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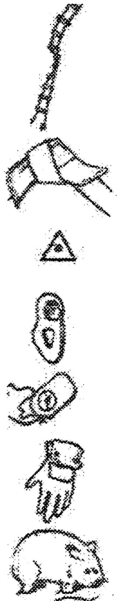
Front Cover: David Rueda-Roca in Bush Arch, NZ
Photo Alan Pryke

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SUSS 70th — it's coming

Coming soon to a venue near you – the celebration you've been waiting ten years for. The SUSS 70th birthday celebration will be held in May 2018. We'll circulate more details soon, but there will be a Friday night dinner function in your diary for May.

(Drawings by Don Matthews from the Bull advertisement for the SUSS 50th anniversary celebration. That's 1998!!! Don's still coming caving with SUSS, although the Zimmer frame gets in the way a bit....)

ASF Conference Devonport

The next ASF conference is to be held in northern Tasmania in December 2018 / January 2019. Being in Tassy means that a lot of really excellent caving trips are likely to happen before and after the conference.

Check on the ASF website caves.org.au/events for more details.

Karst Conservation Fund profits from ICS

For three years, the International Congress of Speleology organising committee has been worrying about the potential financial losses the Congress could have caused. The ASF and all Australian clubs had significant skin in the game as well. It turns out that registrations passed the break-even point about three weeks before the Congress and kept on rising. In the end, ASF has received back every dollar that was lent to the organising committee and with the books closed, the ASF will receive a profit of around \$50,000. At the ASF Council meeting in January 2018, the clubs resolved to transfer the bulk of that money into the Karst Conservation Fund. In addition, a sale of old books at the Congress raised about \$4000 for the KCF. This is going to transform the ability of KCF to fund projects.

As a reminder, KCF is a tax-deductible environmental charity which will fund projects that contribute to the conservation of Australian caves and Karst landscapes. These projects can include on-the-ground work to improve cave environments, cave research projects that are environmentally-

oriented, and in some cases the purchase of land in order to conserve caves. Current projects include:

- Population dynamics of the critically endangered Southern Bent-wing Bat, PhD Project of Emmi van Harten, Latrobe University. This work is proceeding well and a poster on the work was used as a display at the ASF Table at the Congress. The PhD will be presented in mid-2018 and a report for Caves Australia will be presented.
- Health Survey of Bent-Wing Bats, PhD project of Peter Holz, University of Melbourne. There is now an interim report which shows that there was no White Nose Syndrome fungus detected in South Australian and Victorian bent-wing bats (*Miniopterus orianae bassanii* and *M. orianae oceanensis*). The *Histoplasma capsulatum* fungus was confirmed for caves in SA and Western Victoria and Eastern Victoria. No other infectious agents were detected which might have contributed to the population decline in both the Southern and Eastern bent-wing bat populations of SA and Victoria.
- Cliefden Projects. Geoheritage Significance of Cliefden Caves NSW, Armstrong Osborne, University of Sydney, in progress. OSS-SUSS Cave mapping project (not funded) but ongoing continues. These Cliefden projects have contributed effectively in giving cave levels which are important for assessing the impacts of potential dam proposals on Cliefden Caves.
- Aerial Survey Baxter Cliffs, Nullarbor WA, Steve Milner. A paper was presented at the International Congress in July 2017 on the results of exploring the Bunda Cliffs for caves and information for future trips to cave prospects on the Baxter Cliffs.
- M-3 Shades of Death Cave property purchase completed by Rimstone Cooperative Ltd. The Fund directors have supported the fund-raising



Nullarbor seacliffs. Photo Steve Milner

for this purchase allowing donors to get a receipt from the Fund (ASF has advanced a loan for the purchase). A management strategy is now being prepared.

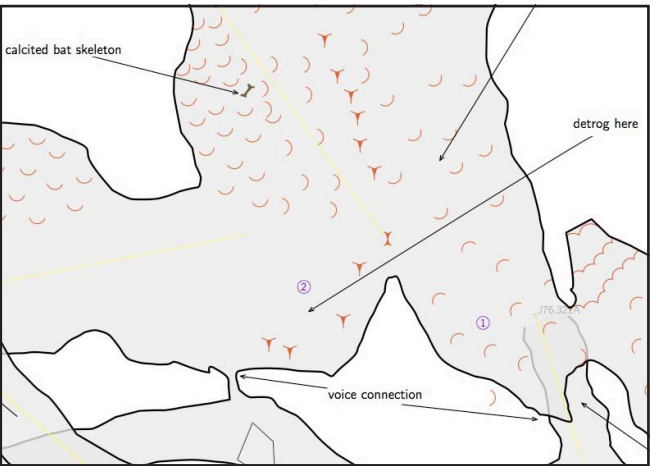
- An exploration project has just been funded for Matej Lipar and Mateja Ferk to explore for caves and karst features on the Northwestern edge of the Nullarbor.

There are also near-term proposals for KCF to fund cave research projects alongside the ARC, the main government support fund for science in Australia. These co-funded projects will enable higher levels of funding and more ambitious projects than KCF could support by itself.

New passage where it shouldn't be

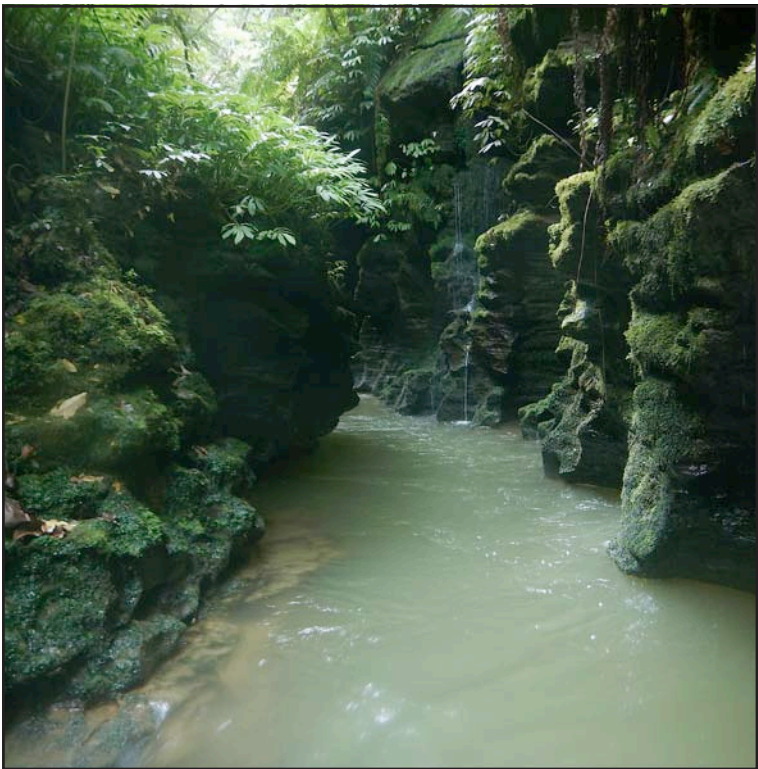
Recent exploration led by Rowena Larkins in a very well known cave at Jenolan has produced new chambers and passages, including some superb

decoration. Where is this? That would be telling! More details, maps and photos to follow in SUSS Bull 56(2).



Where is this?

Map by Rowena Larkins



Mangaorongo gorge, NZ, in flood

Photo Rafid Morshedi

Getting a Hand Up

Wellington 2nd – 3rd September 2017

Phil Maynard, Ian Cooper and Greg Ryan

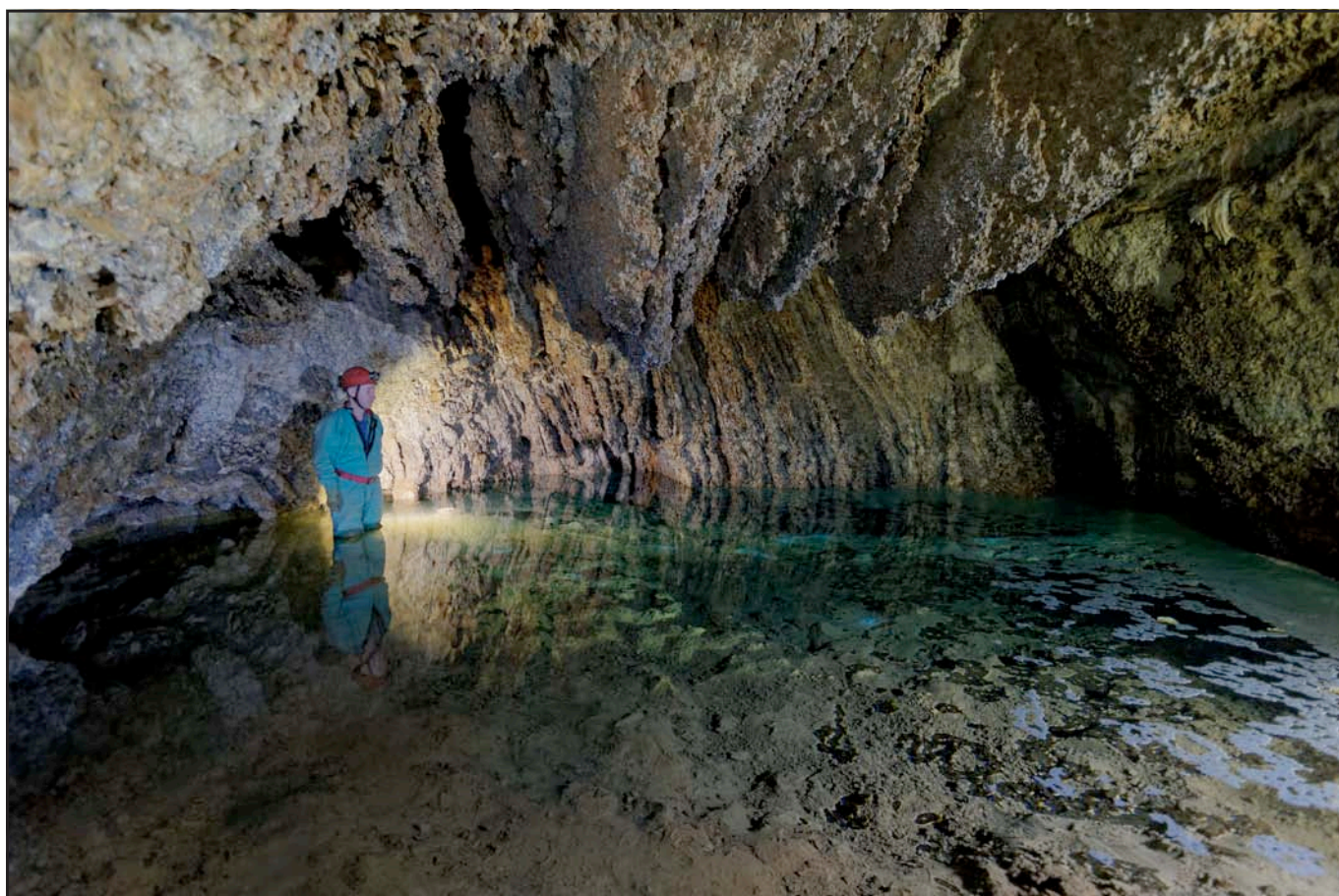
Present: Ian Cooper, Oxana Repina, Rowena Larkins, Phil Maynard, Rod Obrien, Dean Coleman, Greg Ryan, Aaron Strickland (SUSS), Jodie Anderson, Ian Eddison, Rebecca McPherson, Michelle Tonkins (Wellington guides)

Saturday 2nd: Ian C, Rowena Oxana, Phil and Rod went over to Bakers Swamp. It's a karst area on farmland about 10km southeast of Wellington. Parking at the banks of the Bell river, our first target was BS1 Bakers Swamp cave. This is a cave by the river which contains a sump, and Rod wanted to look at this for his book on the history of cave diving (plug: coming soon!). He managed to contact the local landowners and got a universally-friendly response, so we also planned to trek over the limestone hills near BS1 and look at what else was there. The sump in BS1 was examined and photographed. This sump is known to dry up on occasion and allows access to over 100m of additional passage.

