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Southern Tasmanian  
Caverneers Incorporated.

# The Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the  
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**Issue No. 306, Jan-Feb 1998**

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# C O N T E N T S

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## Editorial

I'm a bit at a loss for words this month I think a fair bit has been happening (See the trip reports) but I don't think I've been doing much of it.

Thanks to all those who got it together and wrote something for the spiel I actually felt like an editor this month, with too much material for one issue I was cutting stuff out rather than writing fillers. Don't worry if your literary gem didn't make it I'm sure there will be room next month.

Those of you who have email will know what a hornets nest Art has stirred up with the ASF moratorium on Bolt laddering/Aid climbing underground. I have been more than gratified to see some of the comments appearing on this issue.

Some of the commentators have even taken the opportunity to let fly on other concerns they have with the club in general. I for one hope that this level of debate continues for some time. As a

young club I think we have a lot more issues to work out than most people realize.

**On a related topic** our recent meetings seem to be dragging on somewhat. This is not entirely due to Bob's snail-like notion of fast tracking business.

I wonder if we shouldn't move to separate club and committee meetings, practice which has been adopted on and off by past clubs.

This would allow the committee to debate the boring business without boring the members, freeing the general meetings for more appropriate entertainments.

**John Hawkins-Salt**  
**Spiel Editor**

N.B. Footnotes stolen without permission from Southern Caver #55

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## Club Matters

### Membership fees Now OVERDUE.

#### NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new prospective member Daniel Eberhard. Daniel is 17 years old and studying at Hobart College. Daniel is not really into the hard stuff, but he is competent in the bush and likes exploring for new cave entrances, or strolling through easy horizontal caves. He's keen and fit, so if you are doing any suitable trips then give him a call on 03 - 6239 6577.

Sharon Heritage has also joined as a prospective member, keen to get underground.....after listening to Nick Hume's tales of underground, she still joined!

Also welcome to new member Molly Morgan. So when does she start caving Dean?

#### *SAREX, Hastings, 13-14/12/97*

With the all time caving low of 1997, the annual CAVEX was originally cancelled due to a lack of Cavers. Fortunately with a late resurgence of interest it was possible to run an exercise and one

actually happened. All who attended agreed that it was one of the best CAVEX's, everyone got involved, got their hands dirty and gained a good amount of learning.

Participants included (apologies if your name isn't here, it was a few months ago!):

Police Search and Rescue Team (Damien Bidgood, Jock Allan, Richard MacMillan, Kathy Buchanan, Gerrard Dutton, Justin Bidgood, Peter?), Ambulance Service (Simon Butterly and Paul Davey), local State Emergency Service (Dave, Bob and others), National Parks Rangers/Cave guides, Forestry Commission representative (Lindsay Wilson) and Cavers (Tim Anderson, Bob Cockerill, Jeff Butt, Leigh Douglas, Dean Morgan, Hugh Fitzgerald, Liz Canning, Kelly Miller).

**Scenario 1:** A group on an adventure caving trip out the back of Newdegate Cave ran into a bit of light trouble and in the confusion ended up coming out without one of their party.

Several groups were sent into the cave to locate the missing party. The missing and injured (diagnosed broken lower leg, badly bruised elbow/forearm) party; played by yours truly was located at the base of the 10 m pitch into the Mystery Room. Ambulance officers Paul and Simon (his first caving trip) descended to treat the victim. An air-splint was applied to the injured leg, and the damaged arm was supported. A hauling system was used to pull the victim (who was able to assist by hopping) up the pitch. {Lesson: a rescuer should accompany the injured up the pitch to steady him/her; the combination of being hauled and hopping tends to make it difficult to keep ones feet.} VHF radios worked well within the main chambers of the cave and made communications easier.

To avoid damage to the cave and making things excessively difficult, the patient moved under his own steam to the chamber at the end of the Binney tunnel. For those who don't know it, the Binney tunnel is basically a narrow (excavated through mud) passage about 50 m long, the constrictions are roughly 0.5 m by 0.5 m. It is a U tube, descending steeply (around 45 degrees) for about 30 m and then rising just as steeply for about 20 m. When wet, it is a greasy tube than can be quite an obstacle/barrel of fun. The patient was safely ensconced in the Sked stretcher and then carefully lowered (feet first) down the first section. Paul, at the foot of the stretcher controlled movement of the stretcher; the rate of lowering and negotiating obstacles such as rocks, bends and the several small drops. I have never been in a stretcher before, but can report that it was an exceedingly comfortable ride. The occasional ceiling helictites en-route made it quite an enjoyable trip. Fortunately at the base of the U, there was room for the stretcher to be rotated so that the haul up the other side could be head first. The scenario then ceased.

The exercise was considered to have been very successful.

**Pool-side BBQ:** An after-hours dip was enjoyed by most. A sumptuous BBQ feast, catered for by the Police and cooked wonderfully by the SES team was enjoyed. Many thanks for the food, cooking skills and after hours access to the pool and BBQ area.

**Evening Shenanigans:** Lodging for the night was the Southport Community Centre, thanks to Phil Bradley for organising this. After a few games of table tennis and a few drinks the party games begun. Table Climbing, dyno moves up the walls, squeezing through chairs, broom projections etc. resulted in a suitable amount of

fun, laughs, strained muscles and the odd bit of embarrassment!

**Scenario 2:** A group caving in Wolf Hole were overdue.

The caves in the area were checked, ropes were found at Wolf Hole and the missing party was located not far from the entrance. The injured member (played by Justin) was treated by Simon, and then required to be hauled up the 30 m entrance pitch (which comprises of a 10 m inclined ramp leading to a 20 m vertical drop).

