

# Speleo Spiel 339





## STC Officers

### President & Public Officer:

Steve Bunton

Ph: (03) 6278 2398 (h)

[sbunton@postoffice.friends.tas.edu.au](mailto:sbunton@postoffice.friends.tas.edu.au)

### Vice President:

Janine McKinnon

Ph: (03) 6243 5415 (h)

[jmckinnon@tassie.net.au](mailto:jmckinnon@tassie.net.au)

### Secretary:

Ric Tunney

Ph: (03) 6243 5415 (h)

[rtunney@tassie.net.au](mailto:rtunney@tassie.net.au)

### Treasurer:

Steve Phipps

Ph: (03) 6223 3939 (h).

[sjphipps@utas.edu.au](mailto:sjphipps@utas.edu.au)

### Equipment Officer and S&R Officer:

Jeff Butt

Ph: (03) 6223 8620 (h)

[jeffbutt@netspace.net.au](mailto:jeffbutt@netspace.net.au)

### Librarian:

Greg Middleton

Ph: (03) 6223 1400 (h)

[gregmidd@ozemail.com.au](mailto:gregmidd@ozemail.com.au)

### Editor:

Geoff Wise

Ph: (03) 6425 3645(h)

[wiseg@dodo.com.au](mailto:wiseg@dodo.com.au)

### Webmaster:

Dean Morgan

Ph. (03) 6229 4405(h)

[dmorgan@tesa.com.au](mailto:dmorgan@tesa.com.au)

### Web Site:

<http://tesa.com.au/stc>

### **Front Cover:**

Looking out the entrance of Mystery Creek Cave  
(Photo by Gavin Brett)

### **Back Cover:**

Caving is not a dirty word — The Editor shows his  
ego by putting himself on the back cover (Photo  
by Dave Chiam)

**STC** was formed from the  
Tasmanian Cavermeering Club,  
the Southern Caving Society  
and the Tasmanian Cave and  
Karst Research Group. **STC** is  
the modern variant of the Oldest  
Caving Club in Australia.



# The Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the

**Southern Tasmanian Cavermeers Incorporated**

PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7006

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

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## Editorial

Well it's another year over for the Spiel. With the AGM coming up before the next issue is out, I'll take this opportunity to announce my 'retirement' from the editorship. Having moved to Devonport, I'm a bit out of the loop, not being able to attend meetings and not caving as frequently. It has been quite an enjoyable experience though, if anyone is keen to take over then drop me an email and I'll give you a run down on what is involved.

There is still plenty of unfinished business for me down south, plenty of caves to tick off so no doubt I'll be around from time to time.

I'd like to thank all those that contributed to the Spiel this year and to those who offered encouragement and didn't complain about the occasional spelling and grammatical errors that appeared in the issues (Or maybe no one noticed and I just stuck my foot in it!).

Geoff Wise

## Stuff 'n Stuff

### Notice Of Annual General Meeting

The AGM of *Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc* will be held at the gear store, 22 Clutha Place, South Hobart at 7pm on Wednesday March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Forward Program

Hobart Rivulet ..... 25<sup>th</sup> February  
Contact Steve Phipps  
Annual General Meeting ..... 3<sup>rd</sup> March  
(See Stuff 'n Stuff)  
Social Meeting ..... 17<sup>th</sup> March  
Arthur Clarke is showing slides from Madagascar  
Riveaux ..... March

## Honeycomb and Wet Cave, Mole Creek: 25 October 2003

By Stephen Bunton

**Party:** Stephen, Kathy and Grace Bunton, Liz Canning, Hugh Fitzgerald and Dexter.

After locating Tailender (MC-64) and being disappointed by not having the correct key to get into the cave, I crawled down into Tailender - Mill Cave (MC-63) and followed it for the twenty or so grotty metres to its sump. All of us then relocated to Caveside.

Hugh and Liz had not seen Honeycomb and Grace hadn't done it since she was about four so it was time for a good scrute. At the entrance we waved to Debbie Hunter who was with a group she was leading and then met Arthur [Clarke] who was with Nick Haygarth. The latter two were researching their book on cave history.

Kathy, Grace, Hugh and I started at the upstream entrance and worked our way through the cave. Liz only did the first bit before having to return to the car to hang around minding Dexter who was having his afternoon nap. The rest of us went for a very thorough investigation. I noticed that the water levels had changed dramatically with streams where once there were none and other areas looking just the same as ever. Some logs were gone! We managed to visit most of the cave but somehow, mysteriously we didn't meet Debbie Hunter's party in the cave. Eventually Liz and Dexter met us over near Honeycomb 2 and followed us back via the most straight forward route.

We then headed over to Wet Cave where a red 4WD flat-tray ute was parked. It seemed to be in attendance of a fire on the hill above the cave. As we approached I

noticed someone slumped over in the passengers seat possibly asleep. I walked around to them and said "giddyay" just to elicit a response. (I was a bit concerned because one of my great uncles, who was a farmer, died whilst just sitting in his truck out the fields somewhere. I had this horrible recollection!) When the woman came to life she asked; "Where are you going?" "To Wet Cave." I replied. "No you're not!" she informed me. "Why not?" I enquired. "Because it is private property." "Not the first seventy metres." I said and left it at that.

We all headed off to the cave and I bombed down into the streamway too early. It's a nice little streamway. Since you can't see much of the cave these days I got the party to follow me through this lovely little canyon. On the bank above us the farmer and her husband (I presume) raced to overtake us. We went into the cave a short way and then returned to where they remained sentinels on the cave.

