

Trip Reports

L-4-6 Mostyn Hardy Cave & MC-14 Lynds Cave

Norman Poulter

7-22 February 2012

Party: Vicki Bresnan [SRGWA], David Wools-Cobb [NC] & Norman Poulter

[An edited version – caves only – of Norm's report covering a trip to Tasmania by visiting WA caver, Vicki Bresnan – Ed.]

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The next two days were caving days, the first, Mostyn Hardy Cave, which is on private property. The owner operates his property, beside a river with limestone cliffs on the opposite bank, as an eco-accommodation multi-activity centre. The cave is only a short walk from the accommodation compound, nestled in a damp, shady doline; leech paradise, although luckily we didn't encounter any. Entry into the near-vertical entrance is gained with the aid of a rope and slippery mud steps. A small lake is at the bottom, along with at least one obligatory decaying log. Our host led us through one of the two passages leading off from the entrance – to be greeted by several of the many Tasmanian cave spiders – with many more to come, along with their principle prey, cave crickets. The cave had passages, chambers, rifts and avens of all shapes and sizes, along with a small, active stream. Calcite decoration abounded in numerous places, especially along fault lines. There was also a large crack visible in several places throughout the cave – the result of a "recent" earthquake. The highlight of our tour was being led through a crawl into a low chamber with an active stream, crammed with so many glow-worms that you could easily move around without the need of a headlamp. A couple of cave spiders were also there, one guarding an egg-sac.

It was near here, low down in a small alcove near the edge of the stream, that I spotted a small white spider in a tightly woven web – it was nothing like the traditional cave spider. The leg span was approximately 20-30 mm. Neither our host nor David had seen a spider like this before, leading us to speculate that this could be a new species. I observed another one under similar circumstances about an

hour later. Unfortunately I only had my "happy snapper" camera with me so couldn't attempt to get a picture of it.

All too soon, we emerged from the second entrance back into what was now a bright, sunny day, so after clambering back up the rope, trying not to damage the steps, bade our host good-bye and headed back to welcome showers and reminisces at David's house.

Whereas we had stayed mostly dry in Mostyn Hardy Cave, the next day we were guaranteed to get at least partially wet BEFORE we even reached Lynds Cave as part of the access track runs through the Mersey River in the Mole Creek region. Once through the rusty gate, you enter Lynds' own little river and have to perform some interesting gymnastics at a couple of small waterfalls in order to stay dry, that is, wet legs and feet only. If you lose your sparse foot or handholds, you get completely wet. Once past those obstacles, you're into the main cave and are shortly confronted by a magnificent bank of what was once overhanging-type flowstone, about 40 m long and 10-20 m high that had cracked and crashed down in the aftermath of a "mild" earthquake several years before – it would have been interesting to be there at the time – and frightening too. Still a fantastic decorative display. Calcite decoration abounded throughout what little Vicki and I saw of the cave.

Our purpose for being in the cave was to undertake a bit of restoration work as part of David's KarstCare projects. We were to do some flowstone scrubbing and stringline track marking about halfway into the cave. Reaching the area on a flowstone ledge above the stream, we located a suitable streamlet which would supply more than enough water flow for the small 12 V pump and lengths of pipe/hose fitted with a modified backpack fire pump of David's design for additional pressure. Working with this, and scrubbing brushes, began to make us feel as if we had indeed "fallen in the water" [Goon Show joke] at the waterfalls. Hours later, the work was finished and we had a late lunch, unpacked the stringline gear and marked out a suitable path through the flowstone-covered rocks and muddy area – a future trip will lay a "floor" to avoid mud contamination of boots.

With that done, we retraced our steps back to the outside world, not falling at the falls and maintaining our balance as we waded up the slippery Mersey riverbed.

Diving Under the Nullarbor – Easter 2012

Janine McKinnon

April 2012

Party: Full time: Peter Buzzacott, Janine McKinnon

Murra bit: (CDA) Liz Rogers, Ken Smith, Mark Pardoe

Is it possible to get cave diving gear for sidemount diving into a 23 kg luggage allowance? I pondered this question when Peter invited me on a trip he was organising to the Nullarbor over Easter. There was only one way to find out, and it is always surprising what you can wear onto a plane.

Peter provided all the camping gear, tanks and lots of the miscellaneous stuff needed for a trip like this. That was the only way I could make the trip.

The first adjustment to being back on the mainland was the 13 hour (1200 km) drive from Bunburry to Cocklebiddy. I will never think anywhere is a long way in Tassie again. We arrived at 9 pm and were so tired that we just set up camp and went to bed. I don't know what excuse I had to be tired, Peter had done all the driving. *[The 13 hours of incessant banter between the two of you would have tired me out – Ed.]*



J. McKinnon

Cocklebiddy entrance chamber.

