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Cover Photo:

A montage of photos of lava caves on the Island of Mauritius; by Greg Middleton. (See the article in this Spiel.)



Welcome Stranger, photo by Jeff Butt



The Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated

PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tas. 7006

<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/scaving/>

The views expressed in the Speleo Spiel are not necessarily the views of the Editor, or of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated.

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Editorial

There has been some sadness, we only recently learned that one of our life members (Dave Elliott) passed away in February. If I am correct Dave is the first Life member to 'leave' STC. There is a section on his involvement with caving in Tasmania in this issue.

On a happier note, there's been quite a bit of varied caving and other club activities (such as working bees) happening over the past couple of months. It's great to see people getting out and about and being involved in whatever's going on. For this issue I have nearly been knocked off my feet with trip reports....for some trip reports I received three versions of the same report, so if your version didn't get in, then apologies for that. Where there has been any duplication, I've tried to put in the most informative version.

Oh, and you probably noticed (well, some of you that is...our budget didn't stretch to everyone!), that this issue has a colour front cover, a montage of cave photographs taken by Greg Middleton on his Mauritius Cave Project. In this issue you'll find a report (with some excellent computer produced surveys) on Greg's work in Mauritius. The foray into colour was more or less just an experiment with a new colour ink-jet printer. We are now a lot wiser about the reserves in ink in these cartridges, and this is not the way to go for mass-producing colour copies, but at least we now know this!

Anyway, safe and happy caving..... and the motto of the month....safe driving to you all!

Jeff Butt

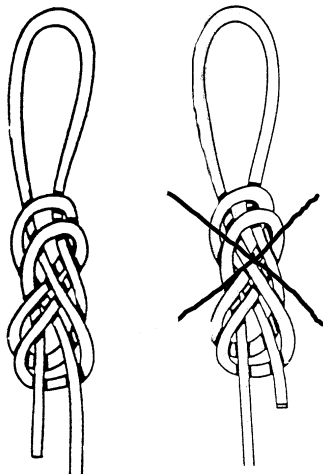
Club Matters

A warm Welcome to:

New Prospective Members: Penelope Lopez and Chris Dolliver. New Full Member: Alaric Bennett.

Bits and Pieces

Spot the difference??



Easy you say, the knot on the right has a cross through it! There is a reason for this cross--this knot is the so-called Improper figure 8, whereas the figure 8 on the left is the one you should be using. The Improper figure 8 is about 10% weaker than the correct version. So check what you normally tie, knot Properly!

New Veteran....Dave R., what's it like to be over 40?? (Guess I'll find that out for myself soon enough!, Ed., as will a couple of other STC members...this club is aging!)

Superb little Epirbs--at the last Search and Rescue liason meeting we learned that several injured bushwalkers have now been rescued through the use of personal Epirb Beacons. These little numbers, about the size of a walkman transmit a signal on a couple of frequencies (121.5 and 243 Mhz) which are picked up by Polar Orbiting satellites (one passes overhead about every 2 hours, no matter where you are on the

*STC has Caving lamps
and helmets available
for hire to Schools,
Scouts and other groups
with responsible
Caving leaders.
Contact the Equipment
Officer for details.*

planet), and relays the distress signal to the local operations centre which then organises the rescue. The Epirbs are quite affordable, costing around \$200. They probably won't be of much interest for everyday caving, but would be worth their weight in gold for Expeditions to remote places....that rescue helicopter is just the push of a button away.

Heard about Harness

Induced Pathology???

If left hanging totally inert in a seat harness (e.g. unconscious) the human body reacts very badly and even a totally healthy person pretending to be unconscious (e.g. during experiments) can die in under 15 minutes. Any obstacle or accident that results in a person hanging inert in a seat harness is potentially fatal and the utmost should be done to get the person off the rope.

It is thus essential that you must

- remove a caver hanging from a rope very quickly.
- help a caver in difficulty on a rope, due to exhaustion or technical problems. (If tired, a caver should not attempt a long or difficult pitch before adequately resting, especially if the pitch is wet.)

FORWARD PROGRAM:

Meetings: (held at the Shipwright Arms Hotel, Battery Point)

| | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| Wed Jun. 3rd | General Meeting at 7:30 p.m. |
| Wed Jun. 17th | Social gathering from 8 p.m. |
| Wed Jul. 1st | General Meeting at 7:30 p.m. |
| Wed Jul. 15th | Social gathering from 8 p.m. |

Trips:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sa-June 5 | Midnight Hole SRT trip, John 62486941. |
| Sa/Su/Mo- June 12-14 | If the weather looks reasonable, is anyone interested in a mini-expedition somewhere? JF, IB, Bubs Hill, The Cracroft or ????. Contact Jeff 62238620 or Arthur 62282099. |
| Sa/Su-July 3/4 | Junee-Florentine with the NC's; doing Slaughter House Pot and K.D. streamway exchange trip. Staying at Tyenna Valley Lodge. Jeff 62238620. RSVP by June 19th if you want accommodation! |
| Dates to be fixed | °Owl Pot-Jol, 62299731. °Blackmans Bay Blow Hole traverse-Dave, 62279056. |

WANTED: YOUR ideas for TRIPS.....how about putting them down!

Vale-Dave Elliott, 4/2/99



Dave at the Hastings Caving Hut in about 1965. Photographer unknown.

Dave was a member of TCC prior to the formation (a Founding member) of SCS in 1965 and was conferred Life Membership in 1983. He held many positions over the years, including President, Search and Rescue Officer, but his mainstay position was as Editor/co-editor of the *Southern Caver*. Dave was regularly seen at meetings up to the early 1980's.

Back in 1996 when the amalgamation of SCS, TCC and TCKRG was happening, he made a reappearance and gave his support for the merger. From then on he was seen at many of the meetings. One recent fiery meeting comes to mind, another caver of a similar vintage was feeling the pressure of the situation. Dave eased things by his retort of "What's the matter you old bugger, have you lost your sense of humour?", Dave obviously hadn't. Anyway, I'll leave you with Kevin Kiernan to tell more of Dave's story.

Ed.

Not long after I started caving in the latest 1960s a veteran kombi broke down a few hundred metres beyond the Southport turnoff along the bumpy olde gravele roade to Hastings. In the days when there wasn't a house in sight, and on a night when there were no other cars either, it proved for me an opportunity to discover a couple of great characters: one was Dave Elliott. His rich vein of quiet laconic humour, his stash of tinned fish, and copious supplies of amber anaesthetic enabled us to survive the cold

until morning. There followed a succession of wonderful trips, back in the days when there were still some frontiers left at Hastings, and it remained a respectable area for exploration (there were still only a couple of dozen caves recorded at either Ida Bay or Juneeflorentine back then). Dave was always there, chortling in anticipation as the forest closed in over the road on those final corners before the old Hastings hut, when the headlights started to glint back off the whites of the leeches' eyes. Evenings spent in that old hut are among my richest caving memories. The letter stuck on the wall recorded the gifting of the hut from the Forestry Commission to TCC, but the Parks Service later stole it, enlarged it for temporary staff, then knocked it down. Hastings never felt the same again, and I still feel a pang whenever I drive past the clearing where it stood. But an equally wistful Dave remained a starter for any Hastings trip nevertheless.

In my early days transport was always a problem for younger cavers, virtually none of whom could afford a car. Dave's old Zephyr, and his subsequent vehicles, were out weekend after weekend, getting a new generation of cavers to their caves. You didn't run up hills with Dave, he climbed them at about the speed of mud, regularly stopping for a smoke and a cough and a yarn - he was always just a delight to be with, either in the bush or underground. Then he'd inadvertently brainwash us on the way home by tuning in to the ABC radio program "Singers of Renown". Funnily enough, now as I sit by the fire with a glass of red wine on another Sunday evening three decades later, penning these memories of Dave, there's that same theme music on the radio again.

Occasionally it was something other than a caving trip. In the earliest 1970s Dave was keen to have a look at the original Lake Pedder, so we flew there together one unusually quiet weekend. But as we enjoyed the peace another plane arrived, bearing a reporter and photographer from The Australian newspaper. A conservationist vigil had just been established at the lake but most of those involved were off walking, so we talked to the journoos too. Five of us ended up gracing a photograph on the front page or thereabouts, arms linked on Pedder Beach under a defiant headline, and over a story that told how the vigil keepers were staying there till the dam was stopped. Dave reckoned his boss got to the office early for the first time in years

on the Monday morning that picture was published - Dave was a key man in his outfit. What his boss didn't know was that the weather crapped in on the Sunday afternoon - we got a good laugh contemplating the compounded panic that might have been, but for Jim England managing to hurriedly fly us out as far as the old Kallista Creek airstrip near Maydena, and a generous driver on an empty late night road.

One of Dave's many great contributions was in publishing *Southern Caver* which although initiated in 1967 had seen only three issues when Dave, Ron Mann, John McCormack and myself got involved with it in early 1970. Flicking through my collection of back issues brings back other memories of Dave's humour on magazine nights at John's place, and later at the old SCS clubrooms in Davey Street. Those old wax stencils had to be typed or corrected with bottled gunge, before the antique Gestetner machine did its thing, or, pretty often didn't. Jokes and beers cracking throughout while debates raged, solutions were found to the problems of the world, and somehow the pages eventually got collated in the process. It was messier and less efficient than using PCs and printers today, but it was the stuff of which clubs were made. Other nominal editors came and went occasionally, but Dave and Ron were the reality until 1979 when they stepped aside "for the time being". I always thought Dave would be back - and he was, briefly - but now, suddenly, I hear that the crafty old bugger really has got away with retiring as editor.

I'm not sure that they make people like Dave Elliott any more. There are some people you regret drifting away from as life paths diverge. After my recreational caving diminished I would most often encounter Dave in or about music shops. His bus home left from just outside one of them, and I couldn't help but notice that it closed shortly after his bus stop was moved. In a game not short of characters, Dave was one of the greats. He enabled a new generation of cavers to go caving, encouraged and provoked us. Dave spanned the divides of age, put in the hard work behind the scenes, ignored the nonsense that is speleo-politics, and was just an immensely likeable, dependable, good mate to us all.

Thanks Dave. For the encouragement, the great memories, your humour, your wise counsel, and most of all your friendship. Cheers mate.

Kevin Kiernan

Ladder making Session-27/4/99

Hans Benisch, Andras Galambos, Hugh Fitzgerald, Liz Canning and Jeff Butt.

On the evening a new 43 rung, 18 m ladder (rope and PVC rungs) was made for Avon's Aven.

The lure of home-made Pizza was enough to attract the willing workers, and soon we were all knotting away. The rungs from the old ladder (recovered on 26/4/99) were quite serviceable (survived any destruction test) and so that made the job a lot easier. Andras's boot was used to make the rung

spacing.....so the height-challenged amongst you can whinge to him about the ~40 cm spacing in the finished product. Many hands make light work, and as the workers put the ladder together, (it was a bit of a challenge between Andras on the leading rail and the B-team working in unison on the trailing rail) Jeff was assembling a couple of pizzas in the kitchen. With the Pizza's in the oven, Jeff came out and attempted to help the B-team by mucking things up for Andras. Andras caught onto this idea, and Jeff was relegated back to kitchen hand status/photographer.

At the end of the night, we had one empty bottle of wine (thanks Andras), two empty Pizza dishes and one nice

new spanking ladder (the rungs were even even!, well mostly...a few minor adjustments were made the following day).



The last major task was trying to fit the ladder into one pack.....after a couple of attempts, the whole kit and caboodle was packed into a single cave pack....but a few tricks (like packing it wet) had to be resorted to achieve this. The new ladder was installed on 2/5/99.

Thanks to all who turned up; we proved yet again that working bees can be fun, social and productive events.

Jeff



Rope Testing Working Bee 9/5/99

Workers: Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon, Arthur Clarke, Penelope Lopez, Tim Anderson, Hans Benisch, Andras Galambos, Hugh Fitzgerald, Liz Canning and Jeff Butt.

