

# SUSS Bull 56(3)

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Articles, news and gossip to [Phil Maynard](#)

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Front Cover: Liz McCutcheon in Fetid Cave, Pio Pio  
New Zealand

Photo Alan Pryke

## SUSS Bulletin 56(3)



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### Committee Commences

The 2018 SUSS annual general meeting produced a new Committee, with these people taking on the task of making the club run:

President: Jordan Fenech

Vice President: Lily Guo

Treasurer: Charmaine Pang

Secretary: Yan Yu

Minutes Secretary/Librarian: Rafid Morshedi

Equipment Officer: Katie Keophilophet

Safety Officer: Jordan Fenech

Editor: Phil Maynard

ASF Councillor: Emily Butcher

Diving liason: Greg Ryan

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Thanks everyone for volunteering/being volunteered.

### Jenolan funded for a major facelift

The NSW state government has announced a major funding package for Jenolan Caves, providing money for an upgrade of the tourist facilities and for environmental works.

The \$8.5M package will be used to upgrade walking tracks, improve lookouts and to carry out a clean-up of Blue Lake. Damage from a major storm and rockfalls in 2016 will be repaired. There will be a new ticket office incorporating the Guides office – the current Guides office will be demolished and moved from its present location.

In addition, a 10 km circuit track will be introduced which would join the current Six Foot Track to the McKeown Valley. This opens up the northern limestone to tourists, which may have implications for the conservation and management of the main wild caves at Jenolan. Caves which have an entrance right next to the valley floor include Wiburds Lake cave, Hennings cave, Serpentine/Little Canyon caves, Mammoth cave and Spider cave. Some of

these caves are gated, some could do with a gate, and some are impossible to gate.

Some news links with coverage of the details:

<https://www.lithgowmercury.com.au/story/5362196/jenolan-caves-funding-85m-infrastructure-injection-announced/>

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/video/lifestyle/jenolan-caves-to-get-dollar8m-facelift/vp-AAwgnNB>

<https://www.facebook.com/PRIME7NewsCentralWest/videos/1702930869788600/>

<https://www.9news.com.au/videos/cjgdfplc4004t-0goaabboljcn/jenolan-caves-set-to-receive-a-major-multi-million-dollar-facelift>

The works are due for completion in 2021.

### UNSW groundwater research at Wellington

03 Apr 2018 UNSW Media/Dubbo Council

Scientists from UNSW and Germany are conducting research this week at Wellington Caves in NSW as part of an international project to better understand how changes in climate and land use will impact groundwater resources.

About one quarter of the world's population is completely or partially dependent on drinking water from limestone aquifers.

For the international project, Junior Professor Andreas Hartmann of the University of Freiburg



*Charmaine Pang investigating groundwater levels in WE14 Limekilns*

*Photo Rod Obrien*

in Germany is measuring groundwater recharge processes in five countries with very different climates – Germany, England, Spain, Puerto Rico and Australia.

In Australia, he is working with UNSW Professor Andy Baker, of the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, at Wellington in the state's mid-west.

A new long-term experimental site to measure soil moisture has been established above Wellington Caves. [*We found these monitoring instruments on the surface above the Phosphate Mine when we were there on the SUSS trip. ed*] Results from this experiment will be compared to the recharge reaching Cathedral Cave below ground, which is already being recorded using equipment that measures cave drips.

"This is the only cave and karst environment in the world where the rainfall, the soil moisture and the water infiltration to the groundwater are being measured at the same time," says Professor Baker.

"As well as helping Junior Professor Hartmann's research project, it will be a wonderful resource for research students, science teachers and cave guides," he says.

Junior Professor Andreas Hartmann says: "Soil moisture measurements in karst have rarely been done before and we expect exciting results from our global monitoring system."

Wellington Caves Coordinator Michelle Tonkins says: "The Wellington Caves are an important site for scientific research and having experts on site and conducting scientific research is of great benefit as it provides more data and knowledge about the karst and cave system.

"It's also great for guests to appreciate the importance of the Caves beyond being a fantastic tourist attraction but as an important place for scientific study," she says.

The Global Assessment of Water Stress in Karst Regions in a Changing World international project is funded by the German Research Foundation and the research at Wellington is funded by Australia's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy.

A news link to this story, with a video interview featuring Professor Hartmann (interview starts at 32 minutes):

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/programs/nsw-country-hour/2018-04-04/nsw-country-hour-wednesday-4-april-2018/9618132>

## Tasmania

*31st Australian Speleological Federation Conference – The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania*

30th of December 2018 – 4th of January 2019 to be held at Devonport, Tasmania. Situated on the beautiful North West coast of Tasmania, Devonport offers a range of outdoor activities from bushwalking, mountain bike riding, kayaking and more, just minutes from our Conference venue; Reece High School campus.

Join us for the 31st ASF Conference where we will celebrate and explore what Tasmania's underground has to offer cavers from beginners, families and veterans alike. With a variety of caving adventures Pre- and Post-Conference as well as activities during the Conference aimed at all age groups, this Conference will be the best yet!

Book your passage to Tassie early or risk missing out. The conference website:

<https://asfconference2019.com>



*Ghengis Khan, Mole Creek*

*Photo Paul Lewis*



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## Horsing around at Cooleman

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Cooleman Plain 25-29 January 2018

Keir Vaughan-Taylor

Participants: Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Rod Obrien, Josh Parker, Megan Pryke, Tina Willmore, Shannon Crack, Lachlan Bailey, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble, David Rueda-Roca, Ian Cooper



*Dive gear going to CP6 River cave*

*Photo Peter Baxter*

Arriving Thursday afternoon a low cloud cover and scattered rain greeted first arrivals. I had noble intent to cross the plain with some dive gear but after a long drive the shelter and tent operations dominated the afternoon. Cooleman appeared much greener than it has done previously with many flowers blooming across the hills. Flies are not so bad this year.

### Friday 26/1/2018

#### River Cave Downstream

Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Rod Obrien, Josh Parker, Lachlan Bailey, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble, David Reuda

The team carried full dive kit for two divers, myself and Rod, to River Cave. We would dive the next day with the intent of surveying hopefully as far as Parallel Universe – a large chamber almost as far as our furthest exploration point upstream.

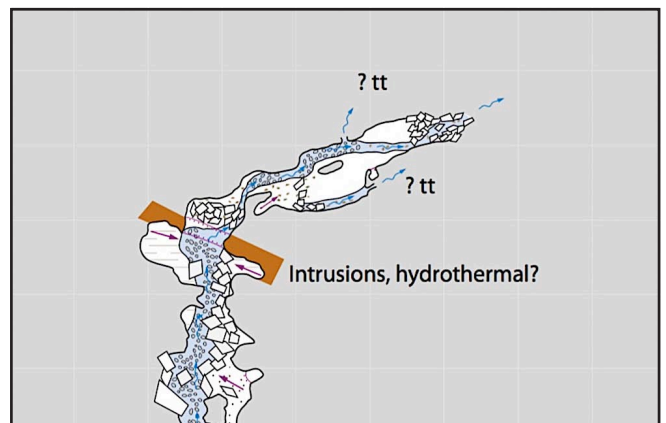
With the dive gear stored a short distance shy of the underground river we took the team downstream. There are two sumps to free-dive which we all passed without problems. On the other side is a lake fed by river water entering from a shallow stream that deepens into marble-roofed chambers. We were slowed by the enthusiastic photographers wanting to stop at every new chamber to get pictures. At the back of the cave we located the last

survey point on a limestone slab leaning against the left side of the passage just before the last lake. We photographed it to confirm to Phil we had found the right connection point.

Rod, David and I chained the survey tape taking measurements and logging the information, first through the “impentable” rock pile and down the other side into the river and along to the next rock pile through which a voice connection had been made with Murray Cave on the last visit.

We took the survey as far as was reasonable into the rockpile following the main water course. There is still, to my mind, a possibility to connect to Murray physically. The survey in Murray ends at the log book and so it remains to do another dive trip into Murray and take a few more survey legs into the rock pile from there. Based on our last trip into Murray I estimate there is still another 20 meters we can push into the rock pile. There is a voice connection through this rock pile to Murray Cave and the surveys suggest a gap less than 25 m. The rock pile sits directly below one of the large surface dolines between the Murray and River entrances. Noted in the last rock fall are two massive boulders within the collapse of red basalt and cold air flow emanating from above. It is dangerous and tight to go upwards in the rock pile.

By the time we had finished surveying, the rest of the team, largely sitting in wait, were getting cold.



*Downstream end of CP6 River*

*Grid 10 m, map draft Phil Maynard*

They were pleased to get going again for the return journey. The trip back to camp was fast because there was no need to carry gear.

### CP93

Ian Cooper, Megan Pryke, Tina Willmore

Tina, Megan and Ian went down the gorge to CP93. A long and very small tunnel was pushed heading north. At the end Tina could see that it widened but by then the squeeze was intimidating and after some looking, they had to give up. This passage is heading towards CP92 and a voice connection should be attempted. Due to the survey gear being in River Cave, this area has only a grade 2 sketch.

### Saturday 27/1/2018

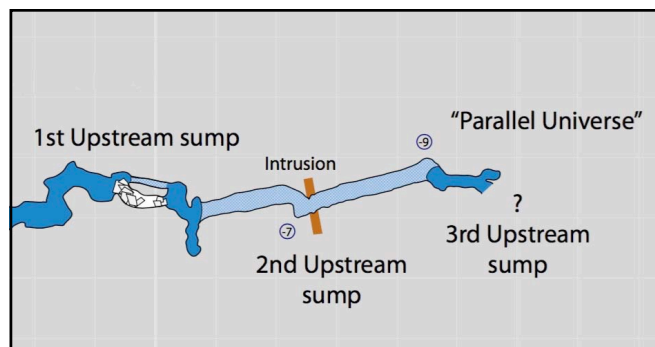
#### River Cave Upstream

Rod Obrien, Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble

Today we would do what we should have done a long time ago, survey the underwater passages in upstream River Cave through to Parallel Universe. The current survey finished in the lake beyond sump 1, where we began our first survey station connecting on the last upstream station possible in a dry survey.

I took the lead end of the measuring tape trying to find the longest leg possible for each survey station that would also be a good jump point to the next station. I would signal to Rod with two pulls on the measuring tape that I was on station. He would take compass and depth measurements then with two tugs on the tape signal to me I could let go of the tape. He would then move to my position and we would repeat the process.

Nearing the Parallel Universe chamber I was getting very cold. Once we surfaced in Parallel Universe I



*Parallel Universe, CP6 River*

*Grid 10 m, map draft Phil Maynard*

could stand on a mud bank with my torso out of the water and was able to warm up while Rod sketched in the shape of the chamber. At the far end there is a kink to the right where both Rod and I have explored into an underwater chamber. Plans to do a new push were abandoned because of time and I was pretty cold. Even so, I was very happy with our achievements with the survey. Our underwater time was 74 minutes. We are now familiar with the strange twists in the passage and our return dive was quick.

#### The Western Front

Ian Cooper, Megan Pryke, Tina Willmore, Josh Parker, Lachlan Bailey, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble, David Reuda-Roca, Shannon Crack

The group walked up the North Branch stream to Harris Waterhole and Cliff Cave. The main North Branch Sink has changed, with the previous gaping hole having completely collapsed to be replaced by a shallow gravel-floored pool. Cliff Cave was fun as always; some time was spent with people squeezing down to the sump to admire the possibilities.

Next we moved south to CP66 (Rising Mist Cave), on top of the ridge. This is a 6 m tape climb into a single room. The Shannon was deployed, who reported a prospective dig at the bottom of the cave. We then kept moving SW into the trees to prospect for caves. Several promising dolines and holes were found. (Subsequently one of these dolines was pushed and has become CP187 Jrift Cave). We did find an obvious active stream sink into a choked hole. Again the Shannon was deployed 4 m down, but the cave is gravelled up. Subsequently this was recognised as CP65. We then walked back via River Cave and picked up the remaining packs of dive gear. The stream sinks in this area appear to be the source of the Altimira Alley stream in River Cave.

