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Jenny Whitby

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BINOOMEA

The Newsletter of the Jenolan Caves Historical & Preservation Society.

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President's Column

August 2006 Binoomea

Jenolan Caves has been in the news recently, and this time for all the right reasons. New explorations in the Rho Hole and Barralong Cave have led to discoveries that have taken the public's imagination. My congratulations on behalf of JCH&PS to Sydney University Speleological Society on their exciting achievements.

New developments are happening too in the show caves, and at our August meeting we will be hearing and seeing some of these in a presentation on the new lighting system in the Temple of Baal Cave. This will include a visit to the Cave to see the new effects and hear the reasoning for the designs.

Please come and enjoy the evening. See back page for details.

On another matter, General Manager Andrew Fletcher and Personal Assistant Faye Christopher have announced their retirements from the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust. On behalf of the Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society I would like to thank both Andrew and Faye for the co-operation and assistance they have given us in the past, and wish them all the best for the future.

Arthur Gray

2006 President

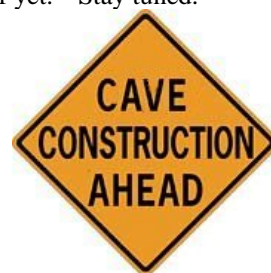
Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society

NETTLE CAVE – A SHOW CAVE AGAIN.

Work has commenced on the development of the Nettle Cave, which will eventually be a self guided cave.

Scott Melton reports "The work is progressing well in the Nettle Cave and the exit stairs were recently lifted into place by a crane that when fully extended reached as high as the Pinnacle on top of the Grand Arch. Visitors will enter via the Coach House and exit down the steps from the Nettle cave entrance that you can see from the Lucas Cave Balcony".

The Nettle Cave was discovered in 1845 was closed as a show cave in 1932, the day after James Wiburd retired. Apparently he was the one who wanted it kept open. As to when it "re-opens" we are told in August 2006 but no date has been set as of yet." Stay tuned.



NOTICE ANY DIFFERENCE ? Can you see what has changed in this photo? Answer on back page.



CAVES BACK IN PUBLIC HANDS.

On Wednesday July 7, 2006 the State Government took back control of Caves House, and plans to outsource the tour guiding services at the site to attract new management. The Government won the lease back from St George Bank, who last year called in a receiver and evicted the previous lessee, Archer Field. The Environment Minister, Bob Debus, plans to offer a seven year lease on tour guide services, together with a 21 year lease on the hotel. He refused to disclose how much was paid to win back the lease. The Government plans to spend \$3 million on the upkeep of the caves, and \$1.8million on the resort before calling for tenders.

- Extract from Sydney Morning Herald 7 July 2006

WHAT DID YOU MISS ?????

Preceding the last meeting, a get together dinner was held in Caves House, which was attended by 13 members. Unfortunately it clashed with another function, so some of the Jenolan Guiding staff that are also JCH&PS members were unable to attend the evening. We are pleased to report the standard of food/ service has improved since the last JCH&PS dinner held at caves House there in 2004. Infact the dining room was very busy and well patronised by the public. Administrators have taken over and appointed new management at Caves House and they are doing a good job. Some additional members and guests also attended the meeting which that was held afterwards in the Kanangra Boyd room. The raffle of the Trickett book raised over \$100 and was drawn, Gary Rosmarin a visitor from Canada won the raffle. Thanks again to Sydney Speleological Society for donating the great prize. David Cook kindly donated some old Caves House menus to the society that he recently acquired. At the conclusion of the meeting two PowerPoint presentations were given, Ted Matthews on WA Caves and Gary Whitby on Lechuguilla Cave. Thanks to all who attended, and to those that supported our raffle.



REMINDERS.

Remember that our headquarters for archives at Cottage 17 has a security system. If you are planning a visit, please ensure you call the guides office first, and make arrangements for access. And don't forget to advise JCH&PS your new address if you move. We recently were able to track down two members who we had lost contact with. They are now both back on the mailing list.

