

Ackroyd, Peter, (2008) A Nomad's View of the Nullarbor. *CEGSA News* **209 (Vol 53 No 1)** pp 5-8.

Carr, Daryl (2003) Nullarbor 2003: The Latest VSA Nullarbor Expedition. *Nargun* **36(2)** pp 29–32.

Peter Ackroyd, 16 April 2008

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Pearse Resurgence (NZ) 2008

Three South Australian cavers have recently returned to Oz following a successful expedition to dive the Pearse Resurgence in NZ. Trip leader Richard Harris (Harry) was accompanied by Grant Pearce and Andrew Bowie in Feb/March on a trip lasting just over 2 weeks.

2 pallets of diving and camping equipment were shipped from Adelaide before the divers arrived. A rental van (aka "The Slow Rocket") and a trailer got the lads from Christchurch to Nelson (about 8 hours drive). Local cavers in Nelson (the area is home to some world class vertical dry caves like Nettlebed and Harwood's Hole) assisted them further. From Nelson they drove to a logging clearing in the Pearse Valley from where they were ferried into the camp site by Syd Deaker from Action helicopters (5 trips each way) (see front cover photo). Amid pouring rain and a fairly gnarly looking resurgence, they pitched camp and prayed for an improvement in the weather!



Pearse Expedition 2008 L-R; Richard Harris, Grant Pearce and Andrew Bowie.

The weather gods must have been happy because the rain gradually faded away and they enjoyed some crisp sunny periods over the next 10 days. The first day was spent setting up the decompression habitat at 7m in the Nightmare Crescent. This involved securing an upturned IBC (Intermediate Bulk Container) in the passage, then filling it with air. A decompressing diver could then sit in relative comfort out of the water breathing surface supplied 100% O2. With over a tonne of lift, the IBC must be well fastened to the granite and Dave Apperley (who has explored the site more than most) has spent many hours underwater drilling and inserting bolts to use as anchor points.



Grant and Andrew mixing stage tanks and rebreather spheres.



Harry with the Mk15.5 electronic mixed gas closed circuit rebreather. Preparing to take some stage tanks into the the cave.

The next 5 days were spent diving the cave to progressively greater depths, staging various gases as they went and adding some detail to previously drawn maps of the site. Video and still images were also made along the way. A particularly interesting find was made by Grant in a side tunnel at 18m; a fossilized bone later identified as the tarsometatarsus of a kiwi (the bird, not the All Black variety). This has the local cavers and paleontologists scratching their heads as to how it got into the cave. Small translucent

invertebrates (?amphipods) were noted in the Nightmare Crescent to 18m depth, and two fish (?Native Trout) of approximately 20cm length were seen in the entrance pool.

After diving the bone chilling 7 degree waters of the Pearse, the group were treated to a variety of culinary delights including Peas Harris, Pasta Oxygene with Bacon Free Radicals (see "How to light a fire in the rainforest using a G cylinder of O2 and a Jerry Can of Petrol"), and coffee with one Snickers bar or two (OK someone didn't pack enough sugar).



Harry after the 182m dive, resting on the surface breathing oxygen as a precaution.

After a number of buildup dives and with numerous cylinders now staged in the cave, Harry made a push dive on Saturday 8th March. Following line laid by Dave Apperley and Rick Stanton to -177m, Harry scooted down to -182m and examined about 20m of new horizontal passage before turning the dive at 15mins bottom time. At that point the passage appeared to be heading gently upwards, however it is entirely possible the cave descends again to greater depths. 4 ½ hours later Harry emerged from the habitat still toasty warm thanks to the offerings of hot soup (delicious) and warm Gatorade (disgusting) from the trusty support team.

Following this dive, the habitat was deconstructed, the stage tanks all removed and preparations for getting everything out and back to Australia were made. A quick half-day fossick in Nettlebed Cave in search of the elusive Hinkle Horns Honking Holes finished a great adventure.

Diving Summary March 2008

Dive 1 Monday 3rd. Open circuit dives (RH) to install habitat at 7m in Nightmare Crescent. Water levels still rising following rain previous night.

