

SPIEL 342

May - June 2004

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Front Cover:

Claire Brett gets down and dirty in Newdegate Cave — isn't it disgraceful what they would trash in the old days! (Photo by Gavin Brett)

Back Cover:

The joys of wet caving in NZ — Janine goes for a swim in Ripper Cave (Photo by Ric Tunney)

STC was formed from the *Tasmanian Caverneering 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

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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

Spiel 342 hot off the presses. Don't burn your hands. Thanks to those people who have proven themselves capable of actually writing trip reports, (except Dave, whose Tassy Pot account would have to rate as my all time lowest editorial moment). May/June 2004 appears to have been quite an active period, mainly thanks to the fabulous Midwinter Extrav. (many thanks again Steve, Robyn and Arthur!)

I have received several scathing comments on the incidence of 'silly' back cover photos for recent spiels, thus you can expect to see many more.

Enjoy the read and keep the reports and photos coming, (and songs...) I believe Joe will be doing a performance of 'The Good Deed' in the not too distant future.

Alan Jackson

Forward Program

Social Meeting (Republic Bar).....21st June
General Meeting (Republic Bar).....4th August
Social Meeting (Republic Bar).....18th August
Florentine Frenzy (S. Phipps)21st/22nd August
General Meeting (Republic Bar).....1st September
Mole Creek Madness (S. Phipps).....21st-24th October

Ric has a Kubla permit

Tassy Pot – check with Gavin, Dave or Alan
New leads abound!!

Anywhere! – There are several thousand caves in Tasmania, so if any of the beginners, or old hands, want to go and give any style of cave a crack, then give one of the old farts about the club a hoy and we'll make sure it happens. There can be no excuses for not caving!



Stuff 'n Stuff

FINAL CALL FOR STC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL. There are a few stragglers who haven't renewed their membership yet (which expired at the end of March 2004). If you are unsure please check the second last page of the Spiel to see if you are listed as a paid up member. If not, please send your cheque to me as soon as possible. Also, if your contact details have changed or if you have any other membership queries, please let me know.

Thank you

Claire Brett (Treasurer)

CORRECTION/APOLOGY. The Editor would like to stand corrected and ashamed for failing to acknowledge photo credits to Arthur Clarke for the double page photographic spread celebrating the life of Jeff Butt in issue 341. If anyone can think of a suitable punishment for such a heinous travesty of justice, then please make it known.

GEAR STORE WORKING BEES. As some of you may have noticed, there has been quite a bit of activity going on up at the old and new gear stores in Clutha Place. Most of the club gear is now situated under Gavin's house in various states of disorganisation. Thanks to all those who dug, lifted and sorted. Further activities will be advertised on the list server.

DAVE RASCH would like it known that if you rearrange the letters in his name you get... "Caves Hard".

NEW MEETING VENUE. After the inaugural STC pub crawl, organised by 'our ever-social Social secretary', Phippsy, a new meeting venue has been chosen (required due to the increasing popularity of Shippies as a restaurant). Meetings will now be held at the Republic Bar, on the corner of Burnett and Elizabeth Streets, North Hobart. Business meetings will be held in a private area called the 'Green Room' – first (green!) door on the right after coming in the main entrance. Social meetings will be located in the pub itself at a booked table somewhere. The Green Room will generally be available for social meetings should the need arise for more privacy or a slide show etc... The Republic Bar has a great selection of beers on tap and is the first smoke free bar in Tasmania (so now we don't have to all die from passive smoking – it just keeps getting better!) We will trial the new venue for a month or two and then discuss any issues that may arise from the change. Our first official gathering there will be the next social meeting on the 21st June. For more info, contact Phippsy.

Waitomo Wanderings: April/May 2004

Janine McKinnon

Party: Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon

Ric and I had decided that it was about time we visited the North Island of New Zealand (we've been to the South often) and had a look at what caving was like at Waitomo. This area has a reputation for lots of well decorated and streamway caves. No-one else in STC

was interested in going but as the area was supposed to comprise generally fairly short (2-3 hours), mainly horizontal caves (many with 1 pitch or a Tomo entrance the only vertical bits) we figured we were capable of doing them alone.