A horizontally mounted Z-pulley hauling system was set up at the edge of the doline and a mobile pulley was set up on the opposite side of the doline to keep the haul rope away from the lip at the bottom of the ramp. {Lesson: keep the Z-pulley off the ground to minimise friction. A pulley deviation tied to one of the adjacent trees would have helped immensely.} The friction problem was overcome by hefty SES man-power. The patient was hauled up in a horizontal position for maximum comfort. Simon was hauled up with the stretcher, he looked after the patient and oriented the stretcher to avoid any obstacles. {Lesson: the safety belay on the stretcher was tied directly into the patients harness, which meant that with a tight belay it was very uncomfortable for the patient. The belay line is best tied into the main stretcher hauling point, and then the patient tied in with a tail.} The mobile pulley kept the haul rope free of the walls of the shaft and floor of the ramp and so allowed an un-hindered ascent. [Some of the near mobile logs perched on the ramp were removed for safety.]

Quite a few lessons were learned by all involved; another successful exercise.

**Scenario 3:** A person on a guided tour experienced chest pains whilst on the tourist trail in Newdegate Cave.

This exercise was primarily for the Parks staff who regularly take guided tours and who may one day encounter such an occurrence. The patient, played by Peter was treated and stretchered by the local SES out of the cave. Valuable experience was gained here in relation to location of an in-cave first aid kit, keeping a patient warm in a comparatively cold, drippy and draughty area, and communications from the cave to the office.

All up, everyone had a great time, learned heaps and I am sure that everyone who participated will be very keen to participate in CAVEX 98, coming sometime later this year. Thanks for everyone's involvement.

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## Trip Reports

### ***Niggly Cave 27th December 1997***

**Present;** *Stephen Bunton, Daniel, Rolan and Stefan Eberhard.*

Yes, Rolan was in town again for Christmas with his folks and keen to push the bottom of Niggly. Stefan was down working for the summer, doing biological surveys at Ida Bay. This little excursion was the lead up to a push trip in the downstream rockpile.

Niggly was partially rigged in late May but John H-S and I didn't get to go back before the winter rains started in June. The priority of this trip was to check and improve the rigging to facilitate a quick trip in and out on the bottoming push trip. I had carried the long rope to the entrance a few weekends before this such that we could all carry manageable loads to the cave entrance.

It was a bleak day in the Florentine and Daniel, whose plan it was to ascend Wherrets Lookout sat in the car all day. The other three of us raised a sweat clearing the track. Despite it having been cleared at Easter, winter snows and winds had obliterated a lot of saplings on the slip. I retaped it when I carried the long rope up but really a good bit of muscle power was just what was needed. It took over two hours to reach the cave entrance.

Stefan went ahead to check the rigging and Rolan and I carried the huge pig into the cave; 171m of rope, the other person carrying a lesser rope pack with all the rest of life's necessities for time spent underground. Stefan did a good job of the rigging while I watched and Rolan wandered around poking his head into holes. He can't help himself but he's fascinated by the fact that the Black Supergiant pitch (191m) really starts 50m higher than where we take off on it.

Stefan wanted to take photos on the way out but the fog was too dense and so he didn't stop. We didn't see him at the arranged rendezvous. We didn't see his gear at the entrance either. This could only mean one thing - that he wasn't keen to do the push trip and so it was...

*Stephen Bunton*

### ***Niggly Cave 30th December 1997***

**Present;** *Stephen Bunton and Rolan Eberhard*

Everything went off well for this big trip, as it does when your well psyched into it. I'd even bought a new back-up light, a Petzl Duo, my old renovated Zoom was cave shy too often the other day. It worked well in the workshop (I guess that's why it's called a work shop?) before and after the trip but not in the cave!

With light packs we were at the cave entrance in 50min and got underground at 11:15. With the cave rigged it took an hour and a half to the top of the Black Supergiant. Rolan went down the pitch first so that I could have the pleasure of seeing a minuscule speck of light at the base during my descent. His descent was slowed by a recalcitrant knot in the bottom of the long rope, mine by a miscreant rack and a tonne of rope weight at the knot in the bottom of the 41m rope, ie about 30m down.

At the bottom of the pitch we had a brew of coffee with lunch and then set off to the bottom of the cave. We agreed on about a four hour roundtrip from the bottom of the pitch. Unfortunately we used about an hour and a half of that just getting to the frontier. The first rockpile is a nasty and seemingly interminable thrutch through slimy squeezes and up slippery climbs. The main stream passage is something amazing to behold but the place is spoilt by the fact that it floods -spooky! and that there is as a consequence huge mudbanks. The whole place was reminiscent of PNG caving... big and impressive but too much mud and I didn't have my mud crampons on either. Rolan's boots had a better edge and he did less grovelling than I did.

"bullshit Bullshit Bullshit BULLSHIT BULLSHIT". JW descending the 90m (a 5 bullshit) pitch in Big Tree Pot.

At the bottom Rolan asked "How are you going?" To which I replied "I was stuffed and needed a breather, considering we are only at the halfway point!". Rolan, however, got straight into it and started grovelling into the terminal boulderpile somewhere down at stream level. He was gone for about half an hour but was never out of earshot. He stopped at a particularly intimidating squeeze without a draught and returned. He then quickly headed off up a higher level but found the remains of old footprints. Footprints in this area get obliterated by the floods from spring rains and snow thaw. In fact a potentially good campsite on the top of a collection of huge sandy mudbanks, beyond the first rockpile, showed no sign of footprints. We ominously looked at the dome roof above and thought of the horrible prospect of fighting your gear all the way in and through that horrible rockpile, only to wake in the middle of the night to the sound of rising water and then having nowhere to go!! That's the prospect of the next push trip. It may require another generation of cavers, neither of us were particularly keen to get back.