Time was spent prospecting to the south of BS1 and along a 30m high bluff of limestone cut by the Bell River. Several small tagged caves were located with-

out anything major being seen. In the afternoon we looked at a separate ridge of limestone hosting BS9 (Columbine or Water cave).

BS9 is in a collapse doline underneath a huge spread of chickenwire. Between the boulder pile, a ladder pitch drops in 6 metres, onto a steep soil slope. Phil rigged a long tape down the slope and found a lake at the bottom. The lake filled a rift running east for at least 10m before dropping below the water-line. Underwater, the passage opened out on both sides of the rift under the walls, as well as getting deeper. Phil waded out into the rift and could see the passage continuing ahead in the rift underwater. All the party except Ian came down for a look, and Rod's eyes lit up at the sight of the continuing sump passage.



Phil Maynard at the sump in BS1

Photo Oxana Repina

Back at the tourist caves, Greg and Dean went for a dive in McCavity, finding the water level in the Birth Canal relatively high. The Bakers Swamp group returned in the late afternoon and we had a BBQ at the picnic shelter, joined by the guides.

Sunday 3rd: Phil and Rod dived in McCavity in beautiful clear water. Meanwhile, Ian, Oxana and Rowena took a group of Wellington Caves Guides to Bondi Beach in WE14 Limekilns. No-one had been to this area for some time. A flood had caused the rockpile crawl to become blocked, requiring some clearing. The water levels were higher than usual, making the climb down into Hanging Swamp interesting. One guide went for an involuntary swim off the base of the ladder. Just as the guides came down into Hanging Swamp, Phil and Rod surfaced to say hello. They had come via Bondi Beach and found the beach chamber completely full of bats. After chatting for a while, Phil and Rod sank into the main passages of McCavity for an extended float through the formations. Ian and Rowena weren't able to take the guides further around to the Northwest area, because of the high water levels. They returned to the surface for lunch.

After lunch Ian, Oxana and Rowena took the guides to WE5 Mitchells cave. Everyone was belayed down the entrance pitches, watched by Phil and Rod from the surface. The group spent some time in the middle level looking at the bone breccia and signatures, before rigging the third pitch. Just as Phil and Rod were leaving the cave, we heard Rowena calling for us from the bottom of the entrance pitches. She told us there'd been an accident, as described by Greg:

The accident occurred at approximately 1430 hours on Sunday 3/9/2017 in Mitchell Cave, Wellington. Ian Eddison descended the third ladder pitch belayed by Ian Cooper, and moved clear of the bottom of the ladder. The third pitch is 4m deep and is largely composed of compacted soil and rocks. Below the pitch is a steep soil slope that descends for a further 10m.

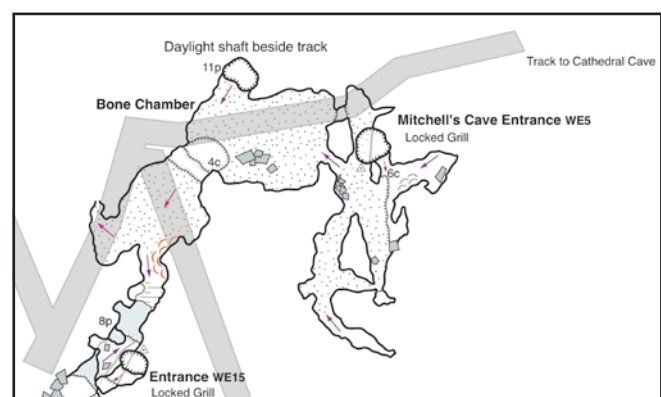
As Ian Cooper was belaying the next person at the top of the pitch, she dislodged a helmet sized rock which went down the pitch. There was a call of "rock" but it bounced and landed on Ian Eddison's left hand. He called out for help, and Ian Cooper descended and saw that the back of Ian Eddi-

son's hand was bleeding quite badly. Ian Cooper gathered together some t-shirts from the party and bandaged the hand. Ian Eddison was able to ascend the third pitch on belay with guidance from above and below. He then moved to the base of the second pitch where he rested and was kept under observation.

SUSS members at the surface were alerted by Rowena Larkins and a rigid ladder was fetched from the Caves Reserve workshop for use on the first and second pitches in place of the caving ladders which had been used for descent. Jodie Anderson exited the cave and called an ambulance to the site. A caving harness was sent down for Ian Eddison to wear on the ascent of the remaining two pitches. The rigid ladder was placed at the second pitch and Ian Eddison climbed this on belay. The rigid ladder was repositioned to the first pitch and Ian Eddison climbed out of the cave on belay. He remained alert and responsive the entire time underground. An ambulance was waiting at the cave entrance. Paramedic initial assessment was that there didn't appear to be any major damage. He went to the local hospital to have it checked out.

First aid in the cave was provided by Ian Cooper. The extraction was managed in the cave by Ian Cooper and Rowena Larkins. The surface response and belay was managed by SUSS and NSW Caves Rescue member Rod O'Brien.

The outcome was a crush injury and a chipped bone in Ian's hand. He returned to work two days later! Cautionary note: rigging down unstable pitches always has an element of risk.



Portion of WE5 Mitchell's cave

Accident site is pitch down from Bone Chamber

IB-38 Milk Run and IB-8 Mini Martin

29-30 April 2017

David Rueda-Roca

Party: David Bardi, James Barnes, Alan Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler, Liz Rogers, David Rueda-Roca, Lachlan Shore, Sandy Varin.

After my previous experiences in Tasmania (Niggly trips described in a previous article), I decided that I wanted to explore more vertical caves in Tasmanian areas like Junee Florentine and Ida Bay. For this reason I joined to STC (South Tasmanian Caverneers) and started making contact with local cavers.

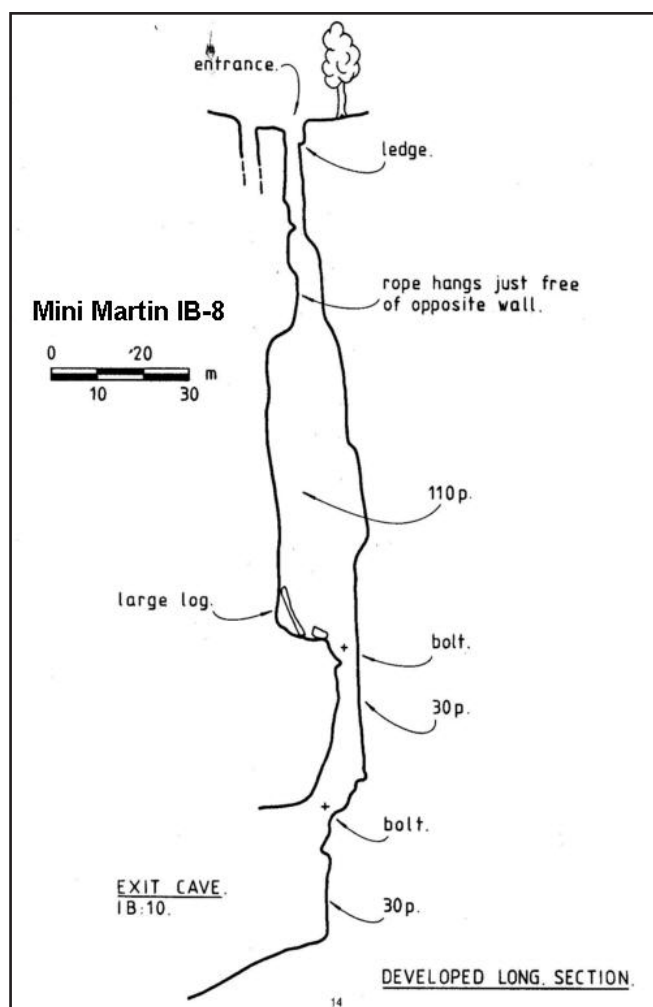
My original plan was to join to a group of STC cavers who were going to KD (Kazhad-Dum) cave. However, due to the fact that the main organisers of that trip did not know me at all, I was advised to visit other vertical caves before. For this reason, my Victorian caving friends and I were addressed to visit Ida Bay caving area and to perform a couple of classic caving trips in that zone. Alan Jackson (STC) suggested us to visit IB-8 Mini Martin, with its spectacular 110 meter pitch and IB-38 Milk Run pot (more than 200 meter deep), as both caves are

not difficult and they provide a good vertical SRT training chance. Obviously, I felt that I was going to be observed and I put my five senses in full power mode.

The “Lammelander” party was composed by the Victorians Sandy Varin, David Bardi, Lachlan Shore and Liz Rogers (three cave divers and one top cyclist) and by me. Moreover, Alan Jackson brought two beginners from STC to this trip, James Barnes and Gabriel “Gab” Kinzler (excellent French photographer and polyglot).