COMING SOON TO ABC TV- PLANET EARTH - CAVES

A new David Attenborough series started on ABC on Sunday 9 July 2006. The documentaries titled "Planet Earth" were made by the BBC. All up there are 11 programs in the series, which is being aired in two parts, and there is a whole episode about caves! Unfortunately Jenolan doesn't appear in the show, but there is a JCH&PS connection! Your editor has been involved in annual expeditions to Lechuguilla Cave (USA) since 2002, which appears in the documentary. The BBC crew were there the week following the 11/2004 expedition we were on. Several of our fellow expeditioners assisted with the film shoot, by supplying food, camera equipment, batteries and supplies to the crew, who spent 10 days in the cave. The sherpa trips involved carrying packs up to 10kg to the crew daily, and then returning with used batteries to the surface. The day trips were usually 12 hours in duration, and involved lots of vertical caving, including a 50m pitch. Having already seen the episode, it has some stunning footage of many caves throughout the world, and is definitely a program not to miss. Episode 4 "Caves" is the one to look out for. – Jenny Whitby



CHANGES AT JENOLAN - John Callaghan.

Wombeyan, Abercrombie Caves, and some employees from Bathurst Office were re-deployed to NP&WS from Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust on 1 July, 2006. An evening at a pub in Taralga was enjoyed by about 35 people, not the least were the 'guests of honour', those who would no longer be employed by Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust. Affectionately they have been known as "The Dirty Dozen", although there are thirteen, Steven Meehan, Steve Reilly, Lisa Bevan, Mick and Annette Chalker, Geoff Lang, David and Corrin Smith, Barry and Lynn Cupitt, Stuart Bremner, Laurie Dunn and Mark Simpson. Andrew Fletcher presented each of these people with a Certificate of Appreciation and those in leadership roles received appropriate framed photographs from their cave system. It was wonderful to see Jenolan Caves well represented as their colleagues were farewelled, Jenolan people attending were Scott Melton, Ted Matthews, Ian Dive, Charles Degotardi, Margaret and Grant Commins, Dan and Dom Cove, Russell Commins, Phyllis Calvert and John Callaghan.

CONTACT DETAILS: JCH&PS Locked Bag Jenolan Caves 2790
DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE FOR THE BINOOMEA?

You don't necessarily have to write the article, just tell us what you would like to read about. Articles, suggestions, letters to the editor, complaints, stories are welcome and can be forwarded to the editor. Please contact: Jenny Whitby 48 Park Street Charlestown 2290 or send your email to: jwhitby@iinet.net.au or Phone (02) 49432265

SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

This month's spotlight is focussed on member Keith Watson, who worked as a guide at Jenolan Caves from 1970 to 1975, under Senior Guide Frank Harmon. Some of his fellow workers were John Culley, Ron Newbould, John Callaghan, Ron Poleson, Bob Richards, Noel Rawlinson & Frank O'Keefe.

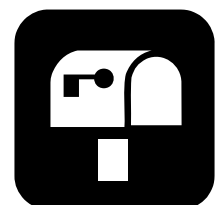
"I arrived at a time when there was considerable discontent in the guiding staff and it didn't take a genius to see why. The wages were appalling and it was quite obvious that with the situation as it was, they were not going to get any better. These young men were interested in the caves, in fact that was the main thing that had brought them to Jenolan but having got there they very soon realised as I had done, there was no future in it. Guiding is different now but it was our doing.

There was a great deal of worry about condition of the caves from a preservation point of view, but we battled on as best we could, I can remember John Callaghan and myself struggling with a six foot roll of wire netting through the Imperial cave up to the Jubilee. A monstrous weight it was and we sat down frequently on it to rest and every time we sat down I would point out some feature of the cave or some of the history, for Jenolan is as much about history as about caves. By the time we got to the place where John Culley and I were working on the fence we were exhausted but Callaghan knew the cave backwards.

I was shown the Lucas first of course but it didn't really mesh with me though in later years I took a lot of schools through it and once I got over my initial grumpiness enjoyed myself as well as the kids but the cave that really grabbed me was the Temple of Baal. It was just magic to me, like another land, those great sweeping wings and the old man peering over the edge of the hole in the roof of the great collapsed cavern it needed no imagination, it was all there looking down at you. Then came the Chiffley, showing the age of time beyond imagination. There were a couple of stalagmites near the track had cave insects on them and I used to take a jewellers eye glass in my pocket and if I had a good party I would show them the tiny insects living on the stalagmites. I left Jenolan in about mid 1975. Went to breed horses and do other things that took my fancy such as chooks and veggie gardens and driving tractors and what not. Developed a heart disease, and skin cancers but I never really left Jenolan."