We had a dinner of noodles and tuna before ascending the big pitch. It was guaranteed to repeat on us but then again, so does all cave food. We tandemmed up the big pitch which is most sociable and saves a tonne of time. The last bit was a bit of an effort. The short pitches in the cave aren't nice but they sure are muddy! My Duo had chewed up it's batteries and before I got to the entrance it had chewed up a second lot which didn't impress me considering it was only my backup light. I borrowed a little light from Rolan at the bottom of the entrance pitch to rejuvenate my carbide for the final time and as usual it went better than ever once we got out of the cave, like most things really. We had been underground for exactly 12 hours.

Whilst it's only an hour down to the car with a light pack, that's the killer; a 350m descent. It took three days for my thighs to unstiffen. If you'd seen me in that time perhaps you'd have thought I actually go better when I'm underground. (350m up to go down a 385m deep cave only to have to come up 385m and then walk down 350m - "Kinda reinforces the pointlessness of it all really!" said Rolan later.)

My thanks to Rolan, it was a good trip. I always wanted to do Australia's deepest cave and it seems fitting that it contains Australia's longest pitch. Pity we didn't help make it deeper, longer, wider or whatever. The derigging trip is yet to come.

*Stephen Bunton*

### ***Trip report for JF341, 8/2/98.***

**Party:** Tony Veness, Mim Jambrecina (NUCC) John Hawkins-Salt

The offer of caving was what got us in the end. We could have looked at the Tall Ships. We could have gone walking or we could have even sat around the house doing as little as possible on a pleasant Hobart Sunday afternoon. We didn't....

The lure of a 'real' Southern Tasmanian cave with water and vertical bits was too much for us mainlanders (temporary Tasmanians) and it was with great expectations that we allowed ourselves to be whisked off to the Florentine Valley by John Hawkins-Salt for a days caving. Due to rain the previous night, the venue for the caving was changed from Growling Swallet to JF341. This was fine with us, not knowing any of the caves in the valley from any other hole in the ground. After an 8am departure and breakfast en-route, we arrived at the forest parking bay and trogged up. Due to warnings, we were well prepared with many layers of thermals and the like. We were determined not to freeze-up under pressure!

After mounting our brand new Blundstone wellies we set off. The walk to the 341 entrance was pleasant though slippery and gave us our first encounter with Tasmanian 'cave hunting'. John named and gave directions to other dolines as we walked. So many caves and so little time. I now understand the limitations of aerial photography for cave spotting in Tas. Not quite like the Nullarbor Plain or Northern Territory karst. More leeches and certainly less cows and kangaroos.

After a short scramble and a few abseils we landed. The last abseil was an exercise in rope bounce avoidance as the lone bolt from which we hung appeared rustier than your average Russian Tallship. We abandoned the now unnecessary SRT gear and followed John down into 341.

I won't go into details of the next three to four hours but it is suffice to say that we saw more straws, larger flowstone walls and more mud than we had seen in a long time. Mud, mud, mud. I'd heard rumours of the

use of ice axes and crampons in Tasmanian caves. I now know why. I suspect the warranty on our Blundstones is now null and void.

We finally turned and headed for home after reaching 341's largest chamber. Very impressive but unfortunately the threat of work the next day got the better of us and we had to start back. On the way out, we ran into Dave Rasch and Kelly who were leading a Swiss contingent of cavers on an exploration \ tourist trip. The number of cavers in 341 was now nine and John, Mim and I beat a hasty retreat to the SRT gear to avoid joining a queue of prussikers. We made our way out in reasonable (for us) time.

Soup and hot chocolate on the way home at Maydena was a welcome distraction. John returned Mim, myself and some very grotty gear home safe, sound and very tired, at a respectable 9pm. Work the next day wasn't looking so daunting after all. Only seven more days until we can do it all again.....

*Tony Veness and Mim Jambrecina.*

## ***JF-341, 8/2/98***

**Party:** *D. Rasch, K. Miller, Hugh, Liz Canning, Roman Hapka, Rachael Rumo (Swiss cavers)*

The purpose of this trip into JF-341 was to get a few people underground and to check out a few leads near the beginning of the "Enterprise" extension. The weather was reasonable even though the bush was wet from recent rain. We picked up Hugh and Liz from the Tyenna Lodge where they had been staying, and heard via the folks there that John H-S had left a message earlier that he was heading into the same cave with Tony and Mim to do a bit of checking in "downstream Enterprise" for that elusive connection into the Master Junee system.

The walk in to the cave around 12'ish was uneventful, and we took the opportunity to replace a few tapes along the track section from the 341 turn-off to the entrance (which is the most confusing section when heading out in the dark). The cave was already rigged which made for light packs all round. Being last down the final pitch, I rigged an extra trace to back up the single aging bolt. It would be good to see this bolt removed and replaced with new stainless/glue-in technology, as well as a backup bolt.

At the bottom of the pitches most shed their SRT gear. Hopefully John would see the gear on the way out and not de-rig on us! We had a bite of lunch near the first crystal pool (which was empty), then headed through to the area of interest. First we slid down into a small chamber and visited a small stream that appears from a small sump (which looks divable), goes about 8m then disappears into another (which doesn't). Hugh and Roman next did an interesting boots-off climb up a flowstone ramp to check out the source of a small stream. Then I toe-kicked up a dodgy mud ramp into a 3m diameter horizontal phreatic tube to see whether I could see into some other tubes at roof level. I got a good view into two of them but neither "went". About this time, we heard John and company returning, so we shouted to them and they came and had a chat. Two of the party looked very tired - it's a long trip in to where they had gone. They headed on out, followed shortly by Roman, Rachel and Kelly.

