

CAVEMANIA FIELDTRIPS

Stephen Bunton



CAVEMANIA Fieldtrips 2005 was supported by the Tasmanian Government through *Events Tasmania*.

The caving areas of southern Tasmania at Hastings and Ida Bay are readily accessible from Dover and this was one of the main reasons for holding CaveMania in this regional centre. Throughout the conference many people visited Newdegate (Hastings Tourist) Cave taking advantage of the free tours offered by The Hastings Experience. The Hastings Experience also provided the leaders for the main fieldtrips day, Wednesday 5th January. Participants were ferried back and forth to Mystery Creek Cave or King George V Cave before everyone met for an evening BBQ at Hastings Thermal Pool.

The celebratory mood obviously affected Hastings Cave Manager, Keith Vanderstaay, who offered a special more personalised late-night tour of Newdegate Cave. This was extremely popular with quite a crowd taking him up on his generous offer. At various times throughout the conference people made their own arrangements, some of them joining caving trips run by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers. Several trips were run through Midnight Hole into Mystery Creek Cave. Southern Tasmanian Caverneers also ran post-conference fieldtrips from the Southport Hall. Exit Cave was the main drawcard and a small percentage of CaveMania participants were able to visit this cave.

Permits were also issued for Mini-Martin and Old Ditch Row which are vertical entrances into the Exit Cave system. Some original exploration, surface and underground surveying was undertaken while Arthur Clarke arranged some fieldtrips for the visiting biologists, some specifically as part of Dave Meritt and Glenn Graham's glow-worm research.

On Saturday 15th January, Aardvark Adventures hosted 14 cavers on an abseil of the 142 m face of the Gordon Dam. This is one of the world's longest commercial abseils and a highlight for many participants.

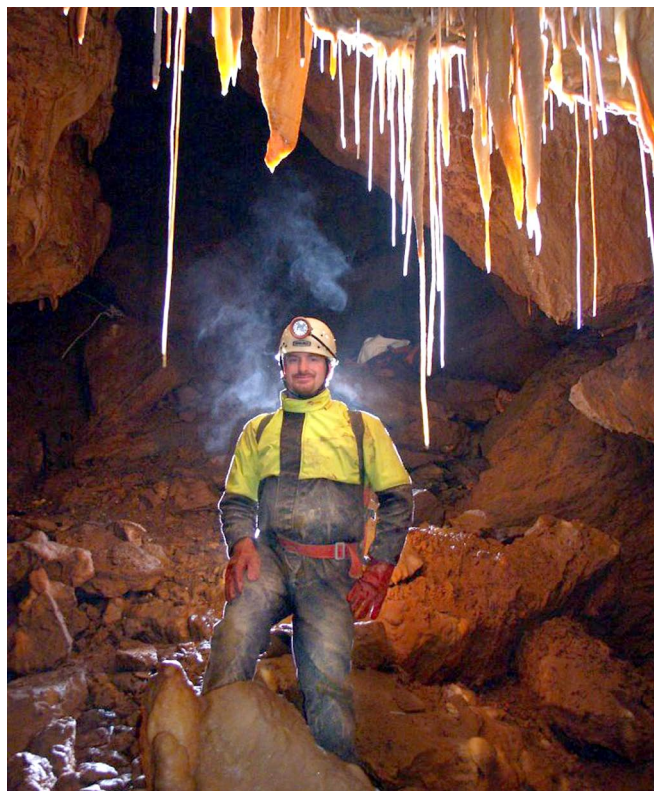
Over the following week a few more fieldtrips were run in the Junee-Florentine area including trips into Growling Swallet as well as a Slaughterhouse-Growling Swallet through trip. A tour of the Florentine Valley and some commentary on the issues of karst management was also undertaken as a follow up to Kevin Kiernan's paper at the Conference.

At Mole Creek an enthusiastic group of local leaders guided a plethora of visiting cavers through the main caves of the area. The centrepiece of these fieldtrips was the Karstcare cleaning program in Kubla Khan Cave facilitated by Dave Wools-Cobb of the Northern Caverneering Club. Permits were also issued for the areas's other iconic caves with people taking the opportunity to visit Croesus Cave, Lynds Cave, Genghis Khan, Baldocks Cave and many others. ■



Kathy Bunton on the 50m introductory abseil of the Gordon Dam.

PHOTO: CHRIS HERBERT



Paul in Haillie Selassie cave. Photo Competition Third Prize for a Digital photograph in the Cavers in Action category.

PHOTO: GARRY K SMITH