### Sunday 28/1/2018

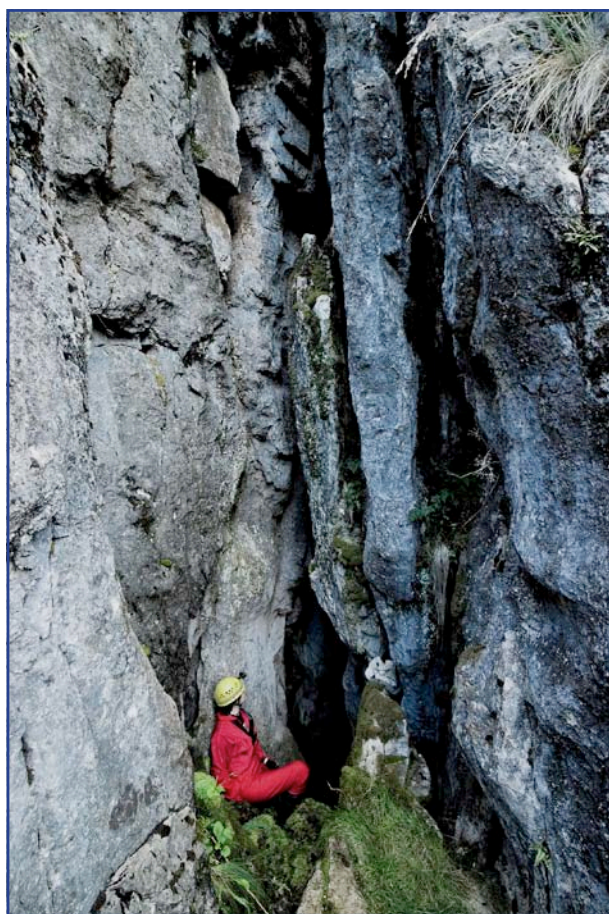
Most of the group went to Black Range Cave for a tourist trip. The Shannon was deployed into the downstream gravel grovel. This continues to intrigue as a way on to more cave. Then there were quick trips into Barbers Cave and White Fish Cave. About half of Caves Creek was sinking at Schrod-ingers Cave.

Rod, Josh and I looked at Easter Cave entrance but did not do the duckunder. Two horses that had previously joined us at Magpie Flat were encountered near White Fish Cave.



# CP6 River Cave, Cooleman Plains

Photos Peter Baxter



*CP6 entrance*



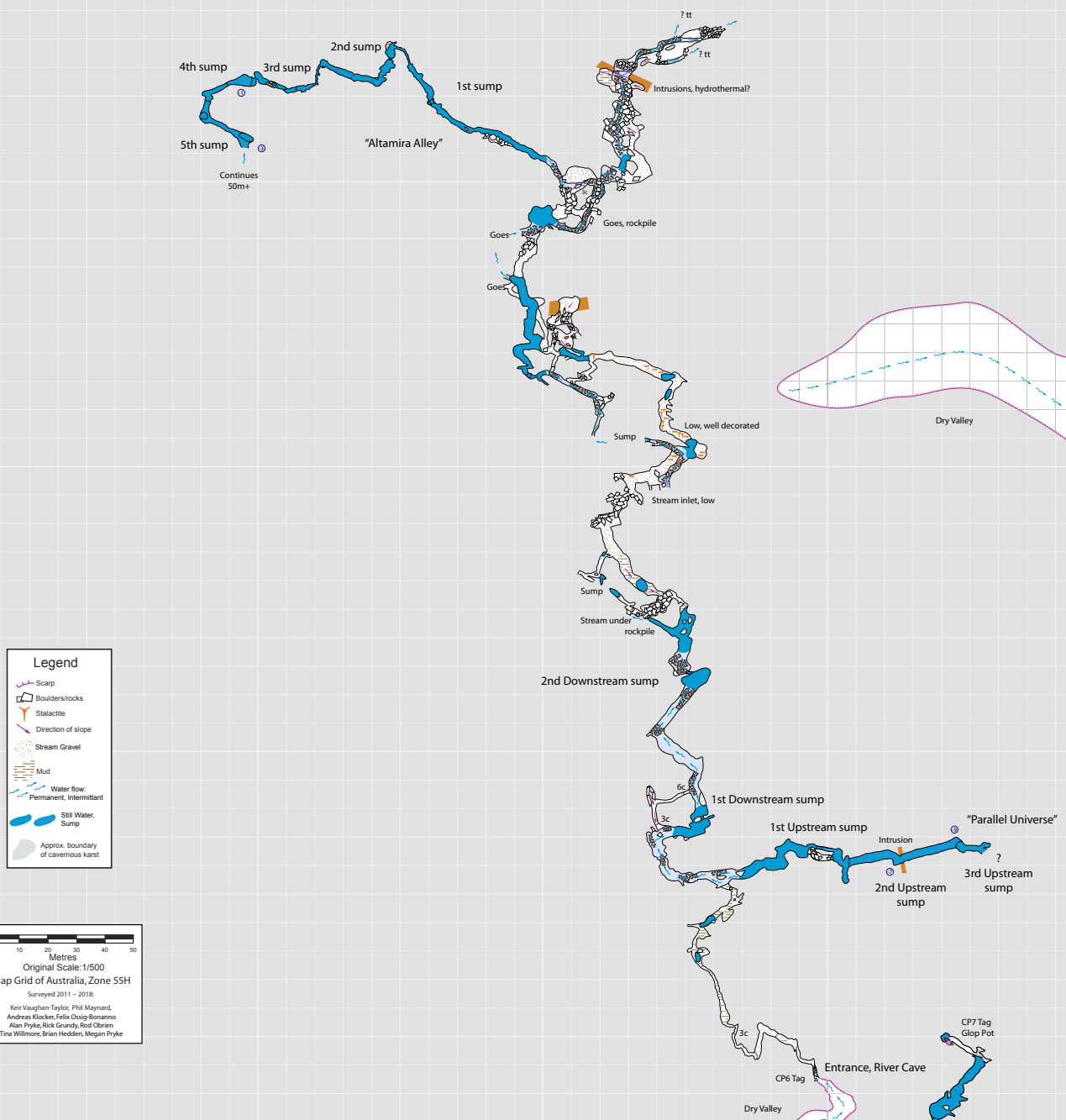
*Keir Vaughan-Taylor and Rod Obrien, preparing to dive upstream in CP6*

# CP6 River Cave

Coolleman Plains  
Kosciuszko National Park,  
New South Wales, Australia



ASF Grade 64c, draft Phil Maynard February 2018,  
Map No. JCP6/5558



CP6 River cave, Coolleman. 2018 January version.

Map by Phil Maynard



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## SUSS Tassie Trip, Mole Creek

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11 – 16 Jan 2018

Simon Murphy

Participants: Stephen Kennedy, Simon Murphy, Stephanie Murphy, Joshua Parker, Ben Power (RSS)

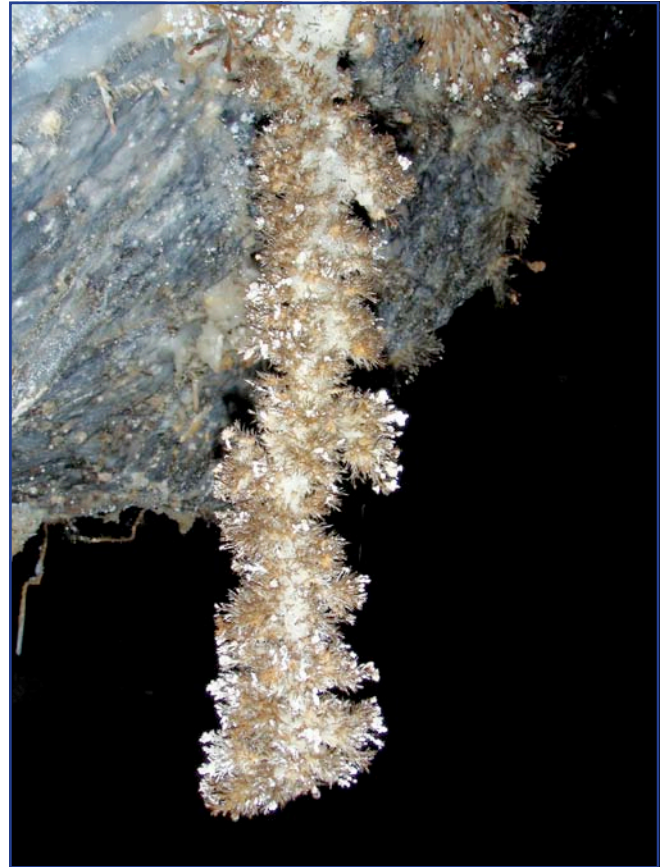
### Day 0

Josh and Ben were at the airport at least three hours in advance, but for Stephanie and me the trip started in typical Stephanie fashion, which is the art of leaving home less than 90 minutes before the flight is due to take off. Stephen drove down to Mole Creek from Sydney with the SUSS gear (mainly ropes) and with a selection of other items given to him in advance by the other participants. Nonetheless, our one checked bag remained heavy enough that we didn't want to walk ten minutes to the train station with it, and by unfortunate coincidence the Uber app had ceased to work on either of our phones, for different reasons. We did make it to the airport. Just.

At Launceston Airport, Stephanie and I had to wait an hour for Ben and Josh to arrive as they took a later flight. I was admiring the cute dogs wandering around, sniffing people and their luggage for the presence of illegal fruit imports. "That's a cute dog", I chimed, to which Steph replied "Yeah, shame he's addicted to cocaine."

I had hired a rental car in advance, before knowing whether Ben and Josh would be joining Stephanie and me. Now, you can just about fit four adults in a Hyundai i30, but not if you are also packing luggage for four. Fortunately, they let us upgrade to a Mitsubishi Outlander for an extra \$10 per day; a sum gladly paid at the time and very much appreciated throughout the week!

Once in Launceston we got takeaway pizza and took it to the gorge. This is where Ben revealed that he had no sleeping mat. Steph suggested a trip to Kmart for an airbed, so off we went. We hit many a red light along the way, and used the time to comment on the neighbourhoods through which Google Maps was directing us. Yeah, this looks exactly like the kind of place to find a Kmart, we remarked sincerely, as we passed Repco and Google notified us that our destination is just 300 m away. Sure enough, not 30 seconds later, we pull up in Kmart's car park. Not long into our Kmart adventure we had found everything we needed, and as we headed to checkout we got a call from Stephen.



*Kubla Khan*

*Photo by Paul Lewis*

"We're on our way", we told him. "We just need a quick stop in Coles". That was at 19:40. Steph and I quickly whizzed around and filled our trolley, bumping into the others near the end of our shop. To our horror, their trolley thus far contained two bags of potato chips, disposable plates and plastic cups. We realized we were going to be here a while. Folks, they took an hour in Coles.

Upon reaching the campsite in Mole Creek, we discovered that Stephen had thoughtfully erected the tent we had dispatched him with. Bravo, Sir!

### Day 1 – Hailie Selassi

We had a bit of a late start because Steve had to collect the keys from Deloraine, about 20km away, and until he returned we weren't sure what we were in for and thus what gear we needed for the day. In the end, it was Haile Selassi, a little gated hole scarcely 2

m away from a major tarmac footpath at King Solomon caves.

All we knew about the cave is that it “may” have a 9 m pitch. We explored the passages on the left from the entrance, which are of little consequence, before committing to the 9 m pitch in the opposite direction that lies just 10 m from the entrance. The cave continues steeply down and the abundance of 1-m straws increases with depth. We followed the pink survey tape, dotted on various stals and cairns, spending some time exploring. Steph was the main guinea-pig, high on enthusiasm and by the end, well covered in mud. We eventually turned around when the only major way on was down another 9 m pitch that Steve described as looking “a little deadly”, given that we rigged our only rope on the first 9 m pitch we came across.