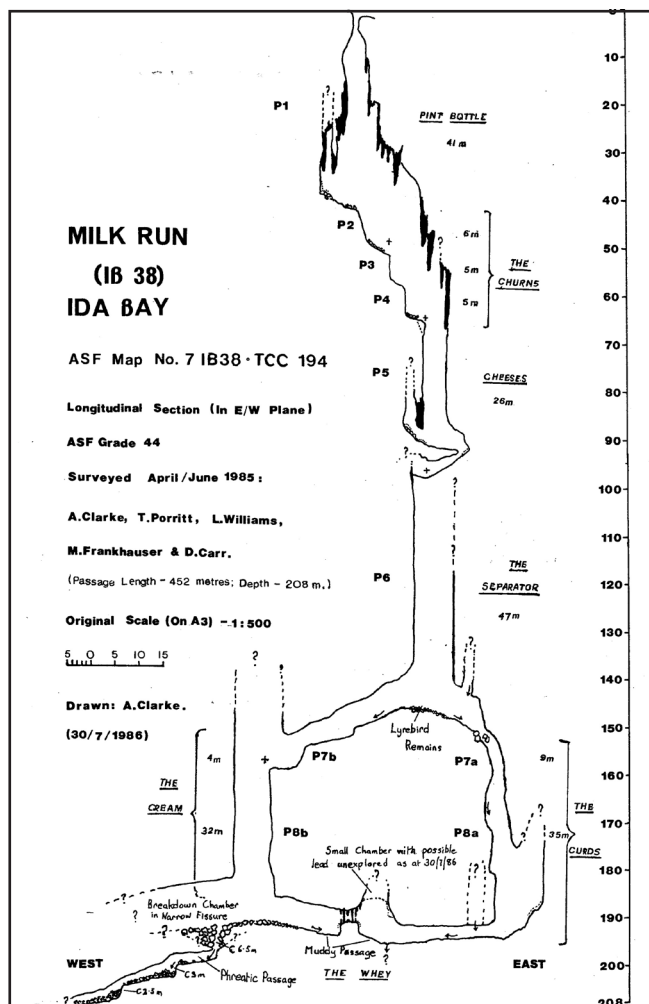
In opposition to our normal routine, we decided to fly to Tasmania on Saturday morning. I had to take the first plane in the morning at 5:30 am. Despite Jetstar tries to avoid that you feel asleep moving the plane as much as they can, I felt in the arms of Morpheus for the whole flight. After arriving in Hobart and being smelt by the Customs puppy, I met my Victorian friends. We picked up the rental car (a huge one this time) and drove towards Ida Bay: We stopped at the supermarket in Hobart to pick up the food for lunch (Sando prepared rolls in the car for the cave) and dinner. We continued driving to Huonville, where we had a second breakfast (first one for the ones that, like me, did not have enough time for having it at home and did not want to be abused by the airline meals and drinks prices). As soon as we arrived in Ida ay, we checked into the accommodation, sorted kit at the carpark and started following Alan Jackson through the bush to the entrances of both caves (they are very close one to the other). It took us more than one hour to reach both caves. Tracks through the bush in Ida Bay are frequently destroyed by the Lyre birds, who are consider as a mainland pest in the Tasmanian bush. Moreover, bush is pretty thick. For this reason, Tasmanian leave pink tapes attached to trees and ferns in order to mark the tracks. Lyre birds can destroy the tracks, but they cannot untie the tapes yet.

Alan divided the party in two teams. One team was formed by Liz, David B and Lachlan and had the goal of rigging IB-8 Mini Martin and having fun practising vertical SRT. The other team was formed by Sando and me and we had the task of rigging



IB-38 Milk Run, reaching its bottom. Most of us were carrying STC ropes through the bush to perform the rigging. We found the entrance of Mini Martin and got changed. I was still using my red Spanish MTDE cordura suit at that time. Sando rigged the first 41 meter pitch ("Pint Bottle") with me and went down. She continued rigging the next three small pitches that make "The Churns". Sando and I were following the rigging instructions that we got for this cave, trying to repeat exactly what was indicated in the description. Just before "Cheeses" (a 26 meter pitch) we could start listening Alan Jackson, Gab and James following us and progressing through the cave. following us. Alan was checking our rigging, checking that we were not going to kill ourselves... As soon as we abseiled "Cheeses", we landed in a bigger chamber and I took the rope to start rigging "the separator (a 47 meter deep pitch with an Y-belay at the top). While I was rigging I could hear voices of young males shouting like excited little girls and I look back to Sando, who started laughing. At that point, Alan had seen enough and decided to go up with Gab and James and leave us alone with the confidence that we would not kill ourselves. I abseiled down and as soon as I reached the bottom, I started to look for the continuation through "The Cream". At this point of the cave, there are two possible options. One of them is through "The Cream" that is big and safe, the other one is through "The Curds", that is more difficult as you need to scramble through a rock fall (nothing excessive difficult anyway). When Sando arrived, she used her female common sense and we continued through "The Cream". We rigged pitch P7b (4 meters deep) till the top of the last 32 meter deep pitch, where we discovered that we had not enough rope to go on. Actually, when we got changed before going into the cave, I left one rope behind, without noticing, at the entrance of the cave. After studying the possibility of climbing the pitch down, we decided that was impossible and started to prussik up, reaching the top of the cave with daylight. We wondered if the other group were still in Mini Martin, but we decided to came back to the car, as we thought that their trip was much shorter than ours.

We faced the way back to the cars through the Tasmanian bush and when we arrived to the car the sky was dark already. We discovered with surprise that the others did not arrived to the car before us. We got changed and decided to wait in the car till the rest of the party arrived from Mini Martin. Alan, Gab and James have already left back to Hobart.



Sando and I decided to have a nap (07:00 pm) while we were waiting. I remember closing my eyes and waking up few minutes later... few minutes that meant 09:30 pm. The rest of the party did not arrive still. We continue cooeing to our friends without receiving any response. Sando and I decided to drive back to the previous track cross road, where we could take water for our water bottles. Then we started to get changed into our wet and smelly caving suits again (I hate to do that!), as we thought that she and I had to come back to Mini Martin that night to try to find them. When we were finishing changing our clothes, it happened what it usually happens in these cases... someone was finally cooeing back. David B, Liz and Lachlan arrived to the car and everyone could finally come back to our accommodation at Ida Bay.

What we did not know at that time was how adventurous our accommodation at Ida Bay was going to be. Liz and Lachlan slept in one of the huts and Sando, David B and me in the other. We discovered that we did not have proper stoves/pots to cook pasta and therefore we had to use a cannelloni tray and the outdoor barbie to have some carbohydrates for dinner. Spoiler alert: Do not use cannelloni

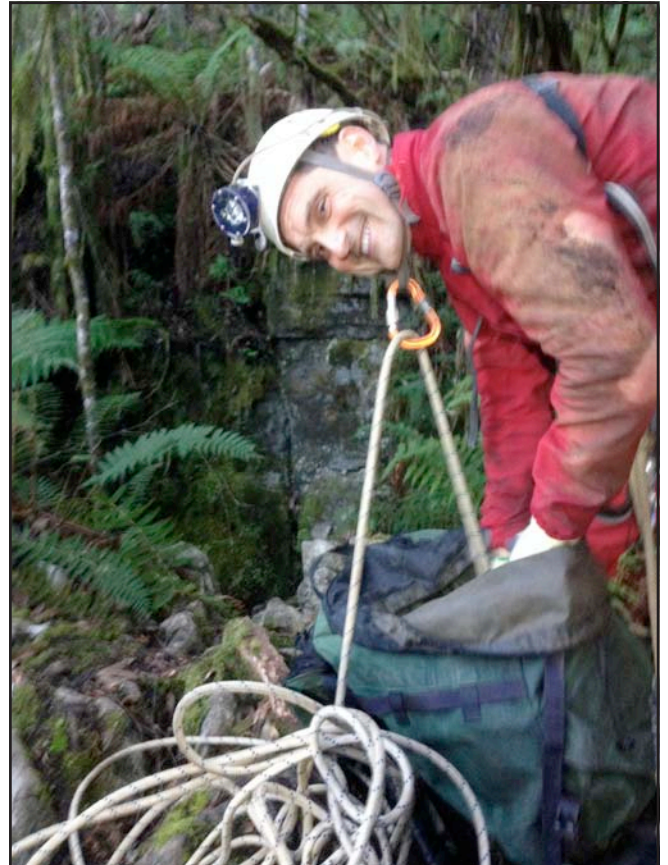
trays in barbeques... they do not last long. We were very pleased of having electric blankets in the beds and as it was cold, we set them to their maximal power. Good idea. While our thermals were drying out in the hut flooding the air with a nauseating smell, I woke up in the middle of the night, covered on sweat caused by the now almost incandescent electric blanket.

Next day, Liz, Lachlan, Sando, David B and me headed back to the caves. The plan was to swap caves and derig them. Sando and I reached the top of IB-8 Mini Martin and she started abseiling down. There is a small rebelay just few meters from the top and then 110 meters to the bottom of the first pitch. The rope was extremely thick, as no rebelay is used in this pitch. When I was abseiling, I felt me like in heaven, hanging in the middle of the pitch, feeding the rope with my right hand and getting tired of pressing the handle of my stop. Actually, a carabiner to eliminate the stop device and to convert it into a simple descender is more than recommended. At the bottom of the first pitch, we could find a big log lining against the wall. There, we continued through the second pitch (30 meter deep) and the third one (also 30 meter pitch). However, this last one is divided into two with a more than convenient rebelay. Once we reached the bottom of the third pitch, we continued walking/scrambling down the slope till the bottom of this pitch that is joined to the river in Exit Cave. Sando and I did the traditional drinking of the Exit Cave river water and started walking/climbing up till the rope. We prussiked it up. I was first and Sandy was de-rigging. When I reached the 110 meter pitch, we had a break and had something to eat. I took the rope with my hands, pass it through the prussiking devices and started to prussik up. I believe that in the first ten pushes, I did not moved from the bottom of the pitch. Suddenly I started elevating my body from the floor very slowly. I could see the rope progressing through my ascending devices, but its movement did not corresponded with the slow movement of the wall behind the rope. After a while, the wall started moving faster and faster. The feeling and emotions were great. In the middle of the air, in this pitch, turning around like a sausage. I felt me like a bird. I recommend this pitch to any caver. It is a good fun.

When Sando and I reached the top, we were very happy. We recovered and coiled the rope when David B appeared. He had finished derigging IB-38 Milk Run. We came back to the car and drove back

to Hobart. It is important to mention that before of this, we had a soft drink at the reception of the Ida Bay camping (actually I do not know how to define it), sponsored by Lachlan. The conversation with the owner was really picturesque. It is an experience that everyone should have once in a life.

At that time of the year, as I wanted to avoid previous bad experiences hurrying up in caves to be able to get flights back to Sydney on time, I planned to stay in Hobart for Sunday night. Alan Jackson invited



David packs a lot of rope at the top of IB8

Photo Sandy Varin

me to spend the night at his place. Actually, Sando, David B, Liz and Lachlan left me as a "hostage" at Alan's place, while they were escaping back to the mainland. Obviously I had to clean/wash the ropes before getting any food or liquid. That was the deal. If you have seen the movie "The Green Mile", you will discovered that at the end, the captors become friends of the inmates... this is actually how everything finished at Alan's place. I was allowed to use the shower, I even got a cup of tea and slept in a very comfortable bed. Just before falling asleep, I looked at the right side of the bedroom, discovering a gorgeous map of Midnight Hole... perhaps it was a message from the twilight zone about the future events that would develop in Tasmania during the next months.

continued following Serena and Chris through the cave till we arrived to the broken column chamber. There, the alleyway became bigger and bigger. It this cave is well known for something, it is for being huge. Yes, it is huge and its dimensions are impressive. Then we arrive into a big chamber, where we could finally see the river for the first time. We crossed the river and we had lunch on the sand. After having lunch and taking a fair bit, we continued walking through the main streamway. Then Chris requested us to divert through a side passage where we discovered some old investigation setup that was part of an old scientific project that measured the water level of a pool. Besides, we could also see some wires to limit a wet area of the tributary of the main stream, where people used to count snails, studying the population of these animals during the different seasons.