As we passed on the way out, she thanked us for "respecting their rights". Hugh and Liz managed to engage her in a bit more conversation, some of which I overheard. My ears pricked up with "Well you're not the group that's been hassling us." I bit my tongue and didn't ask the obvious question; "Just who is hassling you?"

It seemed to me that they were the ones doing the hassling of cavers. I wondered how many cavers she had dissuaded from visiting Wet Cave due to her disinformation or intimidation. I also ducked the opportunity to ask. "Since we are so nice, and we aren't

the ones hassling you, could we possibly visit all of the cave sometime soon if we let you know in advance?".

## Not Quite Exit Cave: 1 November 2003

By Geoff Wise

**Party:** Gavin Brett, Janine McKinnon, Helen Roberts, Ric Tunney, Geoff Wise

This was supposed to be a trip into Exit for a look see, as well as do some track clearing but when we got to the D'Entrcastreux River and saw how high it was we realised that we weren't going into the cave today. While the others headed over to have a look inside the gate I had something to eat.

Then while Ric and Janine showed Helen where the river sinks, Gavin and I made a start on some bridge improvements. These involved building a handrail and fixing the end of the bridge to make getting on and off at the far end easier. Gavin found a suitable handrail lying about and we struggled to carry it from where it was to the bridge. Gavin's 'Ladies Bowsaw' (a small one with a hand guard!) struggled to make an impact so

the bigger saw was employed. We then placed it across the bridge and secured one end. Another shorter branch was needed to span the entire length of the bridge. Without any rope to finish securing the handrail we turned our attention to the dodgy bit at the far side of the bridge.

We then headed up the hill, the others were going to head into one of the other entrances to Exit. I continued up the hill clearing the track. We met up at the big tree fall at the Old Ditch Road turn off. It will be no doubt easier to re-route the track around this obstacle. We then headed out continuing to clear the track. Most of the fallen trees were cleared, however there are still some of the bigger ones that really need a chain saw to clear up. Anyone who wants to take care of those two really big logs that have been over the track for donkeys is more than welcome!

## New Feeling (Growling Swallet) 8 November 2003

By Janine McKinnon

**Party:** Ric Tunney, Gavin Brett, Andras Galambos, Janine McKinnon

Ric and I hadn't been to "New Feeling" for about 15 years and thought it was about time for another visit. We couldn't remember anything about the place (and having been there now I have a feeling that previously we didn't get past the first down climb) and neither of the others had been there before, so it was an "explore" for us all. This became abundantly obviously once we got up a climb and found ourselves in a moderately sized chamber with a lot of pretties (for June).

Everything had gone smoothly until then - the streamway was up quite a bit but was still only in the "sporting" category (i.e. you get a bit wet), and we'd had no trouble getting to this point. We had a copy of the map (and a compass).

Where we came undone though was that Jeff (Butt) had told us that he had found a way that avoided the long, horrible crawl that needed to be done to get to the Mini Khan chamber. It isn't on the main survey in the STC archive, but is shown on a supplementary survey and involves climbing up in the first large chamber, but not totally up!

So having climbed a long way up and coming out into a chamber with lots of formation, plus a large formation that looked just like a small "Begum" we immediately thought that we had just done Jeff's crawl bypass and arrived at the Khan chamber. By the way it is very unusual for the Florentine and quite pretty-well worth a visit.

So we started looking for the way on to the last little bit of passage that we "hadn't seen". We looked everywhere-up every rock pile, down every grotty little side passage, everywhere. We couldn't find the way to the passage we were looking for.

Ric found a low crawl with a bend in it and declared that it was the crawl that led TO the Khan chamber from the entrance end, and we knew we didn't need to go that way because we had Jeff Butt's "High Level Dry Bypass" to go out. It was a bit funny about that bypass - it didn't seem anywhere near as long as it needed to be to connect the two sections of the cave according to the survey. But we never doubted that we were where we thought we were! We figured the survey must be out!

Andras followed another low passage to a taped off pretty pool but didn't continue on because it couldn't be the right way - it wasn't the big passage that we were looking for!

We'd pulled out our compass and were really confused now because the passage alignment didn't fit the directions on the map. But we still didn't question where we were!

The whole place did seem smaller than the kilometre or so of passage that was on the survey. Oh well, distances can be deceptive underground can't they?

So after a very enjoyable (yes, we had fun poking about despite our bemusement) couple of hours we headed out-having run out of places to look.

The water level in the streamway had dropped slightly for the trip out but was still very wet and noisy. We regained the surface 4.5 hours after entering.

**P.S** Ric checked the survey again when we got home and had one of those "light bulb moments" and realised that if we considered that we had only got to "New Feeling Chamber" near the 14m climb, which is before the crawl on to the Mini Khan chamber and the second

*half of the series, then everything made sense and the passages we'd looked at fell into place on the survey. And that meant Andras had been following the crawl leading to the rest of the series. I have no idea where that puts Jeff's climb. We obviously didn't find it.*

*Our big mistake? First rule of bushwalking, go from the terrain to the map, NOT from the map to the terrain (i.e. where you think you are). We've never made that mistake bushwalking as we are well aware that many a walker gets lost that way. It obviously applies to cavers too! So we'll just have to go back to look at the half that we'd missed. And try and find Jeff's bypass.*

## **Pendant Pot: 15 November 2003**

By Janine McKinnon

**Party:** Gavin Brett, Ric Tunney Janine McKinnon.

After a failed attempt to bottom this cave last year (see Speleo Spiel 325) we decided to have another go. I was the only member of the previous trip on this one and neither Ric nor Gavin had been into the cave before. There were several contributing reasons why we had turned back early last time, time constraints being a factor, but the main reason was a dislike of the belay point on the 39m Pel Mel pitch. All three of us at the time thought it looked decidedly dodgy. Anyway I'd just about convinced myself that I must have been unmotivated or had the jitters that day or something and that I'd be happy with the belay if I looked at it again.