The aim of the afternoon was to drop test the older club ropes to weed out those that were not capable of withstanding two consecutive fall factor-1 falls with an 80 kg mass (this is currently the minimum requirement for any STC rope). Individual members were also invited to bring samples of personal ropes for a test as well.

The drop test rig was set up out the back of the gear store. Initially a 5:1 pulley system was used to repeatedly haul the 80 kg weight skywards; but after the arrival of more troops this was reduced to a 3:1 system.....but given the vigour of some of the haulers (notably, Tim, Andras and Janine) we could have

dispensed with all mechanical advantage!

Over the course of the 6 hours, 27 samples of rope were subjected to a total of 96 drops. Most of the samples that need to be tested were done. Each rope, if it survived was given 3 drops. The survival of a third drop indicates that the rope has some 'reserve capacity' and should still be able to meet the minimum standard for the next 12 months. A summary of the samples tested and the results is shown in the table below.

Of the samples tested 7 failed (i.e. only held a single fall). The ropes that failed were one 11 mm private Kevlar rope, one private 10 mm Polyester rope, two private 9 mm Bluewater ropes, one club 9 mm Bluewater rope (~1986), and two club Beal 9 mm ropes (~1990?).

Samples of the 'new' ropes STC has in storage (200 m by 9 mm Beal (~1990) and 125 m by 9 mm Edelrid-(1994)) were tested for interest. These ropes withstood 4 + falls and are deemed fine.

It is time for these to be put into service, lest they die of old-age before even being used! It seems impossible to break 11 mm Bluewater rope, even some our 16 year old stuff, but, much of this rope is so damn stiff that it is difficult to put knots in, which means that they generally are avoided, so they may as well be pensioned off.

| Summary of testing results on 8/5/98 | Sample Origin | | No. samples that held the Number of 80 kg Fall Factor 1 falls | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| | Club | Private | 1 | 2 | 3+ |
| Rope Diameter | | | | | |
| 9 mm | 10 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 mm | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 11 mm | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Totals | 18 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 15 |
| | | | FAIL | PASS | GOOD |



Ric and Janine, haulers-shift 1

It was interesting to watch how a couple of dynamic rope samples performed. For the first couple of falls they let the 80 kg down nice and gently, but after that they (in a substantially longer state) behaved just like the static ropes; with the 80kg weight bouncing around before coming to rest.

[The table opposite shows the age distribution and last drop test results for STC's serviceable ropes. As you can see, the thicker ropes stay safe much longer. The shaded cells indicate ropes with an age which suggests that they are nearing the end of their lives.]

| Static Ropes, by diameter & age & [ffl drops held] | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year Diam. | 1996-1994 | 1993-1990 | 1989-1986 | 1985-1982 | Unkown (but old!) |
| 9 mm | 123 [>7] 80 [4] 67 [nt] 49 [2] 22 [2] | 198 [>5] 27 [2] 11 [3] | 5 [3] | | {NB. [nt]=not tested} |
| 10 mm | 29 [>10] 11 [>10] 10 [>5] | | 30 [nt] 22 [5] 16 [nu] 15 [>5] 13 [>3] 12 [5] 11 [nt] 9 [nt] 8 (*2) [>3] | | 10 [>3] 9 [2] 7 [2] |
| 11 mm | | 109 [nt] 69 [nt] | 30 [nt] 25 [5] 22 [nt] | 38 [>10] 23 [>3] 22 [>3] 12 [>3] 9 [nt] 8 [>3] 7 [>3] | 23 [>15] 18 [>5] 17 [>15] 13 (*2) [>7] 12 (*2) [>3] 10 [>3] 9 [>3] 5 [>3] |
| Total len- gths | 407 m | 414 m | 226 m | 119 m | 142 m |



*Hugh (up the convenient Drop-Testing tree), securing 'Buster' (3*27 kg pieces of railway line) to a safety and stringette, prior to removing the haul rope.*

The advertised Devonshire Tea break did occur, it was good to recharge the batteries of the testers (especially the haulers).

All in all it was both a fun, productive and educational afternoon. In addition to being part of an annual rope safety audit it appears that the Annual Rope testing session will become a popular Social day. Many thanks to all who came along and made this somewhat tedious task a fun event.

Jeff Butt



Andras and Tim, haulers-shift 2

A Summary of Recent Caving Incidents

Unfortunately, Incidents seem to becoming a regular thing in recent times. Details of recent incidents are presented here; not to embarrass people, but to try and prevent repeats.

Ed.

Loons Cave, 10/5/99.

Party: Liz Canning, Dave Rasch, Hans Benisch, Arthur Clarke, Penelope Lopez, Judy ?, Andras Galambos, Jeff Butt.

Problem: Jump results in broken ankle.

Solution: Assisted (i.e. others in the party) Self Rescue.

Description:

Whilst the party was exiting Loons cave a 2 m down climb was encountered.

Most of the party down-climbed or bypassed this obstacle. Near the rear of the group, one experienced caver decided to jump down to avoid a large mud puddle beneath the climb, which he did without incident. Penelope, a novice caver followed his example and landed heavily, her left foot landing on a cobble in the mud. She rolled her left ankle and was in significant pain. The incident occurred at about 6 p.m., in the main stream passage, about 200 m from the closest (Vertical) entrance. For those who don't know this cave, the local environment is EXTREMELY muddy, with sections of the streamway knee to thigh deep in mud.

Her ankle was initially diagnosed as a severe sprain. Her lace-up boot and sock was carefully removed, and some swelling was present on the lateral side of the ankle. The ankle was cooled in an adjacent mud puddle for about 10

minutes, then strapped with a conforming stretch support bandage and the lace-up boot put back on for the extra support that it offered. At this time she was unable to bear any weight upon her left leg and the pain had not subsided, thus we (or at least some of us) suspected that her ankle was broken.

[Radiological diagnosis showed three breaks in the lower part of the tibia, near the joint, together with some impaction.]

We did not have any splinting material (other than cutting up someone else's gumboot, or grabbing a couple of stals!) available. The party as a whole assisted Penelope out of the cave, using piggy-backing, shoulder support, helping hands and other supporting measures in the narrow and extremely muddy stream canyon so that she did not have to use her damaged left ankle. In some of the more difficult places we used an able bodied person with a pretend broken ankle to determine the easiest way to get Penelope past these obstacles. This was an extremely good aid. Since we had entered the cave via the 28 m pitch (very vertical), this was already rigged with a ladder and belay rope. We decided it would be easier and faster to take her to the surface this way rather than continuing along the narrow and muddy streamway which included a crawl-way and a very narrow, partially submerged fissure en-route to the efflux entrance. At the pitch we used a simple counter-balance haul (using the belay rope) and Penelope was brought to the surface extremely easily, and then piggy-backed downhill to the road and back to the vehicles, arriving shortly before 9 p.m.

The size (8 people) and nature (many experienced cavers) of the party together with excellent teamwork assisted in making the rescue a comparatively easy undertaking.

Suggestions:

Jumping is a high risk activity which (especially in caves) should be avoided. Experienced cavers should always lead by setting a good example and should avoid exposing novices (and indeed themselves) to high risk manoeuvres. Basic first aid materials were available amongst the party, but we did not have any splinting material to enable us to immobilise the ankle; this is a deficiency that could be rectified by carrying either inflatable splints or other material from which splints could be fabricated (e.g. perforated mesh, karri-mat pieces). Note that for surface activities natural materials (e.g. sticks) can be used for improvised splints, but once underground the opportunity for this sort of improvisation is very limited.

Ed.

PS. Penelope had an operation to 'plate and screw' her ankle together to achieve a superior long term result.

A Thankyou

I would like to thank Jeff, Dave, Arthur, Robyn, Liz, Hugh, Hans, Judy, Andras and Monty for your support and company in the hospital and at home in the period after I broke my ankle.

Penelope Lopez

Safety Tip

“Driving is the most Dangerous Part of the Caving Trip”

Everyone has probably heard this statement. Some of you may have seen some statistics used to support it too.

An abridged version of some I saw on Cavers Digest some years back is shown below.

| Activity | No. of accidents per year per 100000 |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| driving | 2100 |
| bushwalking | 50 |
| skiing | 1440 |
| caving | 200 |
| rock climbing | 198 |

Well, I recently had a bit of a spin-out on one of those wooden bridges on the Florentine Road (obviously I must not have been driving with the attention it deserves!) It was a fortunate result, no

harm done to occupants or vehicle, just some driver embarrassment!

But it is a good reminder that driver errors can put a big damper on a great day's caving, so do take care.

Jeff Butt



The Orana 'parked' by the road, with the bridge in the background.

Conserving the Caves of Mauritius-the Caves of Mauritius Project 1998

In 1991 when I went to the small Indian Ocean island of Mauritius to work on the establishment of their first national park, I knew very little about the island except that it had been the home of the most widely-recognised human-caused extinction - the dodo - and it had issued some very rare postage stamps. [By 'small' I mean that the main island has an area 1/35th the size of Tasmania - around the size of Flinders and Cape Barren islands combined.] Thanks to Middleton and Waltham's (1986) *Underground Atlas* - in which they dismissed Mauritius as: "very old volcanic islands with no speleological interest", I didn't even take a decent torch or a bash hat with me. It wasn't long, however, before I heard rumours of caves - lava caves - and then discovered that one over 650 m long lay within 4 km of where I was living (Fig. 1). Lava caves had never meant much to me, apart from a brief visit to the Thurston Lava Tube on Hawaii, I had never been in one but I was to discover that they are certainly not of "no speleological interest".

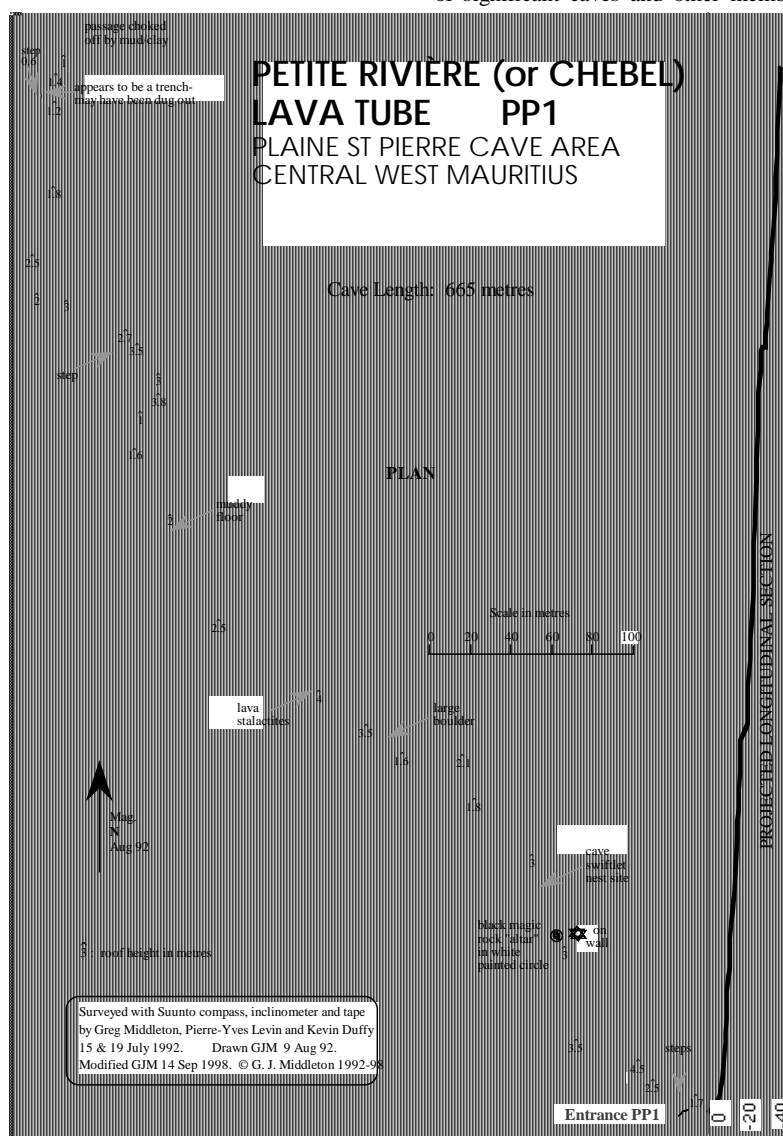
Over the next four years, aided by a very small group of people, I was able to explore and document around 50 caves and I was sure that many more awaited discovery. Unfortunately it also became apparent to me that the government and people of Mauritius had no appreciation whatsoever for the hollows beneath their feet. Wherever convenient, people used then to dispose of household garbage, industrial waste, animal carcasses and even medical waste. Agricultural producers - especially the ubiquitous sugar estates - saw holes in their fields as impediments to production or as convenient places to dispose of large volumes of rocks. Two caves explored and surveyed in 1993 and 1995 were found in 1998 to have their entrances totally filled; in another case, but for our presence on a particular day, a highly significant cave would almost certainly have had its only entrance filled.