Dive 2 Tuesday 4th. CCR dive to explore shallow cave, check guidelines and stage first cylinder at 33m. Mapping in Nightmare Cres, Airchamber and side passage. (RH, AB, GP).

Dive 3 Wednesday 5th. 123m CCR dive to Big Room with scooter. One video light on scooter imploded (faulty I think). Upper passage leading off big room appears to drop straight down into main conduit although RH didn't follow it all the way to confirm. Grant did OC dive to continue mapping in shallows, and located fossil bone 3m into side passage at 18m depth. Believes the bone resided in or around some rock matrix up on wall, and was revealed when the rock was bumped to floor. Trevor Worthy (Adelaide Paleo) identified bone from images as contemporary Kiwi sp. (RH, GP).

Dive 4 Thursday 6th. Photo survey (RH) concentrating on first 25m of cave (in depth) including side passage and the air chamber. Small chamber and aven noted on left wall as you leave the Nightmare Crescent, containing two large marble "prongs".



Grant Pearce surfaces in the lake chamber. Does he look a bit cold? He is!

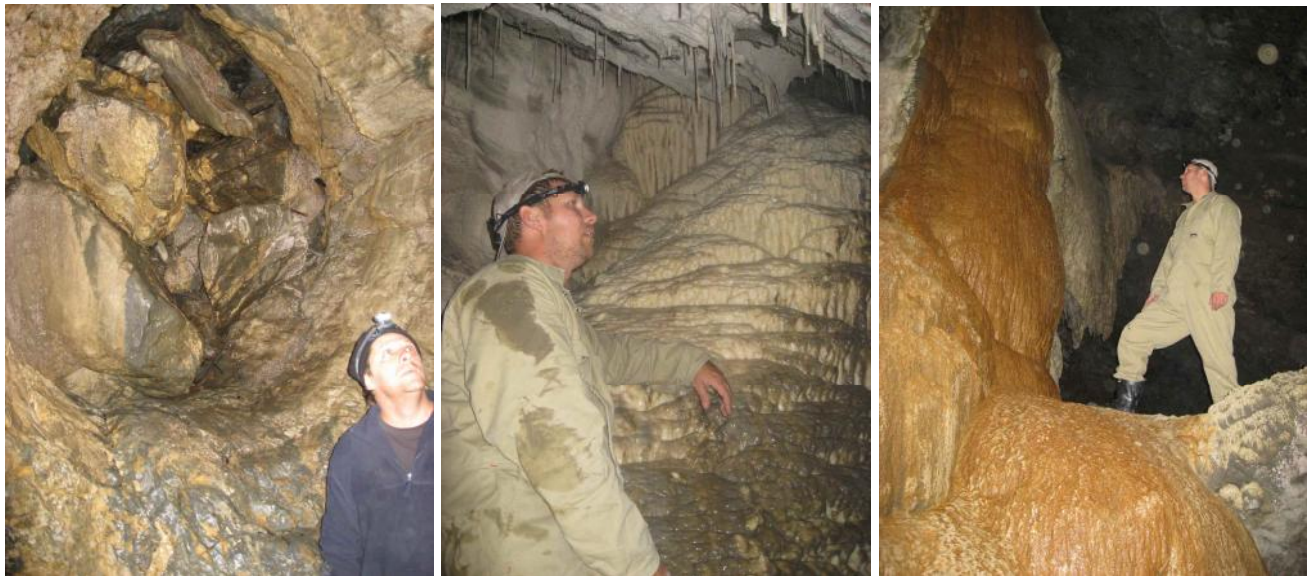
This area was named the "Lion's Den" because of the presence of the 2 large "teeth". A possible lead was also noted looking up and right when reaching the end of the "Side Passage". The floor of the Side Passage drops away in places down to Weaver's ledge. Craig Howell made this connection with a line last year. In the air chamber, the sharp saddle of rock on the NW side must be where John Atkinson spent his unpleasant time stranded last year, and we named this John's Saddle. High in the NE corner wall is a dry spillway that warrants exploration in future. First 25m of Gargleblaster also examined. (RH, GP both OC)

Dive 5 Friday 7th. CCR dive (RH) to 111m to stage final gas in cave. This gave the following staged OC gas – oxygen at 7m, Nx 50% at 21m, Air at 33m and 50m, 20/40 x 2 at 70m, 10/60 x 2 at 105m plus gas carried by RH on dive. More mapping notes made on this dive.