We had planned on arriving at our “base camp”, the Hamilton Tomo Group’s (HTG) hut on Friday (16/4) the day after we arrived in Hamilton. Unfortunately we had got an email the day before we left saying that there was a group of 33 Venturers staying there till Monday and we were welcome to try and squeeze in but... So we decided to delay our arrival a couple of days and found some sight seeing to do!

We arrived Monday morning and did our first cave (the main streamway of Gardner’s Gut) that afternoon.

Some useful information:

The HTG Hut:

The HTG hut is located about 2 kms from the village of Waitomo. “Hut” is a poor description, as it comprises a complex of three buildings. There is accommodation for approx. 30 people in several (?6) rooms but this is flexible as two of the rooms have 2-tier sleeping platforms, and we all know you can squeeze an infinite number of people onto a sleeping platform. Some rooms have 4 bunks each and one room has 2. (We grabbed this so we wouldn’t have to share if other groups arrived). The bunks all have a vinyl mattress and a vinyl pillow but there is no other bedding available. You need to bring your sleeping bag.

There is a fully-equipped kitchen (fridge, microwave, oven/stove, cutlery, crockery, pots, even a wok etc), dining area, and a common room with slow combustion wood heater, all in a separate building to the sleeping quarters (separated only by a 3m gap but great for keeping the noise of any lively souls away from those who’d rather sleep!).

There are several toilets and showers, a washing machine and a large gear cleaning and storing area. There’s even a drying room with heater for when the weather is desperate.

The hut is open to backpackers and any other non-cavers for \$10 pp per night (\$12 on the first night) and are in the NZ Lonely Planet book, so there’s a steady trickle of travellers staying. The cost for NZSS members is \$4 pp per night flat rate. Fortunately, we’ve both been NZSS members for years.

Going Caving:

A few of the caves are on reserves but no permission is needed to go to these. There are 10 or so caves that the Department of Conservation (DOC) has some sort of interest in (some on private land, some on reserves) and they request you tell them details of your visit. This is done at the Museum of Caves in Waitomo and can be done before or after a visit.

Most of the caves are on private farm land and permission is required from the landowner to go there. This is usually not a problem. There is a list of cave names, the landowner’s name and contact phone number in a book at the hut, as well as a free phone.

There are lots of cave survey maps at the hut to help decide which caves you want to visit.

The current hut warden, Pigeon, is a caver and has much useful information about the caves. Pigeon has a

unique sense of humour, so getting clear information out of him can be interesting at times though!

The NZers do not tag caves or in any way mark tracks or locations so finding the correct hole to go in can be difficult at times.

There is no information at the hut on precise cave locations.

Cave temperatures are warmer than Tas - at a guess around 15°C at the time of our visit. Water temperatures were significantly higher than usual in our caves.

Gardners Gut - 19/4.

We had been told that Pigeon could give us all the information and directions we needed to go caving here, but unfortunately he was away. Luckily Kieran McKay (a well known NZ exploration caver and professional outdoor adventure guide) was staying at the hut and getting ready for a group of trainee outdoor guides who were going to stay at the hut for the week to do a cave leadership course with Kieran. Despite being extremely busy Kieran took the time to show us the large survey map of “Gardners” and give directions on how to get to the cave and ideas on which parts would be good to do as a starter (it’s quite a large, multi-level system). Also, Keiran gave us locations of about a dozen caves he reckoned we’d enjoy. This list formed the basis of our next three weeks caving.

The cave has at least 7 entrances and we had chosen to go in via one of the two Zweihölle entrances which lead to some upper levels. It’s a 20min walk to the resurgence entrance from the Aranui Arch carpark. From here we headed straight up the hill about 100m. There were a few dolines here, but one had steps into it! This little clue was one of the few times in finding caves in this area that there was some confirmation we were in the right place.