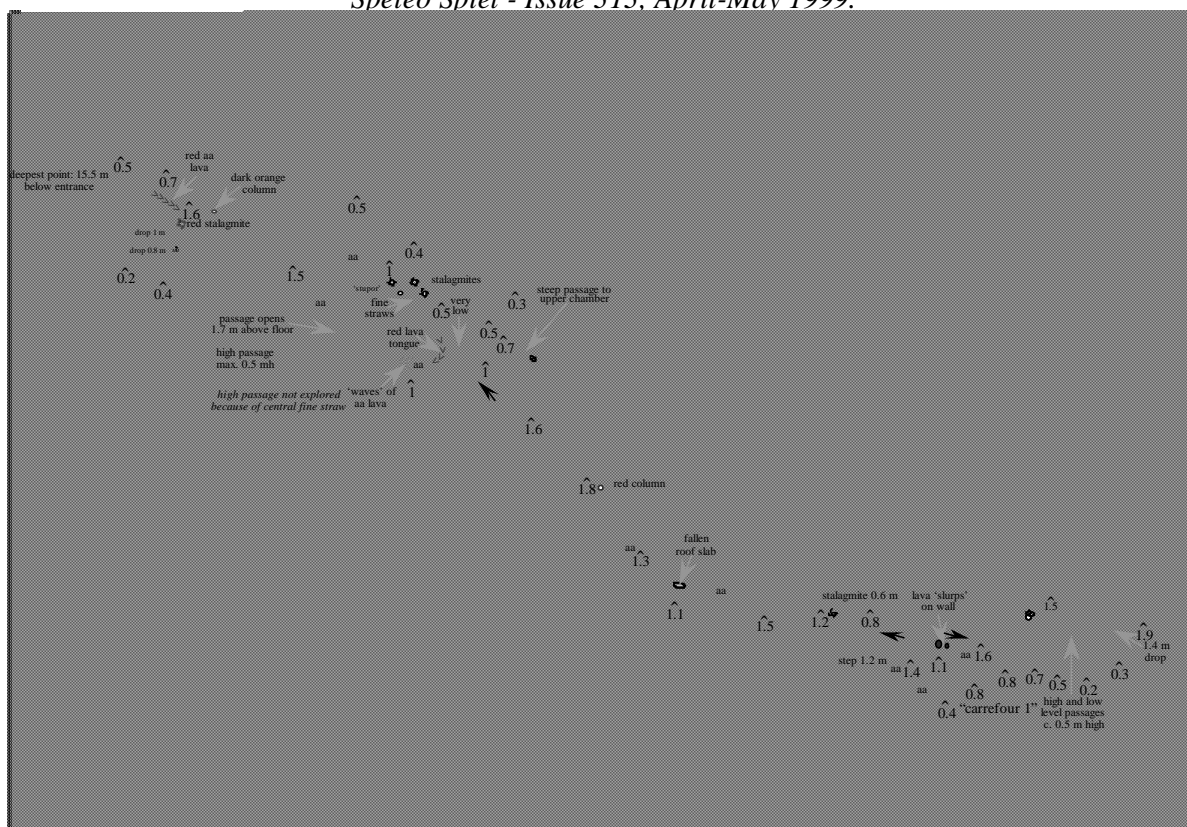
If any people 'appreciated' the caves, it was those who went to them to remove the nests of cave swiftlets to sell to those who would make 'birds-nest soup' from them - with never a thought for the small birds whose breeding places (and often young) were destroyed in the process - or those who (for reasons still not entirely clear to me) delighted in piling up old tyres inside caves and setting fire to

them. In one case we found the distinctive ashes and wires on what was undoubtedly a black-magic altar and in another thoroughly 'carbonised' cave we found the remnants of a Hindu shrine - but I refuse to believe most tyre-burning was associated with underground religious practices. Rings of stones around a central large one are not uncommon sights but they owe more to men finding a quiet place for a hand of poker than to any truly religious observances. There were rumours of illicit stills (not to be unexpected on an island where 95% of the arable land had been devoted to sugar production) and we did find the remnants of one, and there were rumours of pirate treasure trove but the closest we came to this was a series of remarkable tunnels excavated

by a group of people who sank their entire fortunes into honeycombing an area because one man was sure there was treasure there.

The only exception to this apparently universal disregard for holes under the ground appeared to be Clement Moutou who, inspired by a visiting group of French cavers under François Billon (who left just two months before I arrived in 1991) (Billon et Chojnacki 1993) formed the Spéléo-club de L'Océan Indien. This small group, with never more than about eight active members, made a few brief forays underground - but always insisted on being home for lunch or going swimming in the afternoon. Nevertheless, Clement was good enough to show me a number of significant caves and other members





took us to caves they knew in their districts. Through this group I also made contact with Roselyne Hauchler, who worked with the Mauritian tourist office, and her husband Jörg, who was to prove invaluable in the conduct of later explorations and surveys. At this time also I was helped by two rangers from the new national park, Mario Allet and Paul Moolee, who proved to be enthusiastic cavers.

By the time I left Mauritius in 1995 I had put together surveys of 50 Mauritian caves and had collected 12 done by others (principally François Billon's team). During visits in July 1996 and October 1997 I added another 18, largely from information gathered by Jörg and Mario. At the IUS Congress in September 1997 I was able, with Bill Halliday, to report that there were 64 caves documented in Mauritius (7 of them in limestone), with a total surveyed length of 8.9 km (Middleton & Halliday 1997).

Already, I had started raising the issue of the protection of the caves. Although concerned about the danger of 'promoting' caves and thereby encouraging visits by the curious, the unprepared and vandals, I approached the Mauritian Government with Prem Saddul, in 1996, proposing a project to systematically document, assess and recommend appropriate protection for the caves of Mauritius. Saddul is a geographer who, in 1995, published a

study of the geomorphology of Mauritius, including references to lava caves. As a senior lecturer and Head of the Dept. of Social Sciences at the Mauritius Institute of Education he was concerned about the fate of the caves and added authority to my proposals.

The Project

After much negotiating and many delays, the project went ahead in July 1998. The Department of Environment agreed to provide transport, an office, a computer (belatedly) and a small allowance to help Jörg work with me. We were also assisted at times by local volunteers, particularly Imran Vencapah and Vikash Tatayah. During the project

Table 1 - Documented caves by Region and Area

| Region | Area | No. of entrances | No. of caves | Total length (m) |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| North-West | Goodlands | 3 | 2 | 355 |
| North-East | Plaine des Roches | 46 | 22 | 3,520 |
| Central West | Moka Range | 1 | 1 | 4.2 |
| | Plaine St Pierre | 11 | 9 | 1,115 |
| Central East | Plaine Wilhems | 22 | 12 | 1,160 |
| | Beau Champ | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| | Nouvelle Decouverte | 39 | 26 | 3,509 |
| | Quartier Militaire | 7 | 7 | 749 |
| South-West | Trou d'Eau Douce | 3 | 2 | 63 |
| | Bassin Blanc | 1 | 1 | 80 |
| | Chamarel Falls | 6 | 6 | 109 |
| | Kanaka | 13 | 10 | 725 |
| South-East | La Prairie* | 3 | 2 | 96 |
| | Mont Blanc | 9 | 7 | 754 |
| | Grand Port* | 3 | 3 | 115 |
| | Ile aux Aigrette* | 2 | 1 | 35 |
| | Plaine Magnien | 1 | 1 | 85 |
| | Rose Belle | 2 | 2 | 68 |
| | Savannah | 4 | 4 | 500 |
| Rodrigues | Corail-Petite Butte* | 9 | 7 | 1,757 |
| | Plaine Caverne* | 19 | 10 | 1,453 |
| | Plaine Corail* | 3 | 3 | 235 |
| TOTAL | | 209 | 140 | 16,501 |

we had a visit from Dr Pierre Strinati, a caves of Mauritius as at December 1998.

Table 2 - Ten longest caves of Mauritius

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | Caverne Patate CPB1-2* | 1,040 m |
| 2 | Camp Thorel Cave ND1-14 | 1,015 |
| 3 | Roches Noires Football Ground #4 PR35..44 | 810 |
| 4 | Petite Rivière Cave PP1 | 665 |
| 5 | Twilight Cavern PR18-30-31 | 570 |
| 6 | Caverne Tamarin PCV1-2* | 490 |
| 7 | Roxsanne Cave PR6 | 460 |
| 8 | Trou Hirondelle MB1 | 442 |
| 9 | Caverne Safran CPB3* | 425 |
| 10 | Pont Bondieu (Jardin) ND8 | 392 |

* Caves formed in calcarenite (karst).

Swiss biospeleologist who is the only person to have carried out systematic collecting of invertebrates in Mauritian caves. He collected in a number of caves on Rodrigues and inspired the author to collect both there and in a number of caves back on the mainland. Initial reports from Bill Humphreys of the Western Australian Museum, to whom the author sent his collections, indicated some interesting material including eyeless opilions, spiders, silverfish and woodlice.

While initially concerned about how we might find additional caves, we soon found more than we could deal with by simply looking at detailed topo. maps, consulting landowners and asking field workers. Over the next five months we located, surveyed, photographed and assessed a further 76 caves, as well as finding and surveying significant extensions to already known caves. Figs 2 and 3 are examples of a couple of our surveys. Table 1 shows the documented

Table 2 lists the ten longest.

A further 11 caves are in excess of 200 metres and 23 more are longer than 100 metres. Depth is not a strong point of most lava caves, nor of the karst caves of Mauritius and has not been calculated for most of the surveyed caves. From divers' reports, Trou Miguel (a largely water-filled cave in calcarenite closed because of the deaths of two divers in 1972 – Middleton 1997) has a total depth of around 35 m. From survey L'Esperance Lava Cave has a similar depth, while Petite Rivière Cave reaches 33 metres. Surinam Lava Cave reaches 28 metres but few others exceed 16 m in depth.