Mr Onorato (Manager Caves House) and Keith Watson at Jenolan in the 70's.





We Should Remember Them.

By Kath Bellamy.

Some years ago, when on a tour of the River Cave, our group stopped at the bridge going to the Pool of Cerberus. The guide spoke about

where the passage went and where we were going to ascend the steps to the Minaret. At this point we talked about the pool of water at the base of the steps and where it flowed. It was mentioned that in the past the water had been a pool of remembrance and that coins collected in the water had been given to hospitals. This was a common occurrence in the post war years. Many people reading this newsletter would know of the stone structure at Echo Point into which you could roll coins for the local war memorial hospital. The pool in the Mafeking Cave held coins also. It was this reference in the River Cave that prompted my interest in the involvement of people from Jenolan in Australia's war history. Like many small country towns in Australia, especially during the First World War, people knew each other or were related. Jenolan was no exception and the grief that war brings would have affected this closely knit community.



Hospital Box in the Pool of Cerberus- Photo by Harry Phillips from Nature's Masterpiece (est. 1919). Supplied by Rob Whyte.

I have written about some of the 'Jenolan family' who went to war and would have been remembered at the Pool of Remembrance in the River Cave.

No: 1798A Private Leonard Irving Bailey

1st – 6th Reinforcements

36th Battalion, 9th Brigade,

3rd Division, Australian Imperial Force.

Leonard was born in 1898 at Jenolan Caves, the son of **Robert & Cecilia Bailey**. The family lived in the house known as "The Nest" located near the present day entrance to the Binoomea Cut. The Bailey family moved to Mount Victoria in 1909 and to Clarendon in 1910 where they had the post office and a poultry farm. (Ref. The Golden Ages of Caving; Basil Ralston) Leonard attended the public school at Richmond and was in the Australian Cadet Forces. He joined the AIF on the 20th March 1916 and stated on his enlistment papers that he was a poultry farmer. Permission was given by his mother as follows:

Clarendon

March 27th 1916

This is to certify that I Cecilia Bailey do give my son Leonard Irving Bailey, my consent to enlist.

Signed: Cecilia Bailey

Witness: Clara McFadden

He embarked from Sydney for overseas service on 4th September 1916 on board A15 HMAT Port Sydney.

Private Bailey was killed in action on 12th October 1917 at Passchendaele in Belgium during the battle which officially became designated as "Third Ypres". It will forever be known as Passchendaele: the very word is used to describe the wretched and perilous conditions that were encountered there.



HMAT Port Sydney

An extract from Bean's Official History of Australia in the Great War relates the events surrounding the 36th Battalion: "The two attacking brigades of the 3rd Division had spent the night of 10th October on the flats east of Ypres near Potijze. Tents, which were to have been provided, were not there, and the troops bivouacked in wet grass, under such timber or old sheets of iron as they could find. The approach march on duckboards began about 6pm the next day but soon after starting, both brigades found that their tracks were being accurately and persistently shelled, not only with high explosive, but, at some points, with gas.

The 3rd Division's aim was to capture Passchendaele, and, in spite of depressing conditions, it was eager to achieve the distinction of doing so. One unit carried an Australian flag, to be planted in Passchendaele, and, although officers and men in general were not enthusiastic concerning such "stunts", the Commander-in-Chief (General Haig) had been informed, and had told General Monash that, when this flag was planted, the news would be immediately cabled to Australia."



Friday 12th October: Temperature 55 degrees F; Rainfall 7.9mm

“Monash’s impression was that his division was succeeding but shortly after noon on the 12th news arrived that the situation was very serious and the casualties very heavy. At the same time a pigeon message arrived, sent by Captain Gadd of the 36th Battalion which stated they were on the Blue Line (their objective) with a composite force. The 9th Brigade’s line was being battered by German guns and Captain Gadd’s troops were being wiped out. At 3pm rain began to fall steadily and to hold on meant annihilation so the troops retired. The Germans followed the retirement with “whiz-bang” shells, but by 3.30 it had been completed with slight loss.”