We decided that we may as well exit and proceed to the second cave of the day. However, with Stephanie and me on prussiks, the exit itself would take some time. We reached the bottom of the rope and began

putting our vertical gear back on, and despite not taking very long at it, turned around to find Steph had prussiked half way up already. Absorbing the waiting time, I showed Steve my beautifully tied prussik loops (they hadn’t yet been used). Whilst he inspected them, I noticed an alternative ascent in the form of an exposed climb around the back of the abseil. Steve shot up it and I followed, whilst Ben helpfully assisted with passing up bags and Josh prepared to be next on the roped ascent. To our surprise, when the three climbers reached the top, Stephanie was still only 70% of the way up – she was wedged in a crevice. Steve talked her through her predicament and eventually got her out of her tight spot, but Josh was still at the bottom. Apparently, the tricky ascent had not put him off, and he was eager to make use of his ascender.

After Hailie Selassi we traipsed the short walk back to the cars in the rain and regretted having made no provisions to protect the hire car from the mud. Somehow, we managed to avoid trashing the thing



*Ghengis Khan*

*Photo Paul Lewis*



and resolved to buy a sheet of tarp from a hardware store. Not yet though, for a second cave awaited. After some time, we came upon our destination only to learn that we didn't really know where the cave was. The GPS coordinates were of insufficient precision and the cave entrance was only known to approx. 80 m on private property. Since it was raining, we called it a day and headed off to purchase that tarp.

It was around this time that Ben revealed he'd not brought a wetsuit with him to Tasmania. Apparently, he'd forgotten what gear he'd given Stephen and assumed a wetsuit would be among it. Alas not.

## Day 2 – Kubla Khan

Kubla was... Kubla! Those who have been will know how jaw-droppingly spectacular this cave is. Those who haven't, well, there are probably whole books written about it and I'm not about to write another one. But see if you can get yourself on the next SUSS trip to Mole Creek. I promise you it is worth it. Time spent underground: 10.5 hours.

Vehicular access to the foot of the hill is via an overgrown track that leaves lovely scratches down your vehicle. Once we'd parked it and were about to set off on foot, Steph asked Ben, the driver of the hire car, what his plan was for the keys. "Oh, I've just left them in the ignition" he said. We all laughed. Steph did actually want to know what the key plan was though, so she asked again. "I've genuinely just left them in the ignition," came the reply. Incredible glances were exchanged and, just in case, we checked the ignition. The keys really were in there! The rest of the team elected to lock the car and hide the keys in the nearby bushes, instead.

On the way in to the cave, one of us noticed that Josh was carrying two abseiling racks. Two of everything, it turns out, and he was bringing it all into the cave with him. His defence was that he didn't decide to bring it. It had all come in the same bag when he brought it, and he just hadn't taken the duplicates out. Stephen remarked it was a good job the bag didn't also come with a brick.

Steph decided to bring her 5mm wetsuit for the river swim at the end of the cave, and told us that carrying it would be worth it. Thing is, she hadn't actually tried it on recently. In fact, she had bought it aged 16 and wasn't sure if it would still fit. Watching her wriggle and jump to get in it, we weren't sure either. With some assistance, and aeons later, she did get into it but resolved that this wetsuit

would be retired by the end of the trip... Just like we would be.

Three of us elected to skip the wetsuits but at least Stephen and Ben were wise enough to wear thermals. I hadn't brought any thermals to Tassie at all, and declined to carry my wetsuit through the cave. It would be a cold dip for me. At the point where the water reached neck height and we were required to swim, I'm not sure I've ever struggled so much to swim in my life. The swim was short, but the cold rather lingered. Steph and I were prussiking out again, so if we were to rewarm it would be through sheer exertion. The first pitch was 25 m to a re-belay, followed by a hiking ascent on-rope. Upon reaching the re-belay, I could not open the carabiner through which I had tied my clove hitch. The action of pulling the rope through during the ascent had been continuously tightening the gate to the point that it was jammed. Stephen, who we had cleverly sent up first for his assistance in all such matters, worked hard to release the gate but it held steadfast. Here I learned a new trick. If bashing it with another biner doesn't help, then weighting a biner will elongate it slightly, and apparently enough to allow the gate to be unscrewed. Presto!

While I waited at the top, others came up (some on a second rope to overtake prussikers). We were all lamenting the stiff breeze at the top, only to be surprised to see Stephanie emerge in her bikini top. Apparently, her wetsuit was so tight as to restrict shoulder movement and she'd been unable to prussik in the full suit, which now hung around her waist. It seems as though the suit had kept her warm enough in the water that ascending in her bikini top had been a practical option.

## Day 3 – Mersey Hill

We had a somewhat later start, allowing yesterday's wet gear to dry a little in the Sun... but only a little. After a short drive from the Caravan Park, we geared up at the top of a hill and squelched our way down to the cave entrance.

Mersey Hill is a streamway cave, followed by a rock-pile and a descent into large chambers. It reminded me of Infinite Crawl in Mammoth Cave, Jenolan, in that it is full of large river gravel (cobbles) and is rarely high enough for one to stand. To add to the masochism, a cold stream runs through it, in which the caver is regularly required to lie and crawl.

This saw a reversal of fortunes from the day before. Ben's height had made climbing in Kubla easy, but

Stephanie's lack thereof now worked to her benefit. In fact, she was in her element, at some point dragging three people's gear with her. This was no mean feat. Packs contained not only lunches but full SRT gear including padded harnesses, all thoroughly soaked by the stream.} Ben persevered despite the disadvantage of his height against the low roof, and almost had to turn back at the most difficult squeeze. At this point, the river flows through an impassable choke point, but a passage at head height continues. The squeeze passage is narrow enough to be hard work for even the smallest caver: a thin ridge juts out to pin one's left shoulder, while a small gravel bank on the right conspires with gravity to sink the caver into a small rift. Ben wasn't sure he could make it, and was even less sure he could return, but after perhaps twenty minutes and half as many reorientations he eventually made it. All so that we could crawl in the river some more.

Shortly thereafter, the route ascends rockpile via a slope of rubble with such an incline that the rocks themselves barely cling on. Here it pays to be first, else dodging falling debris becomes an additional hazard. With a heavy pack this ascent is particularly perilous, and I had some difficulty maintaining balance, unlike Josh who seemed quite comfortable. There was a point at which Stephen was nearly clobbered by a boulder that came loose at the top of the climb, but ultimately it tumbled past without incident. Josh narrowly avoided an unplanned descent when a different boulder slipped out beneath his feet.

Next came the roped descent down the other side of the rockpile into a large chamber. It took a lot of effort to rig and the descent was nasty because of a necessary redirection. The rigging and squeezing had taken long enough that Steph was cold and shivering. She wanted to head out, and Ben was keen to get a head start on that tough squeeze out again, so the two of them left the rest of the group. Our guide, David, descended first and then Josh, who battled to pass the redirection. Seeing this and the amount to which the rope continued to rub on rock, I decided my SRT skills were not quite up to this descent, especially since I wasn't particularly warm myself. I explained this to Stephen who was also shivering, and it seemed prudent to call the trip here. Once Josh had reached the bottom, Stephen and I broke the bad news to him and David, but gave them ample time to explore at the bottom. Stephen reset the redirect for the ascent, and the four of us eventually headed out two hours after we

began to rig the abseil, and one hour after Steph and Ben had left.

As it happens, we reached the exit only one minute behind Steph and Ben, who had had to remove his overalls to make the squeeze on the return leg. However, we were not done. We had to tramp a good 100 m up in elevation to reach the cars at the top of the hill. Kindly, the property owners had invited us for tea. They have a near panoramic view of the beautiful Tasmanian hilltops, spanning several kilometers in each direction.

Josh had still not removed that spare gear. He claimed it was for emergencies, but couldn't identify a case where six cavers would need seven sets of SRT gear.

#### **Day 4: Genghis Khan (am) and Lynds (pm)**

Stephen had us ready to leave by 8am, though with minor protest. Genghis is a "single chamber" cave that took us about 1.5 hours. Ben was like a kid in a sweetshop, snapping pictures left, right and centre with his iPhone7. It's a superb collapse cave with giant boulders and a great slab of limestone that is almost entirely flat save for some breccia where it has detached from the roof. Beautiful white formation hung from seams in the ceiling, and many calcite stals had fluffy-looking growths of fine grey aragonite.

From 11am, we were headed to Lynds Cave. Steph was unwell and had a nap in the car and picnic by the Mersey River instead. The cave entrance is picturesque, set at river level at the foot of a limestone cliff, obscured by a triangular boulder with a crack in it. To access to the cave, one must wade some 20 m across the river, but getting wet here is hardly an issue. Colder water awaits in the cave.

Lynds is rather sporty and within a minute you are traversing a rock wall to avoid a plunge pool at the bottom of a ~1 m waterfall. A half-decent climber can avoid getting wet here, all the way to the top of the waterfall, but will surely get wet (wetter!) eventually. Most of the passage is walking in a streamway, often alongside flowstone walls that could give Pleasure Dome a run for its money. (Okay not really... artistic license here.) Remarkably, some of the half-metre thick flowstone contains great cracks all the way through as a result of Earthquake damage. Several side passages from the main streamway have such a density of straws that it becomes difficult to distinguish one from the next. The real fun, however, begins at the rockpile. Until





*Lime tree, Lynds*

*Photo Paul Lewis*

now, only short sections require a hands-and-knees crawl in the water, but the rockpile forces all but the skinniest caves to dunk the chest in. (Josh found he could squeeze through a tiny gap that avoided the near-roof-sniff, but the rest of us decided we preferred the waterway!) Ben took one look at the whole thing and resolved to snap pictures of the first half of the cave on his phone instead. After the rockpile, the passageway alternates between walkable sections, crawls, and that awkward Quasimodo height in between. It's all worth it though, because the formation at the end is superb. A stream tributary flows gently across a flowstone plateau in an area with a low ceiling and there are straws everywhere. We can confirm that The Lime Tree is intact!

We spent quite some time in the same spot at the end of Lynds, simply admiring the beauty. Eventually we peeled ourselves away and may have set some kind of record for exit speed for the cave. We found Ben merrily photographing the cave on our way out.

The relatively warm Tasmanian day was wonderful to step out into, and with the Sun shining strongly, Josh and I even elected to jump from a boulder into the river. Its waters were balmy compared to those of the cave. We were back from Lynds by 3pm and on a bit of a high from the cave. David offered to lead us on a drive up to Devil's Gullet and Lake Mackenzie. This high plateau is allegedly great for cross-country skiing in winter, while in the summer there's a nature trail to enjoy that terminates in a lookout platform overhanging the edge of the dolomite cliffs. The view here is spectacular, and the vertical igneous columns are a pleasant change from the limestone. The road past the nature trail continues to a dam at Lake Mackenzie where we paused for snacks.

In the evening we took David out to dinner in Mole Creek. I have scarcely mentioned him in this trip report, as he appears to prefer to avoid the lime-light. He was our guide at Kubla and then offered to join us on Days 3 – 4, too. The guy is a machine! He has far more endurance than us twenty-somethings



and his knowledge of the local caves, honed over forty years, was indispensable. We were most grateful to have him with us. His navigation also kept our bush-bashing to a minimum. So we took him to dinner at the local pub. There we bumped into some other cavers who had won the first prize at the 2017 ICS, which was a stay in a cottage near Mole Creek! We hope they'll join SUSS. David took them caving the following day. Total Machine! And, I would add, one of the nicest people you could hope to meet.

### Day 5 Croesus Cave

In the morning we were all weighing up whether or not to wear wetsuits. Stephen decided to wear his simply because he had purchased it for this trip but hadn't put it to use yet. Stephanie was always wearing hers, as long as she could get it on again after that chocolate pudding in the pub the night before. Josh wore his, but after having been the right temperature in Lynds, Ben and I decided we'd do without. Plus, they'd be dry for transport home then. Well, I swear the water in Croesus is colder than in Lynds! It doesn't help that the entrance is a crawl in water and the next chamber is accessed by wading waist deep.