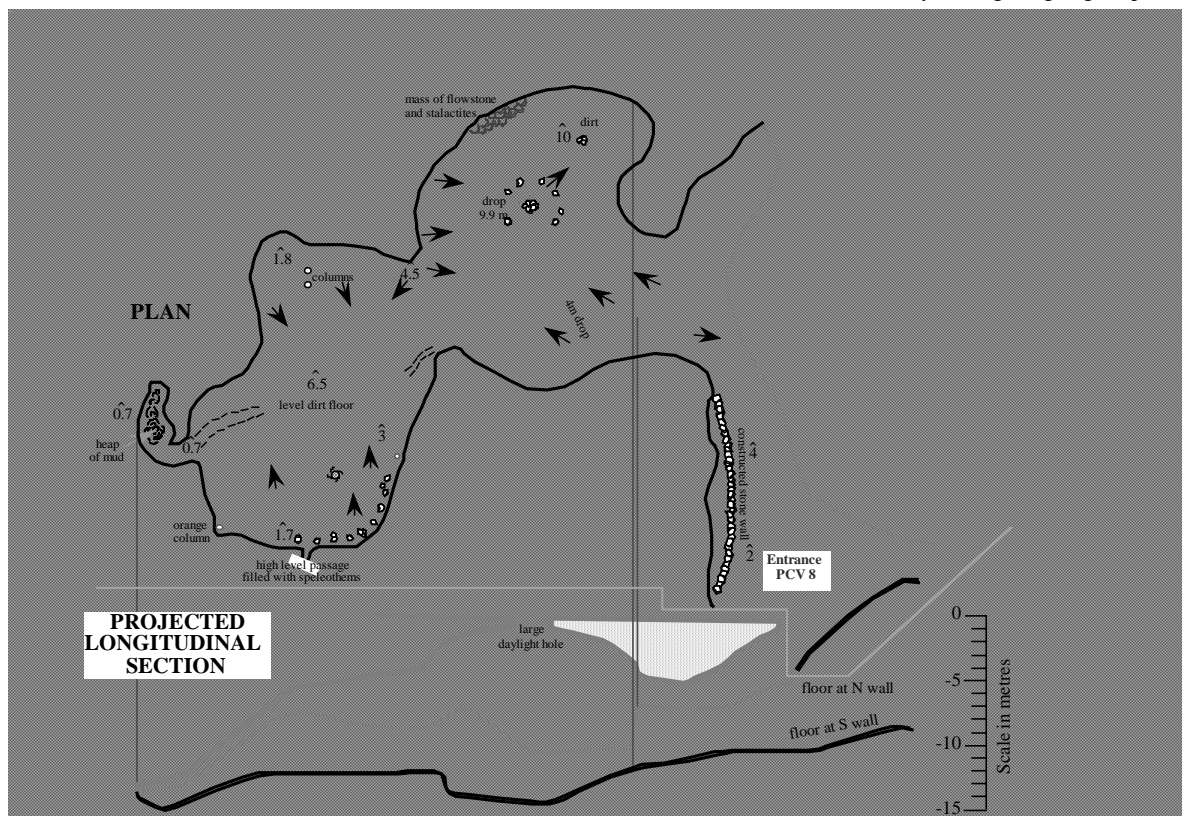
The project report explained the difference between limestone (or karst) and lava caves and discussed the formation of the latter, outlined the values of caves and the threats to them in Mauritius, citing cases where entrances had been closed, rubbish dumped, where

vandalism and pollution had occurred and where siltation is in the process of filling cave passages. A section outlined the historical importance of a number of caves – one was described in detail, and measured, as early as 1769 and illustrated in 1828 (Fig. 4), while Matthew Flinders recorded that over fifty escaped slaves had been caught in another in the 1770s. He also noted an underground stream at Eau Coulée in 1814. The caves of Rodrigues were excavated by those searching for the bones of the extinct solitaire starting in 1786. Caves were reported at Plaine des Roches in 1859 and the intriguing Puits des Hollandais (a water-filled hole around 28 m deep) was described in 1895.

Cave protection/management

Previous efforts at protecting Mauritian caves, starting with Pont Bondieu in 1993 and Petite Rivière and Palma lava caves in 1994 were noted. Sadly, largely because no one has assumed on-going responsibility, these efforts have, to varying degrees, failed. Alternative mechanisms for achieving conservation were outlined, stressing the underlying importance of community education. A supportive community is essential if any attempts at protection are to succeed. Unfortunately this is still lacking in Mauritius.

The report suggested that the creation of reserves is a highly effective form of protection, presuming it carries with it the concept of management- by an authority having on-going responsibility



for the maintenance of the reserved place or feature. It pointed out that the mechanism for this has been provided by

of the cave. A number of other reports can be produced from the database.

Overview and assessment of the more



the *Wildlife and National Parks Act 1993*, used to establish the Black River Gorges National Park. IUCN's *Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection* (Watson et al 1997) was identified as the handbook for land managers with responsibility for caves.

The question of cave protection legislation was discussed, particularly as it might be applied to prevent any trade in speleothems - which fortunately does not currently exist. It was suggested that better enforcement of existing laws might even now serve to reduce practices such as the dumping of rubbish in caves and the removal of swiftlet nests. Management agreements between cave owners and the Government were identified as potentially important instruments in Mauritius, given that many significant caves lie within private land.

The Mauritius cave database

As part of the project, a database of information on all of the caves was compiled, loosely based on Matthews' Australian Karst Index - at least, as it was in about 1990. This is stored as a FileMaker Pro 4.0 database file on an Apple Macintosh computer in the Department of Environment. The project report included a print-out from the database, listing every known cave entrance (grouped by cave area, as per Table 1), giving the rock type, cave name, connected entrances, type of entrance, damage to the cave, cave length and, in some cases, vertical range

significant caves

A section of the report discussed the notable features of the 90 more significant caves, indicating the values which warrant particular management attention and any apparent current threats. All caves providing habitat for swiftlets (34) or bats (8) were considered important (four caves accommodate both swiftlets and bats).

Recommendations

Only four recommendations were made in the report, in the hope of focussing attention on the two more important ones:

1. The creation of a "Plaine des Roches Lava Caves National Park" encompassing a suite of significant caves in the Plaine des Roches area. This is the area with the most known cave entrances in Mauritius and the only one where the land tenure is such that a national park could still be created without causing major disruptions or requiring costly land acquisitions. Unfortunately the area is under consideration as the site for a second airport.
2. The creation of a "Rodrigues Karst National Park" to include most of the cave-bearing karst (and the only current show cave) in the south-west of Rodrigues. The area is extensively invaded by exotic vegetation but in part of it, which is already a nature reserve, these are being kept in check. There is only light grazing on the land, which is

all State-owned but part of it has been earmarked for extension of the island's airport.

3. Priority for funding should be for cleaning and rehabilitation of Caverne Patate, the show cave on Rodrigues which has suffered from 200 years of being lit by flaming torches, and, when funds permit, the electric lighting of this cave.

4. The other significant caves should either be reserved for conservation and, where appropriate, low-key recreation purposes (when State-owned) or, where privately-owned, made the subject of a management agreement between the owner and the appropriate agency of government.

The project report was presented to the Department of Environment and the press on 22 December 1998. It was most enthusiastically received by the Director - though he did note that the setting up of national parks might be a problem because that was the province of another agency!

The press, unfortunately, chose to emphasise a negative aspect, the major daily *L'Express*, heading its item "Lacaverne de Camp Thorel la plus polluée à Maurice". They did pick up on the park proposal for Plaine des Roches but that for Rodrigues was ignored. [Rodrigues is 560 km from the main island and is about as important to the average Mauritian as Macquarie Island is to the average Tasmanian.]

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Greg Middleton

Fauna collecting & chasing historical graffiti in King George V (H214)-25/3/99

Party: Arthur Clarke, Robyn Claire, Peter Price, Roger Griffiths, Jeff Butt.

Arthur was planning to do some biological collecting in King George V as part of his fauna study at Hastings, and so I took advantage of this to make my first visit to this cave.

Access was reasonably straight forward. From the Wolf Hole track, head along to where the track to Wolf Hole departs from the old tramway to the right. Just continue on the tramway, (which is a little overgrown) for about 10 minutes (there are a few yellow tapes). The entrance to King George V is right on the tramway, a couple of tapes on a tree signify you are there. Note that there are several other taped tracks heading up the hill....to places unknown??

The gated entrance (a permit is required) located at the base of a small cliff line, and under an old log is hidden by a leaf mulch covered piece of corrugated iron. If you look carefully at the cliff line you can see draft escaping. A short hand-line gets you into the entrance chamber. There is quite a bit of decaying wood (the remains of an old ladder) in this region.

A short distance in is the 'Signature Passage', containing loads of old signatures dating from around 1917 when the cave was discovered? 1918, and the mid 1930's. Arthur had quite an historical interest in these signatures, and we made a record of as many of the names and accompanying dates (most written in pencil, in fine old-style hand writing) and dates that we could read/decipher. There were many repeat names (e.g. F. Estcourt); the local guides one imagines. [if you are interested in this subject further, then please see: "An analysis of

the early speleograffiti in three caves at Hastings, in southern Tasmania", by Arthur Clarke to be published in ACKMA Journal #35 (June 1999)]

Arthur had dug up an historical Newspaper article about a lecture/slide show presented by J.W. Beattie, in 1918 about the cave, the description is rather 'over the top', e.g. ". . . crammed full of the most beautiful creations that the limestone wizard could produce. . . .too numerous, too bewildering, to describe . . . daintily with matchless combinations of stalagmite and stalactite. . . . wondrous enclosure a natural depression leads gently down to a decorated archway, underneath which reposes the sweetest circular pool of crystal water one ever set eyes upon. . . . Great Hall of Dazzling Splendour . . . it beggars description . . ." Even today, the cave is still quite grand as far as decorated caves go, but there has been a lot of damage and rubbishing from the early days.

Arthur and Robyn started collecting specimens whilst I had an explore. [There is a survey of the cave in Southern Caver Volume 5, Number 1, 1973]. Afterwards I assisted in the collecting, there were quite a lot of cave beasts about once you get your eyes tuned in to the small scale of things. (Peter and Roger had left earlier, they had cave-guiding responsibilities at Newdegate Cave.)

Quite an interesting cave, quite a lot there and well worth a visit. Again, a lot of decoration for a cave in dolomite.

Jeff Butt

SRT limbering up in Giotto Pot (IB104)-25/4/99

Party: Hans Benisch, Andras Galambos, Jeff Butt.

Headed down to Ida Bay, took a few photos in the quarry to record the progress of the regrowth. It is quite remarkable at how the regrowth is now shooting skywards. Next thing we know they'll be clear-felling it!

We headed in along the Skinner track, GPS'ing as we went. [An article about this GPS work will appear in the next issue of the Speleo-Spiel.]

Took the first left, the track to Pseudocheirus (IB97). A bit of looking and checking out holes in this holiferous "Potholes" area.



Regrowth in the x-Benders Quarry. Spot the cavers!

Found IB96, and IB97, then back-tracked to where Andras had found IB102. He then found IB98 (Comet Pot) and IB104 (Giotto), our objective. We obtained GPS positions for all of these caves; gradually the GPS position database is growing.

In the process of looking around we found several other small holes that didn't look like they have ever been entered???, but from the article in the Speleo Spiel 263 by Rolan and Stefan Eberhard it is apparent that there are about forty odd un-numbered caves in this region.

We down-climbed the entrance climb, through a small tight bit, and then we were at the pitch-head. Used a trace on a tall pillar (RHS), to back up a head height flowstone boss (RHS), which took a tape OK. A deviation from the chockstone above the drop, then a second deviation about 15 m down (small column), gave a great free-hang. Headed on down and down, it seemed a long way (58 p), obviously I haven't been doing enough vertical caving of late! Climbed up a small 2m bank to a formation alcove, where we used two flowstone features to rig the next 13 p. Rebelayed to a thread (RHW) to do the 11 p. Used a couple of chocks in the opposite wall (nice runnels) and backed up to the rope from above. Not much else around, and very rubby, so used a trace in parallel with the rope over the lip. Andras went down to the bottom of the 5p, but the hole is just too damn small, about 15 cm wide. Would need a lot of work to open it up (it is currently impossible, even for a desperate man!, the only way through now would be to liquefy yourself first!). No sign of any draught, but it does appear to continue for a little bit.

A pleasant little SRT cave, and well worth the visit.

Jeff Butt

Fraternising with the US Military-April '99

A person by the name of Dave Decker (a Spelunker from California) had contacted me via email a year or so ago about arranging a caving trip during a port call; unfortunately the Carl Vinson (one of those humungous US aircraft carriers) which he was on got diverted to the Persian Gulf. Second time he was a little luckier, but only just as I was on the mainland for most of his visit. However, I spread the word and several other STC'ites collared him mid-week and took him through the Hobart Rivulet, and then on the last day of his visit we zipped down to that old favourite, Midnight Hole.

Dave has written voluminous trip reports of both these excursions; he has an amazing head for detail (maybe he was gathering intelligence on us all, just kidding), and so I have used editorial prerogative to mercilessly prune them down, decimate is a word that comes to mind.