Hugh and I then rigged a rope down some flowstone and I abseiled boots-off into a chamber about 15m long by 5 wide, which had a 6m vertical rift in the bottom and a side chamber. Returning up the rope, Hugh then found another way into the chamber through some rockfall. I climbed up a short section of flowstone into the side chamber which went nowhere. Meanwhile Hugh climbed down the rift, followed by Liz and myself. Continuing down, the rift narrows to sub-human size but a rock tossed down continues to bounce for a couple of seconds. Further along the rift, a "laundry chute" of negotiable dimensions continues down and a stream can be heard. It doesn't look like anyone has been down this yet, but it's definitely worth a look. However, time was against us so we continued along the rift, popping out into a small chamber near a survey cairn (2057? 2059?) from where it was easy to regain the main chamber and the way out. We reached the surface at about 8.30pm, grateful for the extra tapes to guide us back to the cars in the dark. Roman and Rachel looked very cold huddled in the back of Kelly's car, and because of the late hour all the food shops were shut all the way back to Hobart, so we didn't get to eat till after 11pm!

## ***Dreamtime, JF-36 15/2/98***

**Party:** *Tony Veness, & Mim Jambrecina (NUCC), Dion Hutcheon, John H-S*

Just to make sure Tony and Mim acquired completely inaccurate expectations of Tasmanian caving an extended trip into GS was planned. Trev had supplied a (Hot) lead near the Main Line sump & I was keen to re-familiarise myself with this part of the cave in preparation for some future projects.

Tony & Mim made all the right noises in the entrance series which changed to all the wrong noises in the rift. Mainline was reached without incident & after a quick snack we continued down to the sump. Trev's lead proved as exciting as most of Trev's leads do, so we wandered on into Dreamtime. After a few wrong turns we found the River Leath and decided to call it a day.

A quick dip to clean of on the way out finished a very pleasant day. Tony & Mim were surprisingly quick to agree to some more GS trips in the near future. I guess that means I'm running out of excuses not to attack Tiger Mountain.

*John H-S*

## ***Junee Cave Diving News***

The second sump in Junee Cave at Maydena has been pushed to a new depth of 60 metres.

In February this year, Chris Brown, David Doolette, Stefan Eberhard and Tim Payne used mixed gas techniques to extend exploration of the sump which could lead the way into the Junee Master Cave system.

The use of Helium in the gas mixtures, and pure Oxygen for decompression, allowed the divers to safely explore beyond the previous limit of 42 metres depth reached using air in 1992.

The extreme depth required prolonged decompression in the cold water (7 degrees Celsius), which - combined with the strong current, poor visibility, and hazardous restrictions - means that further progress will not be made easily.

It's a scary, narky = nitrogen narcosis place down there. Nevertheless, the sump continues downward and the team plans to return next summer.

*Stefan Eberhard*

## ***CripHole, IB?? 18/1/98***

**David Rasch, Kelly Miller.**

8am, Sunday morning. Phone calls from Dean and Trevor. Something about having to stay and save their houses from threatening bushfires. And the power was off, so Trevor couldn't make a cup of tea. Phone call from Nigel - he was awake all night worrying about Dean fighting the fires, and didn't feel up to caving. HOWEVER, Dave drove the MG through fire and smoke to get to Clutha Place, because he knew how badly Kelly wanted to go caving. What a hero!!!

Thus five became two cripples doing their first trip after respective injuries. Something easy was called for....perhaps a bushbash around Midnight Hole followed by a wander into Mystery Creek?? We staggered and puffed our way up the hill, thankful that the 38 degrees of the previous day had dropped to the low 20s. Once at Midnight Hole, the limestone cliff behind it was followed further up the hill and to the right. The various holes and openings were looked at, none going far. About 20 metres from Midnight Hole, there is an overhang, at the rear it funnels down into an impressive sounding drop (as measured by the rock-ometer). The pitch dropped about 5 metres to a small ledge, then down again through a narrow rift. Whatever thoughts there was of finding 'virgin' cave dissipated with the discovery of 3 orange bolt plugs. Without hangers, Dave managed to artfully rig the next pitch using a couple of wire traces and a rope protector, voila, a free-hanging pitch. Who needs these bolts anyway?? The pitch below was about 20 metres, followed by a short drop (about 4 metres), then it narrowed into a rift which could be crossed (very short passage beyond, probably no prospects of continuation), or dropped through (another 4 metres) into a small chamber. Discussions afterwards suggested the hole could be IB11, although no tag was seen

around the entrance. Does anyone remember visiting/surveying/naming/ bolting this hole? It's certainly a nice little vertical trip and well suited to the occasional physically unfit caver.

## ***Necrosis 8/3/98***

**Party:** Dion Hutchon, Muki, John H-S

Since Muki came south for the summer we finally had a chance to return to a project we started with him last year (see SP 301). After a late start we made it underground by 12pm and in average water levels reached last years front in about 1 1/2 hours.

Above the first pitch a tight vertical rift heads up to re join the stream at a 3m climb. This can be climbed free but is difficult to reverse so a handline was rigged. Immediately after the handline is a 6m pitch which we climbed with some aid. A climb into the rift at the head of this pitch leads into narrow serpentine stream passage. After another handline climb this passage continues about 30m to a junction with 20% of the flow entering from a high passage on the right (Unexplored) the main passage continues for approximately 100-150 meters before becoming to tight at stream level. It may be possible to climb over this restriction from further back in the rift. But by this stage we were all feeling it a bit and decided to call it a day.

I estimate we gained about 200 meters of passage in this area and since there is at least one lead left we will get back there to survey it some time. Back on the surface at 8:00 pm we were met by Arthur Clarke et al enjoying their annual post club dinner foray.

*John H-S*

## ***TOUR de SUISSE, Part 1, 20/1/98-4/2/98***

Whilst attending the UIS convention in La Chaux de Fonds in August '97, Arthur Clarke and myself met many international cavers. A group of Swiss then threatened to come and visit us in the Austral Summer, which they did over late January to early February this year.