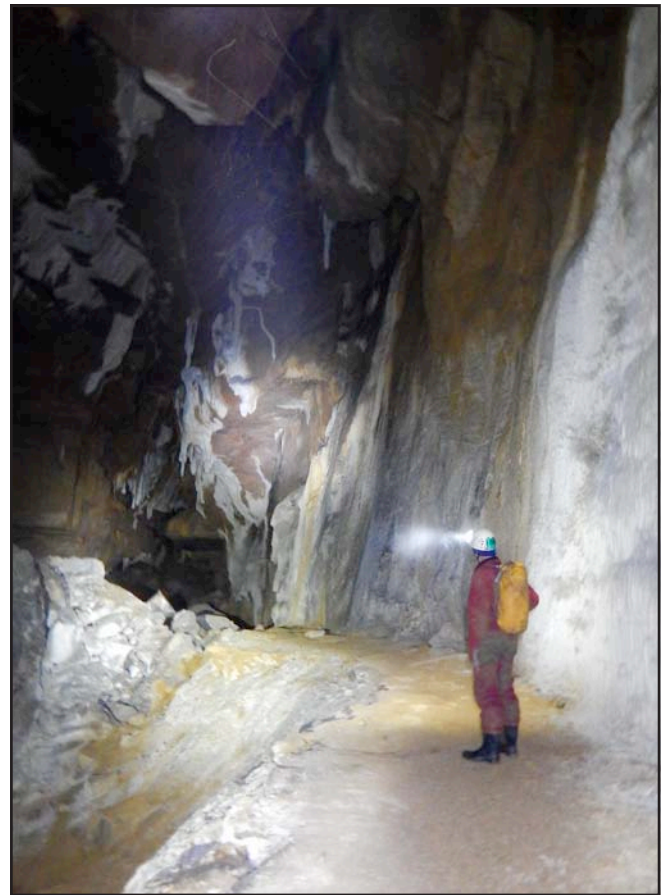
We moved on and got into another chamber, where Chris asked us to look for some distinctive red marks on the rocks, that he suggested they were made by some sort of fungus. We could not find it and we could see some sort of disappointment on Chris' face.



The Ballroom, Exit Cave

Photo David Rueda-Roca

Going on through the cave, we followed the streamway, till we reached the bottom of IB-8 Mini Martin. My face draw a smile remembering our adventure few months ago. We continued passing the big chamber with the huge room in the middle, where people used to bivouac when they explored/surveyed the cave. We could still find some waterproof containers from previous expeditions at that place. We went on till we reached the most spectacular and decorated part of this awesome cave, this is the Ballroom. The Ballroom is a very well decorated



Chris in the main passage, Exit Cave

Photo David Rueda-Roca

area of the cave (something not very common for the South of Tasmania) where the main attraction, apart of columns and formations, is a straw with a calcified hanging ball. Everyone, who has visited this cave anytime, had to see the Ballroom, as it is a mandatory experience.

We left the Ballroom and we continued our way to the main exit at IB-14. The river is pretty wide before the exit and you can see wires crossing it. These wires were used when cavers were surprised by sudden floods or were stupid enough to go into this cave with high water levels. Just imagine people crossing the wild river with high water level is scary.

We went out and we realised that it was drizzling and the sky was pitch black. We started walking back to the cars through the bush, following more pink tapes. The walk back is easy, although sometimes is a little bit steep. We passed by one of the crossroads to Milk Run and Mini Martin and sooner than expected, we arrived to the car park.

After getting changed, we farewelled Chris and moved to the Ida Bay hut. From our previous experienced, this time we knew how and what to cook considering the basic facilities that we had in the

Matawhero and friends

New Zealand, January 2017

by Alan Pryke, Peter Freeman, Rafid Morshedi and Phil Maynard

Present: Alan Pryke, David Rueda-Roca, David-Stephen Myles, Rafid Morshedi, Peter Freeman, Phil Maynard

Day 1: On which we beat the rain

Alan – David-Stephen Myles and VSA's Peter Freeman had arrived ahead of the Thursday afternoon contingent of Alan Pryke, Phil Maynard, Rafid Morshedi and David Rueda Roca. This sped things up a bit on their arrival, with hire cars already dealt with, as well as most shopping attended to. Still, another shop-fest on arrival occurred for breakfasts, lunches and other personal items (Chocolate, etc!)

The afternoon peak traffic finally spat us out towards Otorohanga, our next stop for perishables. We arrived a bit later than expected... 5 minutes to closing at 9pm! A rushed attack on the meat section amassed enough, fast enough, to keep us happy for a week or so, with a last minute panic for parmesan.

A call to the property manager, Colin, confirmed our late arrival time at Waitoru Station. We made it just before heavy rain made the farm tracks impassable. The light of the woolshed could be seen up in the hills, and our arrival had us surprised as to the effort Colin had made to make the woodshed home... Wool bales placed as dividers, and six beds all set up. The kitchen was stocked with crockery, utensils, pots, etc, and in the main room a table with six chairs, five of which looked suspiciously new. A phone call from Colin, who was apprehen-



Home in the shearing shed

Photo Rafid Morshedi



Peter surveying at the bush tomo entrance, Matawhero

Photo Rafid Morshedi

sive about the track in, was happy to know we had arrived safely and keen for an opinion on our digs. We happily told him of its excellence! A quick pasta meal was scoffed, and, after lots of banter around the dinner table, we settled in.

Day 2: On which we beat about the bush

Peter – We rose on Friday to a soggy and grey morning, but the rain had stopped, and with it being the first day of our two-week caving expedition we were still keen to get started. David Rueda and I were new to this location, so we really had little idea of where we were going as Phil drove the Subaru northwards up the network of farm tracks. He brought us to a stop near a gate that led into a large area of bushland – one of the many that stand here as remnant islands in the cleared undulating farmlands.

When kitted up, including for SRT, Phil and Alan led us into the bush and to edge of a steep muddy slope. The slope reached, after a few metres, the lip of a tomo with a small shower of water dropping down its opposite side. This is known as 'the Bush Tomo', and is one of about six entrances to the Matawhero system. We prepared for descent: sorting our packs, deciding two survey teams, calibrating two disto-x's, and of course rigging the pitch. The weather was still defying the rain, though it was not so easy to tell in the dense bush here.

David Rueda was first into the tomo, and Rafid next. At the bottom of the muddy slope the rope passed over a rocky edge, so by this time some discussion was occurring around setting up a rebelay or redirect. However, the next man down, David-Stephen, installed a rope protector instead. Meanwhile, Phil and Alan began a survey, with two shots reaching down to station 62 at the base of the pitch. Soon we were all gathered there.

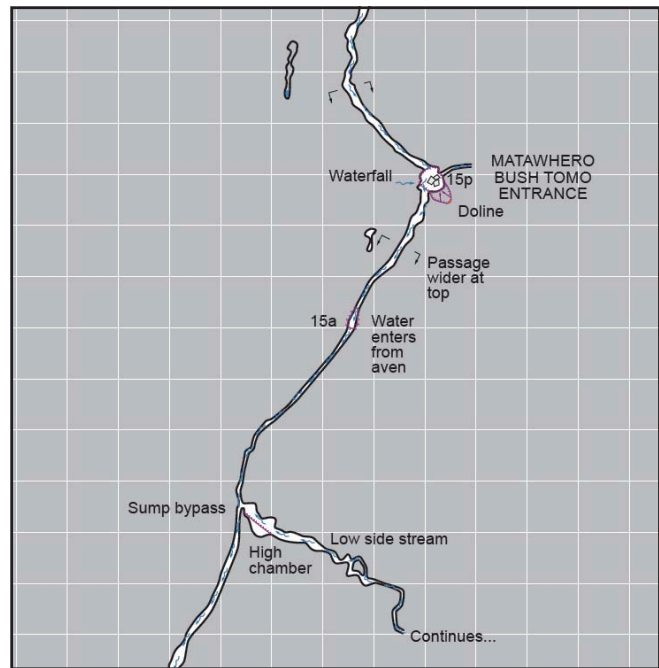
Taking our SRT kit off and stashing it for the return, we settled into our two surveying teams: my party going southwards (downstream) would include the two Davids, leaving Phil, Alan and Rafid to survey northwards (upstream).

The minor shower seen from the surface was actually quite strong down here, and our first shot went right through it. As scribe and sketcher I initially stayed upstream of the shower while the two Davids took our first shot to station 200. I recorded it and then I too got wet as I joined them. This new location was situated on the edge of a six metre hole down which the water poured, but we soon saw that an easy traverse over the shaft led into a drier rift passage where we could climb down to stream level. So began our journey and exploration.

David-Stephen had been part of the previous year's expedition, when the two northern entrances to Matawhero Cave had been discovered. He was able to tell us (and had even shown us on a rough sketch map) that one small non-surveying team, led by a legendary character named 'Felix', had entered this passage from the main body of the cave, south of here, and had pushed all the way north to the Bush Tomo in one go. Before free-climbing out there (!), they had passed through four or five near-sumps. Our present team therefore had some idea of what to expect.

We now found ourselves in a narrow and tortuous rift passage. For ease of writing and drawing I descended into the stream, but David R on disto and David-S on point took most early shots half-way up the rift to achieve longer sightlines. My climb down introduced me to the important fact that this limestone has low tensile strength, with small holds tending to snap off under weight! This first phase of our survey ended when we stepped into a small chamber that was actually the base of an aven with more water entering from it.