Gardners Gut Cave. *Photo Ric Tunney*

These old upper levels contained a lot of good formations but have been heavily trogged. A short way into the cave a small passage to the left followed by a drop through a hole in the floor led via a short climb to large decorated passage. We walked for 100m along these higher levels before reaching a short (10m) pitch which dropped us into the streamway level.

We had decided to see how far up the streamway we could get on this first recce trip. It was easy walking for

several hundred metres, with occasional waist-deep to chest-deep pools to wade. We made quick progress, admiring the lovely light, fawn-coloured, horizontally-bedded, clean-washed limestone.



Gardners Gut Cave. Photo Ric Tunney

About 500m upstream, the nature of the streamway changed slightly to constitute winding, sculpted passage with frequent scour pools. The polishing of the rock walls and floor was exquisite. We decided we would have to come back here for some photography. A little further on and the nature of the cave changed again to narrow serpentine passage. At about 2 kms into the cave we passed a side passage on the right which led to a back entrance. We followed this up to near the “Cleft of the Orcs” entrance. We then retraced our steps. About 600m from the entrance we saw a pile of gear near a climb and realised that Kieran must have his students in an upper level so we climbed up and followed a muddy narrow passage for several hundred metres. When we arrived at a squeeze we decided we weren’t interested enough to continue so returned to the main streamway. There was more beautiful water sculptured rock in the section between the descent from the Z Weihölle entrance passage and the resurgence and so more photography would need to be scheduled. At least 2 more trips in here unless the other caves were even better!

We had covered approx 5 km of passage and were underground for 5 hours.

The nature of the streamway varied from straight, high (10m) ankle deep “run along” passage through chest-deep wades, high narrow serpentine, small narrow serpentine, to crawls in the further sections. It was all non-technical, easy going and the light colour and horizontal banding of the limestone was very novel and appealing to us. An excellent cave to start our trip.

With only a short walk to the car and a 5 minute drive we were back at the hut, gear cleaned, us cleaned and having a beer by 6 PM! BLISS!

Ripper - 20/4

This was a cave that Kieran directed us to that he said was one of his favourites at Waitomo and had only been visited by 10 or so people. With directions in hand and the location marked on the topo map we set off. We were rather pleased with ourselves when after 45 minutes or so of mainly poking about in the bush we

found it. Or so we thought. We climbed down into the doline and found a small cleft in the rock with a stream running into it. The cleft was only about 2 ft wide and as I crawled in I saw that it finished less than 2m in. Looking to the left there was a vertical rift no more than a foot wide dropping about 10m down, with the stream running down it. Surely this wasn’t the way on? I looked at it for several minutes and decided that assuming I could fit down (I wasn’t too sure) with gravity assist, I would have no room to manoeuvre and couldn’t see how I would get back up. This couldn’t be it. Ric had a look and concurred.

We went home, had lunch and back to “Gardners” for a photography afternoon.



Ripper Cave. Photo Ric Tunney

NB. On discussion later in the evening we discovered that we had been at the right cave. Kieran told us that there was a ledge 2m down that you could stand on to help push yourself out of the rift and that MUCH bigger people than us had gone in. Apparently the rift widened to the left (out of sight of the top) after the ledge. By the time he and Neil Silverwood (another well known NZ exploration caver who was working as Kieran’s assistant on the course) had finished mocking us and talking about how we’d just “Fall through” the squeeze we felt, if only to save the reputation of Aussie cavers in general, we’d have to go back and have another try. Later in the trip!

Luckie Strike - 21/4

This was a stream sink in the middle of a farmer’s paddock. Much easier to find! All horizontal again. The stream had produced some beautiful smoothly sculptured rock chutes and plunge pools in the entrance series which were quite sporting, and very wet, to get down (and more so to get up on the way out). The nature of the cave then changed to be straight forward walking streamway, only a few inches deep, with quite good decoration. Several hundred metres in there were some big(ish) caverns and rock falls and the cave then changed to very narrow - squeeze dimensions - serpentine passage with the wall heavily encrusted with manganese deposits. A climb up to higher levels bypassed a swimming pool and after a couple of hundred metres traversing the higher levels we reached the point where a pitch dropped back to the streamway a dozen metres or so before the sump. We hadn’t

bothered bringing gear to do this as it was so close to the end. We were underground some 2.5 hr.