The others weren't due to arrive until sometime Friday (and this was Wednesday night), so we planned on diving Cocklebiddy Cave with just we two, on Thursday. I am not sure if it has been done by only two people before as the logistics of getting the gear to the water is a bit lengthy, with a tripod usually employed to lower the gear from the lip of the entrance. We just carried it down the track, over the fence, set up a ladder for the 5 m drop, and continued ferrying trips down the rockpile to the water. That required three trips each. All this took 4 hours.

We took half an hour to gear up. There were a few problems. One of my tanks only had 150 bar (full is 240 bar), so that was going to shorten the dive a bit. Peter had some problems with balancing his tanks and shifted stuff around a bit. Finally, at 2:30 pm, we were off, swimming leisurely across the 200 m of lake on our backs, chatting

and enjoying the view of the roof. The sculpting on the walls all the way to the roof is very interesting and the cause still in debate. The cave dive then begins with a duck under a ledge.

I was there for a tourist dive and Peter wanted to collect water samples from the roof and floor of the underwater bits. Peter had told me that the water was about 18°C, but it felt like only 13°C, or thereabouts, to me as I swam across the lake. As we swam under the ledge, and reached 5 m depth, we passed through a thermocline AND a halocline; my first ever of both. It was an amazing experience. Pete, on the other side first, looked all shimmery and out of focus. Recent rains had left a cold, fresh water layer on top of the warm, dense, saltwater of the cave.



J. McKinnon

Cocklebiddy lake.

We swam for about half an hour, turning so we would have plenty of air left to use on another dive later in the trip (air was in short supply as we didn't have a compressor – just 14 tanks). We hadn't got as far as I would have liked as I was using 2 x 12 litre aluminium tanks, with weights in the bottom to stop them floating as they emptied, and I was finding them heavy going. I haven't used tanks this big in decades. Pete also was having trouble with his trim and buoyancy because of the set-up he was using, and didn't manage to get his samples. Still, it was a wonderful dive. Clear water, huge cave passage, massive boulders on the floor; and I was in Cocklebidy, a dream dive for Australian cave divers. A place I never thought I'd get to.

We left the gear on the beach after the dive and made our way out of the cave for the day, planning to return the following day. We were back at camp at 6 pm with plenty of time to drive (5 minutes) to the Cocklebidy roadhouse for showers.



Cocklebidy entrance doline.

Friday saw us back at the water in Cocklebidy Cave by 8:30 am. Pete was in the water at 9 am and went to do a quick dive to take his water samples and I started ferrying my gear up the rockpile to the ladder. There was a small hold up when he realised he didn't have enough weight as he tried to descend at the far end of the lake and returned for more weights (which I had already taken up to the ladder – bummer).

I had my gear ready for lifting up the ladder by the time Pete was finished diving and we started moving his gear up at 11:30 am. By 1:30 pm we had everything back in the car and headed for camp. It was hot, despite it being April.

Camp was right beside the entrance to Murra-el-Elevyn (10 minutes drive from Cocklebidy). We started sorting gear to go into this cave on the Saturday. A tripod (that Pete had built), which is set up over a 10 m drop, needs to be used to get the gear in and out of the sinkhole entrance. On the opposite side of the hole the rockpile comes to 5 m below the lip and the plan was to use the ladder here for the divers to get down. Unfortunately it was 1 m short, so I set the drop up SRT.

We had the tripod and rope ready by dark, and shower time at the roadhouse.

This was so civilized: a shower each night. It was also very appreciated as the work was hot and sweaty and the dust everywhere.

The others arrived after dark; Ken and Liz from the east and Mark from Geraldton (now THAT'S a drive for a weekend!). That was a final tally of 5 out of the 10 people on the permit, a fairly high drop out rate.

Saturday morning we started lowering gear down into the entrance around 10 am. Late by my standards but the others were more laid back than I am.

Ken went off to try to get his Subaru fixed as he had hit a stump the previous day and buckled the suspension at the front. He could only drive at 20 km/h. It is a long way back to Adelaide at that speed.

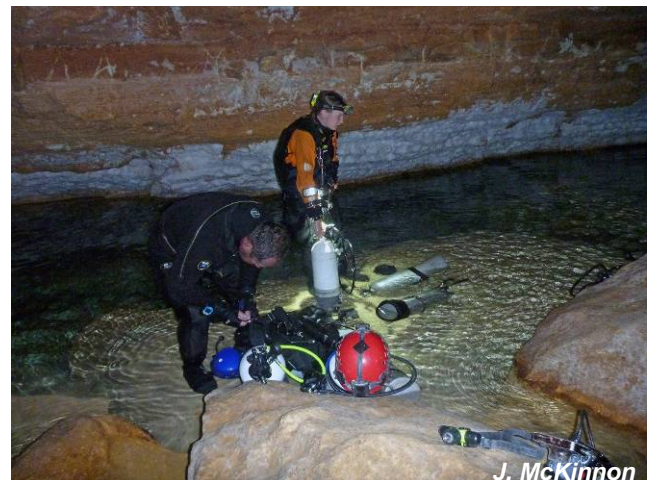
It took four hours again to get all the gear down the hole, and then down the rockpile (not as far as Cocklebidy, thank god), and then the 200 m through the cave to the lake.