Arthur conveniently shot off from the state just as they arrived and so I had the very full-time pleasure of escorting five visitors (Roman Hapka, Roland Huber, Florence Vonlanthen, Claude-Alain Diserens and Rachael Rumo) around in my ever so reliable (T)Orana (the Orange car) and a not so reliable Datsun Sunny (the Green car). Many thanks to Hugh Fitzgerald and my other co-drivers.

**Stage 1-the Junee-Florentine** for a taste of Tasmanian Caves. Hugh co-drove the Green car and the seven of us headed up the eight road to visit Growling Swallet (21/1) and then Tassy Pot (22/1). We resided at the Pagoda, not quite a purpose built caving hut, but a very suitable place. Chateau cardboard was a step down from Côtes-de Rhône, but never-the-less enhanced a very social time.

Growling Swallet: As with many visitors from the Northern Hemisphere, the Glow-worms in Growling were the first time they'd encountered these beasties. The "to-the-core" rope hanging down the last pitch of Slaughterhouse reminded me that as Equipment Officer there were some very dodgy club ropes out and about (these ones were rigged prior to STC even forming) that need to be retrieved and safety audited (now done at the time of writing). Also, the aging fixed rope/plastic rung ladders in Growling also need replacing- (a task currently in hand).

Tassy Pot: A cave I have much visited, but never had the time to fully explore the horizontal passages at the bottom. Hugh and I had a very good look around; I'm sure there are still possibilities there and doubt that everything has been fully surveyed down here??

"I've already been into a horrible, wet, muddy cave with awful climbing and squeezes. Is this cave we're going into now anything like that?" Fiona the Policewoman, referring to a previous exercise in Welcome Stranger, whilst en-route to . . . . Rat Hole.



**Stage 2-Francistown base to visit Ida Bay and Hastings.** Arthur had very kindly allowed us to use his Francistown "Caving Hut", thanks very much AC. Roland won us over with his expertise in the kitchen; many very yummy French style meals were prepared and devoured.

We had a three trip permit to do some surveying in Exit. We spent most of our time surveying the walls and drawing passage detail from the region of the middle rockpile, past the Hatwalk, through the third rockpile and up to the junctions of the Western and Eastern Passages. Basically we detailed between survey stations 60-76 (Old Series) and 1015-1024 (New Series).

On 29/1 we entered and exited Exit via the gated entrance adjacent to the Efflux. On 30/1, and 1/2 we entered and exited via Mini-Martin.

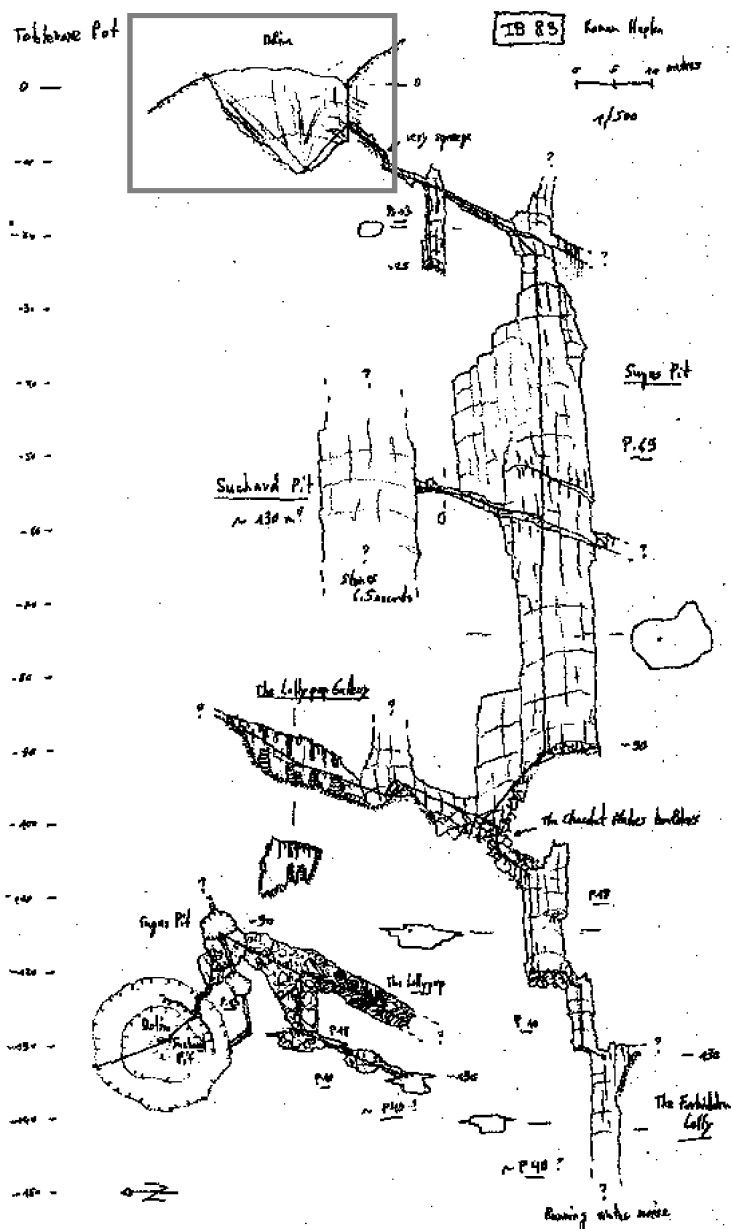
Through email a couple of Canadian Cavers were also going to be around, Louise and Greg Horne, they joined us swelling our ranks to 8. Of course it was at about this time that the Green car became somewhat cantankerous, leaving us with 8 keen cavers and the ever faithful Orana. This predicament tended to be rather difficult and my dual roles as local Guide and Taxi driver basically added immensely to logistical difficulties. Oh, where are you Arthur C and your Station Wagon???

Wolf Hole was visited on 2/2, Lake Pluto being as delightful as always. Later that day we also visited Newdegate Cave, seeing the Binney Tunnel and the Pop Hole area.