By the way, Dave is a navigator on the 29th Torpedo Bomber Squadron. He left quite a few "Symbolic devices" (embroidered patches of a Dragon breathing fire, which he says looks more like a barfing dog!) behind as souvenirs of his visit-Americans of very fond of this sort of thing...maybe STC needs to get some for reciprocation?? He also sent a few pictures of his various day to day activities, which are in no way related to caving, but they were good shots of something we (fortunately, unlike some people in other countries) don't see that often, so thought they might be of interest to anyone who reads this far into the Spiel (if anyone does????)!!

Ed.

Hobart Rivulet trip-8/4/99

Party: Dave Decker, Hugh Fitzgerald, Liz Canning, Kylie, Alaric Bennett, Arthur Clarke.

. . . I made it out of the drains of Hobart Tasmania safe and sound. It was fun! Interesting. . . . The drains, built of brick and sandstone with some parts solid rock (some of it is newer concrete tubes like we have in the States), are old storm drains



Air Wing Fly By

that were built by convicts in the late 1800s and early 1900s. . . . We started the trip with our local councilman (Alaric) unlocking the gate to an iron ladder that was imbedded in the brick wall. . . . There is some wildlife in the drains, we saw a big rat just as we started our trip A couple of spiders graced us with their presence as well, one a "Redback", kin to our local Black Widow. The decorations were a little different than what I'm used to, huge paintings of all sorts of things, dogs, aliens, and skulls to name a few. There were small speleothems from the mortar between the bricks that were quite interesting quick side trip in which we trekked up an older section that looked like it may fall apart soon . . . On our way back the other way we heard the water rising behind us and thought it may have started raining, but it subsided right away so we decided someone had turned on their hose topside. . . . broke out near the hospital and re-entered the drain system in a low split culvert and eventually ended up in a huge tunnel that emptied into the Derwent River very near to where the Princeton was moored. We had traversed the entire city underground! This tunnel must have been at least twenty-five feet wide and fifteen feet high, there were several areas where "flowstone" came out of smaller drains along the way. When we came out of the drains, it was high tide so we had to wade through the water at the end of the tunnel with a bunch of fish swimming around our ankles . . . We walked back to the docks topside and had ice cream and coffee before everyone split.

Dave Decker

Midnight Hole through trip-11/4/99

Party: Dave Decker, Jeff Butt.

The last and best day. . . . The scenery was terrific, rolling grass covered hills with islands of shrubs and small trees, tall groves of eucalyptus trees Huonville is well known as an apple growing area. Anything you can think of will be available, apple pie, apple crisp, apple cider, etc.. Many of the structures were built of local timber in the 1800's giving it the rustic fishing village look. Along the river there were several small fish farms raising Atlantic Salmon (in the South Pacific no less!) and the road held it's share of wildlife including Plovers, a large, fat bird about the size of a chicken, and Rosella's, a local Parrot species that is quite colorful. . . . Eventually we turned off the main road at a fork where there were two gigantic eucalyptus trees standing sentry duty, "Gateway to the South" the sign read. Jeff thought it was rather ironic that these trees were felled to welcome you to an area known for its flora sun shined through the trees and mist and lit up the tree ferns and moss covered stumps and logs, it looked just like the pictures you see in National Geographic! I was in Heaven, everywhere I looked I wanted to take pictures but I decided I'd better save some for the cave. . . . We never saw the Lyre Bird either. . . . The track led to a limestone quarry that happened to be near the cave and as we



Destroyer Sail By

broke out of the trees, more and more relics started to appear. An old log bridge, railroad ties, spikes, track, and lots of scrag. Bits of limestone lay everywhere. . . . Mystery Creek Cave is often regarded as a 'sacrificial cave' so many tours and weekend adventurers come here to experience 'spelunking'. We finally got to the point where we needed to go off trail and Jeff led the way. We climbed over huge logs and bent under small saplings, slipped on the wet earth and snagged on the Blade (Cutting) Grass. . . . Jeff quickly rigged the first drop and showed me a thing or two about rappelling on two ropes and how to rig a pull down. . . . I went off to explore the little room behind the drop. It was covered with loam that had fallen in from above and several small cave crickets were lounging on the walls. As I went further back the crickets grew progressively larger so I kept an eye on them in case they decided to jump me! I poked my head around a corner and saw a web. . . . I came face to face with a spider the size of my HAND!! . . . I let him know I thought it was pretty big, he grinned at me and said it was just a baby! . . . He let me rig the next drop of 26 feet so I tried my hand at the figure-nine knot he had just shown me. I didn't do to well but it was serviceable, I got it rigged and clipped in for a quick jump to the next level. . . . The fifth pitch was 111 feet and went fairly quick. At the bottom of this drop the passage went left and then jiggled right around a fluted wall. At this point somebody had rigged a back up line to a rock lodged in the passageway. I noted it and went a little further on to view the last drop which was 161 feet. It was impressive. . . . The pit had been carved out of alternately dark and light horizontally banded rock and is nearly a perfect cylinder. . . . , it made an evil hiss as it free fell the 161 feet to the bottom! We coiled the ropes and made them ready for carrying, then we took off our climbing gear and stuffed it away in our packs. We had rappled a total of 531 feet. . . . [Everything seems bigger in imperial units! Ed.] Matchbox squeeze. . . . roughly 10 feet long, three feet high and ten inches wide. It has about two inches of very cold water in the lowest spot, strategically positioned. . . . The room we were in now was the 'large confusing room' of lore. There were several large breakdown rocks and many speleothems. . . . The next one we saw was a stalagmite, it must have been four or five feet in diameter and twenty feet high at one point. It was now broken off at about ten feet with the top laying horizontally against the near wall. It had been down for centuries as was evidenced by the two newer stalags growing on the bridge formed by the fallen giant, each was three feet tall and a good foot in diameter at their bases. . . . short side trip to a waterfall so we took off through an opening between breakdown and into a canyon passage with sculpted limestone walls, it reminded me of our granite caves at home in San Diego County. We wound our way up the passage past calcium deposits, Buddha stalagmites, and outworld detritus. The waterfall was very nice at about eight feet high plunging into a small pool then giggling down the passageway without a care in the world. We turned around and started down stream when something caught my eye. Hanging down from the ceiling were ten to twenty threads steeped in dew. Each was a different length, any where from 8 to 12 inches, and in the middle of all this was a little tiny worm. The worm had a glowing tail! Apparently these Glow Worms are the larvae of a type of fly and they lure bugs and other critters into their 'web' with the glowing tail of theirs. It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. . . . We went a little further up stream and then Jeff told me to shut off my lights. I did and what I saw blew my mind. Glow worms everywhere! I could see by their light it was so bright. I looked to the wall in front of me and no shit saw a map of the United States made of

Glow Worms. I pointed out to Jeff where San Diego was and then just stood there and marvelled for about ten minutes. It looked like the Milky Way only all the stars were bright electric blue! I'll never forget that scene as long as I live. . . . I would have to say it was the best cave trip I've been on in 17 years of caving.

. . . . We stopped in a little town called Francistown. . . . It was an A-frame that Arthur built. . . . it was the perfect little get away. Stained glass windows in the gables, greenery and vines hiding the front porch, all sorts of little forest nick-knacks throughout the house. . . . Inside, the front door led to a Great Room that has momentos of the forest, two bats, feathers, twigs, a bird or two, and lots of rocks; it was like being in a natural history display! Robyn had some coffee, chocolate cake, and quisch ready for us. . . . Arthur, Robyn, Hugh, Liz, Kylie, Stuart Bull, Emerson Clarke, Jeff and I all met at the pier for the Tour of the Carl Vinson that I offered. Unfortunately, they had closed the tours down at 1700, we had missed it by more than two hours. [Damn, damn, damn, there went my chance to see if I could pick up a US Military SA free GPS unit!!, or a couple palm size nukes for cave re-arranging! Ed.]. . . . to go get some pizza and watch some caving slides. . . . volcano on a scale of one to ten, I of course said ten! Maybe I was a little too gung-ho on that one, with red peppers, jalepenos, and capascins powder, it was hot! My first bite of the volcano pizza nearly made me cry! [I did my crying the next day! Ed.]. . . . Kubla Khan piqued my interest, so did several of the other caves shown. Very good photography and it made me want to come back to explore some more. . . . We said our good-byes and I headed back to the ship after a very exciting and satisfying day.

Dave Decker

Finding out the secret of "the hole most looked into" Track Cutters Cave (IB211)-25/4/99

Party: Jeff Butt, with Hans and Andras on the surface

I've walked past this cave about a thousand times and on a whim (after we had been to Giotto Pot), I decided to have a look into this 'most looked into' hole. Down the 7 metre pitch lands you on a debri pile in a chamber, about 8 m by 5 m with thousands of cave crickets on the walls, and some formation on the far side. A muddy hole in the floor leads to a small muddy terminal chamber, (I just poked my head in for a look).

So, now I know what is in this cave, the entrance can no longer tantalise my curiosity...mind you if I'd looked in an old Spiel or Southern Caver then I could have found this out from the comfort of home, but there's nothing like having a look for yourself.

Afterwards, I checked out the survey in Southern Caver 50, (1982) it is interesting to note that there are several other caves nearby which might be worth a look one day when one has another whim.

Jeff Butt

Growling Swallet- Slaughterhouse Pot-26/4/99 A near flood entrapment.

Party: Hans Benisch, Paul Steane, Damian Bidgood, Jeff Butt.

There were two aims for this mid-week, Police sponsored trip: 1. to check out the phone line that is in place down Slaughterhouse Pot, and 2. to remove the old ladder/rope from Avon's Aven.

It was a gray drizzly day, and that was the forecast. There hadn't been that much rain prior to the trip: Bureau records show the following:

| | 7 days to 9 am | 24 hours to 9 am | 24 hours to 9 am |
|------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Mon. (26/4) | Mon. (26/4) | Tues. (27/4) |
| Maydena | 5 mm | 5 mm | 4 mm |
| Bushy Park | 15 mm | 0.2 mm | 0.8 mm |

Growling was up a little, but nothing too much to worry about. Anyway, we had our SRT gear with us, and Slaughterhouse Pot was already rigged.

Paul and I headed down Growling. Damian and Hans headed up to the entrance of Slaughterhouse Pot (SHP). At the prescribed time interval we tried the phone system, but to no avail. The in-situ phone line is kaput, and thus should be removed.

Whilst Damian and Hans came down SHP, Paul and I headed off towards Avon's Aven. I showed Paul the scaling pole aven, the Destiny pitch en-route to Herpes III. Herpes was decidedly wet and sloppy. I used my pack as a surfboard to push through, and most of the pack went under. My top half escaped, but from the waist down I had a liberal coating of black mud dripping off me. Paul wasn't keen, but came through as well when I told him it was really worth it. What a bastard of a trick.

It was quite disgusting putting on a clean harness and SRT gear over disgusting mud, but I did and had soon ascended the 20 p using the ladder and safety line. I derigged the ladder and safety line, and installed a replacement rope, down which I abseiled. This whole process took about 40 minutes. Once I was at the bottom, Paul headed out Herpes III to find a pool of water 1 m deep and about 20 m long. He could visibly see the water level rising, i.e. millimetres per second. He called to me, and so I exited, trailing a muddy rope behind me; the other end being tied to the old ladder. By this time the water was about 1.5 m deep and we decided it was time to split. We had a discussion, and I decided that we still had enough time to grab a pack full of ladder before we exited. So, I headed back through the pool to grab the rope I'd pulled through Herpes, by this time it was virtually a swim back. With the rope in hand, we pulled the ladder through Herpes and we retreated to the base of the handline on the exit side of the visibly enlarging pool. We packed about 3/5 'ths of the ladder, then tied the remainder onto the end of the handline, and headed back to the others in SH aven. Trapdoor streamway had risen noticeably since we had passed by earlier, so we guessed it must have been raining hard outside (which wasn't forecast).

Given that it must be raining hard outside, we decided it was time to split. Upon reaching the top of the Windy Rift

chimney, the thundering of the main Growling Streamway was such that the whole place was vibrating. It was pretty obvious that the streamway would be impassable, and so we doubled back to SH aven to use SHP as our exit.