Murra-el-Elevyn entrance chamber.

Pete had 2 x 15 litre tanks for me this time, so I first spent some time swimming around in the lake, trying to get the hang of swimming with two tanks almost as big as I am.

People had various personal projects and agenda, so we headed off on dives in different groups. Liz and Ken were focused on photography. Liz is a brilliant underwater photographer – check out her website (lizrogersphotography.com). Mark and I went in first to lay some line on the main route for everyone to follow for the days we were there.



Kitting up in Murra-el-Elevyn.

Pete had temperature loggers to put in to various spots in the cave and sieving to do for micro-fauna, but he also had trouble with his borrowed gear and spent the rest of the day sorting it out above water.

We were all out for the shower at the roadhouse by 7 pm.

Sunday, after lowering everyone's replacement stage tanks (except me – my massive 15 litre tanks lasted the whole three days), Pete, Mark and I did a big tour of the main cave for 75 minutes. We looked at two of the three air bells and toured the main passages and massive chamber. The air bells were beautiful and contained gypsum deposits over the walls. Some of the underwater sections were very large and the scalloping of the walls and roof in the tunnels was beautiful. The rock is white and pink, which adds to the beauty of the dive.

I went for a look at the last air bell whilst Mark started taking his gear out, as he had to leave the following morning. This was as well decorated an air bell as the other two. There are also bacterial mats in the passage leading to the air bell.

Liz and Ken were taking photos somewhere.

Pete and I helped Mark get his gear out and then Pete returned to do a late dive and put his loggers in (better late than never).

We looked at Liz's photos of an evening on her laptop. They were stunning.

Monday, Liz and Ken were up for more photography in the morning, I went for a big tour of the bits I hadn't seen, and some I had again, for 75 minutes, and Pete went and got his temperature loggers that he had left overnight, and sieved for micro life in the lake.

Then the gear haul-out began – a four hour job again. We lifted the last load just on dark. Time for a shower at the roadhouse.

Tuesday we headed back to Bunbury in 12 hours (with a tailwind), after a delay of a half hour when we couldn't find the car keys and started unpacking the trailer. Liz and Ken headed back east.

And Ken's car? He managed to fix it himself with some tools that Mark had and the Cocklebidy roadhouse facilities. Very lucky as the "local" tow truck driver (from Eucla – look at a map) had quoted \$2.50 per kilometre, both ways!

IB-110 Arthurs Folly

Alan Jackson

9 May 2012

Party: Serena Benjamin, Rolan Eberhard, Alan Jackson

This wasn't technically a club trip, although the party consisted of club members. I reckon it should be recorded, so here goes.

Rolan wanted a survey of the cave and all the existing data was fairly poorly collated. Madphil had scanned everything he could find into the archive but sketches were largely non-existent and it was generally all pretty poor. The best option seemed to be to start from scratch.

The hideous mud and shit in the entrance seemed to be acting as an efficient barrier as the log book Rolan had installed several years earlier, on the far side of the squalid entrance manoeuvre, was unsullied by entries. The log book was removed.

It took us a while to negotiate the tight and confusing first 150 m but we eventually squeezed through into the larger bits of the cave. At a fork in the main passage we tried the right branch first but it soon petered out so we surveyed back to the junction and then ambled up the left branch.

Eventually the good walking passage gets lower and one ends up on one's belly in the filth. We pursued this for 60 m or so before deciding to commence the survey out. (Rolan wasn't keen to push what he knew was going to become an increasingly muddy hell hole just for the sake of a complete survey).

We surveyed out as far as the squeeze at the start of the narrower stuff near the entrance (about 100 m from the entrance) as it was getting pretty late. We racked up 634 m of data (with lots of sketching required as the passage is quite large and full of sketchable stuff). As we went we discovered a few cairns and tapes that, while unlabelled, looked like they could be old survey stations. We linked

these into our new survey so we could try matching up the old data.



Serena demonstrating a good turn-around spot at the back end of Arthurs Folly.

Once back in the comforts of a warm office I analysed the new and old data and thoroughly read the few old trip reports for the cave. Once the old data was all plugged in and tied in at the suspected overlapping stations the data fitted pretty well, but unfortunately it didn't render any of the old data useable (the only sections that we hadn't already resurveyed were bits that didn't have any sketches associated with them). The old station 50 (rock cairn on entrance side of rockfall section) turned out to be synonymous with new station 80 and old station 65 (16 in Jeff Butt's notes from 29/3/87, marked with red flagging tape) is synonymous with one of our new stations (marked 'OLD' in the OnStation file and labelled '# red station old' in my original notes). Another relocatable station (an X in the mud at the start of the low muddy back end with a bit of orange flagging tape beside was discovered but we removed that bit of tape as we passed through and I have been unable to locate the data associated with that station in the archive or at Arthur's house, so there's no point