Dive 6 Saturday 8th. CCR dive (RH) to 182m using diluent 6/85. Through Rick Stanton’s S-bend into a new level that we called the “South Eastern Freeway” which is the main road connecting Adelaide to the Mt Gambier caving region in South Australia. This continues the theme of the Brooklyn Exit (Dave Apperley’s home road) and the M40 (Rick Stanton’s main road). GP made numerous visits to habitat on OC.

Dive 7 Sunday 9th. OC dive to de-rig habitat and remove all stage tanks, the deepest of which had been left at 50m by RH the previous day. (RH, GP).

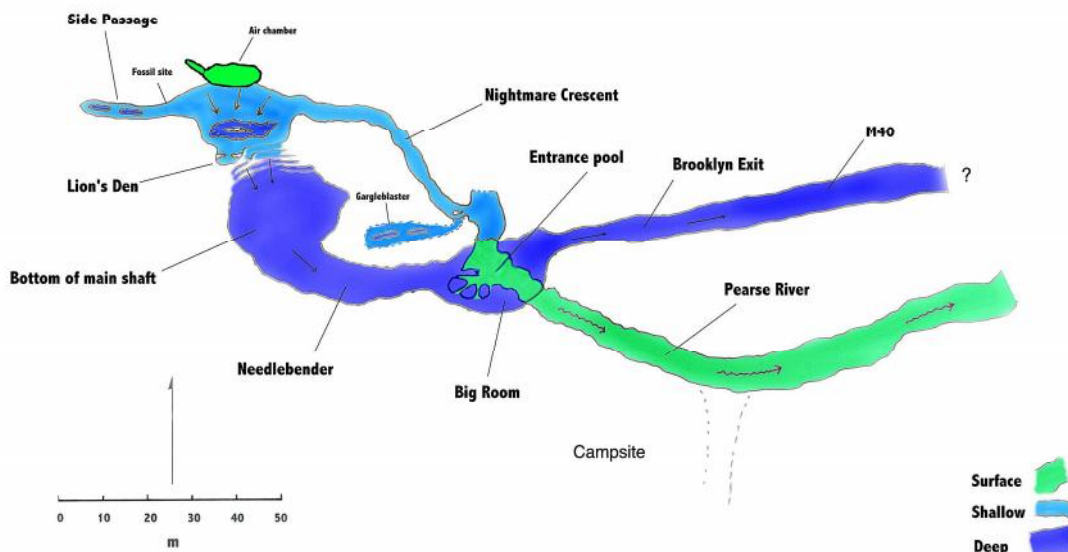
Monday 10th Dry caving Nettlebed Cave (RH, GP).