A very enjoyable cave. I just loved the pools and rock sculpting in the entrance area!

Virginia Cave - 22/4

Our first Tomo entrance cave. We again had good directions, a location on the map and permission from the farmer, so off we set at 9AM. A short (20 min) drive, a shorter walk and we were at the entrance. It had been easy to find the cave because it was in a fenced off, forested area with a stile – obvious! We spent some time deciding where we would rig from and eventually decided the main anchor would be a large pine tree 5m back from the drop on sloping ground. A rebelay was placed in a thread of rock on the RHS about 2m below the lip. We thought there was a chance of a rub just below the rebelay and put a rope protector in but on consideration as we prussiked up I don't think it was necessary.

The Tomo was a nice drop of 30m but the enjoyment was somewhat reduced by landing in calf deep mud. There was a lot of mud in this cave.

We went upstream first and after some false leads up flowstone climbs and wading waist deep in the stream to reach a sump, we found the correct way on. Up a *different* flowstone climb. We were in a short section of higher-level passage with big holes in the floor at either end. There were some reasonable formations and so we spent some time photographing. Lots of mud up here too.

We couldn't find a way down to the lower levels (apparently there is a climb down somewhere) and so we headed back to the rope to have a look downstream. This was less scenic, fairly nondescript streamway that quickly degenerated into rock fall and small, squeezezy, muddy passage. We pushed through this for a 100m or so, looking at several possible leads, until we decided this isn't what we came to NZ to do and headed back.

Time underground was 2hrs 45min, including rigging and derigging the pitch.

Home in time to clean up and have afternoon tea. This is looking like very gentlemanly caving!

Fred Cave - 23/4

Hit our first real snag (if you don't count piking at Ripper!) on this one. The day started really well. We had our directions (thanks again Kieran), map coordinates and permission to go there. Found the farm alright, and where to park. The farmer came over whilst we were getting organised to make sure we knew where we were, as we were not at the spot to park for the main entrance. No, we were going in the back entrance we said. He didn't know about this one. We had a nice chat for a while and he then gave us a lift on the back of his quad bike (with the 2 kids and 3 dogs) to the spot where we were to climb the fence and head into the "natural" (NZers term for patches of native bush remaining in pockets on farmland). We wandered around for about an hour finding blind dolines and the odd Tomo but none that fitted the description of the entrance to Fred. It was only supposed to be 50m from the fence. We retraced our steps out of the scrub and tried again at a

different corner of the fenced-off forest. Bingo, just where it was meant to be. We had started at the wrong corner.



Fred Cave. Photo Ric Tunney

We rigged to a large tree right on the edge of the drop, with a tie back 10m up the slope as a safety to access the pitch head. The Tomo was a beauty, about 20m across with a couple of "arms" to it, giving a vaguely "E" shape. The drop was 40m to a mud slope (very deep mud) which led down a further 20 odd metres to a small stream. This was a bit peculiar as Kieran's instructions included a second small pitch of 20m and the first drop was supposed to be 55m, not the 40m we had just descended. We waded through gluggy, knee deep mud for 60m and passed the bottom of another tomo. This explained things. We had descended the "wrong" tomo. There were two tomo entrances marked on the survey close together, we were meant to have come down the one proximal to the junction with the main cave (named "daylight" tomo) as the passage further on to the distal tomo was very muddy. Yeah, we found out!