On 3/2, Roman and Rachael were sent on a 'hot prospect', to IB89 to explore and survey. They came back somewhat disillusioned as the 'hot prospect' turned out to be something very impenetrable that 'needed blasting'. Whilst waiting for the mechanic to phone us that the Green car was operable, bored and frustrated minds set to work on embellishing the survey of IB89 to the fictitious "Toblerone Pot", below (the real IB89 is indicated by the Boxed section, it ends at an impenetrable squeeze with a slight air flow). At the STC meeting on 4/2 this survey was shown around, creating much interest and envy. Dave Rasch said he "knew exactly where the Suchard Pitch (Suck Hard!!)" came into Mystery Creek Cave. After managing to contain ourselves for the whole evening the real survey was shown around. **The fictions survey is presented here only to show the Swiss style of drawing surveys;** the Swiss treat map making as a art! (which is why topo. maps in Switzerland are about \$40 a throw!!).

The Green car just made it back to Hobart, it definately needs a rest. I too needed a rest and fortunatley Arthur C. had returned to the state and so I passed our guests on. Arthur will be able to write a trip report about the Tour de Suisse Part 2.

Jeff Butt



## ***De/Re-rigging Trip Reports.***

As part of my current Equipment Officer Safety audit of all club ropes I have taken it on to return all ropes to the store for cleaning, examining, re-labeling, testing and appropriate action. Please see a forthcoming article on the results of this rope testing. Most results are consoling, but several are rather alarming!

### ***Three-forty-one (JF341) 16/2/98***

**Party:** *Damien Bidgood, Steve Archer, Jeff Butt*

We visited the "Into the Dinosaur" extension and removed the Rift Cave-341 connector Rope, which had been rigged since the route was first done in June 94. When the time comes for re-rigging, then two ropes of lengths 16 m (Rift side) and 11 m (341 side) are required. The ropes from 341, which had been installed since April 97 were also removed. The 9 mm rope on the 40 m pitch was showing signs of wear. As a club policy, any Trade-route should not be rigged with 9 mm ropes, use 11 mm ropes instead. In addition, wear on the ropes on the muddier sections was significant enough to be of concern; ropes left rigged should be regularly removed, cleaned and checked before being replaced.

### ***Niggly Cave (JF237) 3/3/98***

**Party:** *Damien Bidgood, Hugh Fitzgerald, Jeff Butt*

After a false start on 17/2/98 when a member of a slightly larger team suffered an attack of gastro and the trip was aborted, we returned to derig. Niggly had been rigged since June 97. We headed down to the big pitch, Hugh and Damien bopped it whilst I waited. As we exited we derigged the approx. 360 m of rope; not unexpectedly traversing the Tiger-tooth passage with a big pack of rope was a pain. Personally, I felt it was about time that I toted some gear in this cave as on the other occasions I have never had to carry any rope at all. Several of the 9 mm ropes removed from this cave have been retired; despite looking fine, they were only able to with-standing one 80 kg, fall factor 1 fall. The almost 'new' (i.e. little used, but it's been on the roll for sometime) Beal 9 mm rope could only withstand two 80 kg, fall factor 1 falls. Those whom tandemed the 191 m pitch on this rope might be interested in this! This rope is still safe, but the best part of it's life has gone, the same applies for the other as yet untouched 200 m roll.

### ***Slaughterhouse Pot (JF337-JF36) 7/3/98***

**Party:** *Hugh Fitzgerald, Hans Benisch, Sarah Boyle, Jeff Butt*

Water levels were up a little, but Growling was quite negotiable. We headed down Slaughterhouse and removed the existing ropes (one of which was in terrible condition), and replaced them with 11 mm Bluewater II. John Hawkins-Salt has done a good job of rebolting the cave. If the cave is to be left rigged for an extended time, then the existing steel maillons would ideally be replaced with stainless steel ones, as they will rust soon enough. **It has been reported that rust stains on ropes severely weakens them.** One extra bolt deviation (or rebelay) on the first pitch would make it friendlier to the rope there, there is a smooth glancing rub-point about 2 m below the deviation at the window. The 'new' rope installed on the first pitch is only just long enough, a short (5-6 m) length tied between the natural primary anchor and the bolt anchor and then starting the installed rope from the bolt would improve the situation.

The 8 m piece of 9 mm PMI rope left at the emergency cache was removed, this rope of 1984 vintage is unsafe. The emergency cache (for those who don't know contains: 1 packet barley sugar, 3 space blankets, candle, matches, 2 pairs socks, 2 woollen hats) is in good condition. It would benefit from a "date of inspection" label on the outside. One Karrimat and two pieces of Bubble foam are also present. A phone line (from the last rescue on ?) still runs down Slaughterhouse Pot (which makes route-finding a breeze). It would be interesting to know if this line is still in good working order, if not then it would best be removed.

"We'll out-number them, out-cave them and out-drink them". RF, referring to the approaching S&R weekend at Mole Creek.

I would like to see the following principles adopted in general, although I acknowledge there could be good reasons for exceptions from time to time.

- ?? 'Trade Routes' only to be rigged with 11 mm ropes,
- ?? No individual rope to be left rigged underground for more than 6 months,
- ?? Rigging to be left underground for extended periods be corrosion resistant, e.g. use stainless steel maillons, use bolts/hangers that rope can be directly tied to,
- ?? No electron ladders or wire traces to be left installed underground for more than a month (the two installed in Niggly for an extended period in 97 show significant corrosion).

Jeff Butt (Equipment Officer)

## ***Welcome Stranger & Growling Swallet 8/3/98***

As a fresh-eyed ring-in, who had the privilege of being taken into two Florentine Valley caves: Welcome Stranger and Growling Swallet by three experienced cavers (Arthur Clarke, Peter Verwey and your STC President: Bob Cockerill), I have been asked to write an article of the first impressions of a novice caver.