So off we went with plans to bottom. The trip went smoothly to start. Everyone got through the vertical squeeze above the first proper pitch (18m Penthouse Pitch) with no trouble and down we went; some faster than others. I had trouble actually getting down the pitch. It must have taken about 10 minutes to do the 20 odd metres.

Lessons learnt:

1. Don't believe a guy who weighs 75kgs, when you only weigh 54kgs, when he tells you the rope isn't too slow to thread your Petzl Stop fully.
2. Learn from the **last** time you did the same thing (only 2 weeks before!) on a similar (?the same?) old, fuzzy 11m Bluewater rope.

So after much struggling, particularly on the last 5m or so, to feed the rope through a couple of inches at a time, I made it down.

Meanwhile, Gavin had been poking about looking for the way on, the direction to which I vaguely remembered, and appeared to have found it. As it was roughly where I remembered we were fairly confident.

The passage down Pandemonium Rift was uneventful, although we were all very careful how we moved and in particularly dangerous spots only moved one at a time. This was to avoid the chance of dropping one of the many loose rocks on a person below. This cave certainly hasn't been done often enough for the passage of lots of bods to have cleared out all the loose stuff.

Once people start down the vertical part of the rift proper the danger of serious injury from rocks dislodged further up in the rock pile is significant. We used a rope as a handline to pass packs down the 15m vertical rift and it was quite an easy free climb down. I started off using my Croll as a safety on the rope on the down climb, but it was more of a nuisance than a help so I took it off and didn't use it again in the rift.

Shortly thereafter we reached the top of Pel Mel pitch. This involves a traverse out along a narrow ledge above the 39m pitch to the only belay point we could find. This is a large piece of flow stone projecting off the side of the vertical wall. Gavin went out to it first and expressed initial disquiet. Ric had a look and was thoroughly unimpressed. I decided it didn't look any better on a second viewing. It has obviously (rope marks over the top) been used before but we couldn't convince ourselves to put faith in it for several reasons:

1. We couldn't find a backup, so this was going to be the only anchor to start (there is reputedly a bolt 15m down for rebelay).
2. The cave has not been done for a decade or so as far as we know, and probably only a few times since the initial exploration trips. So the nature of the belay may have changed.
3. The pitch was quite a big one, so the potential for belay failure may not be worse but certainly seemed subjectively so!
4. The fault that we could see running the full length of the contact between the flowstone and the bedrock did not inspire confidence.
5. The rock in the cave generally was of poor and crumbly nature which again didn't encourage us to believe the flowstone was necessarily securely attached.
6. If the belay gave way and fell as someone was on the pitch it was big enough almost certainly to kill them, even provided that the rebelay 15m down held.

So after 20 minutes of discussion along the lines of "are we just being wimps or not" we couldn't convince ourselves to use it. If one of us had thought it was OK they might have convinced the other two, but we all felt the same way. So it was pike No.2 for me at this spot.

The trip out was smooth and uneventful. Using a rope to pack haul up Pandemonium Rift made the free climb

easy and probably quicker. We will probably do a trip to place a bolt at Pel Mel pitch head during the coming year.

## **Slaughterhouse Pot/Growling Swallet: 18 November 2003**

By Janine McKinnon

**Party:** Paul Nelson, Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon.

The purpose of this trip was two-fold. Jeff [Butt] wanted the log book in Slaughterhouse Pot changed and we had a visiting caver from California staying with us and it was a good cave to take him to.

The trip down Slaughterhouse was fairly swift with no problems. Paul said it was very reminiscent of Californian caving. The log book showed that the last trip through (presuming people fill it in) had been a trip we ran in March, eight months earlier.

Paul was quite impressed when we descended the final pitch to join Growling and this was expressed in much photography (or some anyway). We had a quick look around and up into the Trapdoor waterfall coming in and then started the familiar run through to the Windy Rift.

Only things weren't quite regular. At the first ladder down-climb I discovered the ladder lying full stretch back up along the passage, covered in plant debris. Obviously a lot of water had come up the pitch and had redirected the ladder. The ladder was OK once we redirected it so pointed downwards rather than upwards. So we carried on, hoping the second ladder would still be in place. We were worried it may have been lifted off the rock spike at its top. Luckily it was still dangling down the pitch and no further excitements were had until we got to the Windy Rift. I went down first and was rather surprised to find that there was no way out of the rift.