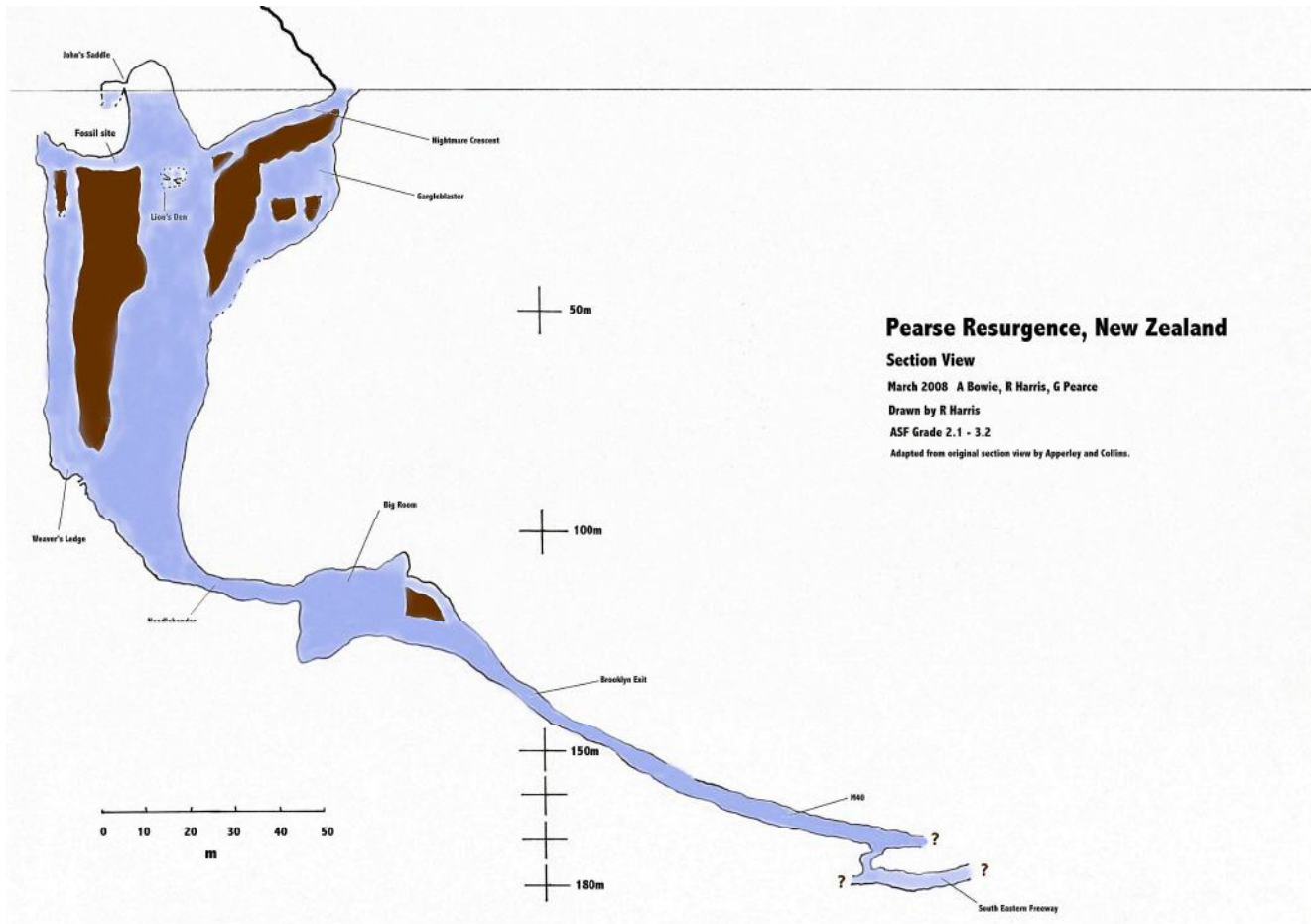


Dry Caving in Nettlebed Cave after the diving was completed.

Pearse Resurgence, New Zealand

Plan View
 March 2008. A Bowie, R Harris, G Pearce.
 Drawn by R Harris
 ASF Grade 2.1 - 3.2





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Photographs by various members of the team.

Andrew Bowie CDAA 3687
Richard Harris CDAA 1360/CEGSA 0401
Grant Pearce CDAA 1382/CEGSA 9211

Richard Harris, March 2008

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Corra-Lynn Cave, Curramulka – Sat 19th April 2008

Group: Tim Payne (Leader), Pam & Mitchel Payne (our youngest caver?), Andrea Gordon, David Fielder, Peter Ashenden & family (4), and myself, Neville Skinner.

We met outside Curramulka Bowling Green around 9am, before departing to the farmhouse where Tim picked up the keys and we headed up the hill to the cave. The weather was kind and the day was looking good.

On arrival at the site, Tim checked the pathway and entrance for obstacles, and then proceeded with the appropriate site brief where we learnt it was our job to know where we were at all times and to have fun. We were told anyone not having fun had a responsibility to advise Tim if this was the case. Do your worst I thought, I've been here before with Graeme Pilkington...

The first trip was clearly to ascertain which of us suffered from claustrophobia and an inability to tolerate loud noise, as Tim took us all down very tight squeeze passages, including the 'Beard