On Saturday afternoon/ evening there was a really excellent BBQ/ Dinner at the ANM Pagoda, near Tiger Road, beside the Florentine River. Someone said the pagoda or was it a yurt(?) had been built for a Thai princess who was visiting the area. But no one told me about all the mossies that would be there, let alone all the rude "party" jokes that cavers come up with when there's a woman around! Just as well the Thai princess was not about! Late on Sunday morning, we headed out to go caving:

I was really quite excited, but also a bit nervous and fearful of what this caving thing was all about. After heading off along Westfield Road from the main drag and taking a few other side roads, we eventually reached a track in the forest (it looked like someone had taken to it with a "whipper-snipper") and this eventually lead us to a crack in the rock (the cave entrance) with a rich humus odour coming from within, as well as a cold, draughting chill rushing out from the narrow crevice in the limestone. This sort of alerted all my fears - fear of falling, fear of getting lost or trapped, fear of rockfalls and the roof collapsing down and above all: fear of the darkside. What was in there? Would it be too strong for me, too difficult to manage, test too much or tempt too much? As we moved into the body of Welcome Stranger, it was sensory overload time.... there seemed to be so many levels on which to absorb its interior - aesthetically, scientifically, intuitively. It's an efflux stream cave draining out from the forested hills and the cave has a high level route, which we initially followed - with Bob as our guide, then down to a streamway until the end where it sumps.

Stalactites and stalagmites, lots of flowstone, clear (transparent) and coloured (bacon-like) shawls, plus lots of straws and straw columns [ some with helictites ] are features which dominated some parts prior to its discovery in 1967. Flowstone covered some of the rocks along the streamway; some more fragile formations, including straws have given in to human impact. There were delicate gour pools and other majestic limestone formations according to your President Bob [but later identified by Arthur as calcite formations] - these all line the streamway. Peter looked for and found some Anaspides shrimps along the way. There were lots of Anaspides in the sump pool at the far end and most were about two to two and a half centimetres long, white and transparent enough to see their gut tract. Arthur found lots of other aquatic creatures, including tiny wee little 1-2mm snails [ hydrobiids ] under rocks in the stream as well as some small 1cm long aquatic amphipods. I didn't know how he could find such tiny little creatures: the snails were barely the size of a grain of sand.

Closer to the entrance we had observed some other bugs including small and large cave crickets [ Micropathus sp. ] and several Tasmanian Cave Spiders [ Hickmania troglodytes ], mainly juvenile specimens. I was walking through the cave with my hands in my overalls pockets, because Bob had told me I wasn't allowed to touch anything in the cave. I decided to take a lone walk along the streamway in Welcome Stranger. My presence seemed slightly invasive; like viewing something private but organically related. Caving lights played tricks visually and imaginatively. The flowstone resembled flesh, the shawls became gills and the fine formations, synapses. A chill brush of air came quickly and went again. Water flowed. The gour pools reminded me to tread softly. The cave was alive, embracing and humbling.

Later we visited Growling Swallet, which by contrast, was in-your-face stunning. If you're a beginner take the opportunity to see it. But a word of advice: if you do go into a cave like Growling Swallet, make sure to remember to bring some extra pairs of dry socks to put on after you come out. Bob had piked, but Peter, Arthur and I went down into the entrance, scrambling down water drenched logs and rocks beside the cascading stream and down through small waterfalls to some place called the "Dry By-Pass". It was a brief stay - time enough, maybe, to lure me quite away from myself. The remains of the early historic beginnings of the formerly proposed West Coast railway are near this magnificent cave entrance, and you actually walk along part of the old excavated tramline route before you get to Growling Swallet. Fear thresholds mellowed into blissful serenity after being in the Florentine Valley caves and now Hobart seems like unfamiliar territory. Thanks so much to the guys for the trip and for making it easy.

One thought tho, for the cockerel President. It might be more appropriate not to crack a tinny at every opportunity then toss the can into the bush. Whilst his apology for crudeness and constant harrassment is accepted, it was sleezy, unnecessary and may deter some people from future caving [ including me ], denying them a good time. I came away from the weekend feeling abused, after a continuum of lewd comments and pointed remarks about various parts of my anatomy from Bob. Try - one well timed moment for your comments mate, and leave it at that! Just a footnote for new chums: when you go caving, you have to enjoy getting wet and muddied, then after relaxing in the bath when you get home, you've then got to go and clean your gear!

*Robyn Claire*

### ***Other Trip Reports, just for the record.***

#### **Pengana Cave (F27)** (formerly Bingham's Arch Cave) on the Franklin River

**Party:** *a motley collection of sea-kayakers, including Sarah Boyle, Jeff Butt* 31/12/97

A great little side trip whilst exploring the lower Franklin River. The limestone canyon that brings the stream into the Cave should not be missed, about 100 m of wonderful limestone sculpturing, water races and plunge pools. Almost as good as a cave!

#### **Mystery Creek (IB10)**

**Party:** *Sally and Miles Harper (WA), Katie, Jeff Butt* 6/1/98

A quick trip to show some visitors a cave on their last day in Tassie. Found one Japanese fellow equipped with a single penlight in the transition zone. Collared him and took him in to the main glow-worm gallery. He was suitably impressed and was very pleased to have me take him back out as his light was about 1 glow-worm power.

#### **Owl Pot (JF221)**

**Party:** *Liz Canning, Hugh Fitzgerald, Jeff Butt* 11/1/98

A limbering up trip to get those old SRT muscles back into full working order. Noticed two newish bolts at the head of the first pitch, both are poorly installed (protruding) however. We had a bit of an explore around the chambers beneath the Bowling Alley pitch and also a bit of a more serious look down the earth galleries at the bottom of the cave. Nothing new to report though.