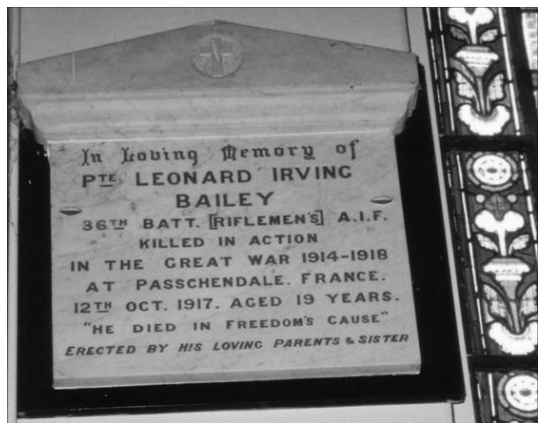
The total casualties for the 36th Battalion were: 15 officers and 383 other ranks. Leonard Bailey was one of them, he was 19 years old. He has no known grave. He is remembered with honour on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.

There was much correspondence at the end of the War with regard to bereaved families trying to get information on where their soldiers were buried. The Baileys received this letter in April 1919:

Water filled trenches of Passchendaele.

Dear Madam,

In reply to your communication of the 31st ultimo. I have to state burial particulars regarding your son, the late no.1798A Private L.I. Bailey, 36th Battalion, have not yet been received at this office. However, a special staff has now been appointed to visit the various theatres of war to complete the registering and photographing of graves of deceased members of the AIF. Owing to the



extent of the work involved, some considerable time must necessarily elapse before this work can be completed. Your request for a photograph of your son’s grave has been forwarded with a list of similar applications to AIF Headquarters, London, for compliance if possible.

Yours faithfully,

Officer Base Records.

His memorial plaque (Dead Man’s Penny) was received and signed for by R.E. Bailey (his father) on November 3rd 1922. His victory medal was also signed for by his father on 31st March 1923. Robert Bailey died in October 1923. The particulars required for the Roll of Honour of Australia in the Memorial War Museum were given by his mother.

In St.Mathews Church in Windsor NSW there is a marble memorial to Leonard Bailey. Photograph provided by Basil Ralston.

Captain Carvosso Roy Wiburd

Medical Officer

Australian Army Medical Corps.

World War 1

James Wiburd’s son, Carvosso Roy Wiburd was born in 1894. He enlisted in the AIF on 8th January 1917, aged 23 years; his ‘trade or calling’ being a medical practitioner. He embarked on RMS Malwa on the 3rd April 1917 from Melbourne.



He is photographed here in a group portrait of the Staff of the Anzac Mounted Division Receiving Station, Palestine 1917. Captain Wiburd is in the back row 2nd from right.

Edmund T. Webb Jnr. was in the party with his father, Edmund Webb; his sisters Selina and Catherine; Jeremiah Wilson and others in the Left Imperial in 1881 when the Lucinda Cavern, and later, Katie's Bower were first entered. In 1891 he accompanied Jeremiah Wilson into the Jersey Cave for the first time.

Edmund Webb's daughter was **Clara Irene Webb** who was born in 1887. Clara sailed from Sydney on board RMS Mooltan on 9th June 1917 to serve as a nurse in World War 1.



RMS Mooltan sailing under Sydney Harbour Bridge.

There was a photograph taken of a group of visitors at the official opening of the Orient Cave on 28th December 1917. Included in this party was a uniformed soldier with only one arm. He was **No.588 Private William Jackson VC**, 17th Battalion. He had been awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry on the night of 25/26th June 1916 near Armentieres, France. In the report in the Lithgow Mercury on 2nd January 1918, it was mentioned that Pte. Jackson was a guest at Caves House and spent Christmas at Jenolan. I suppose he was a visitor, although it may well be that he was an invited guest at the Orient Opening. Does any reader know of him? (*Ed. Or seen the photo anywhere?*)

Part two of this article will be in the next issue. It includes information regarding war connections with the Whalan family, and also Jenolan associations with WW2. If you have any further information to add relating to this topic, please contact the editor.

Coins of Remembrance.