Continuing, we stayed nearer to stream level, which was hardly ever more than 40cm wide. This



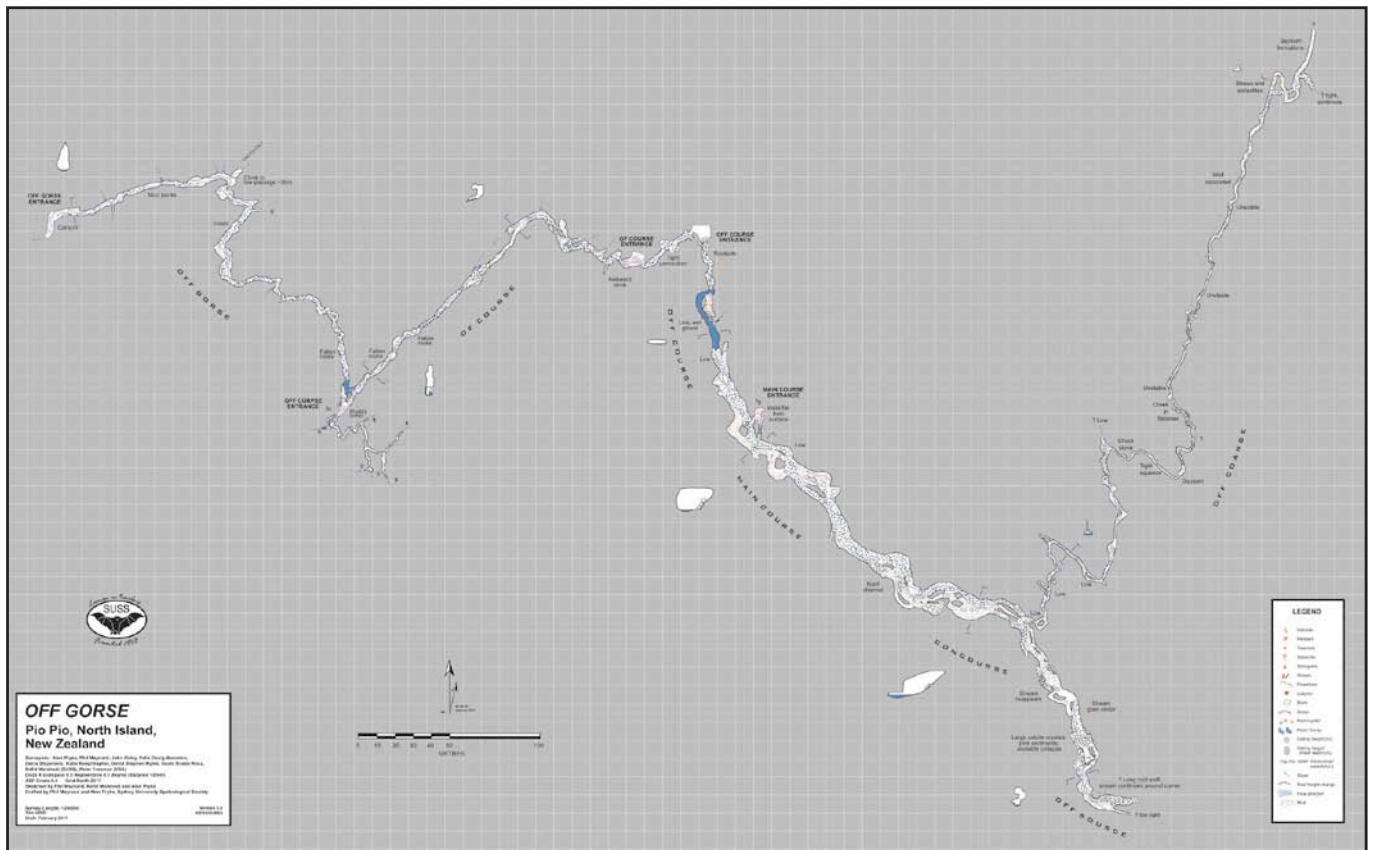
Bush tomo area, Matawhero, 10m grid

All mapping Alan Pryke

enforced shots averaging 3m in length. Eventually, being at that time in the lead position, I looked into a narrow right-hand bend and saw the roof descending to about 20cm above the water surface. So here was our first sump. Above it was a rock face with water trickling down, so David-S climbed a few metres up at that point and found a place where he could look down into a similar rift on the sump's far side. A bypass! This is what we'd hoped for, so the survey was soon extended to that perch.

As we prepared to survey onwards, we realised that we were at a junction, with a side inlet bringing in a very small stream from the east. Since it felt warmer and drier up here, we decided to survey first into this new passage. We were all feeling rather cold, I especially owing to having the sedentary task of recording and drawing. The side passage was followed for 15 shots, with its size gradually diminishing. Eventually the two Davids reached the farthest negotiable point, where the too-narrow continuation led steeply upwards and housed many wetas. Clearly it was nearing the surface.

Along that passage I had encountered another weak-rock area, and the simultaneous snapping of both hand-holds while crawling in a low section had grazed or cut both my hands. These very minor injuries lasted, inconveniently, for the rest of the expedition. I was also shivering whilst trying to write the survey results, and so becoming rather de-motivated. There was no disagreement when I suggested that this might be a suitable point to end



the day's work. True, we had completed only 40 shots and 140m of passage, but the junction was a notable point in the cave, and it would be easy to relocate even though we currently lacked flagging tape to label it.

And so, after making a cairn at the junction station, we returned up the streamway, prussicked out of the tomo, and found our way out of the bush by a rather circuitous route. The other team was still in the cave, but we cleared up and drove back to our comfy woolshed. I spent part of that evening carefully checking our data, correcting some station numbers, and neatly re-drawing my in-cave sketch

Phil – Upstream from the tomo – the passage began as a moderate size serpentine creek, but soon became tight, followed by becoming very, very tight. Eventually, our slow survey made it upstream to reasonable-sized stream passage once more. We stopped at a rockpile blockage, with stream visible below a risky climb heading further upstream.

Day 3: On which we go off the reservation

Rafid – This Saturday was another soggy day. We drove to Off Gorse on Sean Carter's property. The entrance was down a soggy and slippery tape climb near a garbage doline. It was a pretty big streamway cave. David Stephen-Myles, Alan and I surveyed a side passage going upstream for ~460m of passage (The rest of us pushed through rockpile squeezes to

follow the main stream to the bitter end – Phil). The passage was narrow and there was gypsum all over the walls once we passed the rest stop where we had lunch. A few of us needed to relieve ourselves at this point. The passage was tight enough that Alan managed to wedge himself in a crack above the creek in an attempt to avoid the effluent that flowed below him.

Towards the end of the survey of the side passage the passage started to get increasingly unstable. There were many portable footholds and the walls had a tendency to crumble. There was gypsum all over the walls and the horrendous mud had a tendency to suck up our boots. Despite being cold and muddy it was a fun days caving.

Day 4: *On which Rafid discovers Soggy Sheep*

Rafid – Sunday was another very soggy day – the roads there were too bad for us to drive so we were trapped on the property. What do cavers do when they can't drive to caves far away? They look for caves by walking around nearby.

The searched for caves in nearby bushland and looked at a whole bunch of dolines. We were looking in particular for Clives Dam Cave. David Stephen-Myles and I went out earlier than the rest of the team, not really that early (11am) we are SUSS after all. We found a great big doline near the lake, behind the woolshed. David went down to have a look

at it. There were a lot of holes to look into but, it was raining and there were many dead animals around. I crawled right over a decomposing cow. Eventually we found a promising looking cave. It was a little slot leading into a pool of water. We rigged a tape and Dave apprehensively went down first, he shouted it's big and I went down shortly after.

Once I got to the bottom I realised why Dave was bridging across the slot. I shuffled over a little bit and saw what appeared to be 5 dead sheep, floating in the water.

There was a boulder blocking the way on, but it looked long and rifted and about 6 m high and 1 m wide. By this point I had far exceeded my dead animal limit for the day and was ready for some hot tea and dinner. Nevertheless, it's a promising lead for next year. I got out of the cave and found Mylesy had joined us after finding another cave on his own with some pretty decoration and some nasty climbs. Another lead to explore next year.

Day 6: Caverns measureless to man

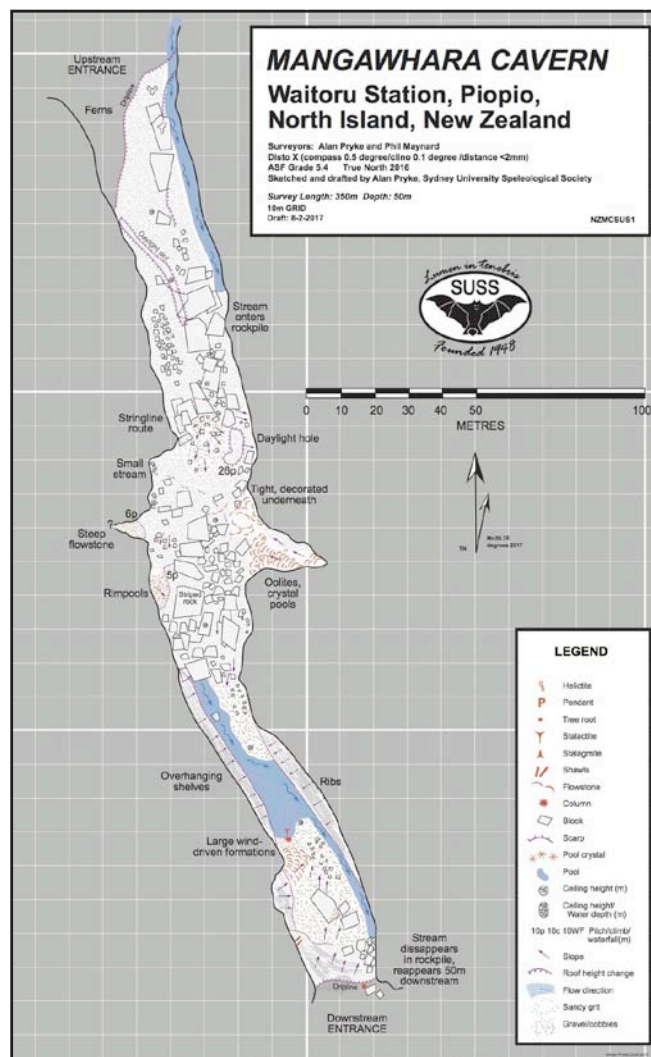
Rafid – Finally, a day of fine weather. We went to Mangawhara Cavern. Dave, Mylesy and I abseiled into Bush Arch through the 60m pitch while the others walked around the side. What a great cave. We then climbed back out of the cave and abseiled into the daylight hole of Managawhara cavern – another great cave. Alan pointed us towards the oolites up the slope while he and Phil surveyed this well-known cave.

Dave, Mylesy and I then went surface prospecting to the right of the Managwhera cavern. We followed a stream that seemed to have too much water coming out of it given the small catchment. We raced along expecting a cave and sure enough we found a large cavern about 8 m high and 4 m wide. We followed it upstream until it suddenly came to an end with the water coming through the hole in the stream.

We were apprehensive, but Mylesy had a look at the hole and found that it went on and would be a small duckunder. He went through and then let us know that the passage continued on the other side. I joined him soon after and we continued up the passage. It went for another 50m or so until it came to another rockpile and a duckunder to get to the other side.

Mylesy went through and told me that it went on, before coming to a narrow and squeezey passage. I went through after and checked it out. The passage continued, but it was narrow and was a roof sniff, with some unstable rocks nearby. We decided it was too hairy and returned. We turned around and met David on the other side of the duckunder. We realised that this cave would go on.