Having procured another not-full pack, I decided to quickly zip back and get the remainder of the ladder and rope. Back at the handline, was a pool of water about 1 m deep. By this time Herpes III would have been flooded, and if we were still in Avon's Aven we'd have been trapped in. I hauled up the ladder and handline and stuffed it into my pack, before heading back to SH aven. We all exited uneventfully; this was the first time that I'd ever gone up SHP, and it is a bit of a grunt with a full pack of gear.

Since we had filled up all the empty packs with ladders, we didn't pull out the unserviceable phone line, but it should come out as it is now nothing more than a guideline.

Back at the entrance to Growling, the stream was noticeably up, about 30 cm higher than when we went in. At this level the streamway would not have been passable, so we had made a good decision not to try.

It is perplexing as to why the stream levels rose so fast when only drizzle occurred, and rainfall totals in the area were quite low. We can only surmise that perhaps some snow-melt had contributed to the run-off.

[Incidentally, the safety line removed from Avon's Aven was chewed through to the core in two places. The PVC rung/laid polypro. rail ladder (of unknown vintage) wasn't in too bad a condition, but given we'd gone to the effort of removing it I decided that we'd rebuild it. The ladder was rebuilt on 27/4/99, using the old rungs and reinstated on 2/5/99-quite a quick turn-around.]

Jeff Butt

STC beginners' weekend-the June Florentine 1-2/5/99

This weekend was organised to show some keen new people that most curios of pastimes, Caving. There were plenty of guides to help as well. Those in attendance: Jeff Butt, Liz Canning, Hugh Fitzgerald, Count Andras Galambos, Penelope Lopez, Andrew, Dave Rasch and Monte Farrah.

Welcome Stranger-1/5/99

After convening at Tyenna Valley Lodge in Maydena over coffees, we amalgamated transport and headed off for Westfield Road. While some travelled in Jeff's Holden orana, others drove in style in Andras' comfy HQ Kingswood trimatic, with metallic purple duco. How can Andras afford such luxury, we wondered? It was then we divined that he is of aristocratic stock, and is in fact a Hungarian count of some description. This provided much merriment in the back seat, while our driver remained singularly unamused...

The two Holdens converged on the spur road carpark and kitted up for Welcome Stranger. We had been informed the gate lock had been tampered with and the barred efflux had been broken into. This proved to be the case - the lock is no longer functional as it has something jammed into its innards. When we checked the efflux, we found a few of the bars had been prised back to allow a crawl space into the cave.

[Forestry Tasmania have advised that all is now fixed. Ed.]

In we all went, after laying the red carpet down for Count Galambos to crawl over. "One. Two. Three. Four." (presumably four bent bars?) he announced, as he made his entrance.

Therein followed a pleasant and untaxing trip through Welcome Stranger, admiring the pretty formations, and venturing to the sump and back again. At one point, Dave and Hugh chimneyed up a narrow side rift and Dave poked his body into a tight phreatic tube that led steeply upward. It pinched off with no breakthrough to the legendary Welcome Stranger Grand System.

We did note that the cave is generally dirty, and that someone has left muddy footprints over a nice flowstone floor in one spot. **A clean-up trip was suggested, and should be considered further as a future club activity.** *[Does anyone want to take responsibility for organising this and putting it on the Forward Program??? Ed.]*

After emerging in two hours with barely whetted subterranean appetites, we scoffed down lunch and drove to Settlement Road to visit our second cave of the day: Beginner's Luck.

Beginners Luck-1/5/99

This took a fair amount of time to locate, as a good deal of scrub has obscured many features. Jeff had been there ~4 years ago and had a mud-map. Eventually Dave found the JF82 (Womguano) entrance and after heading into the bush the requisite 65 paces back along the road we scrub-bashed and found some blue tapes lead to the JF79 entrance.

Everyone entered, with Andras and Hugh some minutes behind after checking other holes on the surface and finding an attractive cave only 25m long from entrance to entrance! We soon located the archaeological site where artefacts had been discovered, then headed further in to see what else the cave had to offer.

After bridging over a pit, we continued along a crawly passage to find the ceiling became lower and lower the further we went. The constricting dimensions made for hard work while rolling out the red carpet for our noble companion. "One metre, two metres, three metres, four metres, five metres..." (etc., etc.) he counted, as he crawled over the pristine shag pile, impervious to the centuries of wombat crap the rest of us had to crawl through on our bellies.

Exploring as we went, we ignored the map and missed the turn off to the Womguano entrance (our intended exit). Some keen individuals pushed through to a chamber at the far extent of one passage, while Monty disappeared down a 4m rift in a small side tube in the floor, not to be seen again until he mysteriously turned up one morning in a bed at the Royal Hobart Hospital some eleven days later...

The party reconvened and found the way out, via the Fat Boy Flattenner. This aptly named V-shaped constriction in the passage, through a trough filled with wombat excrement, was mercifully dry on this occasion. (Jeff reported that on his last visit it had a puddle in the bottom, but the good news was you could keep your face out of it if you tried hard!) Through we each went, carefully sweeping aside the dasypygal marsupial dung for the blue-blooded member of the party.

We emerged in failing daylight after 2.5 hours underground. Bats were sweeping up and down the road above our heads as

we changed our gear and packed the cars. Those in the party new to the pursuit of caving were particularly happy with their day's adventure.

Off we went to Maydena to enjoy the hospitality of Tyenna Valley Lodge. We had a convivial time over dinner in the restaurant, then made use of the accommodation for the night. Andras was given the Royal Suite: "One post, two posts, three posts, four posts," he counted, as he settled down for a well-earned night's sleep in a bed bedecked in purple velvet with gold trimmings, and large enough for all of us. The rest of us had somewhat less salubrious surroundings, sleeping in comfortable beds in the servants' quarters.

Slaughterhouse Pot/Growling Swallet Revisited-2/5/99

Those in attendance: Jeff Butt, Liz Canning, Hugh Fitzgerald, Andras Galambos, Sharon Heritage, Penelope Lopez, Dave Rasch, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Monty Farrah, and Andrew.

Even more people showed up for this second day of the 'beginners' weekend, what with some more challenging caving on offer. Our centre of focus was Growling Swallet; with eleven people on hand we divided into three parties.

Jeff and Andras swiftly headed down to Avon's Aven via the main entrance to install the new rope ladder on the pitch. Dave & Liz led the new cavers (Penelope, Monty, and Andrew) in the same entrance, but carefully rigged handlines and ladders down the tricky climbs on the way. Sharon, Janine, Ric, and Hugh walked on up to Slaughterhouse Pot to do the through trip back to Growling Swallet entrance.

After reaching the main streamway in the cave, Jeff decided that the water level was a little too high for a safe trip with beginners. He returned to advise Liz & Dave not to go beyond the top of the Cascades before leading their party back out.

Meanwhile, Hugh led a trip down Slaughterhouse Pot. This was Sharon's first time at abseiling pitches underground. It was Ric's and Janine's first look at Slaughterhouse Pot, though they have bagged an Icetube/Growling through trip in the past.

The pitches were all passed uneventfully, though Sharon sang a melodious rendition of The Banana Splits theme tune while descending the second pitch. We descended through the rockpile, following the useful telephone line which leads the way. This is a potentially very confusing area, as the rockfall appears extensive, and reports of past trips suggest there are numerous possibilities at ways through. Janine almost disappeared down a hole at the end of a well trogged path near the far wall, until Ric found the correct hole into the pile.

We passed down all the climbs and drops, coming at last to the third pitch, which drops into the dry refuge chamber in Growling Swallet. Here Sharon, Ric, and Janine headed out through Windy Rift while Hugh went looking for Andras and Jeff. He was surprised to come across a mud smeared Dave Rasch climbing up the short ladder from Trapdoor Streamway to the refuge chamber. Dave explained how the high water levels in the cave had necessitated a truncated trip for the beginners, and that he had carried on alone in to Avon's Aven to help Jeff and Andras.

We decided to join Jeff and Andras, but no amount of persuading could coax Hugh to submit to the ordure in the filthy slot called Herpes III. Dave valiantly went through (again!) to tell the others that we would be exiting to further assist Janine, Ric, and Sharon with route finding.

We caught up with them as they were climbing the exposed drop which bypasses a large waterfall in the main streamway near where the phreatic tube leading to Windy Rift joins the main passage. From there we followed the streamway upwards to the entrance, resting on occasion as some of us were feeling the effects of mental and physical exhaustion.

The water level was still higher than usual, which made progress a little more difficult. The noise of the streamway necessitated shouting to make ourselves heard.

We gladly reached a ladder which Dave and Liz had rigged down a waterfall climb near the entrance. Derigging it when we were all up, we carried on to the dry side passage. Here we found the bottom drop was actually taking water [*this first bit of the dry-bypass needs to be renamed, as it is always wet these days!, how about the "dunked dry-bypass", i.e. it's wet on the bottom? Ed.*], which meant we got a soaking climbing up it. At the last climb, which had a handline tied down it thanks to Liz & Dave again, a tired Sharon slipped while attempting the traverse across the ledge to reach the top. Hugh managed to stop her falling too far, and on the second try she made it. No-one was more happy to reach the exit than her! [*A short ladder in many ways is preferable to a handline for people not so adept at climbing. Ed.*]

Outside we found Liz sitting in the twilight communing with a platypus. She led us back to the carpark, where we found a very cold and wet Andrew, Penelope, and Monty (still missing from yesterday), standing round a fire trying to keep warm. They missed where Jeff hides the orana keys and Andras had his keys around his neck. Luckily Jol had dropped by and given them some spare clothes and matches to get a fire going. [*It is good practise to ensure that everyone knows where the car keys are, and that they are in an accessible place in case of split return times, or of some incident requiring outside assistance. Ed.*]

Shortly afterwards, Andras and Jeff appeared, marking the end of another successful STC trip into Growling Swallet. The Slaughterhouse Pot through trip team had spent 5 hours underground. Jeff and Andras had been in a little longer, and had completed installing the new rope ladder and a safety line in Avon's Aven.

By the end of this weekend, the three new cavers had already completed three club trips, which puts them in a position to seek full membership.

Hugh Fitzgerald

The IB "low numbers"-9/5/99 Bradley Chesterman (IB4,5,6) and Loons Cave (IB2,3)

Q. what's so good about the IB low numbers (except 1)?

A. you only have to walk about 100 m to get to them all!

This trip was spawned at the Rope Testing session the previous day. We had a mixture of tastes and abilities, so

chose a couple of suitable caves, which most of us had never been to before (or at least not for a very long time).

Party: Dave Rasch, Liz Canning, Penelope Lopez, Andras Galambos, Arthur Clarke, Hans Benisch, Judy ?, Jeff Butt.

Bradley Chesterman

We parked at the Y-junction about 500 m back from the Mystery Ck. carpark, wandered into the bush on the corner, and soon found a small stream, which in a short distance led us to the IB4 entrance. About 70 m in one comes to a big daylight hole, and finds the IB5 and IB6 tags are about 10 m apart on the downstream and upstream sides of this hole respectively. There are other smaller daylight holes en-route between 4 and 5, and also after 6. The cave consists of a low but pleasant streamway, which apparently in the days of Benders Quarry was very badly polluted due to sewerage and waste oil; fortunately there is no evidence (?) of this past abuse and the streamway sports a variety of cave fauna.

We reached and traversed a rockpile without any troubles. Apparently this cave has only been surveyed to this point. After another section of streamway we reached the 'terminal' rockpile. On the left a squeeze (with a breeze) leads to a rift with an aven. It is possible to climb up this; there appears to be a small passage heading off, but I felt a bit vulnerable near the top and decided to retreat. There appears to be some breeze in the area.

Back at the terminal rockpile, where the streamway emerges, it is very low and wet. We moved a few rocks, and lowered the water level, then Dave in his PVC suit managed to squeeze through and found about 25 m of passage. Continuation in the stream is blocked by about a dozen rocks that would need to be removed, but the low streamway does continue and there is some air movement.