Now a bit of newspaper reporting from The Lithgow Mercury (author unknown) about those hospital pool collections.

JENOLAN'S GOLDEN POOL.

LITHGOW, BATHURST AND KATOOMBA HOSPITALS BENEFIT.

And also Other Ambulances.

The "wishing pool" at Jenolan was recently cleared and yielded 26,270 coins to the value of £361/12/6.

The coins thrown in the pools by visitors, said Mr. Wiburd (superintendent), included one sovereign, 340 florins, 1205 shillings 4660 sixpences, 8560 threepences, 8280 pence, 3180 half pence, and 24 foreign coins.

Mr. Gosling (Chief Secretary) has approved the distribution of the amount by the allocation of £100 each to the Katoomba, Lithgow and Bathurst hospitals, and £30/16/3 each to the Lithgow and Bathurst ambulances.

The hospitals' amounts will be subsidised by the Government on a £ for £ basis.

The participation of Katoomba this year greatly reduces the allocation to Lithgow, which practically wholly serves the Caves. The ambulance entirely deals with Jenolan transportation, whilst 90 per cent of the patients from that centre come to the Lithgow hospital.

Article dated 19/9/1927



THE CAVES WISHING POOL.

Question of Allocation of Money.

Says an "Evening News" report:—"A first class row is raging between the Lithgow Hospital and Bathurst Ambulance authorities as to how the money from the "Wishing Pool" at Jenolan Caves should be distributed. Lithgow Hospital claims the lion's share, but the ambulance insists on an equitable allocation among the six public utilities which benefit.

Superintendent Wiburd, of Jenolan, has adversely criticised the Lithgow Hospital for what he describes as its "avaricious demands." He says if that body does not act in a reasonable manner, he will recommend that the money be distributed equally among all hospitals and ambulances in the State.

The Bathurst ambulance is also still at loggerheads with the Lithgow Ambulance over the latter's refusal to allow Tarana's secession from its area, to be embraced in the Bathurst territory."

Interviewed in regard to the above, Mr. Wiburd denied ever making such a statement. He said he had always protected the interests of the Lithgow and Bathurst institutions, and would continue to do so. He was, however, opposed to the Katoomba Ambulance participating, as if too many institutions shared in the money, its benefits would be neutralised. This was sufficient answer to the statement in the report above, that he would recommend the equal distribution of the money among all hospitals and ambulances in the State.

Article dated 24/10/1927

Thanks to Robert Lindsay for supplying the newspaper articles, and to Rob Whyte for the Harry Phillips photo of another Hospital Box collection site, this one in the Right Imperial Cave.



Elery Hamilton Smith provided an insight into the Jenolan Explorers Club badge question. Subsequently on a visit to the JCH&PS archives, I found out that Jenolan explorer club members were given a certificate and a small presentation folder, which housed the badge. The JCH&PS collection does not have one of the badges, but JCH&PS does have the certificate they were given.

If you were a "Jenolan Explorer's Club" member, or know of one, we'd love to hear from you.

Several leads have been received regarding the school days at Jenolan. This assignment is not due till the end of term, so work is still in progress on this one. If you have any information or stories about the school please contact the teacher, I mean editor!

MORE ON CARS AT JENOLAN - Jenny Whitby.

Following on from the article in the last edition, Robert Lindsay has located some newspaper articles from The Lithgow Mercury relating to the first trip by Mark Foy. The first article confirms the first car trip occurred on Wednesday 10 June 1903, which was mentioned in the Romance of Jenolan Caves book by Havard, however this never mentioned the date of the event. The second is a letter to the editor.

JENOLAN CAVES.

A MOTOR TRIP.

(From our own Correspondent.)

Mr. Mark Foy conducted a party of nine persons in two motor cars from Blackheath to Jenolan Caves, arriving here at about 9 o'clock on Wednesday night. The trip was merely a trial one, and, considering the bad state of the roads at present, it was a decided success. The party left again the following morning for Blackheath, where they expected to arrive early in the afternoon. Although Mr. Foy was quite satisfied with his run out, he is of opinion that motors of a little more power would be required to comfortably negotiate the steep pinches along the road between Mt. Victoria and the Caves. Along the road in various places during yesterday's trip Mr. Foy said that the wheels were buried to a depth of from 6in. to 8in. in the mud, so that the task can better be imagined than described.