We eventually found some other dolines and followed them until we eventually found another entrance to a big cave, with a streamway running through it (see day 7 report below). We followed it for about 150m until it came to a terminal rock pile. It could be ducked under, but I found a squeeze through to the other side. The chamber on the other side was low but there was some fungus on the rocks. There was more rockpile and I pushed on and the others came through behind me. It was getting late now and we returned back to the car/hut. We were very excited and hoped that we had found a new cave. We gave Alan the GPS coordinates and he confirmed that this is a cave that hadn't been looked at for a while. It was called Nurglo in a previous trip report.





Entrance to Mangawhara Cavern

Photo Alan Pryke

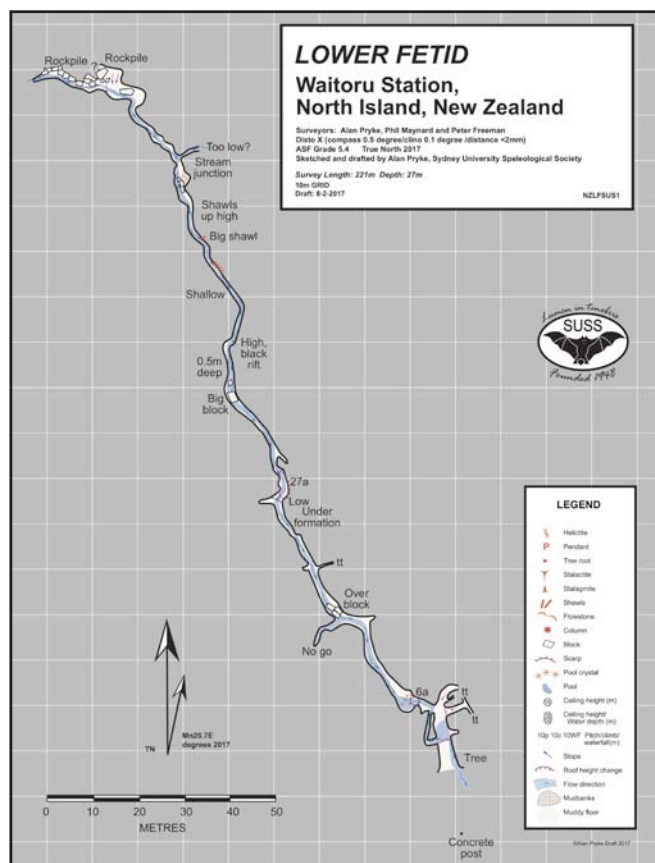
Day 7: Lowest of the Lower Fetid

Peter – The previous day had been a recreationally-orientated one, focussed on Mangawhara Cavern. In the cavern, Phil and Alan surveyed, and while I relaxed near the downstream exit the other guys walked out of this bush and explored the open farmland just to the west. They located a few new features in an area where some caves were already known. One, which they rapidly explored to its apparent end, was just south of the known ‘Fetid Cave’, so we decided it should be surveyed ASAP.

Our team for this visit was Alan, Phil and I – the others busied themselves in the Matawhero bush. Our walk-in was relatively short and it wasn’t long before we satisfied ourselves that we had the right spot. This was a short double-blind valley or karst-window, with the stream flowing out of our cave and, within fifty metres, into another. We were half expecting the descent to need a handline, but in fact it was easy.

A couple leaps over the stream got us into the resurgence entrance and we were off, with me on point. Lucky hey? The going was easy, especially at this early stage, with only ankle-deep water in a walking passage. Phil and Alan worked their usual snappy and productive teamwork with the Disto-X and 1:500 drawing, and after less than 100m we reached the first rockfall area. It wasn’t really an obstacle: a slide past a large rock that narrowed and deepened the stream, then a little climb up and down. A minor westward branch took off from the deeper-water part, but became too narrow after about 20m.

Now the going continued easy, mainly walking-sized in a quite attractive meandering passage. We were expecting another rockpile area, having memorised Rafid’s description from the previous day, but it didn’t come until we’d surveyed and drawn another 100m or so. We clambered around for a while, hoping for a way on, but none was obvious. The possibility of getting past here is not ruled out, but we felt sure that we were nearing the downstream blockage in the original ‘Fetid Cave’ so



it made sense to bring our results out for plotting before spending more time.

One unexplored lead exists in the cave: a minor water inlet on the true left (east side) about 150m from the entrance. We went up there, perhaps ten metres, and looked through a very low and wet continuation. It seemed to be an interesting task for ANOTHER day!

I've not seen the results of our survey work yet. I'm keen to see this place's relationship with Fetid Cave. It would be nice to have yet another wet through-cave in this speleo-heaven.

Day 8: On which we find the Magic Goat pass

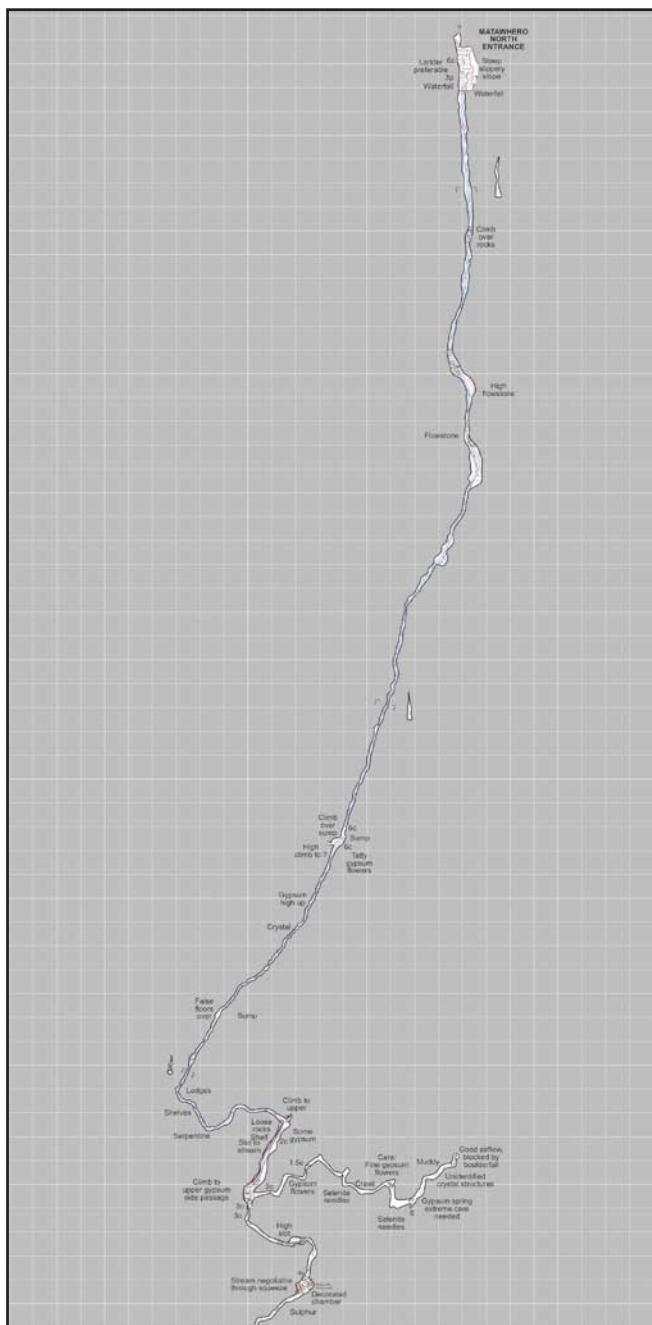
Alan – Alan, in his usual make-it-up-as-he-goes-along attitude, decided it was time to tackle the Mangaorongo Gorge. This is a trip gradually perfected over several NZ trips, albeit still being a long day. The group slid down the steep eastern entrance slope, occasionally using tendrils of kiki vine to slow down ... deliberately or not. Kiki vine, otherwise known as supplejack, is a finger-thick malevolent woody vine that inhibits progress with its invulnerability. An invulnerability that seems easily beaten when using the vine for a hand line, at which point the vine gleefully snaps, depositing the victim into a pit, deep mud, nettles, or the next kiki tendrils...

We then proceeded up the fast-flowing Mangaorongo. A concern about the water volume was soon confirmed upon side-tripping into the bottom end of Taranui Cave. The usual splashy but low flow was replaced by a thundering torrent, crashing down each 2m drop. The fearless worked their way up a few of the waterfalls, climbing above the flow. Rafid and David-Stephen continued to see the daylight hole, then soon returned. Soon it became clear that this was not the safest side trip, so after a few blurry photos and video, the team retreated to the seemingly friendlier Mangaorongo. It was worth it to show Rafid what an NZ streamway cave can be like!

The next kilometre or so of creek bashing turned out to be slower than usual due to the flow. As we approached the canyon section, Alan heard a goat bleating up ahead. The canyon section, previously a sedate pool to swim up, was a strong torrent. A few of us attempted upstream travel, noting the “vortex of doom” at the downstream end of the canyon, where the waters were swallowed up by gap in a rockpile. Alan had a go upstream, then decided to climb over the maelstrom on the left hand bank using tenuous handholds such as clumps of grass. Soon after Alan decided to call the trip, as the cave section of the gorge would be unmanageable with the current floodwaters. We found out that travel back downstream was much faster... especially if, in the less dodgy sections, one got in and floated. Rafid, in this manner, seemed very capable at “finding” hidden obstacles underwater.

Alan concluded that the goat he had heard must surely have come down a pass, so on arriving at that tiny side creek junction, a decision was made to try to exit. If it failed, it would put us close to exiting after dark, several hours later. After a good thrashing through a steep, muddy, kiki vine laced jungle, we successfully escaped onto farmland, cutting our exit time substantially. Cars were quickly located, and we headed back to our woodshed camp in late afternoon sunshine. Alan was keen to use this exit point later in the trip, when waters may have subsided, but we got too busy with other objectives.

Worthy of note is that the pass is very close to Event Horizon Cave, which has yet to be fully descended as we ran out of ladder in 2015. On that trip Denis Stovanovic said that he could see the gorge through portholes in the wall of the second pitch. So it could be possible to descend to the gorge through the cave, then easily return up the “Magic Goat” pass.