I had a look around for a minute and a think; was I having some sort of mental fugue or was that a new rock I was looking at where I was meant to exit? Nope, it definitely wasn't meant to be there. No way past. I tried pushing, shoving and kicking and when all that failed I called on the big guns - Ric. Well, bigger than me guns anyway. Being the smart boy that he is, he used applied physics rather than the (not so) brute strength I had tried and managed to get the rock to roll a half a revolution, which also moved it DOWN a few more inches. This gave enough space to slide over the top and out of the rift. So now the Windy Rift has an added piece of agility required just to keep us on our toes (Ric tried to remove it with a hammer and chisel on a trip with SUSS in December but was unsuccessful. Plan C, crowbar, will be tried next time we're in there, unless someone else wants to have a go first?). Getting out of the Windy Rift was a big relief as (for the first time ever, isn't it always so?) we had only bought 1 pair of SRT gear for all 3 of us-not expecting to actually NEED it. So it could have been a long trip back out Slaughterhouse.

It does show that the cave floods in severe conditions – up from the Growling Swallet sump, through the Windy Rift, up two ladders and then across the bottom of Slaughterhouse into Trapdoor streamway. From the survey, this is a height of 50m!

The trip up the streamway was leisurely with lots of viewing and photo stops. Total time underground was 4½ hours.

## **Findings from the Logbooks installed in Midnight Hole and Slaughterhouse Pot.**

By Jeff Butt

### **Background**

As you may know, P-hangers were installed in Midnight Hole in August 2001. From experience overseas (*e.g. see Caves and Caving, Vol 90, p 9-note re: Giants Hole*), it has been found that in some popular pull-through caves there has been excessive wear on P-hangers due to rope abrasion. In an attempt to gauge this type of wear in Midnight Hole against the number of trips occurring, a logbook was installed at the base of the first pitch in July 2002.

STC also for a number of years has kept Slaughterhouse Pot permanently rigged, so as to facilitate an easy sporting trip for members and visitors. The 11 mm Bluewater ropes (yes, somewhat stiff) are replaced approximately yearly. Again, in an attempt to gauge the number of trips using occurring, a logbook was installed at the base of the first pitch in August 2002. These ropes are again about ready for replacement, if anyone is keen, then please see me!

The current plan is to replace the logbooks approximately yearly, preferably in the winter when the number of trips is much less. If anyone is keen to do the logbook changeover, then please see me!

### **Results**

The first 'cycle' has just finished, with both logbooks being replaced. The use figures from these are shown in the table on the next page.

Cave Logbook	Date Installed	Date Retrieved	Number of trips/people	Number of trips made by STC/others
Midnight Hole	21/7/02	29/6/03	8/34	3/5
Slaughterhouse Pot	23/8/02	18/11/03	5/24	5/0

Of course, not everyone will fill in a logbook; but the recorded entries do show that Midnight Hole is frequented by other groups, whereas Slaughterhouse Pot is solely visited by STC parties. Most of the Midnight Hole trips occurred over the summer period.

On my last trip down Midnight Hole in November 2003, some polishing of the P-hangers was evident, especially on the longer pitches (p3, p5 and p6). As a group moves through the cave the ropes tend to become increasingly gritty, resulting in greater abrasion potential.

Gavin Brett reports that on a very recent trip down Midnight Hole (January 2004), that the wear on the P-hangers on the lower pitch is of the order of a millimetre, and that there are a full page of entries in the logbook. So, it seems that Midnight Hole has again seen a lot of use over the summer and that the P-hangers may indeed be starting to show significant wear. Note, that before you use any P-hanger you should check it! If the diameter has been worn down to 6 mm, then the P-hanger is no-longer safe and should be replaced.

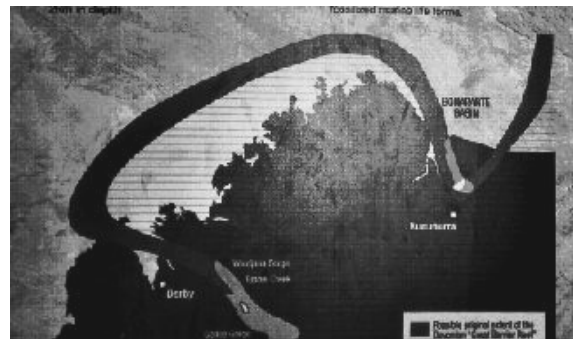
It seems that we may have to install sacrificial maillons with captive rings made from large diameter (10 mm) stock on these P-hangers. Doing this will be significantly easier than replacing the P-hangers.

## A Brief Sojourn to The Kimberleys and the Caves of Sweat!-July 2003

By Jeff Butt

As it happened in late July I found myself winging north to Darwin, and then southwest to Kunanurra where I rendezvoused with a friendly Caver by the name of John Cugley and his friendly Blue Heeler, Cobber. Via email I had teed up with John for a weekend of caving in the Ning Bing Range over July 25-27.

Later on I learned about the Devonian limestone reef that runs in a 'horseshoe' from Kunanurra, out to sea paralleling the coast and then runs back inland near Derby. Mostly this 2 km thick reef is underground or undersea, but just north of Kunanurra it surfaces as the Ning Bing Range, and east of Derby it surfaces to give the Napier Range containing Windjana Gorge, Tunnel Creek and Geike Gorge; all places I'd visit later on.



*The Devonian Reef of Limestone in the Kimberleys*

Anyway, we headed out to the northern Ning Bing Range, about an hour and a half's drive north of Kunanurra. Despite the heat there was running water and a swimming hole (crocodile free!) at Gorge Camp, ideal for me, a sweltering

southerner. Despite the heat of the day, the evenings were rather cool; I'd almost underestimated how many clothes to bring. The night sky was magnificent with many shooting stars.