The cave is remarkable. One rimstone pool after another, almost the entire length of this very long walk-through cave. The river flows gently over the top, the crystal-clear water disturbed only by the ripples we create walking through it. Occasionally, high flowstone walls border the river, but no Earthquake damage is to be seen here.

The river and the cave passage twice almost end in rockpile. The first time, one walks past some highly pure shawls, which we spent some time photographing before Ben lost his iPhone. The rimstone pools are often about a metre deep and were frequently clouded by our motion, so we had little hope of finding it but we still tried for a while. I was getting cold with the standing around and Stephen was also keen to press on, so we went through the rockpile leaving the others searching in vain for the phone.

The rockpile is oddly spacious with a lofty ceiling above it. Much of its upward facing surface has a calcite layer on it. At the very top, Stephen and I observed a straw oscillating in the breeze. It must have been near breaking point because the amplitude was large, but it seemed in no hurry to drop off, so we continued. A second rockpile shortly fol-

lows. Climbing around the rockpile had warmed me back up somewhat, and I enjoyed poking my head in holes. Josh and Steph soon caught up and decided to follow the river under the rockpile to a low but well-decorated passageway. Since David had told us there was only one chamber after the first rockpile and to turn around at the end of it, we decided it would be a good time to head back.

We lamented the loss of the phone, and with it all of our photos for the entire trip, but kept optimistic that the pools would settle and we'd find the phone in the bottom. Alas, when we reached the approximate location of the lost phone, the pools were still murky and we couldn't afford the time for them to settle. Not even a high-powered and focused beam would penetrate to the bottom. By sheer luck, we found the phone on a submerged limestone rim, just 20 cm below the surface of a 1 m deep pool.

That more or less ends the tale of our adventures in Mole Creek. It was a nice warm sunny day in Tasmania and we welcomed the heat on the way out. The Sun aided with drying gear before packing, and after an hour or two of consuming the remaining consumables, we parted company with Stephen at the Caravan Park.



*Croesus*

*Photo Paul Lewis*



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## Tomos and Torrents in Pio Pio

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New Zealand, January/February 2018

Ciara Smart, Phil Maynard, Oxana Repina and John Oxley

Participants: Alan Pryke, Ciara Smart, Emily Butcher, Phil Maynard, John Oxley, Liz McCutcheon, Patrick Larkin, Oxana Repina

Day 3. 22/1/2018

*Surface Exploration*

*Ciara*

After finally attaining a solid night's sleep following the departure of twelve-hundred sheep from below us, we awoke on our second morning to torrential rain. The dampness meant confinement to the woolshed as we couldn't drive on the slippery dirt roads. When it became clear that the weather had set in for good, we decided to do some local exploration of the dolines just north of the woolshed. Curiously, Alan, Liz and John seemed to be struggling to muster any enthusiasm for a damp, muddy walk (Em was taking the day off due to yesterday's fall). Having exceeded our limit for hot beverages, and only able to gaze wistfully out the woolshed window for a so long, Oxana and I trogged up and departed in the pouring rain with assurances from the others that they were 'right behind.' Alan, with typical confident vagueness, had instructed us to walk through a nearby gate and then head right, down a hill towards some dolines where he and the others would meet us shortly to begin exploration. Unsurprisingly, the two parties never located each other.

Upon crossing the gate, Oxana and I were confronted by dolines in every direction. We raced down the hill into a nearby copse and immediately



*A wet day at Waitoro station*

*Photo Ciara Smart*



*Shearing*

*Photo Alan Pryke*

found a small muddy hole beside a dead animal. Mud and corpses in varying states of decay were to feature rather heavily in the days to come. The hole was abandoned and we moved on, immediately finding another cave only metres away. We named this cave 'Attractive Hole,' (in comparison to its neighbour) and earmarked it for later exploration. We continued to search the bushland for several hours. At no point during the day did the rain cease meaning that the scrub soon turned to a saturated jungle with desperately slippery hillsides.

After several hours of increasingly sodden work, and no sighting of the other party, Oxana and I decided to return to the woolshed. This took quite some time as our enthusiasm for finding new caves had come at the expense of maintaining our mental geography. After climbing to the top of several hills to gaze across a fairly featureless farm landscape, and following a number of fencelines (and bemoaning my decision not to bring my compass), we eventually stumbled back to the woolshed. Today we were accompanied by no less than twelve dogs at the woolshed. Sometime later the other group appeared in an equally bedraggled state having explored a totally separate set of northern dolines with no success.

After lunch we set out as a group to look more closely at the caves Oxana and I had found. It was still raining heavily. We returned to 'Attractive



*Not that way, Oxana*

*Photo Ciara Smart*

Hole' and went down. It turned out to be a small cave, with about a four metre loose downclimb to enter followed by about 20 m of tight passage following a small stream that became impassable. In the stream I found a large crayfish. As I exited with Oxana behind me I noticed a small tight chamber. I crawled into the chamber and immediately noticed two terrified possums cornered about a metre away. Needless to say I immediately slithered out. Not to be deterred, Oxana entered the small chamber and required strong persuasion not to stroke the soft coated marsupials.

We then set out to locate the marked cave we had earlier stumbled upon. In hindsight, I should have insisted that we take the previous familiar approach, which would have been no more than a ten-minute walk. However, it was difficult to persuade the group to walk back uphill rather than taking what appeared to be a 'shortcut' through the bush. More than an hour later we had failed to locate the cave and had found ourselves on the wrong side of a marsh surrounded by impenetrable blackberry bush. It was still pouring. Not to be deterred, Oxana crawled across the marsh attempting to use surface tension to prevent immersion. She failed. I followed with the remainder of the group across a more solid path and we found ourselves back at our original point.

After yet more scrambling through blackberry and mud, we finally located the marked cave. The numbers were very worn, appearing to read 'MF6.' Disappointingly we could not locate the cave entrance itself which may have collapsed.

We continued down the valley towards a dam, hoping to find the elusive 'Clive's Dam Cave.' We

have the survey for this cave but the location remains unknown despite many searches over the years. Sure enough we found a cave beside the dam with a substantial stream flowing through. There was about 60 m of passage before a sump, meaning that alas this cave did not match the survey and we returned to the woolshed. The location of Clive's Dam Cave remains unknown.

**Day 4. 23/1/2018.**

*Quipic Cave, Fetid Cave, & Feijoa Cavern.*

*John and Oxana*

Caving today provided some shelter from the rain. The weather forecast suggested we could look forward to afternoon showers and temperatures in the low 30s. This sort of weather was routine for our first week and the locals were complaining of it being unusually hot. It called for something that involved only limited surface trogging.

Quipic and Fetid caves are close together in the bottom of a gully with the outflow stream from Quipic winding along a short section of reedy creek and into Fetid.

It was uncomfortably hot in the sun while trogging up so Al's ancient Bunnings cave umbrella came in useful. Al, Liz and Emily went into Fetid to survey.

Quipic Cave followed the streamway; mostly walk-through, some walkthrough, a climb up the rock-pile where it said "frog" on the rock (literally), and a waterfall at the end. There was a dodgy climb-down, even dodgier on the way up, but we did it without a tape.

On exiting an hour or so later, the sun was again blazing down from a blue sky. John and Ciara had a quick wander around a nearby bluff looking for any likely prospects while Oxana relaxed on a comfortable rock. Emily had also exited Fetid and was sheltering from the sun under the cave umbrella.

Fetid's a short cave, but halfway thorough is a great gaping tomo, where the stream runs through ferns and green and the daylight pours down through mist in a brilliant spotlight of white, like canyons in the Blue Mountains. Ciara, Oxana and John were just in time to witness the beams of sunlight pouring down through the green ferns and mist right into the cave's streamway.

Late in the afternoon on our return to our woolshed accommodation we diverted to check Honeycomb



Crags, a line of low cliffs surrounding a small grassy bluff. Oxana soon located an inviting entrance into which she and some others disappeared for several minutes. Oxana named it Feijoa Cavern. Alan later insisted it had already been found, and was in fact called Honeycomb Crags (inconclusive).

**Day 5. 24/1/2018**

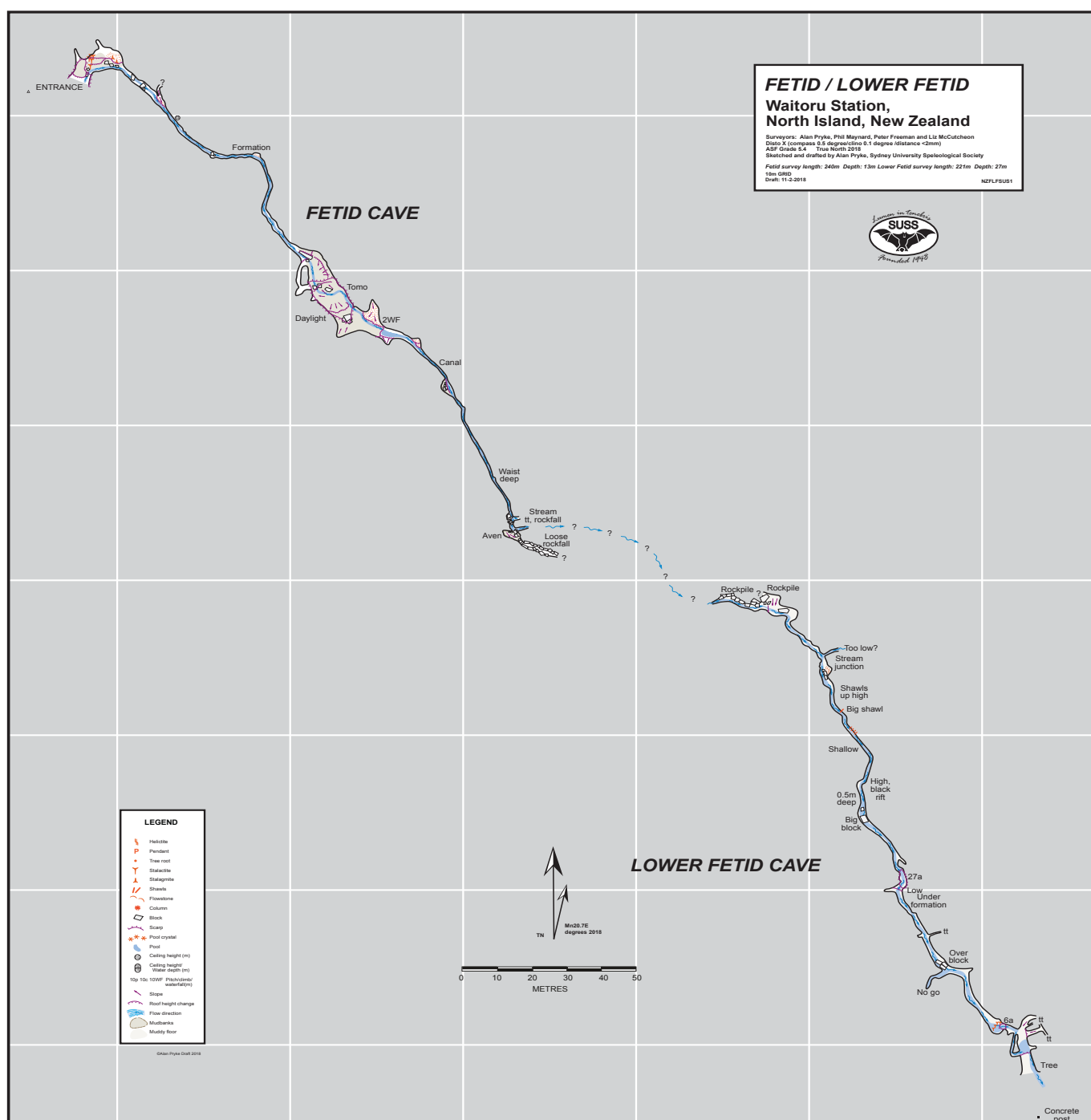
*Nirvana/Thistlebob*

*Oxana*

We started the day heading down the wrong cave, as “I definitely know where the cave entrance is” turned into “this is definitely not it” (Alan). Once we got to it, Nirvana Cave delivered on the magic

promised. The streamway meanders through curved rock walls and past wet white flowstone and shawls. The cave baits you into traps with ease, as you stare captivated at a ceiling of straws and fall straight into water-filled holes in the floor. The end of the cave was a bit of grovelling in low passage and a bit of confusion over where the way out was, until we came across sticks obviously arranged in an arrow and Alan realised he’d put it there because he had always forgotten where the exit was, but then had forgotten he’d set up that marker.