#### **Gormenghast (JF35)**

**Party:** *Hugh Fitzgerald, Hans Benisch, Jeff Butt* 8/3/98

Something new to us all and light enough to handle after the STC BBQ. The lower stream passage is wonderfully decorated; the wet crawls and squeezes are great protection for this area. The diving trip (dive line installed in terminal sump) must have been rather tough!

Jeff Butt

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## Stuff

### ***New World depth record Haute-Savoie France***

The following posting was placed on the OZCAVERS List Server by Al Warild. It is a translated version of a French article relating to the recent discovery and exploration of further vertical passage in a French cave: Gouffre Mirola in the Criou mountain, near Samoens, in the French province of Haute Savoie.

#### **World's deepest cave record beaten in Haute-Savoie France**

This is a translation of the info put out by the cavers who were on the trip... Jean Bottazzi écrit: The new world's deepest cave is the Gouffre Mirola in the Criou mountain, Samoens, Haute Savoie France.

On the 22 January the weather conditions seemed perfect so we decided to make a winter attempt on the Mirola.

We took 2 days to get the necessary equipment together then left for a weeks caving with the ambitious objective of diving the terminal sump at -1070m below the lowest entrance. Part of the equipment was already at -600 after our previous attempt at the beginning of '97, and a preparatory trip at the beginning of '98 to dig out the entrance and take the food to -300 made things easier.

To help sway the odds a little further in our favour we used a helicopter (saved us energy and helped us keep inside the good weather prediction). Everything came out perfectly with all the equipment getting to the objective in perfect condition. The dive was fast because the sump was very short. We transported the gear between the four of us and mapped all of the new discoveries.

The small passage took us to a 20 m pitch followed by a 4 m climb and after some more descent we reached a vertical squeeze which we had to enlarge to reach the next climb which dropped us into a fissure which also took the river. A pitch beside the waterfall led us to a nice dry passage which in turn took us to another sump - the current deepest point in the cave. We were separated from the diving bottles by the squeezes which motivated us to look hard for other possibilities. The river had disappeared down the fissure but we managed to follow it down a series of squeezes to a point close to the level of the sump.

Another branch stopped at the top of a 15 m pitch but we broke the hammer and were unable to rig a secure rope down it so we left it for next time.

Finally, a dry upstream passage finished in a squeeze where we were surprised to find vegetation detritus which seemed to indicate that the cave may be fed by streams from the lower part of the Criou. 8 hours beyond the sump and a long way from home was not the place to start something new. We left it for the next push. In total we were underground 103 hrs and got off the mountain on the 29th. After 379 m more mapped the Mirola reached 1610m below its highest entrance which makes it the deepest on the planet.

Although the exploration was an unqualified success we must say that it was only one step in work which was started 25 years ago. We must attribute today's result to the incredible amount of effort which has been invested in the project and the generosity of the inhabitants of Vallons and particularly the Deplace family. The possibility of future discoveries is promising and we will work towards that goal.

#### **Members of the team:**

*D. Colliard (cavernicoles)*

*S. Lextrait (troglodytes), N.Faure (URSUS), F. Danière (cavernicoles),*

*J. Bottazzi (URSUS & SCS)*

*Gerard Campion, Stewart Muir, Graham Salmon, Bruce Bensleigh, Voghan*

*Thomas, Lynn Robinson (Spéléos anglais)*

One of the Swiss cavers, (Roman Hapka) who has been visiting Tasmania for the past month, has just left to join a three week long expedition in Mexico to continue exploration of another vertical cave with considerable depth potential. The team of French, Swiss and U.S.A. cavers will explore a known vertical

cave in a remote part of the forested hinterland in Mexico, three days hike away from nearest roads and villages. In 1992-1993 cavers reached a depth of 1140 metres and the current expedition plans to set up base camps at -920m and at the 1140m mark which is another 5-6km further along. Efflux waters drain from the system another 450-500m lower (vertically) than the present surveyed low point and there are additional entrances higher up from the present entry point which may connect to the system giving it a potential depth of around 1700-1800 metres.

*Arthur Clarke.*

## STC WaReHoUsE SaLeS

### Tape

- ?? Edelrid 25 mm tubular tape. Ideal for rigging, chest harnesses etc. (White) \$2.00 per m
- ?? 5 cm flat tape (ideal for harnesses, rigging, gear bags, battery belts etc.) (available in Blue or Red) \$1.50 per m
- ?? 2.5 cm flat tape (ideal for handlines, rigging, gear bags, battery belts etc.) (White) \$0.80 per m

### Safety

- ?? 9 mm Beal dynamic rope (ideal for cows tails, safety loop) (Purple) \$3.50 per m
- ?? Space Blankets (don't be caught underground without one!) \$4.00

### Lighting

- ?? Duracell 4.5 Volt flatpack batteries (for your backup Zoom). (Use by 2000!) \$8.00 each, (or 3 for \$23.00)
- ?? Metal light brackets (used and no fittings) for helmets \$1.00 each
- ?? Jets (21 litres/hr) for petzl kaboom \$5.00 each
- ?? Miscellaneous second hand pieces for Oldham headpieces. Contact us for details.

### Tow Ropes/trailer tie downs/bull tethers/cat scratchers etc.

RETIRED CAVING ROPE, no longer safe enough to use for caving purposes (ADORNED WITH PAIN SO THAT YOU WON'T BE TEMPTED!!), but more than adequate for many other purposes. Available lengths up to 10 m. \$1.00 per m, less for the stiffer stuff. If you need any of the above please contact Jeff Butt on (03) 62 238620 (H), or [jeffbutt@netspace.net.au](mailto:jeffbutt@netspace.net.au), or write to us:

SOUTHERN TASMANIAN CAVERNEERS, P.O. BOX 416, SANDY BAY 7005.

If you have any other suggestions of gear that the club should Bulk Buy, then let us know and we will : what can be done.