another hour poking about the surface was met with frustration as the temperatures started to then climb into the low 30's.

Ready to give up Peter then returned to the high entrance to push the final lead. When crammed in the hole, air was detected slowly moving in. Climbing further down, the small rift opened out below, descending another 5 metres among some large boulders.

Now in solid passage, the rock pile then opened out into a small formation chamber with two main leads. The left lead continued down to a small rift with extensive formation. After taking a few photo's, Peter squeezed into a narrow rift to the left and this again opened up. Once through, the faint glow of daylight was detected to the right. Ahead a deep rift appeared choked with rubble. Moving towards the opening, the daylight area looked familiar an appeared to be the small 10m cave found earlier in the morning.



The main formation chamber

Returning through the slot Ray and Peter then looked at the second lead. Though initially promising, the passage quickly stopped short at a very low (60cm) flat phreatic fissure about 5m wide. Peering in from a far, the passage seemed to be going nowhere.

Peter decided to have a closer look and crawled in to find another flat horizontal rift intersecting at about 30 degrees. Following the phreatic junction to the left a small straight phreatic passage was

entered which enlarged slightly as it descended gently.

The roof was filled with a breccia of fractured limestone fragments. It had the impression of being some kind of palaeo-fill which might have been deposited in a bedding fracture. The walls also had fracture marks though they were all filled with different mineral deposits.



Micro fractures in the solid walls

Crawling on for another 8m, a vertical 1m wide perpendicular phreatic slot was encountered, which fell away for about 8 metres. Deep and with smooth shear sides, a rope would be required to explore the rift below. Despite the junction, the original passage continued straight. Bridging the rift and crawling on another 6m, revealed another 8m deep rift with intersecting junctions of two other vertical passages.



Ray at the phreatic junction

Ray threw a few pebbles down and the tinkering echo indicated there might be more passage beyond the rift maze below. With no vertical gear,

exploration was halted and we left the cave excited about how extensive the cave may be at the lower levels and if these passages would lead to a water table.



Piano Tower Complex – eastern

ASF Insurance

There has been a recent review of our ASF insurance cover. It is now clear that all cavers attending a club trip must be covered by ASF insurance or the actions of Trip Leaders are not covered by the insurance.

The following criteria qualify as a club trip;

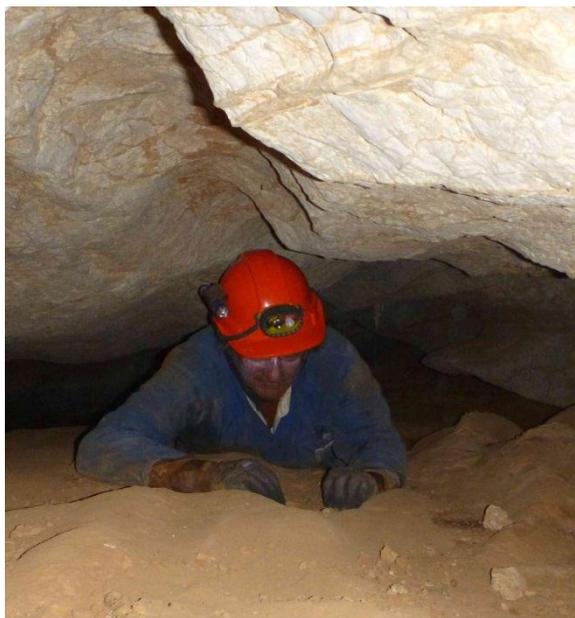
1. All members of the party are ASF members.
2. The party is led by a club trip leader.
3. The trip leader advises the executive of the trip prior to **or**;
4. Records the particulars in the club trip book at the clubhouse prior to the trip taking place **or**;
5. The trip is advertised in the Club Newsletter.

Visiting Schools

The executive have advised club members that any visiting school have to be supported by those members suggesting they stay at the club and who are taking them caving. This month there was no organisation for the cleaning of facilities prior to the arrival of Jubilee Christian College.

Dusty conditions are fine for club members with low expectations, but completely unsuitable of visiting members of the public. The Executive will

attempt to find a local cleaner to help facilitate cleaning, prior to the arrival of a school group.



Ray crawling out of the phreatic section

New Zealand - January 2014

Steven and Philip Morgan are heading to NZ in early January for a spot of caving. The primary objective is to bottom Legless which is a vertical cave with 16 pitches and a depth of 362m. Pitches include a 40m, 60m and 70m. Rigging, bottoming and de-rigging legless should take 2 - 3 days. It is intended to spend the remaining time in Middle Earth, a system which is now over 30km. Participants will need to have strong vertical caving skills.

NZ caves are wet and cold and are a serious undertaking. Participants will need to have their own SRT rig and set of waterproof overalls. The trip will commence in Nelson on Sunday 5th January and conclude on Monday morning 13th January. Participants will need to make their own way to and from Nelson. Fly from Brisbane to Auckland or Wellington and get a connecting flight to Nelson. Accommodation will be at the Nelson Speleological Group hut at Takaka Hill for all nights except the last night, which will be spent in Nelson. In addition to accommodation costs, participants will be expected to share hire car costs.

If you are interested and would like more information please contact Steven Morgan: steven.morgan61@gmail.com.au, 0418882 817.

Bookings for the trip will close at the end of November, and participants will be expected to

attend the Club's December Christmas break up week end for training and trip preparation meeting.

Up and Coming Events

November

- 9th - 10th November - Club Caving Trip. (Contact Peter Bannink) - Karst exploration or cave surveying around Piano or Markham Towers.

December

- 7th - 8th December - End of year gathering, last club caving activity at Chillagoe till March 2014. Any interested Members please e-mail Peter Bannink.
- 10th December – March 2014 Club caving activities at Chillagoe closed for the 'Wet Season'

January

- New Zealand Expedition – Contact Steven Morgan for updates on the event. Steven's e-mail address is steven.morgan61@gmail.com.

Go Caving!

Peter Bannink & Winfried Weiss (Secretary)



A loveable hairy cave companion