The next cave was Thistlebob, really as a quick way through the hill. The long part of the cave is in the side passage, but it was deemed that could be done



as a through-trip from the SRT entrance on another day.

The final cave was Maui. Just after the entrance, we climbed up a mud slope (lubricating it with gum-boot water for a fast trip back down) and through a rock pile and came to a beautifully decorated room – it was walls and curtains of pure white straws, each a metre in length.

Then more stream passage, and then – “ducky scunge!!” What is Ducky Scunge? “You’ll know when you get there!” was the gleeful response. In fact, Ducky Scunge artistically and eloquently denotes the middle section – the grovel-swimming required to get through fine silt and muddy water where the air-gap is just enough to fit your helmet under the rock if you turn your head sideways and desperately try to avoid contact between the goo and your ear. And then it was great big walkthrough passage, wide and a few tens of metres high, and a final swim, long and deep and cold enough for girly squeals to echo down the chamber (mainly not from the girls in our party).

The final bit of excitement was the walk through a cow paddock back to the car. The cows of Waitoru really are madly curious about the odd variety of human that dresses in helmets and red suits and lumbers over their fields. They came streaming down from all sides of the hill – quite literally running; mooing and nudging each other out of the way to get a closer look. We sat in the grass quietly and they came up and licked our boots.

## Day 7. 26/1/2018

### *Mangaorongo Gorge*

#### *Ciara*

Today Em decided to seek medical attention so our party size was reduced to seven. To introduce some variety, we decided to attempt Mangaorongo Gorge, a magnificent trip that defies classification into either a cave or canyon. Alan had assured us that today would be a ‘shorter day.’ Cavers are known for chronological ambiguity (perhaps related to the absence of sunlight) but as was becoming increasingly clear, Alan’s concept of time seems to diverge from ‘reasonable’ in a particularly spectacular fashion. Had we known the true length of the day, or the true water levels, we might have spent slightly more time preparing and perhaps worn more warm clothes!



*Phil, Alan, Ciara, Pat and Oxana in Mangaorongo*

*Photo John Oxley*

We left the cars atop a steep ridge where we could see the Mangaorongo river meandering several hundred vertical metres below. We headed through thick scrub down ‘Magic Goat Pass’ towards the river. The Mangaorongo is a large river that flows through a dramatic gorge. Reaching the river, most of the party changed into wetsuits with cave-suits on top. We wandered upstream for several hundred metres through a steamy jungle reminiscent of ‘The Lost World.’ At this stage the river was wide and shallow but this quickly changed. It became clear that the water level was very high following the recent rain. As the river narrowed, the current strengthened leading to some hilarious and vaguely desperate attempts to swim upstream. We clung to the slippery walls trying not to be swept backwards or to knock others off their precarious holds. It was in this section that Alan’s Pelican case containing copious camera equipment became submerged. Unfortunately the case malfunctioned and the equipment was partially drowned resulting in sombre scenes later.

After negotiating the rapids, the Mangaorongo Gorge became increasingly cave-like as the canyon walls converged above us. At this point we paused and had a brief lunch. Alan vaguely estimated that we would likely spend around an hour inside, so we considered it safe to leave all our equipment, food and extra clothing outside. However, our hour-long dawdle transformed into a four-hour adventure of a substantially more serious calibre than we had anticipated. Despite this, it was nevertheless an incredible and worthwhile trip.

The ‘cave’ itself was more canyonesque than truly subterranean. We boulder-hopped and swam to follow the Mangaorongo upstream. The force of the



river had carved out beautiful cuttings in the soft soapstone, often leaving thin and fragile lips that were difficult to negotiate without damaging. The outer surface of the rock was black due to volcanic deposits, but the core remained a soft yellow. The river was very fast-flowing so great care had to be taken whenever we entered the water. At one point the upstream passage was blocked by a large boulder-pile. I found a tight squirmy route through but unfortunately only the female party members could follow as the males failed to fit. We attempted to find an alternative route and inevitably the two parties became separated leading to slightly anxious scenes as we shouted out to each other through the extensive boulder-pile. Eventually the two parties were reunited when I caught a glimpse of torchlight and a more accessible way on was found.

Much photo-faffing was had as we continued up the stunning streamway, eventually making our way out into the sunshine. We gratefully lay in the sun's glare but too soon it was time to reverse our journey. The return journey was more serious as some party members who had forgone a wetsuit were beginning to get quite cold and we were all reasonably tired. However floating in the fast downstream current meant we made excellent time and were soon happily reunited with our bags containing food and water.

As we travelled down the Mangarongo Gorge towards Magic Goat Pass we heard the ominous tones of thunder overhead, never a noise you want to hear while in a constricted body of water! We reached the base of the pass and then several party members raced uphill to shut the car windows before the storm hit. We reached the cars just as the rain began to pelt. The combination of humidity and fierce evening thunderstorm was far more reminiscent of a summer Queensland storm than a New Zealand gale. We were reunited with Emily in the woolshed that evening who had had an inconclusive visit to the hospital and enjoyed another evening of wine and chocolate.

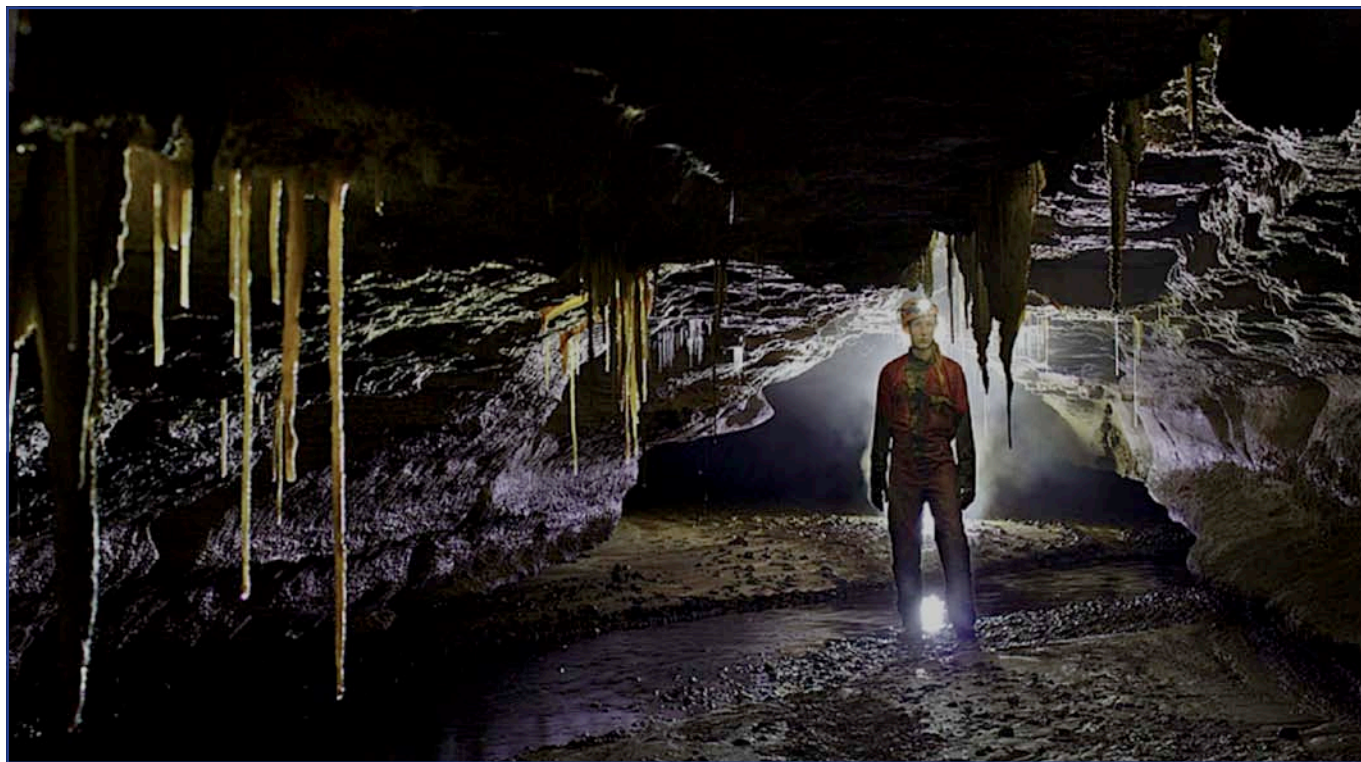
**Day 10. 29/1/18**

*Battleys and Carters Wish*

*Ciara*

This was to be Emily's and my last day of caving before heading to the South Island for the New Zealand Canyoning Festival. Patrick was departing this morning and Oxana was in Auckland so we were reduced to a small party of six. We drove into town towards Battleys and were dismayed as the lead car drove past the notorious 'Berry Farm' without stopping.

Battleys Cave is very well known to locals. It is located directly beside the road and has been



*Ciara in Battleys*

*Photo John Oxley*

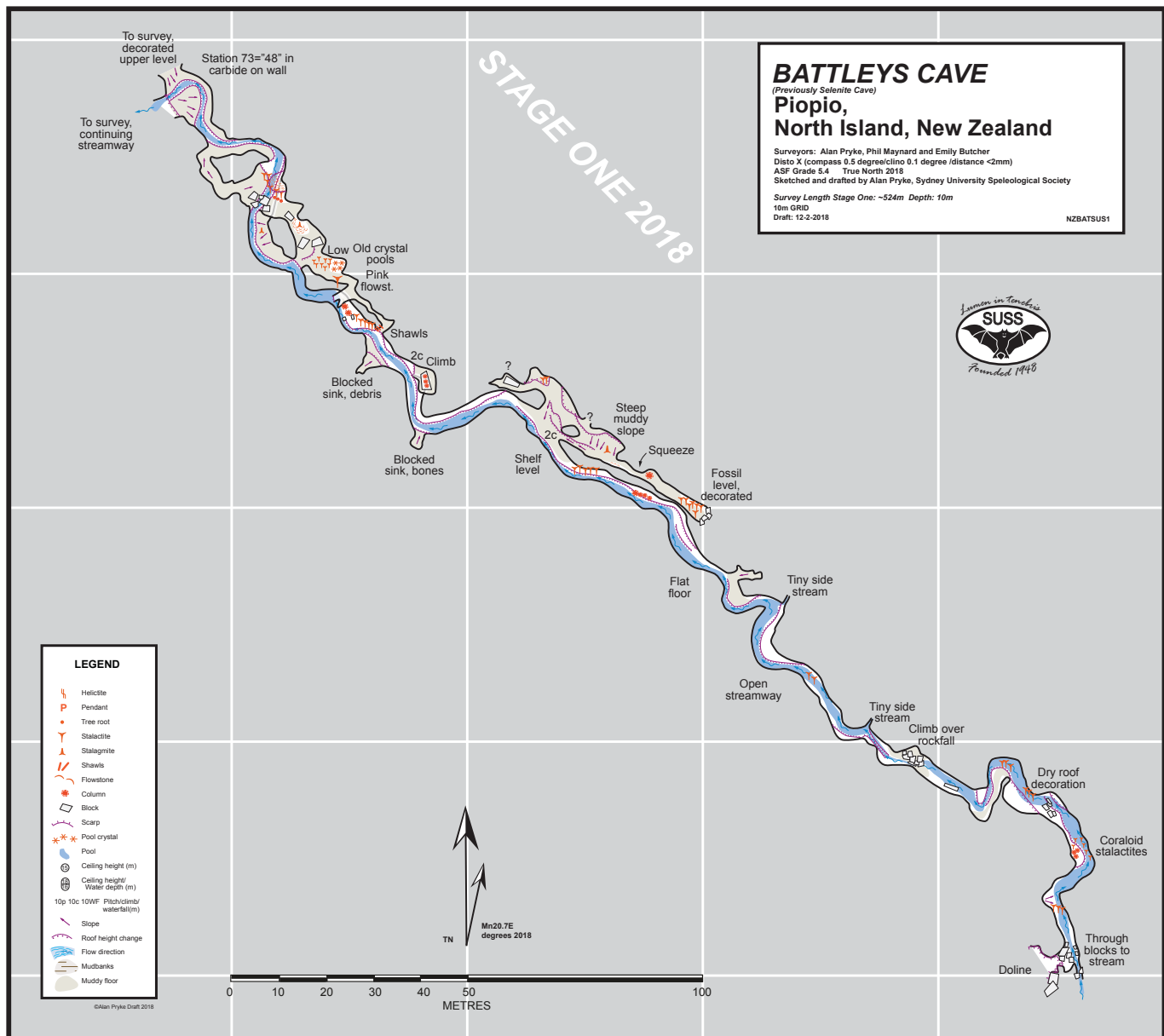
favoured by families and Scout groups for decades. Despite its accessibility, it has never had a proper survey which was our task for the day. We were relieved to escape the unseasonable thirty-plus degree sunshine as we descended into this delightful cave. Phil and Alan immediately began the survey and the remainder of us headed downstream to explore. Despite its popularity, the cave is in good condition and well decorated.