Apparently the cave has only ever been surveyed to the first rockpile. This would be an ideal cave to teach the art of surveying and doing this would be comparatively easy and worthwhile. Apparently there are several other caves in the area, and so connections are exceedingly likely.

Loons Cave

After lunching back at the cars we sauntered down to Loons Cave and headed in via the 28 metre pitch. Unfortunately Penelope sustained a broken ankle in this cave. **A report of this incident is be found earlier in this Spiel.**

Arthur reports that 25 years ago Loons Cave was pristine, containing large areas of clean flowstone. It's definitely different today! Human impact over the years has degraded the cave a huge amount, indeed much of the cave resembles (fortunately not in aroma!) a dairy farm holding yard in winter time, mud, mud and more mud, pugged up mud everywhere.

Today Loons Cave is open for commercial tours, and is on the Education Department list as a suitable cave for visiting. Lets hope that the cavers who come through from this introduction to caving can be made aware of what impacts people have on the delicate cave environment.

Jeff Butt

SRT practise in Midnight Hole: 15 & 16/5/99

Party: (15/5) Tim Anderson, Jeff Butt. (16/5) Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon, Alaraic Bennett, Jeff Butt.

A bit of a SRT limber-up (and experience tester trip) prior to the KD-Dwarowdelf weekend.

(15/5) A quick trip down where Jeff and Tim rigged the cave and left it rigged for the next day. The rigging was done properly (mostly on 9 mm rope) with lots of deviations, a traverse line and an interesting rebelay (middle of the fifth pitch) so as to provide a level of technical complexity similar to what would be encountered in Dwarowdelf or K.D.

At the bottom Tim found that his SRT set-up was close to ineffective, so he chose to exit via Mystery Creek. I was keen to get the prussiking practise, so casually prussiked out surprising myself that it only took 45 minutes. I think Tim was also surprised at the earliness of which I made our rendezvous. Maybe the limber up wasn't really needed, never-the-less it's quite a fun cave to SRT.

(16/5) A not so quick trip, where the cave was bottomed and then back out we came with three packs of rope. The main 'obstacle course' (joined ropes a few metres below a tight rebelay from somewhat nebulous anchors) on the fifth pitch served their purpose of giving people some technical problems with an ounce of apprehension about the re-belay anchors thrown in too. The amount of prussiking (with filling packs slowly filling with rope) also was a good test of prussiking technique and prussiking fitness.

Midnight Hole is a great SRT training cave, and a good one to have under your belt before doing any of the other vertical caves in either Ida Bay or in the Junee-Florentine.

Jeff Butt

Khazad Dum/Dwarowdelf Through-trips: 23 & 24/5/99

Party: (23/5) Dave Rasch, Hugh Fitzgerald, John Palmer, Jeff Butt, Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon.

(24/5) Andras Galambos, Jol Desmarchellier, Jeff Butt.

Several STC'ites had done one of the caves to death, but had never seen the other, and some hadn't seen either. So, the idea of this trip was to do a couple of exchange trips over a couple of days,

To make the trip nice and efficient the ropes were selected and pre-packed the evening before, ending up with 5 packs of rope containing 499 m of rope. By the end of the packing the STC rope rack was half empty! Some of the lengths for Dwarowdelf weren't ideal, but I didn't want to specifically cut any ropes for the trip. The tables below show the rope taken, and what the rigging parties ended up doing. Both teams had the right amount of rope to get to the bottom (not more than a meter or two spare here and there), similarly there was about 2 krabs and tapes left between us when we bottomed out.

Note that over the years quite a few extra 'spits' have been placed in both K.D. and Dwarowdelf. Some useful references

to these some of these are: Lenser (1998), Warild (1986) in addition to the information in Bunton and Eberhard (1984).

| Khazad Dum | Ropes taken (m) | Comments on rope lengths. |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Serpentine Route | | |
| p1 (23 m) | 30 | Good, enough tail left for a tricky 2c that follows. |
| p2 (15 m) | 22 | OK |
| p3 (8 m) | 11 | 8 would do |
| p4 (9 m) | 13 | OK |
| p5 (5 m) | 13 | OK |
| Main Drag | | |
| p7 (6 m) | 12 | OK |
| p8 (9 m) | 16 (8+8) | used 8 plus 11, another 4 would make the up climb safer, i.e. a total of 23. |
| p9 (5 m) | 11 | used 8 plus tapes, 11 better! |
| p10 (8 m) | 11 | 12 m better |
| p11 (8 m) | 16 | 12 m enough |
| p12 (9 m) | 13 | OK |
| p13(42 m) | 49 | OK |
| Total length | 217 m | Fitted into two medium and one small pack. (mostly 10 mm rope) |

| Dwarowdelf | Ropes taken (m) | Comments on rope lengths. |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| p1 (22 m) | 38 (9+29) | OK, Using the big log 10 m above the entrance |
| p2 (21 m) | 25 | A few m more for the pitch-head traverse would be ideal. |
| p3 (55 m) | 67 | OK |
| p 4 (14 m) | 22 | OK, the end made a bolt rebelay on the 5th pitch |
| p 5 (37 m) | 30 | Went straight to the 80 m rope from here. |
| p 6 (67 m) | 80 | Had the 20 knotted onto the end about 16 m off the deck. |
| handline in the final chamber | 20 | Used the 30 m rope here, about 10 m excess. |
| Total length | 282 m | Fitted into two large packs (all 9 mm rope except p 1) |

Saturday 23/5

Our numbers were fairly minimal for this endeavour, much of the time we had two packs each.

Dave and John headed down to rig Dwarowdelf with 2 packs of rope.

Hugh, and I headed off to K.D. with Ric and Janine and 3 packs of rope. We headed down the Serpentine Route, Ric and Janine carried one pack of rope down for us to the main streamway before they headed back. We found the rigging fine, and things generally went quite smoothly. But, there was a bit of stuffing about here and there, some rigging gear got accidentally left behind at one pitch head, so we had to retrieve this and at one or two pitches there was an amount of 'frigging' rather than 'rigging'.

There was quite a bit of water in the main streamway, so quite a bit of effort went into trying to make the pitches dry, or as dry as possible. At the base of K.D. pitch 10 (our 9th pitch) a thick curtain water covered the entire passage, so despite

rigging it all dry, we still got soaked at this point. An umbrella would have been handy for this manoeuvre.

The KD streamway is truly beautiful with its marbled limestone. It would be good to get some good photographs,...but with two packs of gear each adding the camera isn't a real proposition. Certainly the marbled floor is etched in my mind's eye and I feel privileged for having seen and being able to recall this wondrous feature.

We just made the top of the last pitch at the 6 hour turn-around time and contacted the others, who waited for us to get down. They had been there about half an hour. For them, things generally went smoothly, though there was also a bit of 'frigging' and time spent looking for bolt casings.

After a group snack, John and I headed out K.D. whilst Dave took Hugh headed out Dwarowdelf. They were out in 2 hours, we were out half an hour later. It was quite smooth going and just the right amount of exercise to stay warm in this somewhat damp environment. By the time we got back to the last pitch in the Serpentine route it was hard not to laugh at the considerable effort I had gone to in rigging the rope out of the miserable trickle of water coming down it. I guess it's kind of like, when you have dry feet you go to great lengths to keep them dry, but after they're wet, it doesn't matter a toss!

On the way back to the Tyenna Valley Lodge where we were staying, there was a little mishap with the Torana. I got into a slide on the short bridge due to misjudging the wooden tracks, first I was pointing 45° to the left, which I managed to correct, but when the tyres gripped, I had over-corrected and ended up just over the bank on the wrong side of the road, pointing 45° the other way. This was somewhat embarrassing...but fortunately no-one was hurt. The front end was down the bank, leaving little weight on the rear wheels, so she was stuck for the night. We had a 4 km evening stroll back to the ranch.

Sunday 24/5

The original intention was to derig both caves today, but the events of last night meant a late night and that all our thermals etc. were still soaked (we had planned to dry them out overnight). Also, events had altered my priorities, the first thing was to get the Orana back on the road and see what the damage was.

Andras and Jol turned up at the agreed time, to watch us complete breakfast....sorry guys, day 2 of caving always seems to be a bit tardy.

Anyway, down the road we headed equipped with a shovel, tow-rope, chain and pieces of wood. We jacked up the Orana and made a ramp of wood and stones to assist in getting her out. Andras gave me a tow with his Kingswood, and out she came, totally unscathed; that was a relief.

With that out of the way by noon, what more is there to do, than to go caving! Dave felt a bit wrecked from yesterday, and Hugh had other things he wanted to do, so it was to be just three. We'd decided that derigging wasn't feasible today anyway, which meant that the day was just a pleasure trip without any gear to carry. I took Andras and Jol down Dwarowdelf and out K.D. Some of the rigging in Dwarowdelf was a little interesting. The ropes didn't quite get used as intended (see the table above), and there was a meaty knot 16 m off the deck on the last pitch which Jol made a meal of!

The most overwhelming impression I had in going down Dwarowdelf was that there were a lot more bolts (spits) than there used to be. Some of these bolts (in my opinion) simply aren't needed! In addition, most of them un-marked which is possibly half the reason why there are so many...if people can't find them, they put in new ones. My favourite natural anchors were still all there, often in close proximity to new bolts! [The entrance to the third pitch has 5 bolts within 1 m of each other, three on the left are spaced about 8 cm apart, and the two on the right are similarly spaced. Within a metre of these bolts are two excellent nubbin anchors.]

Both Dwarowdelf and K.D. are classic caves that (in my opinion) should be fitted with stainless steel P-hangers. Good long lasting bolts that can be easily found, and thus stop the proliferation of the short-term 'spit' solution.

It was lovely to be heading out K.D. again, it was a bit dryer than yesterday as well, which was a bonus. Five and half hours after going in we three were back on the surface.

We had a couple of minor mishaps, which are briefly mentioned so others can take heed:

1. Whilst Jol was just passing the first rebelay on the third pitch, at -10m I was negotiating the pitch-head tunnel, this is an awkward spot. Anyway, I heard something drop, so gave a call of "Below". Jol pushed up against the wall, and to his great surprise my small (fortunately) pack ended up in his arms, he took a brilliant chest-mark! The pack had self detached from the pack-haul snap-link.

2. Andras was the first person to ascend the lower pitch (42 m) of K.D. and he accidentally hauled the lower rope up with him without noticing. Jol, who was following couldn't find the rope; it was then that I spotted a loop of rope hanging down from the ceiling. Andras had disappeared from view, but some yelling brought him back and the rope was freed and thrown down.

Suggestions:

1. Use a screw-gate as your pack-haul krab to prevent such occurrences. Another option is when in a tight spot, get yourself through first, then pull your pack afterwards; or post your pack through first and secure it to the rigging before you manoeuvre through.

2. When ever going up any pitch, always check that the rope has not been pulled up (also check that the rigging is still secure as well, e.g. ensure tapes aren't pulled off bollards etc.). If you suddenly realise that your mates aren't following you, then go back and check why, perhaps you've left them stranded.

With the cave still rigged, we should take advantage of this and have a look at some of the leads outlines in an article by Rolan Eberhard (1992).

References:

- Bunton S., Eberhard R. (1984), Vertical Caves of Tasmania, pp 24-28.
Eberhard R. (1992) "Notes on Khazad Dum (JF4, 5, 14), Speleo-Spiel 274.
Lenser E. (1998) "Rigging requirements for Khazad Dum", Nargun V30 No. 10, p159.
Warild A. (1986), "New bolts in Maydena Caves", p 18, Australian Caver 110.

Jeff Butt

ASF Accident Paperwork

Very recently I learned of the so-called ASF Cave Accident/Incident form (a copy of which is included opposite) which is meant to be filled out for any accidents and returned to the ASF Cave Safety Convenor, Mike Lake. You too might find this news? Anyway, it is probably best if any forms that originate from STC are filled out by the persons involved and a copy lodged with the STC secretary.

Gear Tip

Tool for a Petzl Duo

If you've got a Petzl Duo and are have trouble getting the caterpillar band off, then you can make up a small



took, like shown below.