*Boabs on the flanks of the Ning Bing Range*

The outcropping limestone took the form of ~50 m high range containing many pinnacles and it was also liberally studded with Boab trees. From a distance it was obvious that the terrain up on top was somewhat difficult, very gryky and full of razor sharp rillen karren. The surrounding plain, studded with kapok trees with their yellow flowers was much friendlier.

First task of the day was to phototag some entrances. The nature of the terrain meant that we walked around on the plain and not on the tops. The entrances here were numbered with a small metal disk (~2 cm diameter) surrounded with an annular reflective ring, making it about 3 cm in diameter in total. The tag was glued to the rock, quite a bit easier than drilling and mechanically attaching as we do. Most of the caves we saw were quite small, very linear in nature (forming along grykes) and well decorated, but dry. (In the wet season they are obviously quite wet!) Quite a few contained bat colonies; there were a number of species inhabiting these caves. Any caves containing bats were given a wide berth.



*Razor sharp Rillen Karren on the tops of the Ning Bing Range.*

sewerage pipes running along the floors of the passages. We encountered several species of bats, including the huge and somewhat off-putting (that's when you are in a small passage and the bats want to fly out!) ghost bats. There was quite a bit of formation around, some small pitches and other areas of interest. It would be a good survey project, but alas not for us today on our limited time.

Eventually we made camp, and the swimming hole. After a swim we checked out a couple of other small nearby caves containing some interesting features; aboriginal paintings in one cave; and a 'chocolate biscuit' like patina surface on some rocks in another cave, this patina is apparently due to the fur polishing and toilet habits of the resident wallabies.

Next day we headed ~ 20 km south to the Southern Ning Bing Range, where more work had been done. The terrain here was flatter and less gryky in nature. Our task was to head to BFC (Big F'n. Cave) to do some surveying in the upper levels. In the wet season BFC (~ km in length) totally fills with water, but in the dry it's a dry but moist cave. BFC was like a real cave, a single entrance and then a dark passage heading off. John had done some surveying in here before, but wanted to do some work in the upper levels. Conditions in these levels (often crawly) were noticeably hotter than in the main part of the cave; the sweat just liberally poured off me in these 26°C, 100% humidity conditions. I can tell you that it was so hot that damn cave was sweating; the walls and formations all were wet. Keeping the fluid up was the biggest problem. After a couple of hours we had surveyed about 150 m of cave, but we'd reached our heat tolerance and had run out of water, so retreated. The lower levels were remarkably cooler and the water stash left there much welcomed.



*John adjacent to roots of Fig trees in KNI75*

By the way, caving garb equated to shorts, kneepads and a T-shirt. Underground temperatures were in the low to mid 20's. With minimal protective clothing, one tends to cave with care.

As the afternoon wore on, John suggested we try a route back over the top of the Karst to camp. According to John not much work had been done up on top on account of the nature of the terrain. The going was awkward; we were often stopped by grykes and other obstacles. Cobber did a remarkable job walking on the rillen karren; I wondered how his foot pads held up, as my feet were feeling it through boots!

At one stage we were stopped by an impressively wide ~12 m deep gryke. After a bit of tooing and froing, we found a way into this gryke cave system. This new cave was to become KNI75, and our cursory wanderings showed it to be ~500 m or more long. Parts of the passages had daylight overhead, and there were many daylight holes elsewhere. Generally the passages were large and easy walking and had a wonderful through breeze. Intersections with other passages tended to be at right angles and the roots of fig trees looked like



*Jeff GPS'ing the entrance of KNI75*

Cobber was patiently waiting for us at the entrance. We then headed off for a bit of a wander to Siggins Springs, which was not much more than a cattle polluted soak. Across the way was an amazing collapse entrance, leading to a large cavern about 2 m high. The entire ceiling was adorned with life-size drawings of kangaroos and other animals. A most impressive display that wouldn't photograph well.

Again we opted for a walk over the top of the Karst back to the car. This was pretty punishing in the heat as we'd both run out of water. We spied a couple of interesting holes, but nothing too promising.



With welcome relief we were back at the car and rehydrated. Back at Kunanurra some beer was welcome as we celebrated a fine little weekend in the ‘Caves of Sweat’.

I was also interested to see how John documents the caves, phototag photographs etc. He uses some software called Speleobase written by a fellow called Paul de Bie. This software is freely available on the web at <http://users.skynet.be/avalon> For dealing with his GPS data Ozziexplorer is John’s choice, and John also showed me some nifty photo-stitch software for combining overlapping digital photos. It was very snazzy in the demos he showed me. John uses Panintshop Pro for doing his surveys; I was interested in this as I use Clarisdraw (Macintosh) but am about to make the transition to a PC platform.



*Windjana Gorge cuts through the limestone Range*

After leaving Kunanurra, I headed off on a ‘tour de Kimberley’s with some other friends. We did meet the limestone again, in fact it’s hard not too as you drive west towards Derby you have to cross the Napier Range (a linear and very much ‘Wall of China’ like feature).

As a tourist, you are then led to Windjana Gorge, Tunnel Creek and Geike Gorge. Despite being very busy with tourists, these places were well worth a visit.



*‘Boneyard’ solution holes at Windjana Gorge*

Windjana Gorge, a freshwater crocodile infested break in the range is pretty exquisite with the ~80 m high limestone cliffs on either side of you. The walls of the gorge were studded with interesting looking holes and drip-stone features. There were several small ‘boneyard’ style caves accessible at ground level, which I couldn’t resist poking my nose into.