Article Friday June 12 1903

THE RECENT MOTOR TRIP.

To the Editor.

Sir,—Re the experiment of a motor trip to the Jenolan Caves, you say in your journal that it was a very successful trip. I should like you to allow me space to flatly contradict that statement, as it was a complete failure, as the cars left Blackheath about nine a.m. and reached the caves about 9.30 p.m., the road being strewn with bushes in different parts to help progress. On the return journey one completely broke down, and remained at the Half-way House for the fowls to roost on. As your report is likely to do me harm in my business, I would like you to do me the favour to insert what I have written to you. Yours, etc.,

G. H. COOPER.

June 18.

Article Tuesday June 23 1903

Another early photo of travellers to Jenolan. This time it's a photo taken in front of the Hydro in 1906. It belongs to Mary Shaw who is the grand daughter of Mark Foy.

Mark Foy Snr is the gentleman standing between the two cars, Mark Foy Jnr is the small child at the front right hand side.

Thanks to Kath Bellamy for sourcing this photo.



SPELEO STUFF! – Jenny Whitby.

For those of you who haven't heard all the latest speleo news from Jenolan, reproduced below are some internet postings of recent discoveries. The first is from Keir Vaughan-Taylor, President of Sydney University Speleological Society (SUSS) about the finds in Barralong Cave on the June long weekend. The second is a compilation of updates from the mysterious "Fractal Flow" person and also myself regarding the latest findings further up the valley at Rho Hole. JCH&PS members have been on hand at each discovery. The Kennedy's were on the Rho Hole trip, and Gary & I were at both the Barralong & Rho Hole weekends.

Keir Vaughan-Taylor's posting to ozcavers group. June 2006.

This long weekend a joint Illawarra and SUSS group made the journey to the southern extent of the Jenolan Caves at the back of Barralong. Over two hours two divers penetrated along the rift passages to the south and finally digging underwater in a sandy phreatic loop. No confirmed breakthrough was made however we believe the passage is ready for renewed progress on the next dive.

Two other divers headed downstream from Barralong, through Klepto Sump. (The sump that steals your gear on the way through). This heads north back towards the tourists caves. The last dive at this site was blocked by a dangerous rockpile but had been stabilised ready for the dive this weekend. During a two hour dive, Michael Collins and Jason Cockayne found an unsuspected route through the obstructing rockpile and entered a new canyon passage following the Barralong River. They terminated their trip at an agreed time limit leaving above water and underwater passages unexplored and new chamber.

The position of the new passage is in the same geological area of high decoration in the famous Barralong Chocolate flowstone and may yield some pretties. We expect the new river passage to eventually come out at the pitch near the start of Barralong's decorated section known as Bluetongue Pitch. (So called because of the blue purple hue of the limestone.) If this connection were made, it could dramatically improve exploration time getting to the southern leads and reduce impact on the cave. Of course if it were to also reveal another chamber like the Temple of Baal that would be okay by me.

On the third day in the tourist caves Styx River, an underwater and also an above water passages were found to connect to holes in the Pool of Cerberus Pool Room. These holes had previously been examined by generations of explorers and passed by. It just goes to show that the rockpile you have written off as a dead loss should be checked again. Special thanks for the expert help from Illawarra Speleos.

.....
A radio interview from 23 June on ABC Radio by Michael Collins (Vice President SUSS) regarding the Barralong discovery was recorded in MP3 format. If you are interested in hearing it, a temporary website (it's the only thing on it besides a picture!) has been set up by us at <http://members.iinet.net.au/~gjwhitby/>
If you want to download the interview you can, warning, it is 8.3 Meg!

