



# CHILLAGOE CAVING CLUB

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## OCTOBER 2015

## NEWSLETTER

[WWW.CHILLAGOECAVINGCLUB.ORG.AU](http://WWW.CHILLAGOECAVINGCLUB.ORG.AU)

### In This Issue....

- September Vertical Caving Weekend
- Visit to Scaramouch CH259
- Castle Cave Abseil Practice
- Club News
- Up and Coming Events

### September Vertical Caving Weekend

P Bannink

A small group of enthusiastic cavers (Ray Deasy, Van Christenson, Emily Holt, Jamie Ellacott and Peter Bannink) assembled at the clubhouse for the September club event. First up was some SRT practice at the new abseil into Keefs Cavern (Keefs Abs). This is an excellent location, where you can literally step of a rock and head down without much fiddling around.



Emily enjoying prussic practice

© R. Deasy

Emily impressed us all with how little you could use to climb ropes, by just using prussic knots and a small descender. Change overs did take a longer time but she certainly has honed this technique. Our group spent much of the day going up and down till we had finally had enough.



© E.Holt

Jamie just about at the free hang!

On the Sunday we thought of abseiling the large daylight into Blue Sky Cave, something a little different and a bit more of a thrill (as it is much more exposed). We were surprised to find 4 bolts available to anchor and backup the rope. The lead over the edge was however over very rough terrain requiring a number of bags and rope protectors. The rigging site is very sunny, so we ended up cooking on the limestone terrain for an hour at least till, we finally got all the rigging sorted.

Setting up the rope protectors at the lip of the free-hang proved quite difficult, as the protectors have a tendency to slide down the rope quite unexpectedly (if they are not secured properly). Ray was the first to descend followed by Jamie and Peter. The chamber is very spacious by Chillagoe standards,

offering a spectacular descent into the cave. Once in the cool chamber, a few of us practiced change overs, while Emily and Jamie went exploring. Van took on the challenge of prusiking out to de-rig, while the rest of us chose a leisurely trip through to the closest exit.



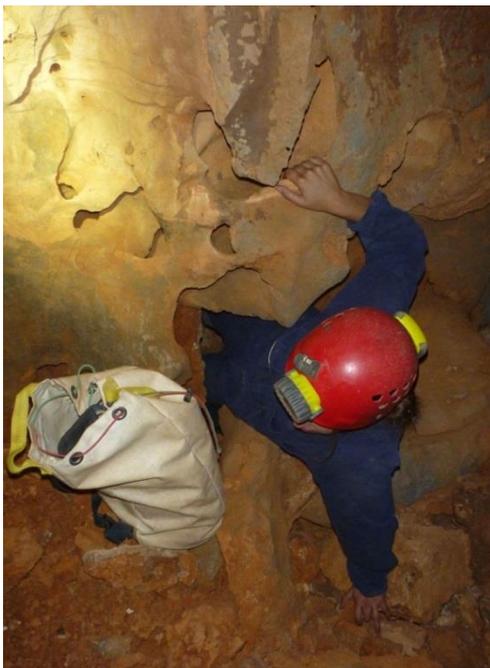
© R. Deasy

At the base of the Blue Sky doline, Jamie 'On Rope'.

## Visit to Scaramouche CH259

Peter Bannink

In October eight cavers turned up for the club weekend. After the first day spent doing a Keefs Cavern through trip, the second day was a planned abseil into Technicolour Pot (in the Spring Tower Complex). An hour into the trip and everything was going horribly wrong. We forgot the locality map and did not know any of the tag numbers, this was not helped by the fact that we had not been there for fourteen years. All these factors weighed heavily, as Van and Peter scabbled over the same area of karst in the sun, convinced the entrance was nearby.



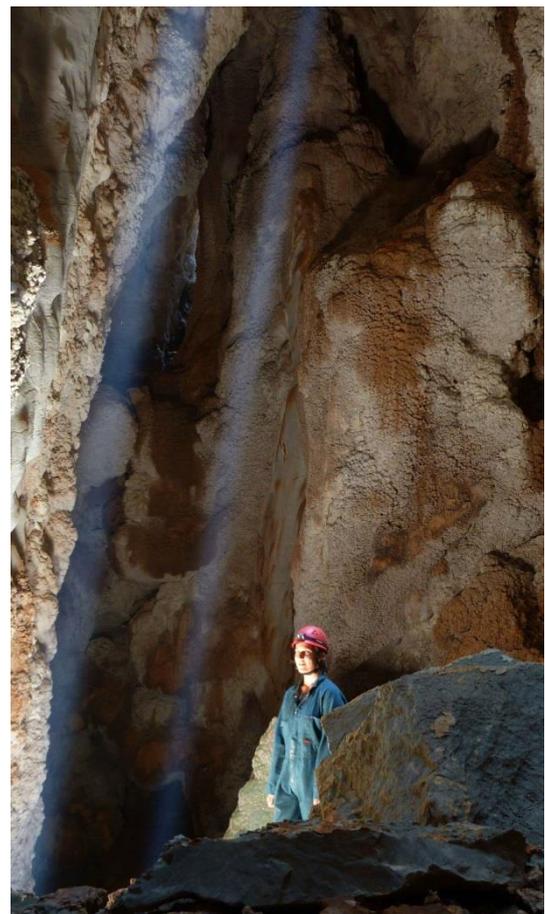
© P. Bannink

Sarah entering the squeeze

Another half an hour went by and by now it was very hot (34 °C) and everyone was getting thirsty. We all had a very limited amount of water to last the day. There was a final unanimous decision to just get into the nearest cave we could find, as Van had found a few tagged entrances close by. Sarah and Joy disappeared down a small fissure at CH259, reporting a steep climb down a narrow rift, with a right angle squeeze at the bottom, blowing air.