As we progressed down the streamway we heard voices behind us and realised we were not alone in the cave. We were extremely startled to bump into a local family who were going for a bit of an adventure on the public holiday. More surprising was the emergence of a small, bedraggled terrier who was desperately attempting to keep up with the family while simultaneously avoiding the cold water. Considering the dog had no head-torch it was managing rather well. The contrast between the family dressed

in bike helmets and singlets and ourselves in our full trog-suits created a rather amusing moment.

This cave abounded in eels. Over the trip I had been refining my subterranean eel catching technique. This being my last day of caving, I decided to attempt my last resort and capture a large eel using my gumboot. Unsurprisingly, this tactic also failed and my record of successfully captured eels remains precisely zero, despite dozens of attempts.

That afternoon, myself, John and Liz decided to explore another cave while Alan, Phil and Emily continued the survey. We drove to a nearby property and set out in search of 'Carters Wish Cave,' which John had visited some years previously. The directions to the cave were roughly 'go down the valley and head right,' which inevitably led to nearly an hour of wandering through scrub. I did however stumble upon a previously unknown deep hole (to be continued on a future trip). At one point





Liz became separated from John and I. Calling her name proved fruitless as our shouts were answered in unison by several hundred sheep grazing nearby. Eventually, both Liz and the cave entrance were located.

Carter's Wish is a beautiful streamway cave with large open passages. It is highly decorated and has plenty of leads to be pushed. I crawled on my stomach through several tight muddy leads but had limited success. At the end of the cave the streamway disappeared and there is a large mudpit. I slithered up a steep muddy wall attempting to push several leads. I could see the tracks of Felix and Katie from 2016's trip. The downwards journey was desperate as I threatened to slide at speed down the muddy embankment. Another potential leads goes underwater through a rockpile but I was not game to attempt that today. Again, a cave to be earmarked for future trips.

**Day 11. 30/1/2018**

*Matawhero North branch*

*Phil*

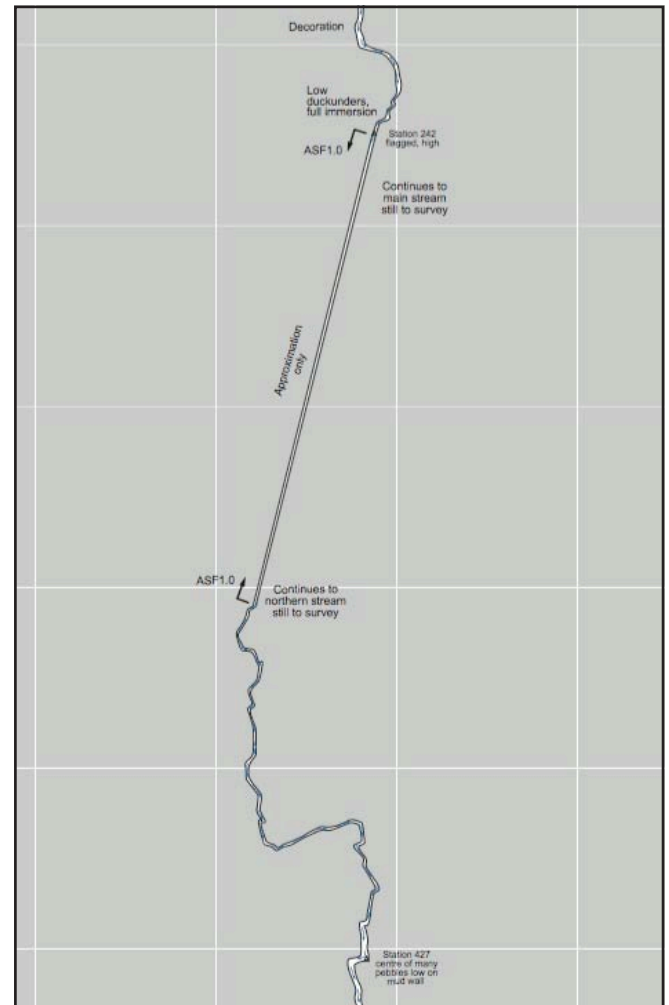
Flunge, (/flʌndʒ/) *verb*. To proceed through a cave like a penguin, particularly relates to mud banks.

This was a day of survey for multiple teams in Matawhero cave. We all dropped in through the pines entrance (unnamed and unnumbered). Alan and John surveyed in from the pines entrance (including the GPS acquisition), then downstream in the main stream.

Phil and Liz went to the point where the north branch survey was left in 2017 and pushed upstream, towards Peter Freeman's 2017 Bush Tomo survey (the one with all the duckunders<sup>1</sup>). That means going downstream in the main creek, through all of the mud-bank meander cut-offs. That means that flunging is the main technique required to progress through this part of the cave.

Entering the north branch stream, we immediately found out why we left the survey last year – the comfortable stream surveyed back then becomes tight, twisty and low within the first new survey leg. Three survey legs later, we were lying in the water and trying to keep the Disto & book dry. This led to some desperate rift caving (climb up out of the creek, crawl and flat-out squeeze along 6 m above the creek with a rift underneath, then find a way to climb back down into the water).

<sup>1</sup> SUSS Bull 56(1), 11 – 21



*North branch Matawhero*

*Map by Alan Pryke, 50 m grid*

At the big right-angled bend to the West on the map, the roof lifted to quite impressive dimensions and the passage widened to about three metres. Yay! Could this be the fun passage we were looking for? No, of course not. Soon we were round the next right-angled bend to the North, and we were straight back into the tight, rifted meanders. This time there was quite a long survey leg through a lying-in-the-water bit.

After forty survey legs, we were both looking at each other to see who'd be first to suggest giving up. It was a tie. Our efforts produced 151 m of survey, but only half that much distance towards closing the gap in the North branch. This would finish the North branch survey and produce one of the most remarkable through trips in the North Island. Despite that prize, no-one went back into the North branch for the remainder of the trip and no-one suggested going back into the North branch for the remainder of the trip.



*Kiwi Megan in Briars cave*

*Photo John Oxley*

### **Day 13. 1/2/2018**

*Briars with Megan and Kristen / shopping / rain / Shuttle*

*Oxana*

We took Megan and Kristen from the farm through Boomerang/Dollar/Briar's Caves, all walkthrough along the same streamway. The passages are lovely, with scalloped walls and v-shaped channels towards the end, set in pale gold-white limestone with black ripples. There was a waterfall that was great fun to roam up and down with reckless abandon, and a chamber that was all black manganese at the very end.

It was raining when we came out, but we still stopped at the waterfall lookout on the way back to the farm and I ran down the track to have a look barefoot in the rain while the others waited in the car. The waterfall was worth it I think. Afterwards we got coffee at The Fat Pigeon. Well earned. We picked up groceries too since we were in town.

And then came the matter of getting back to our woolshed. Alan asked the farm owner, Colin, if the roads were okay for us to drive on still. Colin laughed. "No." he said. Discussion closed. Instead, groceries, cave gear and cavers were loaded onto the back of Colin's farm quadbike and he drove us to the woolshed madly bumping through the rain. We wore our cave helmets. Seemed warranted. It was great fun and Colin was a champion for doing that or we would have been pretty stranded.

### **Day 14. 2/2/2018**

*5 Dead Sheep Cave, Almost Certainly Not Clive's Dam Cave.*

*John*

out, we were unable to travel far until we retrieved the car. Phil and Oxana grabbed a ladder and headed off to a cave which had been found the previous year just a short walk from the woolshed. John managed to hitch a ride with one of the farm workers back to collect the car. When he returned he and Al headed out to meet Phil and Oxana just in time to catch Oxana emerging from the cave. Despite declaring it to be a very unpleasant experience due to the presence of several dead sheep she was all smiles when she emerged into the fresh outside air.

The little group then headed off toward a patch of bush below a large dam near the woolshed. The outflow from the dam disappeared into a small hole which Phil thought was worthy of a dig so he proceeded to open it up with a stick and his bare hands. Meanwhile, Al, John and Oxana looked at a large doline just a few metres away. Oxana managed to scramble down the steep mudbank to the bottom of the hole to find that it was blocked with rock and the remains of dead animals and so had little prospect. She'd had enough dead sheep for one day.

Returning to Phil we found that he had managed to make the hole considerably larger. Large enough for anyone keen enough to enter. As always, Oxana was that keen one. She climbed down through the splashing water and along a couple of metres to find that the way on was barred by a tight sump. The cave is Certainly Not Clive's Dam Cave.

Oxana left at that point and went into the outdoor shower still dressed in her cavesuit, peeling off and de-sheeping each layer one-by-one.



*Oxana in a really quite dangerous hole*

*Photo John Oxley*





*Chamber in Marmonts cave*

*Photo John Oxley*

**Day 15. 3/2/2018**

*Marmonts, Hansdown station*

*Phil*

Marmonts is a long, spectacular through trip which comes out more than a kilometre from where it goes in. It's on the next station south from Waitoru, owned by Stephen Knight. He was happy to let us on and have a day caving on his property.

John and I parked the car down at the exit and walked back over the ridge in the hot sunshine. We eventually got back to the others and found the entrance, buried under blackberries and very small and uninviting.

The entrance creek is modest and rifted, with some climbing over rockpile. It eventually gets into an area of gypsum crusts and some small flowers.

When we got to the bit where the creek disappears down a slot, we climbed over the big rockpile, and down the other side the creek was reversed! Should it be coming towards us? After some back and forth in the passage, we realised this really was the way on. The entrance creek disappears and doesn't show up again in the cave. We'd crossed the watershed to a new drainage inside the cave.

This creek gets smaller upstream and eventually vanishes into a sump. A side passage leads to decoration and a way up to a higher level. We climbed up and up, through the formation, and down into a gypsum-festooned dry passage. It was a nice warm spot for lunch, and we'd crossed another watershed to a new drainage inside the cave.

Down from the high point, we soon reached a new creek, followed downstream to the roar of the main inlet creek. We were on top of the 10 m pitch and

there were two shiny stainless eye-bolts. Curses! We'd brought a ladder because we didn't know about the bolts. With some difficulty, we rigged the ladder from a natural anchor and the others climbed down.

I needed to re-rig for a pull-down, so I placed the rope around a jug-handle right at the water in the waterfall, below foot-level. I had to swing down and sideways on the rope to get onto the ladder and my knee stayed behind in the rift passage, caught on the corner. There was a large jolt and my knee moved sideways, feeling like it was dislocated. Ouch! I climbed down the ladder and dropped into the cold water with relief.