Fred Cave. Photo Ric Tunney

The passage from the second tomo was a lot cleaner but still very old, heavily trogged and dusty. The floor-level passage became very narrow and we continued by

traversing along narrow ledges 10m above the streamway. The passage was generally about 1-1.5m wide in this section. After 100m we encountered a handline running along the passage which seemed a bit unnecessary we thought as the difficulty of the traverse along the ledges hadn't changed. 30m further on the passage did a sharp right angle turn. This is where we had our next major stuff-up of the day. Although the handline disappeared around the LH wall I thought the way on was across the passage from a large rock protrusion to a ledge on the other side. This involved a leap of some 2m horizontal and a 1m vertical difference to a sloping muddy ledge. I had serious doubts about making the distance on the way in (remember a 10m drop to the streamway), but was certain I could never do the leap "uphill" from the ledge up to the rock on the way back. The reason I was so certain this was the way was that - amidst lots of verbal instructions given about the cave - I remembered Pigeon saying there was a leap to do that some people didn't like. No kidding! I thought "all these NZ cavers must be heroes to do this move". Ric took a look and said there was no way he was doing that jump so we reluctantly turned around and headed out.

At least the Tomo had made going down worthwhile.

This trip had taken all of 2.5 hrs.

NB when we spoke to them that evening we discovered we were meant to go around the corner and continue the traverse (following the handline - where had my brain been that day?) and not do the "death defying" leap. Oh well...

Back to Ripper - 24/4

So, here we were having another shot at Ripper. The entrance squeeze didn't look any more inviting on the second look but we were determined this time. I started down and with much wriggling slid down far enough for my feet to touch the promised ledge. Once I got the rest of me down this far it did open up to the left and I was able to climb easily to the bottom of the rift. Ric joined me soon after and we started along the narrow stream passage. Soon after there was a small waterfall and plunge pool that were easily negotiated and the first of many crawls and squeezes. These first few hundred metres were old passage with quite a lot of formation. Near the end of this section of passage we encountered a "roof sniff". We don't get a lot of these in Tassie and I can't actually remember doing one since my very early NSW caving days. I knew there was a reason I moved to Tas! Well, we were already soaked from the entrance squeeze with the stream running down it so getting wet here didn't matter. The nature of the passage soon changed to much newer, formation free rock. It was heavily coated with Manganese deposits and so was quite black. The passage was very narrow and necessitated us walking sideways along most of it but at least it was high and we could walk upright. We followed this for more than a kilometre (an estimate) and the passage remain the same the whole way, twisting and turning as it went. Kieran had said there was over 2 kms of this passage and that it terminated in squeezes, so after an hour of this very repetitive passage we decided we'd had enough and turned back.

There was a chamber with lots of straws in here somewhere and so as we went back we kept climbing up at likely looking places. No luck. The climb up the entrance squeeze was interesting for me as the ledge didn't put me high enough to get my arms out the top for leverage. My helmet was only just able to fit through so that caused the odd annoying moment as well but after 5 minutes of grunting, wriggling, straining and swearing I got my elbows out and was able to lever myself up. Ric sensibly took his helmet off first and, after a few complaints about his chest getting bruised, joined me. I can't work out how the bigger guys who've supposedly been down fitted.

Despite the less than inspiring description, this was actually an enjoyable trip. All the other caves we'd been in so far had obviously been heavily used and the lack of wear and tear in this cave was refreshing.

Mangawhitikau (attempt 1) - 26/4

This was reputed to be the best streamway trip at Waitomo and we were very excited about going there. We headed off Monday with the usual permission, directions and map location. To cut a lengthy story short we spent some of the morning with Ric squeezing down a very narrow hole in unstable rocks at the bottom of a doline at the GPS location we had only to find the "cave" terminated after 20m. The rest of the morning was spent trying to get him out! Gravity helping down but we had to bash some rock away to get him back up. All the fresh mud, rock and trees (complete with greenery) made us think that the floods in February had filled in the entrance and so, very disappointed, we headed out and went back to Gardner's Gut for more photography in the afternoon.

(attempt 2) - 27/4

We discovered that night that our GPS location was out by about 500m, we'd been sent to the wrong doline, so we rang (both) the property owner(s) with our sad tale and asked for permission to go the next day. At 9PM a guy turned up who said he was a guide for Black Water Rafting (BWR, one of the larger adventure tour operators) and he had done the cave before and would like to come. The grapevine is pretty good here!