Tunnel Creek must be the most visited (~ hundreds of people/day in the dry season) wild cave in the country. The car park held ~50 cars, 5 buses when we were there. Masses of tourists take this water wading, torch-light tour through the range



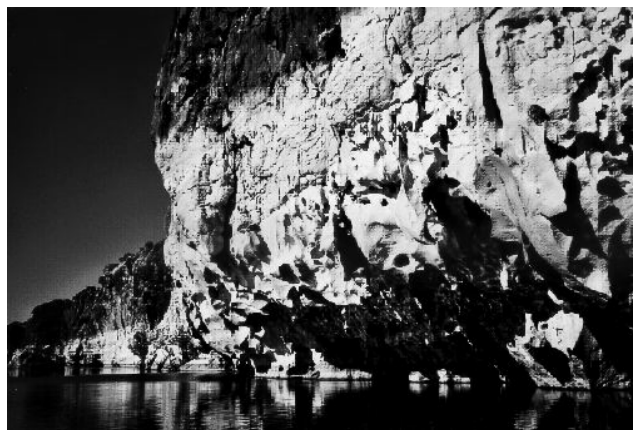
*Visitors in Tunnel Creek Cave*

following the course of Tunnel Creek. The notorious aboriginal ‘Pigeon’ used this cave as his hideout in the old days. The cave contains several interesting side passages half way through that aren’t on the tourist drag.

Colonies of fruit bats also hang out here, it’s definitely not a quiet place in their vicinity.

Geike Gorge containing the mighty Fitzroy River was also very impressive. This limestone cliff-lined river has a ‘white-washed’ high water mark about 10 m up the walls, showing the normal river level during the wet season. The Gorge is about 150 m wide, so that equates to a very large amount (~ 30000 cumec) of water flowing sea-ward. There were many solution holes in the limestone, but no sign of any real caves in our short visit.

All up, the Kimberley’s was a thoroughly interesting place, but the heat is too much for a lover of the cold like me. I’ll stick with Tassie!



*The washed limestone sides of the Fitzroy River*

## **P-Hanger Project-Status Report-21 July 2003**

By Jeff Butt

Since I'm about to head off to the mainland for a month or two, it seems like a good time to give an update on the P-Hanger project.

Since the inception of our P-hanging work, we have installed 57 P-hangers (Midnight Hole-12, Owl Pot-9, Mini Martin-6, Old Ditch Road-8 and Khazad Dum-22). Of these, we have formally load tested all but one. We have not had any failures at all; our confidence in both these hangers and our installation techniques is thus high.

A formal register of all P-hangers installed; the installers, the batch of resin used, when they were inspected/load tested is being kept; it is located in the Gear Store if anyone is interested. Periodically, I send an update to Parks and Wildlife.

Rigging details of all installed P-hangers have been published in the Speleo Spiel.

### **2002/2003 Year**

'Southern Cave Care' was formed, this is a member group of the Parks and Wildlife 'Wildcare' scheme. To join this group one just indicates this when renewing your Annual Parks Pass. In August 2002 a Grant application was put in to Wildcare, with the support of Mark Bryce (District Manager-Parks and Wildlife) and Ian Houshold (Nature Conservation Branch-DPIWE), to fund this project. We were hoping that a decision would quickly follow and that we could do most of this work over the summer. However, this was not to be the case, and it was not until February 2003 we were advised that we had been successful in obtaining \$1345 (to cover the installation of 50 P-Hangers only; we were 'knocked back' on travel, rope and some rigging hardware). Then we had to wait till P-hangers could be imported from the UK, which meant that we lost the summer.

Despite it now being in the midst of winter, we have installed 22 P-hangers. At times we have been hampered by the wet conditions.

A condition of our Wildcare Grant was that each installed hanger has to be formally load tested. To facilitate this, in April, Parks and Wildlife purchased (~\$2500) a Hilti 4 Hydraulic Bolt Tester. We have put this tester to good use testing P-hangers.

Since April we have done 10 trips, involving 27 people and around 330 person hours of time. The average trip duration has been around 7 hours underground, 12 hours from home to home.

The budget of \$1345 has been overspent by \$38.50, but we have materials for the installation of the remaining P-hangers.

The main reason for going over the budget is that extra mixing nozzles for the resin are prohibitively expensive at ~\$6 each. Sometimes a nozzle can only be used for 1 installation (e.g. when the pitches are well separated); but generally with some good planning one can get half a dozen hangers installed with one nozzle.

The materials cost of each P-hanger installed amounts to about \$26.50 (\$20.50 for the P-hanger; \$6 for glue and nozzles). There are of course other costs; our 18 mm drill bit and the batteries for the drill are aging; these will need to be replaced next year. And of course, there's the wear and tear on our caving gear, cars and bodies!

Plans for the rest of the year include Dwarrowdelf and Tassy Pot, both caves have experienced a degree of 'bolt-rash' in the past. Fortunately, compared to K.D., the jobs in these caves is much simpler.

### **2003/2004 Forward Planning**

In September I intend to put in another grant application for ~\$1200 to cover the installation of P-hangers in other 'Popular caves in need', i.e. other popular caves that have either bolt-rash and/or some defective anchors.