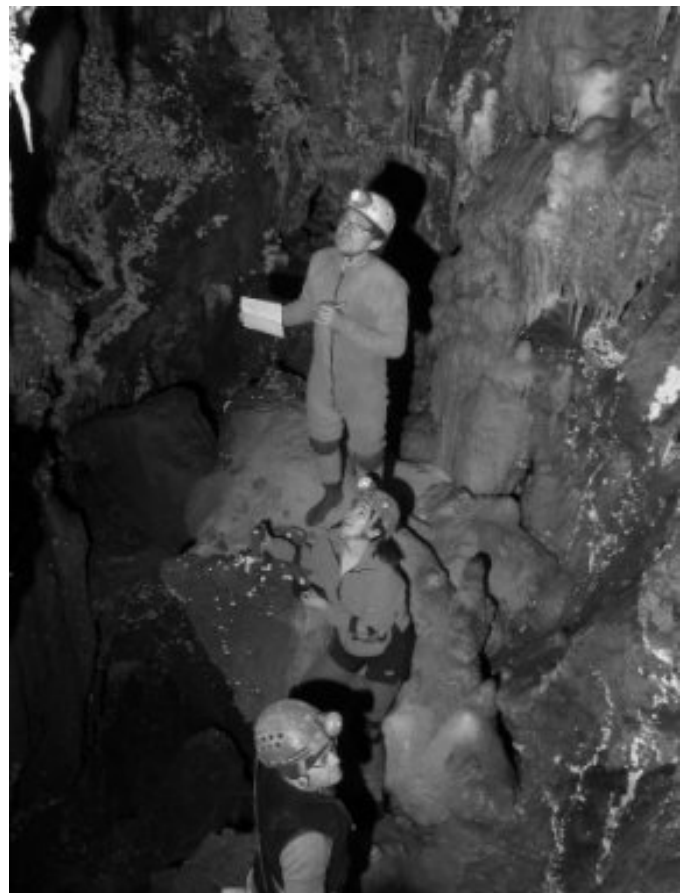
.....
Fractal Flow's posting to Jenolan group dated 19/6/2006.
SUSS was back the weekend following the Barralong finds this time to visit a recent favourite - Rho Hole. This time progress was made in one of the new higher level leads (Rhoman Ruins) and following a rather bold freeclimb, some 200m or more of additional passage was found. In particular this included some well-decorated chambers bearing comparison to the famous Chevalier Extension in nearby Glass Cave. It included pool crystals, helictites, flowstones of different colours and bones, possibly of small rodents. A likely connection with the Jenolan System still beckons below in the Rhoboat Streamway (beyond the painful Rhotisserie) but this new find adds the possibility of breaking through at a higher point as well.

Further posting by Jenny Whitby 20/6/2006.

I can confirm "Fractal Flow's" posting of the new find in Rho Hole, as I was there. Infact Gary (my other half) did the climb above Rhoman Ruins, which led to the exciting new chambers on Saturday. He was pretty happy! As the earlier posting mentions, it is a well decorated area. Upon discovery of the area, the party detrogged (removed cave suits) and explored in their thermals and socks due to the caves pristine state & formations. On Sunday a team of 4 led by Alan Pryke returned to survey & take a few photographs of the area.

.....
SUSS returns to Jenolan for a week long trip in July, so hopefully there will be further news of more discoveries.

.....
To read all about the beginnings of the exploration of this new area in Rho Hole, check out the SUSS Bull 45 (4) March 06, which can be viewed online at <http://www.ee.usyd.edu.au/suss/> It includes some good maps of the cave!



Alan Pryke (with survey book) Jenny Whitby with disto laser and Darren Dowler in the new area named Rhotunda surveying the new discovery. Photo by Gary Whitby

Rho Hole was known to be a hole blowing cold air, before speleological societies commenced work at Jenolan, however it is not known when the cave entrance was enlarged enough to allow access. The cave was named in 1950, when the shape of the entrance apparently resembled the Greek letter Rho.



Discovery

FRANK WALKER

New cave may yield secret passage

JENOLAN Caves last week grudgingly yielded up a 350 million-year-old secret when Sydney adventurers discovered a new cave that could be the missing link in a complex underground river system.

A joint team from the Illawarra and Sydney University speleological societies broke through a previously blocked underwater tunnel to emerge into a cave no human had ever seen before. It was the first cave found in the underground network in 42 years.

The first through was diver Michael Collins. "It was awesome to emerge into a space no living being had ever seen before," he said.

The explorers had pushed further than anyone before along the southern extent of the caves.

They headed downriver from Barralong Cave, diving through sumps – parts of the cave that were underwater.