While the rest of the team contemplated whether it was worthwhile coming down, Sarah was able to get through the squeeze and report that it opened up further down. I was able to make the hole a little wider, making this a relatively easy obstacle. Further in, a distinctive flowstone filled rift identified the cave as Scaramouche. A cave which I last visited in 2000, over 15 years ago.

With everyone safely down the steep climb, groups of two or three set about exploring the various deep rifts and lower passages, where we were occasionally dazzled by spectacular light displays.



© P. Bannink

Joy watching the sun beams

Lunch was a most relaxing affair and everyone had a great time exploring in different directions, most of the leads looped back and no links were

discovered to any caves nearby. Paul Osborne reports that there is a connection to Good Black Friday via a squeeze, but this connection was not found.



© P. Bannink

Lunch in the main rift of Scaramouch Cave

We all headed out in the early afternoon to catch a swim at the Chillagoe Wear. Despite the drought there was still enough water to wallow around in. Laura even found that swing rope worked quite well.

That evening everyone headed to the pub to catch a few cold beers and watch the footy. Sunday nights have the added bonus of throwing dice for your beer (an even number = free beer). I was pretty happy with two free beers to carry the evening forward. Van was ecstatic with the NRL Grand Final result, and all in the last few seconds of play. All together an unbelievable weekend.

### Castle Cave Abseil Practice Peter Bannink

On the Monday Van suggested some abseiling practice at Castle Cave. There were two descent options, a free hang and a re-belay. Not everyone had all the right prusik gear, but those without could walk out. Few in the group had visited Castle Cave before, so there was the added option of some cave exploration as well.

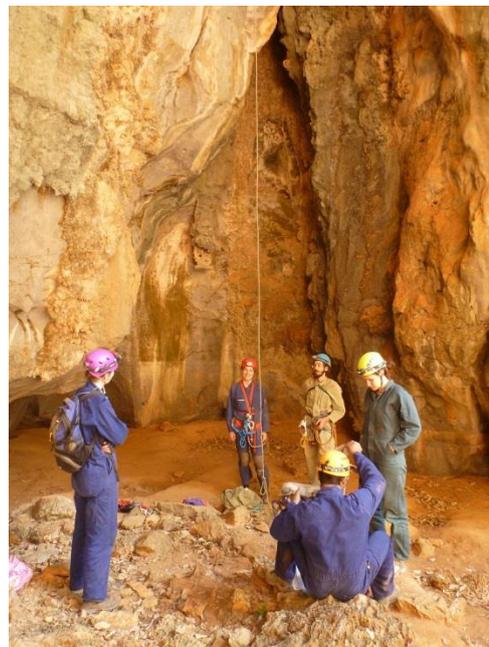
Van sorted out all the rigging, anchoring the ropes to two large chains, which have been bolted over the drops. This creates two neat free hangs, which can both be accessed from the same rest area.



© P. Bannink

Gearing up at the top of the pitches

At about 28m, the descent into the softly lit doline is thrilling. It was a great confidence booster for the new vertical cavers. Some members had new Hydrobot descenders, although these seemed small and flimsy (almost like a belay device), however everyone reported they worked well.



© P. Bannink

The base of the free-hang pitch

Once down, we all entered Castle Cave and explored the area for about an hour. Peter had fun taking lots of daylight photo's while some members

pushed some of the smaller leads in the cave. Those with prusik gear climbed the ropes, (the re-belay being a challenge for some ☺), while everyone else walked out. Thanks for another great vertical weekend!

## **Club News**

There are problems with the grey water pump attached to new amenities block. This is being examined over the wet season and will hope-fully be functioning again by March 2016.

Clare Mullins has now settled into her role as caretaker at the clubhouse and will hopefully have a relaxing stay over the wet season until caving fires up again in 2016.

Peter has put in a grant for vertical caving equipment with the Department of National Parks, Sport & Racing's - Get Going Clubs grant funding program. This will provide introductory vertical cavers with a full set of vertical gear when joining club events and provide additional rigging equipment. The latest news is that the club has been awarded the grant and vertical trip leaders are finalizing the purchase list. If anyone wants input, please contact Paul Osborne. The bulk of the purchase is eight sets of vertical SRT equipment for introductory vertical cavers and training.

## **Up and Coming Events**

### **October**

- 3 - 5<sup>th</sup> - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe.

### **November**

- 14 - 15<sup>th</sup> - Club Caving Weekend at Chillagoe.
- Weekend Club Caving - closed for the wet season.

### **December**

- 27 - 29<sup>th</sup> - Club Working Weekend at the clubhouse (water mains upgrade).

### **January**

- 22 - 27<sup>th</sup> - Club Working Weekend at the clubhouse.

Peter Bannink & Van Christensen (Secretary).



© P. Bannink

Sarah White at the re-belay in Castle Cave



© P. Bannink

Main chamber in Castle Cave