Day 9: *On which the northern streamway starts to make sense*

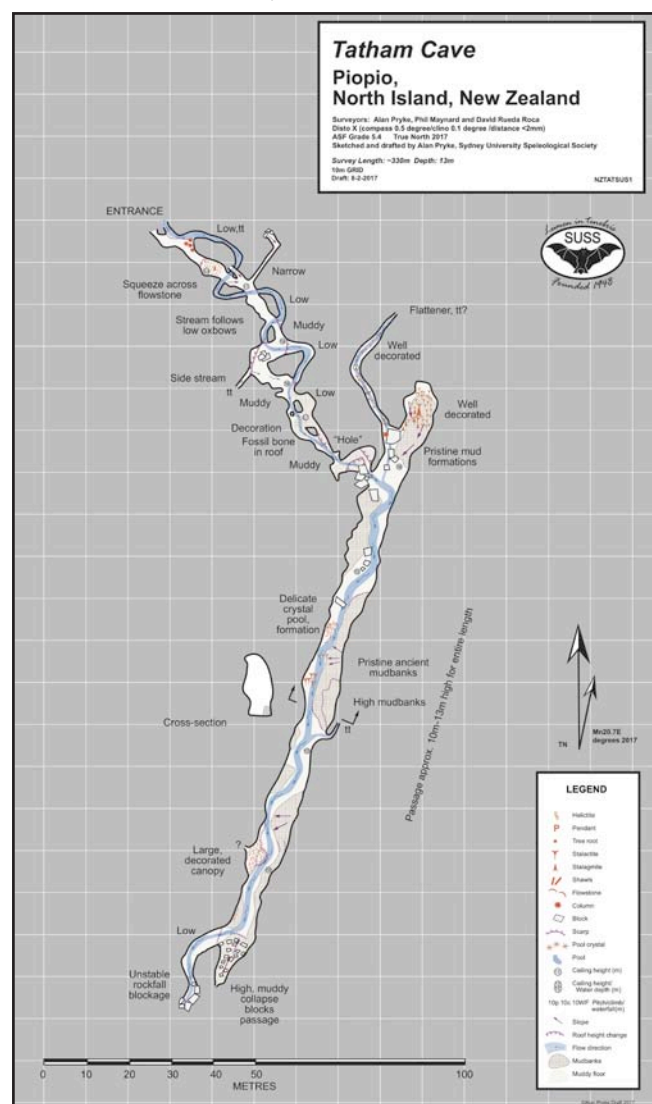
Phil – All of us piled in through the northern swallow of Matawhero, proved to connect to the main cave by the crazy through trip the previous year. It's a nice pitch, into huge rift passage with a level creek running off downstream. The rift passage doesn't become small and annoying for at least 200m. Peter, Phil and David R-R surveyed downstream from the previous limit of mapping, while the others went upstairs to survey a high level passage rumored to contain gypsum flowers. The main stream turned

out to be serpentinious, with just the occasional rockpile blockage. We'd been going for about 200 metres when Phil crawled through a low rockpile trying to stay above the liquid mud and found his survey point from Day 2! That was quicker than expected. We returned and found the others were still going up in the high levels. Turns out there was an impressive set of gypsum flowers.

Day 12: *On which old land turns up new cave*

Phil – The Tatham property has recently been extended across south of the road, and we spent time surface exploring around the new karst area. But it was on the old part of the Tatham property that we made a major discovery. A small creek in a big doline led into tight passage. After 100m the stream joined a major creek passage – rectangular in cross-section and about 12m high. At the upstream end of the big passage, the creek vanished into a small ugly slot while downstream was a mobile rockpile.

We explored Tatham cave on day 12 and came back to do the map on day 13.





Phil Contemplates the landscape from the Tatham property

Photo Alan Pryke

Day 14: On which Rafid discovers Liquid Cow

Alan – Another Matawhero Cave day was prompted by David R's keenness to finish the job. Peter is reporting on their day, so Alan, Phil and Rafid attempted to locate the western half of the cave.

Attempts in the past have failed, in one way or another, to get in to the western streamway. This trip was almost equally insidious. The only evidence of recent success was the 2008 ladies team that all managed to squeeze through the insane flat-tener halfway through the cave, then to eventually dig their way to the surface, popping up through a grassy hole into a paddock of quizzical cattle. A line of mature pine trees made their exit point memorable, when discussing the exit with Alan. On returning a few years later, Alan failed to locate the pine trees, believing himself to be a bit lost in the landscape. Turns out the said pines were dispatched soon after the ladies' trip, confusing future searches. Phil and Alan spent some time searching the exact area some years later, finding no entrances, or trees.... and were stumped.

So after discovering Tina Willmore's Matawhero photo files from the 2008 trip, a tell-tale short wooden fence near their exit point would help in the search. First up, the northwestern entrances were sought. Alan vaguely recalled a similar wooden fence on one of these. The first possibility turned out to be a different fence, so the group continued to the second possibility, the sink point from Masochismia Cave, followed by the usual herd of curious cows.

Rafid was keen to drop in to the obvious sink point, but once in soon piked after encountering a recently deceased cow carcass and its putrid stench. A sufficiently grey Rafid clambered out of the pit saying not to send him back in. "The stench and the eyes, the eyes, ugh!" Thus Alan could not convince him to return to collect the ear tag for Colin. Phil, meanwhile strutted over to a bunch of pines nearby, quickly finding an entrance pitchy thing that he hardly hesitated to climb down. Alan, being well aware of the consequences of losing grip – i.e. a near broken ankle a few years back, chose to be

body belayed on tape. Rafid dropped in shortly after.

Phil made his way down the ever decreasingly-sized passage to a low bit that fortunately opened up and joined a major streamway. A quick reconnoitre was made upstream, soon ending in a climb through a vertical squeeze. Alan then recalled seeing this from the top years ago, and being reluctant to drop in. A good decision as it belled out at the bottom.

The group then piled downstream along easy going, encountering another upstream branch probably leading back to the rotting cattlebeast, so that was not pursued. A southwestern branch was encountered next, so we dropped packs and went for a look, eventually finding the going more difficult. Rafid identified daylight up a rift and concluded that it would be tight, but an easier way out.

So again, downstream along easy going ankle-deep streamway. Dry oxbows began appearing, the streamway being low or too low not to use

them. This meant climbing up muddy walls into each oxbow, then descending back to the stream, crossing it, then repeating as often as unnecessary. Sometimes, the streamway would be the easier route, but one would end up rather damp. As the oxbows continued, Alan became aware that the northern branch we were now seeking could be hidden in one of the oxbows. Then we ended up crawling in the muddy soup as no more oxbows presented themselves. Rafid found this particularly joyous on realising that some of the morass was probably bits of livestock, woven into a soup of wet cement-like slop. Soon after, we arrived at an obvious northern side creek, just before the main stream became a likely swim. Surveying began earnestly, Phil delighted by being chosen to do book in the drippy, muddy mess. Rafid grovelled up the side stream, through a squeeze above stream level, at which some time was spent making it Alan sized, which led to the operation being performed again at a second squeeze just beyond. From there it became a standing height passage with some stalactites. Phil



Rafid gets to grips with the Matawhero stream

Photo Alan Pryke

surveyed through the mess getting cranky with the conditions. And you don't want a cranky Phil, so we called it, as further on returned to a tight muddy slopfest.

On returning to the mainstream, we all realised that we were now wearing camouflage gear. Mud coloured, of course. After some silly pics we headed back upstream. We soon realised that being soaked did not help in climbing into the oxbows, and that a more appropriate climbing technique was the self explanatory "flunge" technique, ending up penguin-like at the top of each climb.

After flunging for some time, it was noted that we were in a much narrower passage than we were in going downstream. Ah.. this was the correct upstream branch, accidentally flunged into. So, without too much convincing, the trio began surveying from an old carbide number on the wall at the junction.

It was decided that after an initial oxbow-y bit, that sketching would be rather pointless as the passage was a half metre wide tunnel without any extra bits. We soon had a couple of hundred metres or so of survey, when the passage shrank considerably, and with the team wet and cold, a decision was made to

head out, leaving a good station to find in future. It was noted that dirty water was flowing past us, so the other upstream team mustn't have been too far away.

On eventual arrival at Rafid's "easier" way out, he spent some time covering Alan, wedged in a vertical squeeze offset close by, with dirt, most of which seemed eager to slip inside Alan's collar, ears, etc. After lots of groaning and thrashing, Rafid freed himself of the cave. Alan followed, noting a narrow floor of cow bones for support to push up to Rafid's exit. Unfortunately, despite Rafid squeezing past a roll of old fencing, which he shifted courteously aside, the exit was not Alan sized. Luckily, after Rafid passed in a digging stone, Alan was able to enlarge the hole. A small piece of rock wall broke away and clattered down the tight rift, making exit possible. It turned out that this was the hole that the ladies trip in 2008 was not happy to exit. They had enlarged another hole nearby, now lost in the mud and grass. Oh, and nearby was a long row of low bleached tree stumps, confirming to 2008 story.

At least we now have the "new" (unmapped) pit entrance to the system in the pines. On returning to the car we noticed the other team's car missing from up on the ridge, so they were out safely. And the



Western branches of Matawhero, downstream to junction with northern branch, 10m grid

cows? Yes they were there to greet us, still puzzled assumedly by the vanishing/reappearing humans.

Peter – Team Peter/David/David drove separately to the parking spot and prepared for descent. We could see across the valley to our west, the other team combing the ground for the western entrances – observed by a discreetly-following audience of inquisitive cattle. Soon we set off into the bush area – and returned to the cars around twenty minutes later, having wandered in that wilderness and being unable to locate the tomo. If only we had the coordinates! We tried again, and this time we walked around in circles for only ten minutes before stumbling onto the correct location.

Rigging the pitch was easy and quick (it always is, the second time), and we dispensed with the rope protector at the transition between the mud-slope and vertical drop. David R remarked that there seemed less water than previously in the initial shower – which would be logical after two weeks of less-rainy weather, though I wasn't actually convinced. Anyway, we were soon at the previous high junction and ready to survey.

An interesting event occurred as we began work: our first station, along with the large and seemingly stable piece of bedrock on which the cairn had been built, detached itself from the cave wall. I held it, with difficulty, while David R got himself out of the way, and then let it go. It crashed down and wedged itself safely across the rift passage. It reminded me to test all hand-holds.

As we surveyed southwards bypassing the sump, the passage at stream level remained narrow. David and David therefore performed the survey at a level around 6m higher, where the width tended to be just over 1m. All the way along, there was a similar height of rift above the survey: really a very tall passage. Progress was satisfactory, though with the usual difficulties of being cold, wet and muddy, making handling the data sheets awkward despite using semi-waterproof paper.

After only twelve shots the high level seemed to end. I was already down at stream level, recording,

so I looked for the way on there. What I found was a near-sump. We were not totally surprised: we knew that we must be approaching them, but had hoped they lay farther south. In view of our experience on the first day above the previous sump, we were convinced that a bypass would be found high above. David-S therefore climbed even higher than the survey level, but, despite initial promise, there was no bypass. We performed another shot to bring the survey close to the sump, and were then all looking at each other wondering who might suggest that we call it a day. I eventually made the suggestion, to everyone's apparent relief.

We agreed to flag this final station, 243, for continuation later, and having done so we packed up the equipment into our dry-bag and cave pack and prepared to retreat. Just then, perhaps feeling guilty for having made only 100m of progress, David S said he would "just pop through the sump for a look". This he did – and found more sumps. He went further, soon having passed through about four short sumps. He half-returned, and we agreed to take more survey shots, with the data being shouted back to me. David R went in too, and I unpacked the equipment and we recorded the data. I then packed it all up again, and then the Davids said "Let's do one more shot". I unpacked again! Finally we completed eight shots through the series of sumps, and flagged station 251. THEN we packed up and retreated to daylight with 115m of survey bagged.