The team came to a narrow passage that had been blocked by boulders. An earlier team had cleared the rocks but had to stop because the water had turned into a virtual mud custard.

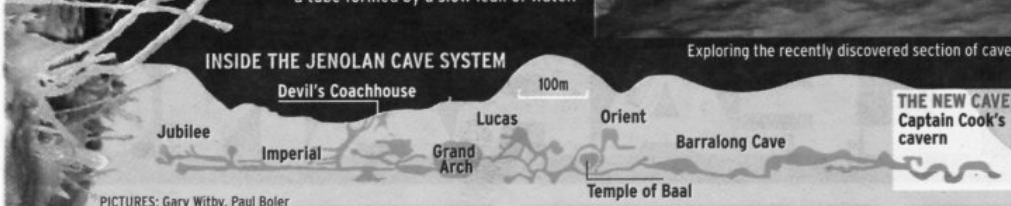
This time the water was clearer and Collins and Jason Cockayne spent two hours underwater trying to probe through the passage.

"It was like being the first man on

JENOLAN'S MISSING LINK

The 100-metre long cave could be the missing link in the two kilometre long Jenolan underground river system.

Bizarre crystal growths, helictites, are gnarled fingers of stone made from calcite crystals growing along a tube formed by a slow leak of water.



PICTURES: Gary Witby, Paul Boler

the moon – no footprints, no sign of anyone ever being there before," Cockayne said.

As the first man into the cave Collins had the right to name it and decided to call it Captain Cook's Cavern.

The divers risked being buried in sand as they dug shifting sand, mud and boulders to clear a passage wide enough to drag themselves through.

They finally emerged into the cave,

10 metres high and three to four metres wide, which could be up to 100 metres long. Walking along the cave, they hit a rockfall.

"There are a lot of rocks that have fallen from the roof and it is hard going but we think the passage goes on further. We have to go back to try again," Collins said. "It gives such a feeling of pride and achievement to make a breakthrough like this."

Team leader Keir Vaughan-Taylor said it was a major discovery.

"Cavers have been searching for generations trying to find this missing link in the underground river system," he said. "The new cave contains sparkling chocolate-coloured flowstone due to unusual mineralisation."

There are 22 caves in the Jenolan system. The first to be discovered was Lucas Cave in 1860.

Newspaper corrections: as advised by "Fractal Flow" from Jenolan users list group.

Unfortunately the map in Sun Herald is misleading. The map gives the impression that the new discoveries are heading south into the unknown. That is not the case. The divers were pushing downstream towards the River Cave (opposite direction) with the aim of producing one continuous river passage dive from Barralong all the way to the Blue Lake. The River Cave to Blue Lake section was completed some years ago. However what is shown heading south is more or less correct and was found by SUSS divers in 1988. It's just not the "Captain Cook's Cavern" discovery of a couple of weeks ago.

MUSEUM OPENINGS.

The Old Post Office Museum has been opened on numerous occasions in recent times, including the long weekend in June. Thanks to Kath Bellamy, Arthur Gray, David Cook & Jimmy Lim for volunteering their time. It was decided at the last meeting to give a breath of fresh air to the museum display. A committee was set up to co-ordinate this project, and work is underway. If you would like to assist please contact the editor.

CONGRATULATIONS.

John Callaghan has recently clocked up 36 years of service at Jenolan Caves. That's almost a life sentence!

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE.

New lights have suddenly appeared in the precinct in early July. The bollard (runway landing lights) have been upgraded, and will soon be removed. The lamp posts fit in very well, and give an historic look to the area, and make the precinct much brighter at night.



Next meeting will be held on **SATURDAY 12TH AUGUST 2006 at Jenolan.**

A **special JCH&PS in cave presentation** of the Temple of Baal, and its new lighting will be given by guides Dan Cove & Russell Commings, who designed and installed the new system. If you haven't seen the cave in its new light, well here's your chance! **Meet at the Binooma Cut at 6:30pm.** At the conclusion of the cave tour, the normal meeting will be held.

MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE 2ND SATURDAY OF FEBRUARY, AUGUST AND NOVEMBER. THE MAY MEETING IS THE FIRST SATURDAY, DUE TO MOTHERS DAY. Following meetings are 11 November 2006 & 10 February 2007 (AGM)