Caves that I personally think meet this requirement include;

- Big Tree Pot

- Milk Run (has stainless bolts on most pitches, but only one per pitch)

- Growling Swallet (Avons Aven has rusty old spits)

- Slaughterhouse Pot (the bottom pitch has one good glue-in, but this could do with a second)

- Ice Tube (some years back mechanically fixed stainless steel bolts were bought for this purpose; only about half of these got installed, so we should finish the job off; perhaps augmenting the remaining bolts with P-hangers??)

I do know of some other caves where the anchors could be improved; but that's a lower priority at the moment. If anyone else knows of any high priorities, then please let me know; so we can incorporate them into our forward planning.

#### **December Update**

Due to some personal health issues, things have slipped a little bit. However, in late November I put together and submitted another Wildcare Grant Application; asking for \$1095 to install 30 P-hangers in 2004.

I'm pleased to say that at the December 2003 Wildcare Board of Management meeting this application was largely successful; our application was granted subject to a reduced amount of \$1059.

Now we just need some trips to do the work!

## **STC WaReHoUsE SaLeS**

#### **Publications**

- "Caving Safety 1 Manual", 92 pages, covers Planning, Safety, Maps, Gear, Rigging, Emergencies etc. \$20.00

#### **Gear**

- CAVE PACKS, cylindrical in shape, made from Heavy duty Ripstop PVC material, double thickness material at wear points, strong seams (triple sewn) and all critical stitching is on the inside (to protect it from wear), drain holes, large diameter eyelet's and a simple 'draw cord' closure as well as adjustable straps.  
**Now featuring a handle on the side to facilitate carrying the pack in low passages.**  
Strongly made. Available in either Yellow with different colour trims (navy, green, red, black etc.). So, they don't all look the same! Available in two sizes,
  - the "STANDARD" (25 litres: 23 cm diameter, 61 cm long) and \$55.00
  - the "SUPER" (31 litres: 25 cm diameter, 63 cm long). \$65.00but LARGER OR SMALLER-SIZED PACKS can be made to order, JUST ASK. POA
- Aluminium Bars for Rappel Racks. \$5.00
- BATA full-length Gumboots, Size 9, Green with Orange Sole, and steel toecaps. \$20.00

#### **Tape**

- **NEW STOCK....**Edelrid 25 mm Supertube tubular tape. Ideal for rigging, chest harnesses etc. (White) \$1.50 per m
- **NEW STOCK....**5 cm (2") flat tape. Ideal for harnesses, rigging, gear bags, belts etc. (Black or White) \$1.20 per m

#### **Safety**

- **NEW STOCK....**Edelrid 10.5 mm dynamic rope (for cows tails, safety loop) \$4.50 per m, e.g. Cowstail \$12
- Space Blankets (don't be caught underground without one!) **Just one left.** \$4.00 each

#### **Lighting**

- Yuasa Gel-cells, 6 Volt, 7 Amp-Hour \$24.00 each
- Metal Lamp Brackets, complete with fixing rivets and cable keeper. \$7.50 each
- Used Metal Lamp Brackets and cable keeper. Good condition. Just need to add some small bolts. \$4.00 each
- Used Plastic Lamp Brackets. Good condition and comes with fixing screws and a cable keeper. \$3.00 each
- Jets (21 litres/hr) for Petzl kaboom (just a couple left) \$5.00 each

#### **Old Rope.....sorry, it's all been sold....but there will be more in the future!**

If you need any of the above please contact Jeff Butt on (03) 62 238620 (H), or [jeffbutt@netspace.net.au](mailto:jeffbutt@netspace.net.au), or write to us: SOUTHERN TASMANIAN CAVERNEERS, P.O. BOX 416, SANDY BAY 7006.