The slot dimensions are 54 mm x 25 mm. The other dimensions are for convenience of handling and don't have to be exact. For the record the plate is 3 mm alloy and the outside dimensions are 110 mm x 50 mm.

this was lifted from OZCAVERS

If you've got something to flog (Caving gear preferred!!), then don't forget that the Spiel might be one way to sell it. (Try the List Server too!) It cost's members nothing to have a go, so why not!

ASF CAVE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT FORM

INSTRUCTIONS

If you intend to fill this out online and email it back to me then...

1. Set your editor to overtyp mode and display a fixed width font e.g. courier.
2. To fill in information on dashed lines just type in the line regions. What you type should overwrite the lines.
3. To fill in information in the [] regions place an X in the region like so [X]

If you intend to print this out and then fill in the printed version for posting back to me then print it with double-spaced lines so that there will be enough height between lines for your writing.

Your name: _____

Your ASF affiliation: _____

Today's date: ____/____/19__ Date of incident: ____/____/19__

Address: _____

Phone: _____ (h) _____ (w)

Please mark with an 'X' as many boxes as required for the following questions:

Source of information:

I am the: victim []
witness []
rescuer []
uninvolved []

Contributing factors:

gear failure []
unsafe practice []
bad luck []
inexperience []

Injuries sustained:

none [] hospitalisation required []
minor [] very serious []
first aid required [] fatal []

[]

Number of persons injured []

If known please supply a brief description of the injuries.

If rescue was required how was it undertaken ?

Self rescue: [] Assistance req. (unofficial) []

Assistance required (Police/Official Rescue Group etc.) []

Cave Description

Name and tag number (if known) or physical location (if known).

Wet (deep standing pool or running stream) ____

Dry (no water or slight seepage and shallow water only) ____

Horizontal: under 200m [] over 200m []

Vertical: pitches less than 30m [] pitches longer than 30m []

Party description:

Size of group: 1 - 4 [] 4 - 10 [] 11 plus []

ASF affiliated group [] Non-ASF group []

* Please supply details here (if known):

Has the incident been written up in a journal/circular/letter etc. ? ____

If so please supply references here:

Please supply any further details that you consider relevant.

Also if available please mail copies of referenced articles.

When this form is completed please email to:

ASF Safety Convenor, Michael Lake, email: Mike.Lake@uts.edu.au

or print out and mail to: Australian Speleological Federation Inc.,

P.O. BOX 388, BROADWAY, NSW 2007

Thank you for your assistance and co-operation.

Fringe benefits of being in STC

Although S.T.C. membership is all about caving, that doesn't mean it's about muddy holes and prussiking techniques all the time and.... not all cavers go caving all the time! The diversity of interests amongst S.T.C. members provides another exciting dimension to membership of our caving club: an added fringe benefit of being an STC member.

Its unlikely that I'll ever set out on a mountain climbing expedition, let alone one from *Tierra del Feugo* to the *Antarctic Peninsula* in a chartered, but untried yacht built by a carpet layer! However, the slide show session by Rolan Eberhard at the recent Wednesday evening social gathering at Shippies was like having a Claytons trip to Antarctica - without the weary bones and chill. Although Rolan might suggest that its impossible to take a bad Antarctic snapshot, his eye seemed to catch some extraordinarily beautiful scenes.

You don't imagine such stunning mountains in *Antarctica*: a rugged skyline of granite peaks projecting skyward through snow and ice and flanked by numerous "sea-going" glaciers or inland ice sheets; the view from mountain ridges in midnight sunlight; desert-like surface textures and including parallel rows of snow dunes: all patterns resulting from the Antarctic gales sweeping across the snowscape, plus the silky sheen of snowscape due to sunset colours. So many of Rolan's exciting and evocative images could have been calendar photos. And of course there were the calendar photos of the three-metre long seals; the penguins and their downy feathered chicks doing their thing along, along with strange-looking sheath bill birds scavenging around the fringes of penguin rookeries: eating "bird-shit" (penguin droppings). So many exciting impressions: and you could almost touch the atmosphere, almost feel the chill in the air!

Rolan and his company of climbers began their expedition from a base at the south-eastern tip of South America, from the Argentine port of *Ushuaia* where the landscape scenery and vegetation similarities with Tasmania are quite remarkable. We saw amazing photographic images of what could easily have been a Tasmanian alpine landscape, but here almost at sea level in Argentina - it was weird: there were spindly *Nothofagus* trees, "cushion" plants and what looked like a button grass plain extending out to a shoreline. Then sailing south on their chartered yacht: we saw photographs of a remarkably flat sea, with views of rugged South American coastlines as the yacht passed *Cape Horn* - which is actually an island, rather than the end of a peninsula as I

had imagined. Then barely 72 hours later, Rolan was up the mast in the lookout taking photographs as the yacht sailed through icebergs and pack ice with a view of the jagged skyline of the Antarctic Peninsula looming ahead.

Their expedition yacht eventually tied up beside a wrecked and rusting whaling vessel in a deep blue-water shallow bay, floored with a litter of whale bones; this was possibly the old whaling site of *Port Lockroy*. The climbing team was intent on exploring some of the numerous un-named mountain peaks along the *Danco* coast of *Graham-Land* in this section of the *Antarctic Peninsula* where three nations had laid claim to territory. Rolan showed us graphic images of their cross country ski-ing to access some of these remote peaks, including their climb of *Pilcher Peak* with a series of views of mountain climbing sequences amidst crevasses and wind driven snow from ridge line cornices. Some of these crevasses were very cave-like: but rather than being dark inside, they had deep blue interiors with a roof-line of sharp-pointed icicles which resembled stalactites.

And then departing from the Antarctic mainland.... a photographic essay of the diversity of form in icebergs: tall and slender (some dripping with icicles); curved or arched forms you could sail through (though at least one toppled over in front of them); ribbed and scalloped (due to "erosion" by air bubbles rising from below); smooth and flowing forms covered with snow (and occasional penguins and seals); and the different coloured layered forms with pinks and greys, due to penguin "poo" or meltwater sand and grits. It was an environment of constant change as ice melted in the Antarctic summer seas and was moulded to form new shapes or disappear into the sea.

Well done Rolan... you have given me another one of the fringe benefits of being an STC member...or maybe with the chill in the air that those images evoked, that should read as "fridge benefits..."

Robyn Claire

Classifieds

Scarpa
SL boots,
size 42.
Good to
very good condition.
\$200 neg. Phone Joe Farrell
(M C C C) 63635020

For Sale-lighting stuff

Sealed Lead Acid (Gell cell) Caving Lamp.

- Reconditioned Oldham headpiece connected to a new Yuasa 6 Volt/7 Amp. Hr. sealed lead acid (gell cell) in an Oldham battery case. Belt included. Very reliable. A robust and inexpensive light to cave by. Runs for 14 hours at 3W. \$140. (\$10 extra for QH option).

Sewer Pipe Caving Lamp.

- Reconditioned Oldham headpiece connected to a 3 D-cell Sewer Pipe battery case, with belt. Run on Nicads (8 hr duration) or Alkaline (18 hr duration) batteries. If you prefer an even smaller battery case, then a 2 D-cell option is available. Very sturdy and compact light; great for expeditions or international travel (you can get D-cells anywhere). Belt included. \$140. (batteries not included) (\$10 extra for QH option).

Gell Cell Charger.

- Through the headpiece charging; small, robust and portable, runs off the mains or plugs into a car lighter socket-\$80.

QH Cave Blaster light (Really SEE the cave!)

- 50 (or 20) Watt QH dichroic bulb mounted in a PVC fitting. Convenient to hold in your hand. Secure switch that will not allow a Chernobyl in your pack! Runs off a 12 Volt sealed lead acid battery (extra)-\$25.

contact Jeff Butt, 62238620 or jeffbutt@netspace.net.au

STC Contact List-May 1998.

A few people have asked for a club contact list, so here's the latest version. If your details are incorrect and/or incomplete, then please let Arthur Clarke, the list-keeper know. Many thanks.

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Some observations of Caving around the World- Part 5; Italy.

This follows on from Part 4, published in Speleo-Spiel 312.

From **Italy**:

The caving is exceedingly social, the locals very friendly and hospitable. Some of my observations during my brief caving time in Italy (in the north), included:

- There are many scars on the mountains, these are from marble quarries, where there are many caves. So, it is hardly surprising that there are many conservation issues in relation to quarrying. If you contemplate some lovely Italian marble for your house, think again!
- Caving in marble caves is **WOW**.....a world apart from some of the grotty caves here is Tassie.
- Here, like in France, caving is popular and respected. We called in on

one little country show, and the local caving club had a large display tent set up, videos, gear and other publicity material.

- The club magazines/publications are extremely professional; they make virtually any other caving publication I've seen seem very amateurish. Just wish I could read Italian!
- Besides the ubiquitous spit, I also saw some 'home-made' anchors which consisted of a piton like hexagonal section rod with a welded eye on the top-side; the 'peg' is then hammered into a drilled hole.
- It seemed to me that about 9 out of 10 cavers are smokers, cough cough!!.
- Petrol is quite expensive, so little Fiats and the like are usually crammed full of gear and people, it's amazing just what you can fit in.
- Have "one" for the road is still

widely practised, sometimes "one" is Grappa, local rocket fuel made from fermenting grape seeds.

There are probably other observations, but to be honest it is nearly two years ago and some of these have probably escaped my mind.

One striking observation from my travels however should be repeated as a finale of this little series

Cavers, the world over are very friendly and hospitable people.

I'd like to thank all the cavers whom showed me hospitality during my travels, and throw out the invite for anyone out there in the speleo-world to drop in if they are down this corner of the planet.

Jeff Butt.

STC WaReHoUsE SaLeS

Publications

- "Caving Safety 1 Manual", 92 pages, covers Planning, Safety, Maps, Gear, Rigging, Emergencies etc. \$15.00
- Back Issues of Southern Caver, Speleo-Spiel. There are various issues available. Please contact the Librarian, Greg Middleton (gregmi@delm.tas.gov.au) with your requirements. Price negotiable. ~\$1 each

Gear

- BATA full-length Gumboots, Black with yellow or green sole, no steel toe-caps. Sizes 5/6/7/8/9/10 \$25.00 pair
- CAVE PACKS, 30 litre volume, made from Heavy duty yellow PVC material, double bottom, reinforced seams, drain holes, large diameter eyelet's. Simple and sturdy. JUST ONE LEFT! \$50.00 each
- Aluminium Bars for Rappel Racks. \$5.00 each
- 5 cm (2") plastic Tri-glide buckles, ideal for battery belts, cave packs etc.) \$0.80 each

Tape

- Edelrid 25 mm tubular tape. Ideal for rigging, chest harnesses etc. (White) \$2.00 per m
- 5 cm (2") flat tape (ideal for harnesses, rigging, gear bags, belts etc.) (Blue or Red) \$1.50 per m
- 2.5 cm (1") flat tape (ideal for handlines, rigging, gear bags, etc.) (White) \$0.80 per m

Safety

- 9 mm dynamic rope (for cows tails, safety loop) (Red with Blue/Yellow fleck) \$3.50 per m
- Space Blankets (don't be caught underground without one!) \$4.00 each

Lighting

- Alkaline 4.5 Volt 'flat-pack' batteries (NEW STOCKS!) \$7.50 each, or 3 for \$22.00
- Eveready 6 Volt, 0.5 Amp Flange Mount Bulbs (#1417), Blister packs of 2 \$3.00 each
- Metal light brackets for helmets. Complete with rear cable keeper and fittings. \$5.00 each
- Jets (21 litres/hr) for Petzl kaboom (just a couple left) \$5.00 each
- Miscellaneous second hand pieces for Oldham headpieces. Contact us for details

Tow Ropes/trailer tie downs/yacht mooring lines etc.

- RETIRED CAVING ROPE, no longer safe enough to use for caving purposes, but more than adequate for many other purposes. Available in various lengths. \$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, or write to us: SOUTHERN TASMANIAN CAVERNEERS, P.O. BOX 416, SANDY BAY 7006.