

Recent exploration in Jones Ridge Cave (DD-4) at Drik Drik, Western Victoria

*Glenn Baddeley,
Victorian Speleological Association Inc.*

Abstract

The 25m deep DD-4 doline has been known since the early 1900's and was notable enough to be shown in profile on the parish geology map of 1929. In December 1995 cavers became aware of a small entrance at the base of the sheer sided doline which led into an active stream passage heading upstream beneath Jones Ridge. The ridge is an uplift about 10km long running parallel to the Glenelg River, consisting of a thin recent volcanic flow atop Miocene Gambier limestone, tailing off into Quaternary dune limestone down to the river.

Since 1995 the Victorian Speleological Association has run nearly 30 trips to explore the stream passage and higher level dry areas of the cave, resulting in about 2400m of surveyed passage. Much of it is extremely muddy and wet and there are about 30 rock-falls and some pools and cascades to negotiate. Two kilometers into the cave the stream emerges from a sump pool which is only a few hundred metres from a stream sink (DD-18)

on the east side of the ridge. Efforts are continuing to push the sump, with the hope of further negotiable passage, which may extend through to DD-18. The stream continues downstream from the DD-4 entrance but human passage is currently blocked by rock-fall beneath the doline only a few metres in. The stream appears to continue to a small resurgence at DD-25, about 2km distant near the Glenelg River, but this has yet to be confirmed. There have been some interesting discoveries in the cave, including a big loop in the stream passage, a whale bone, shark teeth, unusual mud stalactites, several waterfalls up to 4m high, side passages, and evidence of bat habitation in the past. Studies have been done on water chemistry and levelling.

Surface exploration has added about 25 new karst features to the Drik Drik area, but no other significant caves. The limestone is nearly all on private farm land and cavers continue to foster very good relations with the land owners.



Figure 1 Entrance passage DD-4 2004
(Photo:Ken Grimes)



Figure 2 Entrance passage and muddy stream
DD-4 2004 (Photo: Ken Grimes)