Upstream from the base of the pitch, the main creek goes through tight noisy canyon passage before opening into vast, decorated caverns. The others stopped for quite a while and took photos, and I rested my leg. Eventually, we left the caverns and came round the corner to truly spectacular stream passage back-lit by the entrance.

The cave exit wasn't the end of this trip. The creek is well and truly overgrown. We had to tunnel under and through the blackberries! A big stick and some kicking at the blackberry canes allowed us to make slow progress up the creek. My leg was hurting by this stage without cold water to immerse it in. Exiting the blackberries, we staggered out into the paddock and up to the car. That was a full and fun day.



*Main stream entrance, Marmonts cave*

*Photo John Oxley*

**Day 16. 4/2/2018**

*Matawhero*

*Phil*

Phil was out for the day, so the remaining four made it two survey teams in Matawhero. Alan and

John surveyed downstream in the main stream, past the western branch and into the flunges. They stopped at the marked station for the junction with the northern branch. That links last year's northern branch survey heading upstream, and this year's extension of it, into the surface GPS. We can position the northern branch surveys against each other now – there's a depressing amount of work to close the gap if the stream isn't going to get any easier.

Oxana and Liz surveyed the northwest branch upstream from John and Alan's survey of the previous week. They found a major problem in the minor branch of the branch – neither of them fitted past the first squeeze. Since neither of them is particularly large, we decided that the 1960s survey of this area was produced by stick figures. Instead of trying the impossible branch, Liz and Oxana surveyed up the main creek to the cow exit MF28 (See Rafid's encounter with this entrance in last year's trip report<sup>1</sup>).

We've been surveying Matawhero since 2016. The cave is starting to make sense now that we have the northern branch located and two other branches are fully surveyed. This cave collects a series of creeks in separate blind valleys around the western side of the main ridge and then flows east. The northern branch was never suspected to flow from a completely different part of the landscape until the epic through trip in 2016. Combined with the

GPS coordinates acquired for the waterfall entrance of North branch and for the pines entrance of Matawhero, Alan's map shows a straight-line gap of ~130 m to bridge between our 2018 survey and Peter Freeman's duckunder survey from 2017. It's probably two full days of exceptionally ugly survey to finish the job. Yay!

**Day 17. 5/2/2018**

*Thunderer / Puketiti / Carters place / Berry farm again*

*Oxana*

Thunderer comes complete with everything – beautiful walkthrough streamway passage, scrambling through rockfall to find it, boulders that you can make your own optional duck-under from, and a great big chamber in the roof bristling with straws. We turned around at the little waterfall.

There were a great many big eels in the streamway too. I actually managed to catch one in my gumboot today – except that it was so big it didn't fit, so it immediately oozed back out the top when I picked the boot up, and disappeared into the murk.

On the way back we stopped at the Carter family's farm, and had a tea and a chat. We promised to come back and go caving together next year.



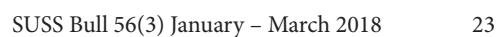
*Sunset storm from the woolshed*

*Photo John Oxley*

<sup>1</sup> SUSS Bull 56(1), 11 – 21



Too many to keep track of), and another 1 kg tub of raspberries too (because how could you not?).



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## JF-268 Pooshooter and JF-221 Owl Pot

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21–22 October 2017

David Rueda-Roca

Party: David “Davo” Bardi, Alan Jackson, Gabriel “Gab” Kinzler, Serena Benjamin, David Rueda-Roca, Sandy “Sando” Varin.

One more time, we decided to perform our usual monthly trip of STC/SUSS/VSA mainlanders.

We arrived in Hobart by plane on Friday evening. This time, we changed plans in order to increase our efficiency, I was the one who picked up the rental car (a red small one that was going to be mis-treated in the two following days) and then I drove to the supermarket, where I picked up the prepaid groceries for the weekend. Afterwards, I drove to Geoff Wise’s place (his cellar is the gear storeroom of STC), where I used my list of ropes, that I got from the rigging instructions, to pick them up for the two caves that we intended to visit that weekend. Sando and Davo arrived at 00:30, as their flight was delayed (what a surprise!). Poor buggers!, they could not sleep much that night.

### JF-268 Pooshooter

21 October 2017

Next day, after having breakfast in the way to Maydena, we met Serena, Gabriel “Gab” and Alan at 08:30 am. Our plan in this STC trip was to go to the cave Pooshooter Pot. This cave was still under investigation by STC, and Alan suggested at the end of our previous Tasmanian trip that we should take part in some official STC trips too. Alan, Serena and Gabi would perform a dig and, on the other hand, Sando, Davo and me would try to bottom the cave. The cave was rigged until where the present dig is, but not to the bottom. For this reason, Sando, Davo and me decided to carry on the necessary ropes to be able to do it.

I confess that I had some difficulties to follow Alan’s 4WD in the dirt track of JF, specially with a small 2WD at 90 km/h and with Alan trying to left us intentionally behind. I was not very worried, cos I knew that the car was fully insured, although when we started sliding in the curves and I had to correct the direction of the car with the steering wheel, Davo reminded me that the insurance did not work on dirt roads and that it did not covered human life either. So, I slowed down a bit. Our car was not red anymore, it was quite brown after the speeding.



*Gab changing ropes at the Orifice*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

As soon as we arrived to the crossroad, where the carpark is (to call it carpark is to be very generous), we got changed. Gab started to follow the usual pink tapes through the Tasmanian bush (you know that I strongly believe that Tasmania is polluted of pink tape all around). I was carrying on two of the ropes that Sando, Davo and me needed to go to the bottom of the cave. However, as I did not have enough room in my caving pack, I tried to tie them outside the pack without much success. The ropes were firstly hanging, afterwards laying on my arm and when I felt down to the ground a couple of times, due to the inclination of the track, on the mud.

As soon as we reached the entrance of the pot, we got changed with dry thermals and we head down the cave. It is so nice when the cave is rigged... you can progress quite fast through the different pitches, without waiting for the rigging of the pitches. When I almost bottomed the first pitch ( $18+22 = 40$  meter pitch) I realised that someone dropped his pack into the bottom of the pitch and was waiting at “The Orifice” to go down and pick it up. At this pitch you must stop two meters before bottom of it to do a traverse into the continuation of the cave.

Once my friend picked up his pack, we continued abseiling a new pitch (8 meter deep) till another traverse and an easy restriction that left us at the





*David B squeezing through the dig*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

top of the pitch called “Shower of Shit” (S.O.S.) that gives the name to the cave (“Pooshooter Pot”). This pitch, 38 meters deep, is divided in three/four rebelayes.

Once I reached the previous one to the last one, Alan indicated me from the bottom how to rig the traverse to the John Silver passageway from the place I was. This was to use a new rope and to abseil completely vertical and when I reach a slippery slope, to walk carefully through the traverse to the other end of the chamber and always attached to the rope. Anyway, I had to go down a couple of abseils more, till where Alan was, to recover some rigging plates to be able to set them in the bolting holes of the next pitches that we were intended to perform.

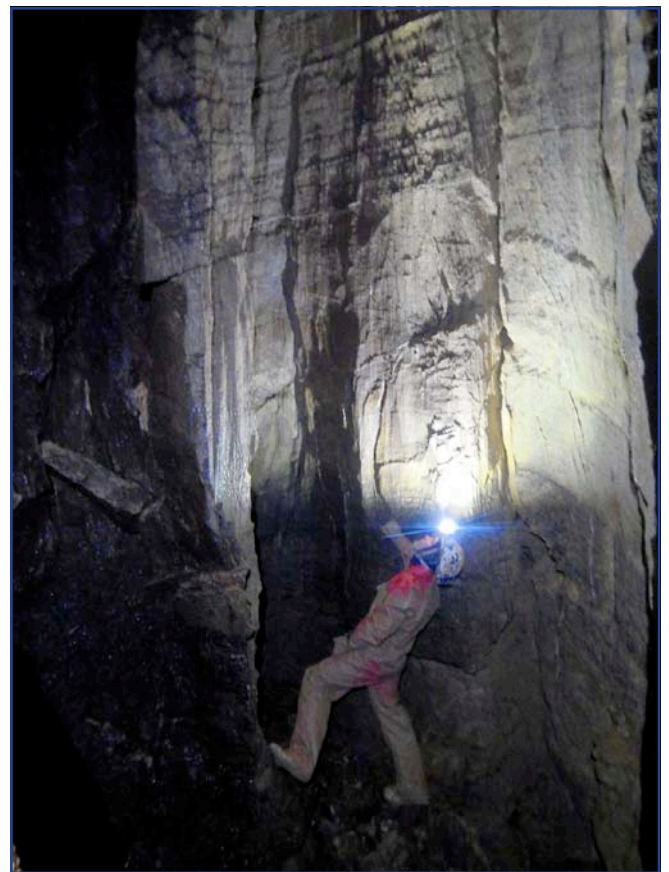
When I prussiked up again to my original location, I saw that Davo had by-passed me and had done the traverse through John Silver to the other end of the chamber and fixed the rope. Then we could perform a guided abseil to the other end. At that point, Davo suggested what Alan indicated to him before, this was not the bottom of the cave, but going through the window at the right side of John Silver passage (South) where an initial 16 meter pitch was waiting for us, and then try to explore that area of the cave, as Alan didn't think it had been looked at terribly well back in 2004.

Meanwhile, Alan, Serena and Gab went to a digging that finally resulted in a frustrating 50 meter deep new pitch and a dead end.

On our side, Davo rigged the rope at the other end of the window and abseiled the 16 meter pitch down. After a while, Gab came back from the dig-

ging (he got bored as only one/two skinny people fit in the digging and he could not do much) and joined us. Initially, we explored the wrong bottom of the pitch and we could not find any progression. Then we moved to the other side of the bottom and I found a hole, where I could abseil three meters down. Then we continue progressing down towards a new chamber, and through another hole we could find more cave. All this area was already explored and surveyed before.

Afterwards, tough Sando started digging a small hole at the far bottom of the last chamber (Southeast point of it in the map). She could see a new chamber through that window. Then it was when Sando found new cave... As soon as she squeezed through the enlarged hole, we discovered a small chamber and an aven that was going up. When we came back to John Silver, Alan met us at the window and explained us that Serena and he have been very successful with their digging. We gave him our news too. The three of us struggled a bit with the prussiking to the window, as everything was covered in sticky and slippery mud and our gear (especially the Pantins) was not working at all. We de-rigged our section of cave and headed up.



*Sandy in the new aven*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

As usual, we walked the way back to the cars and got changed, farewelling our Tasmanian colleagues and driving back to Maydena. We slept at the Giants Table, where the owners had cooked a very nice dinner for us for the same price! We got a shower and set the electric blanket at the lowest setpoint.

## JF-221 Owl Pot

22 October 2017

On Sundays, we do not usually have so much time for caving as we have on Saturdays, as we need to take planes to come back home. Therefore, we woke up quite early in the morning to try to go to the cave we want to go, as soon as we can. I did not feel very well that morning and I looked to Sando and Davo, who were looking at me with the desire of having an easy day. I confess that I wanted to have an easy resting day too. As I mentioned before, we could not sleep very well because we put the heaters of the house at full power to dry our thermals and we got very hot at night. Anyway, I looked at me at the mirror in the bathroom and I said to myself "lazy bugger, are you made of butter? What sort of "mainlander" are you?". So, I decided to go caving despite of all.

This time, we have selected a cave that Sando and Davo knew and that I had wanted to visit and that is not particularly difficult at all. It is actually quite easy and simple. We went to Owl Pot. As usual with a 2WD, we left the car 2 km far away of the cave and walked uphill to the entrance (see previous trip report about Tassie Pot trip). Sando decided to rig the cave and we started abseiling the 20 meter deep muddy slope that is considered the first abseil of the cave.