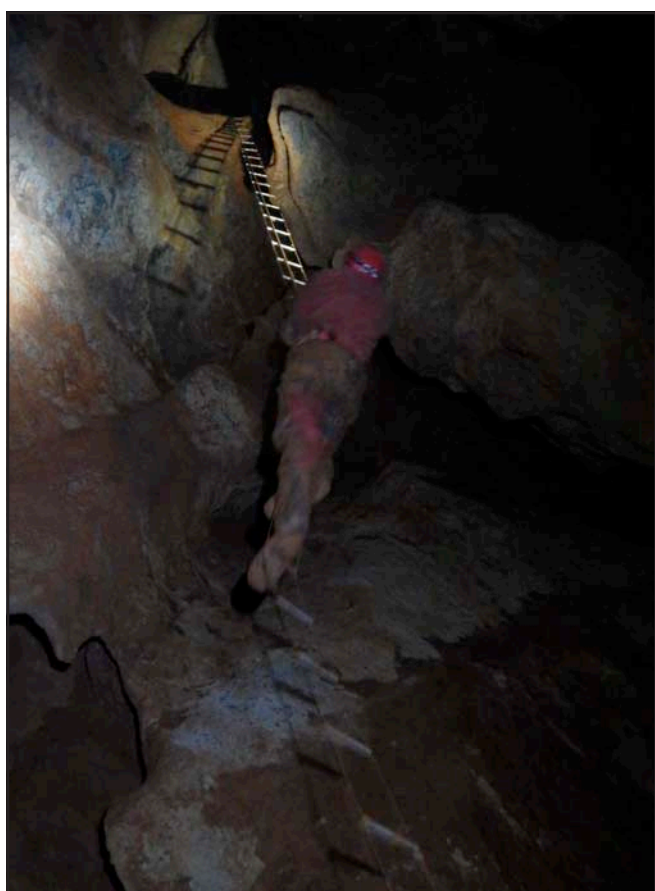
Phil – Despite six survey trips and some very wet surveyors, the mapping of this extraordinary creek passage is not finished. The northern swallet is in a completely different surface drainage to the western entrances of Matawhero, and a very, very long way from any other branch of the cave. The initial rift passage downstream of the swallet passes under some of the highest terrain in the district; coming though under the bush into the vicinity of the bush tomo. The distance underground from the swallet to the junction with the western branches of the cave is no less than 1.1km and possibly more. Stay tuned; this cave is a fairly high priority for us next time.

Photogallery



Cave Hazard, Rocket Rods Pot, Ida Bay

Photo Gabriel Kinzle



On ladder in Dwyers cave

Photo David Rueda-Roca



Western Grand Fissure area in Exit Cave

Photo David Rueda-Roca

Photogallery



Gypsum in Matawhero cave, NZ

Photo Alan Pryke



Rafid Morshedi in Tatham Cave, NZ

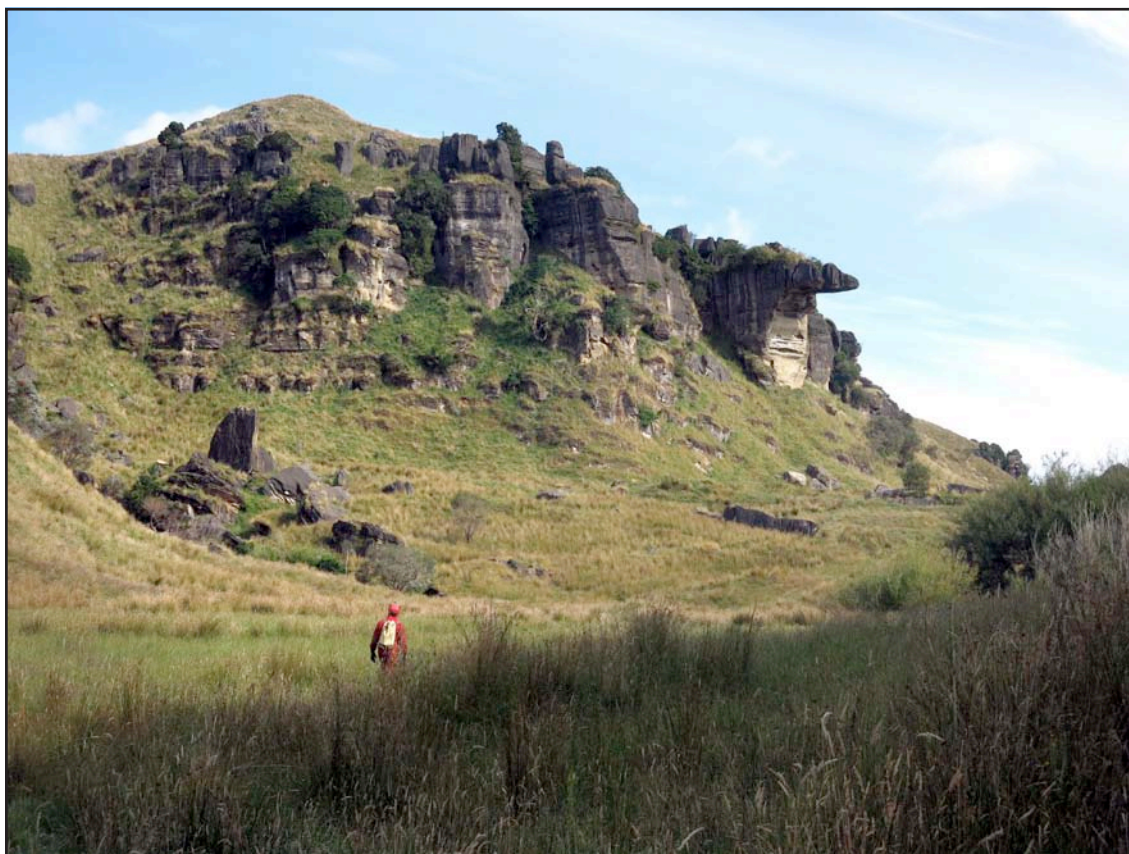
Photo Alan Pryke

Photogallery



Rafid Morshedi in Taranui Cave, NZ

Photo Alan Pryke

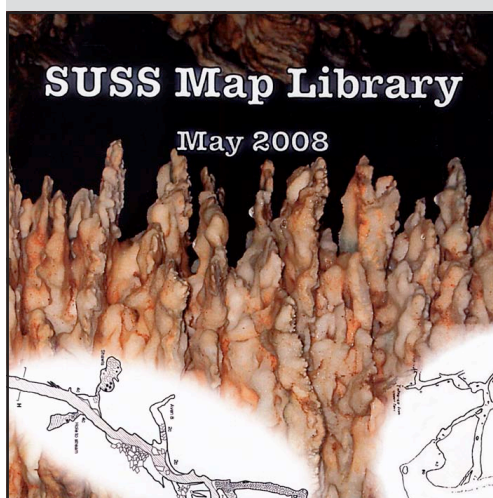


Limestone landscape, Waitoro station NZ

Photo Alan Pryke

Things to buy

For postage and handling costs and the details of how to order go to <http://suss.caves.org.au/publications>. There you will also find a range of must-have maps and other publications.



Maps And Bulls On DVD

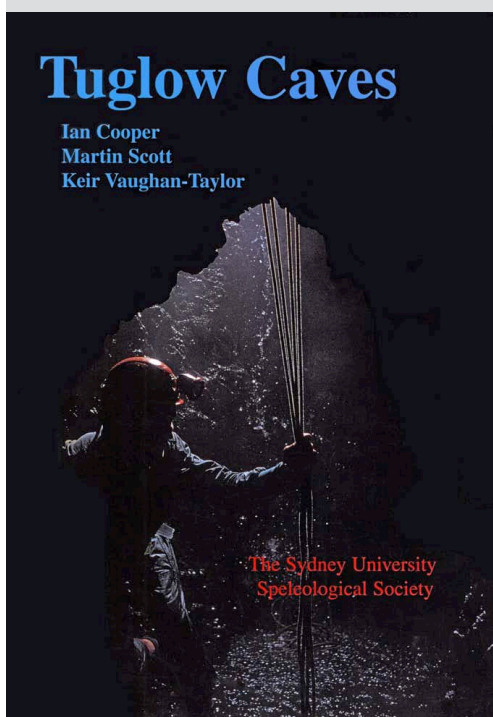
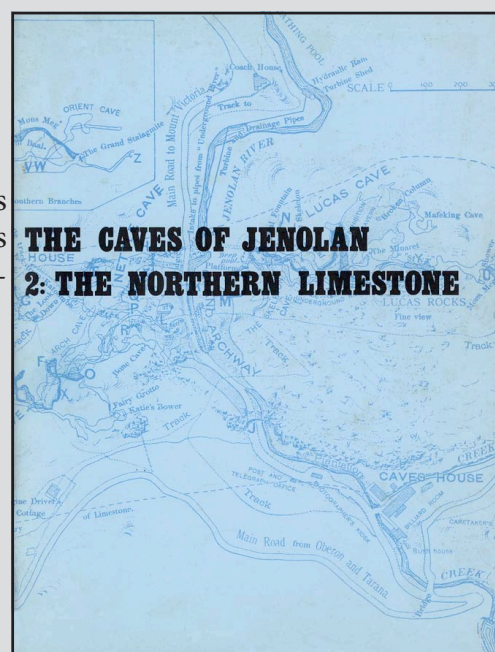
The entire SUSS cave map library of over 300 maps is on DVD and available for purchase. Our map library was scanned to provide wider access to the maps for SUSS and other ASF caving clubs. There are field sketches, ink maps produced on drafting film, ink maps produced on linen, as well as some of the latest digitally-produced cave projects. The DVD also contains all SUSS Bulls in HTML format from 35(1), July 1995 to 47(4), March 2008 and SUSS Bulls as PDF format from 42(1), April 2002 to 47(4).

Price is \$10.00 + PH.

The Caves Of Jenolan 2: The Northern Limestone

Edited by Bruce R. Welch. 1976, 140 pages. We still have some copies of these books left. Contains maps and descriptions of many caves in the Northern Limestone section of Jenolan plus notes on the history of Jenolan and its geology, geomorphology and hydrology.

Cost is \$8 for members and \$10 for non-members + PH.



Tuglow Caves

By Ian Cooper, Martin Scott and Keir Vaughan-Taylor. 1998, 70 pages. Examines caving procedures, site descriptions, history, biology, surveying and maps, geology and hydrology of Tuglow Cave and others.

Cost is \$13 for members and \$16 for non-members + PH.

Back Cover: Rafid Morshedi in Matawhero cave, NZ
Photo Alan Pryke



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