## Current STC Membership

Given name	Family name	Expiry date	Postal Address	Phone (H)	Phone (W)	Mobile	E-mail
<b>Members</b>							
Damian	Bidgood	31 Mar 2004	c/- Police S&R, 76 Federal St, North Hobart 7000		6230 2267		damian.bidgood@police.tas.gov.au
Claire	Brett	31 Mar 2004	4 Clutha Pl, South Hobart 7004	6223 1717		0419 731 969	claireb@keypoint.com.au
Gavin	Brett	31 Mar 2004	4 Clutha Pl, South Hobart 7004	6223 1717			gavin@keypoint.com.au
Andrew	Briggs	31 Mar 2004	2/28 Sawyer Ave, West Moonah 7008	6228 9956	6220 3133		andrew.briggs@hobart.tased.edu.au
Kathryn	Bunton	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 198, North Hobart 7002				
Stephen	Bunton	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 198, North Hobart 7002	6278 2398	6210 2200		sbunton@friends.tas.edu.au
Jeff	Butt	31 Mar 2004	22 Clutha Pl, South Hobart 7004	6223 8620	6223 8620		jeffbutt@netspace.net.au
Liz	Canning	31 Mar 2004	124 Wentworth St, South Hobart 7004	6223 7088	6233 6176		Elizabeth.Canning@dpiwe.tas.gov.au
David	Chiam	31 Mar 2004	40 Wytet St, West Launceston 7250	6331 1653			davidchiam@dodo.com.au
Arthur	Clarke	31 Mar 2004	17 Darling Pde, Mt. Stuart 7000	6228 2099	6298 1107		arthurc@southcom.com.au
Matt	Cracknell	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 14, Geeveston 7116		6298 3209	0409 438 924	crowdang@yahoo.co.uk
Geoff	Crossley	31 Mar 2004	44 Pradham St, Farrer, ACT 2607	02 6286 1113		0417 437 931	gkcrossley@bigpond.com
Gerry	Doherty	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 315, Geeveston 7116	6297 6219			gerdoh7@iprimus.com.au
Rolan	Eberhard	-	18 Fergusson Ave, Tinderbox 7054	6229 3039	6233 6455		rolane@dpiwe.tas.gov.au
Stefan	Eberhard	31 Mar 2004	2 Churchill Ave, Margaret River, WA 6285		08 9757 7411		stefaneberhard@margaretriver.com
Hugh	Fitzgerald	31 Mar 2004	124 Wentworth St, South Hobart 7004	6223 7088	6226 1740		Hugh.Fitzgerald@utas.edu.au
Andras	Galambos	31 Mar 2004	6 Lanena St, Bellerive 7018	6244 4769			baandi@netspace.net.au
Jason	Gardner	31 Mar 2004	5233 Huon Highway, Geeveston 7116	6297 0070	6298 3209		
Albert	Goede	-	69 Esplanade, Rose Bay 7015	6243 7319			goede@tassie.net.au
Anna	Greenham	31 Mar 2004	57 Quayle St, Battery Point 7004	6224 7566		0408 639 132	annagreenham@doctors.org.uk
Kent	Henderson	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 332, Williamstown, VIC 3016	9398 0598	9398 0598	0407 039 887	kenthen@optushome.com.au
Andrew	Hogarth	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 21, Lune River 7109	6298 1771			
Alan	Jackson	31 Mar 2004	6 Wignall St, North Hobart 7000	6231 0968		0419 245 418	ajackson@lmrs.com.au
Max	Jeffries	-	18 South St, Maydena 7140				
Sarah	Joyce	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 350, New Norfolk 7140	6261 1864		0438 255 259	sjoyce@postoffice.utas.edu.au
Ron	Mann	-	10 Swinton Pl, Rose Bay 7015	6243 0060	6220 5246		
Janine	McKinnon	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 1440, Lindisfame 7015	6243 5415			jmckinnon@tassie.net.au
Greg	Middleton	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 269, Sandy Bay 7006	6223 1400	6233 2336		gregmi@dpiwe.tas.gov.au
Dean	Morgan	-	15 Cades Dve, Kingston 7050	6234 3113	6234 5061	0438 294 405	dmorgan@tesa.com.au
Dave	Nichols	31 Mar 2004	1/2 Excell Lne, South Hobart 7004	6224 4737	6226 1831		D.Nichols@utas.edu.au
Heather	Nichols	31 Mar 2004	13 Willow Ave, Kingston 7050	6229 4362		0414 294 362	nichols5@iprimus.com.au
Steve	Phipps	31 Mar 2004	133 Waterworks Rd, Dynnyme 7005	6223 3939	6226 2251		sjhipps@utas.edu.au
Tom	Porritt	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 60, Millaa Millaa, QLD 4886	07 4056 5921			
Helen	Roberts	15 Jan 2004	10 Napoleon St, Battery Point 7004	6223 4449		0418 432 221	helenroberts@yahoo.com
Phil	Rowell	31 Mar 2004	c/- 22 Clutha Pl, South Hobart 7004				
Chris	Sharple	31 Mar 2004	GPO Box 1941, Hobart 7001	6239 6669	6239 6669		chris@sharple.com.au
Aleks	Terauds	-	60 Belair St, Howrah 7018	6244 3406	6244 3406		
Richard	Tunney	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 1440, Lindisfame 7015	6243 5415			rtunney@tassie.net.au
Keith	Vanderstaay	31 Mar 2004	754 Hastings Caves Rd, Hastings 7109		6298 3209	0429 983 209	hastings.caves@bigpond.com
Trevor	Wailes	31 Mar 2004	214 Summerleas Rd, Kingston 7054	6229 1382	6229 1382		trite@ozemail.com.au
Mick	Williams	31 Mar 2004	PO Box 288, Geeveston 7116	6297 6368			
Geoffrey	Wise	31 Mar 2004	117 Upper Maud St, Ulverstone 7315	6425 3645		0408 108 984	Geoff.Wise@don.tased.edu.au
<b>Friends of STC</b>							
Bob	Cockerill	-	14 Aruma St, Mornington Heights 7018	6244 2439	6233 6832		
Mike	Cole	-	1/17 Twentysecond Ave, Sawtell, NSW 2425	02 9544 0207		0408 500 053	mikecole@tpg.com.au
Brian	Collin	-	66 Wentworth St, South Hobart 7004	6223 1920			
Chris	Davies	-	3 Alfred St, New Town 7008	6228 0228			
Therese	Gatenby	-	PO Box 153, Orford 7190			0428 391 432	pelicansrest@yahoo.com.au
Steve	Harris	-	17 Derwentwater Ave, Sandy Bay 7005				
Nick	Hume	-	8/71 Mt Stuart Rd, Mt. Stuart 7000	6231 0348			
Phil	Jackson	-	8 Malunna Rd, Lindisfame 7015	6243 7038			
Barry	James	-	52 Edge Rd, Lenah Valley 7008	6228 4787			
Kevin	Kieman	-	FPU, Royden House, Patrick St, Hobart 7000	6239 1494	6233 7716		Kevin.Kieman@utas.edu.au
Stuart	Nicholas	-	PO Box 24, North Hobart 7002	6234 3799		0409 781 248	stunich@pin6.com.au

All Membership Enquiries should be addressed to the Treasurer.