After an easy walk through the cave, we reached the second pitch (30 meter deep), Sando rigged it and we abseiled it too. Then, we went through the squeeze and reached the second 20 meter slope. Sando rigged as well. This pitch is not aerial at all and it looks like a big slope and finishes at the "Bowling Alley". After this, I understood why this easy cave goes so deep. There is a passage of rock-falls that goes down for a long time, going deeper and deeper.

At a certain point, we crossed the river and followed it for a short time. Then, we arrived to the final waterfall (30 meters pitch). We abseiled the waterfall and reached the bottom of the cave. I did not want to eat, as I was afraid of expelling anything

that could reach my stomach, but Sando convinced me to eat a bun. Then I started to prussik up again.

All of us de-rigged the cave and we reached the top. We discovered a rope that other group of cavers had left at the entrance of the cave. As it was not ours, we decided to report STC back and to leave it there.

We walked the two kilometers downhill through the dirt road to the car, got changed, packed all our muddy clothes and gear and drive back to Hobart. I was driving back as a mad man, cos I always get very nervous with the time of our flights back to the mainland. God Bless, the cops did not notice my speeding...

We washed the ropes at Alan's place, where his wife Loretta cooked some pizzas for dinner. Then, as I always do, I was getting very nervous cos my "Crapstar" flight to Sydney was at 8:00 pm and we decided to hit the road.



*David R-R on the 16 metre pitch*

*Photo Sandy Varin*

As soon as we left Alan's place, when we had just the necessary time to go to the airport, Murphy's law happened. Ten meters after starting the car, we realised that we had a flat tyre. We worked as a F1 team changing that bloody tyre in a very short time, while Alan was laughing from the porch of his house. You should have seen my face... I wanted to be able to stop the time. At the end, we finally got to the airport in time and flew back home.

Another gorgeous weekend in Van Diemen's Land!



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## A Welcome Sunny Dissident

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Junee Florentine December 9th – 10th 2017

Phil Maynard

Participants: David Rueda-Roca, David Bardi, Sandy Varin, Phil Maynard

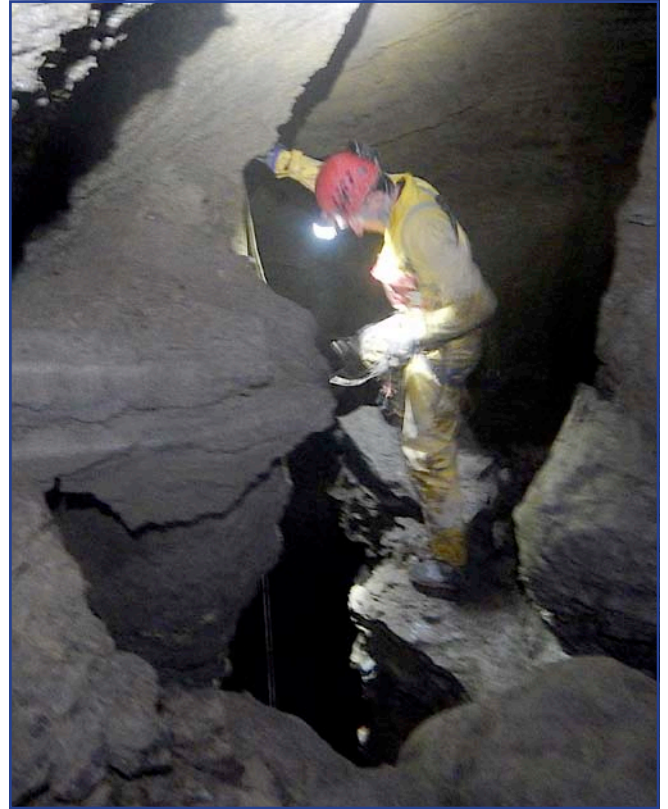
It was a dark and stormy night... but Saturday morning wasn't as bad as expected. We had decided on JF382 Dissidence as our main target for the weekend because it's more survivable than the alternatives in wet weather. None of us had been to the cave before, so we stuck with our survivable choice even though the promised flooding rains were missing.

We grabbed the ropes from Alan Jackson's place, then had a quick drive up to the Growling Swallet car park. The access road was a bit wet, a bit potholed, and a bit harsh for our pretend SUV hire, but we got to the end of the road. It's a very pleasant walk to Dissidence, with only a little bit of steep climb up the last slope to the small doline entrance.



*Phil Maynard rigging in the entrance area, Dissidence*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*



*Long way down..... David B at the rebelay of Vertical Euphoria*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

Dissidence starts with a really quite tight squeeze (in a suspiciously dug-out shape), then a series of small pitches including a rift traverse. I rigged these pitches with one long rope, trying not to look too closely at the traverse exposure. Bolts! There were lots of small-diameter, fiddly bolts for setting up the rigging. They are time consuming and have nuts that need to be taken off without dropping down the pitch and they need BYO bolt brackets. At the bottom of this pitch series, the passage opens right up. A continuously-descending gallery (Union Jack) provides a spectacular way to lose a lot of altitude in a hurry.

The Vertical Euphoria pitch drops out 55 m from here. It's re-belayed off the side of a massive shaft, reached via a promontory, and there's a gap between the bolts and the promontory that is open to the bottom. It's been bolted by a tall person – I'm going to take a wild guess and say it was Alan Jackson –

so Sandy had to stand on tippy-toes over the 55 m drop to rig the pitch.

Three different streams drop into this shaft, making for a wet, splashy experience at the bottom. The others stopped for a rest and a bite to eat here, but since we didn't plan to go further in this branch of the cave (it's called 'No Country for Old Men', be warned) I ascended and had some lunch at the top.

The continuation of Union Jack leads over mud banks to the Negative Reality Inversion Pitch. This is a clear-hanging 42 m pitch onto a rockpile slope. Below that is an ugly, loose 13 m pitch into open horizontal rockpile. We weren't sure whether to keep going from here, but we thought we'd just go on a little bit and pop out the other side of the rockpile. Boy, oh boy, oh boy. The other side of this rockpile is Run Rabbit Run, a chamber about 70 m long by 30 m wide and 70 m high.



*Run Rabbit Run*

*Photo David Rueda-Roca*

We thought that was a suitable place to turn around for the day. There's much more cave down there, including a few exploration leads still open, but that's best done by leaving the rigging in place and going hard day after day after day. We de-rigged on the way up (the traverse at the top was not so much fun to de-rig), eventually leaving the cave into the

gathering dusk. We were packed and walking out at 9.30 and back to the accommodation at 11pm. The owners had left dinner waiting for us on the stove, yum.

On the drive back to the accommodation, David R-R couldn't find his camera. The rest of us (well me, at least) tried to convince him that it'd turn up inside his gear somewhere. He was convinced that he'd left it on the ground at the Growling Swallet car park.

Sunday dawned and the clouds were breaking up into bright sunshine. So much for weather forecasts. We drove way north up the Florentine valley road to have a look at JF7 Frankcombe cave and JF229 Welcome Stranger. David persuaded us to turn off to the Growling carpark, and there lying in a mud puddle was a mud-coloured camera. It turned out the camera was in perfectly-good condition.

It was hot and sunny and very humid by the time we parked near Frankcombe, with many appreciative leeches at the side of the road. We slogged up over the hill to Frackcombe, and found a large entrance with rockpile down to a stream flowing in to the cave.

Frankcombe soon becomes a crawl... and then it stays as a crawl for absolutely ages. There may be some good passages to explore down at the end of this cave, but I must admit I wasn't interested enough to find out. Eventually, David B at the sharp end turned around as well and we exited the cave into conditions on the surface that were even hotter and more humid than before.

We finished the weekend by popping over to Welcome Stranger, after finding that there are two ends to Westfield Rd and the side road to Welcome Stranger was not at the end we chose to drive up. Welcome Stranger is a horizontal stream cave, with some sizable chambers and lots of decoration. I thought it looked more like Pio Pio than Juneeflorentine. We wandered through and Photos Happened, so that was the weekend done. Well, not quite – the finish of the weekend was dropping off the ropes to Alan Jackson and getting an unexpected invite to a BBQ. Thanks Alan!







*Cool caving in Jasper, Canada*

*Self-portrait Felix Ossig-Bonanno*



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## Photogallery

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*Oxana Repina in Briars cave, Pio Pio New Zealand*

*Photo John Oxley*



*Keir Vaughan-Taylor and Rod Obrien in CP6 River Cave, Cooleman Plains*

*Photo Peter Baxter*



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## Photogallery

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*Waitoru station, New Zealand*

*Photo John Oxley*



*CP6 River cave, Cooleman Plains*

*Photo Peter Baxter*

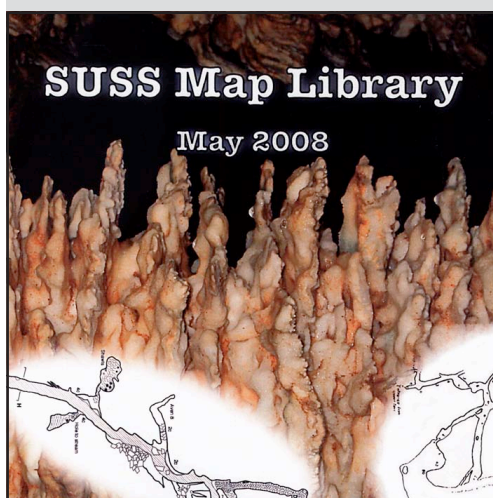


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## Things to buy

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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

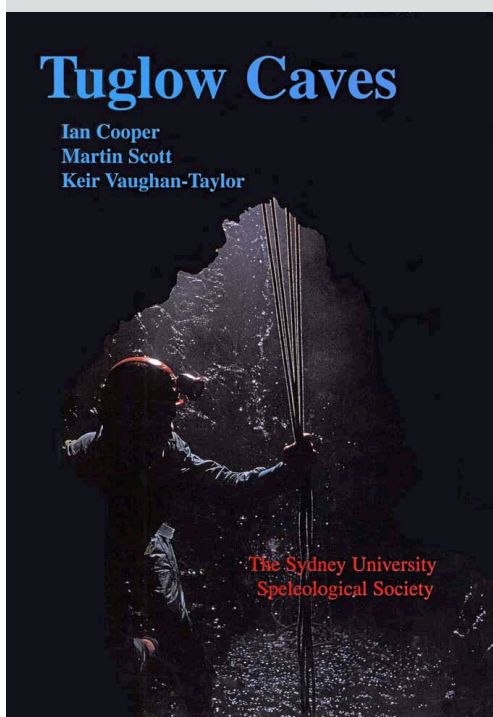
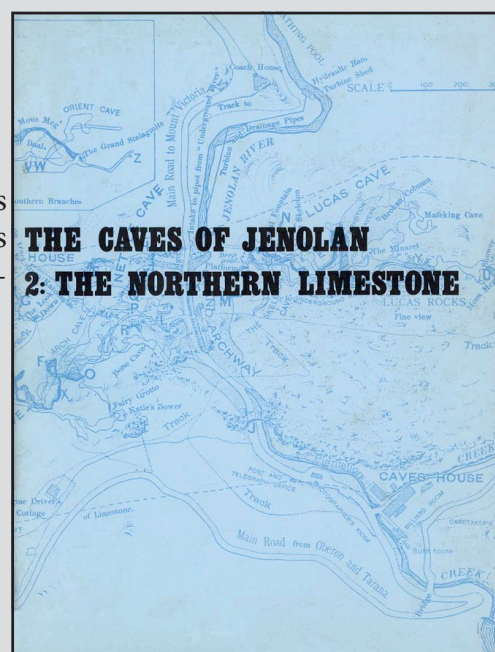
The entire SUSS cave map library of over 300 maps is on DVD and available for purchase. Our map library was scanned to provide wider access to the maps for SUSS and other ASF caving clubs. There are field sketches, ink maps produced on drafting film, ink maps produced on linen, as well as some of the 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: Mangawhara Cavern, Pio Pio New Zealand  
Photo Alan Pryke*



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