So next day 5 of us (the trip had grown with 2 other guides who'd never done the trip and saw this as a good opportunity) headed off to do the through trip. This was a wetsuit job and we were glad the locals were coming as the morning was drizzling, with rain forecast, and we would have been concerned about potential flooding in such a big river system without local knowledge of drainage patterns and flood potential. Zane (the guy who'd done it before) didn't see it as a problem so we were happy to go with his assessment.

We were planning a through trip which involved going down a small entrance climb on one property and out a big Tomo on another. The Tomo entrance and 100m of passage from it were used by one of the adventure operators and permission was also needed from them!

After car shuffles and wandering across paddocks trying to avoid getting zapped by electric fences (very common here) we arrived at a nondescript hole in the ground.

The climb down from the 1m wide “Gollum’s Hole” was easy and after a short section of passage we were at the top of “The Deodoriser” pitch. There are two “P” hangers at the pitch head - one directly over the drop for a free hang and the other a metre back - and an approach line can be rigged from a thread on the LH wall about 5 m back up the passage. Zane rigged the pitch and descended. In the hurry of the morning he had forgotten to bring his SRT kit and so we pulled up the borrowed kit before I descended.

The pitch was 30m with a small waterfall coming in halfway down giving a damp finish to the abseil.

After 10 min along an old dry passage we entered the main streamway just above a sump. It was an impressive stream passage of Growling Swallet proportions but a greater water flow. We started working our way upstream, sometimes wading and climbing around the deep pools where possible. The streamway was every bit as impressive as we’d anticipated but the rock sculpting on the light-coloured horizontally-bedded limestone was breathtaking. The rock was worn to a polished smoothness in a variety of shapes with frequent perfectly circular scour pools. We made our way slowly, having a good look at wonders water flow had created. After about 600m we reached the next sump and started looking for the climb up to the “Grinstead Levels”, the old abandoned passages that bypassed this sump. Zane hadn’t been here for a while so it took a few minutes to find it. This section involved working our way up through twisting, sometimes tight, narrow passage across to an old high-level fossil passage. From here we headed upstream, looking for a small hole in the floor to drop back down to the stream past the sump. Zane had never actually found the hole and on his previous trip had abseiled down a fixed rope at a pitch access to the stream. We were carrying our abseil gear with us in case we had to go that option. We found the hole though, so decided to do the climb down. Ric did go on to where the rope was and reported that it was all tangled around a large piece of wood up near the belay point. This meant the February floods had backed the water some 15m vertically to reach this large passage. We were also carrying a rope in case of such a problem at the pitch. In the end we didn’t need to lug any of it through, but better safe...

On regaining the streamway we had more great sporting caving - swimming pools, climbing around and up and down in this amazingly beautiful passage. There is a 10m waterfall that can be climbed up beside that was begging for photos but would have to wait for another time. We climbed around (yet another) plunge pool that was the scene of a very unfortunate drowning a few years ago. A guy jumped in (doing the cave downstream direction) and the water at the base of the short waterfall was highly aerated and wouldn’t support him. Several attempts were made to get a line to him but he was unable to hold on and sank and drowned.

After another few hundred metres of this sporting, cascading streamway we reached the spot where it all gets very sedate – just walking along a shallow flat stream - and encountered the first of several dams (only a couple of feet high) that have been built to back up

the water for the commercial punters to have enough depth to do their “inner-tube blackwater rafting” trips. i.e. they sit in inner tubes and float down the stream slowly in the dark looking at glow-worms. A group could be heard up ahead as we got to this spot so we dutifully (as requested) sat silently in darkness for about 10 minutes as they went past. Seeing these dams explained the bits of hessian and black plastic I’d seen along the way stuck in crevices up high in the passage. A couple of dams had been demolished in the big Feb floods.

It was only a short walk to the Tomo we were planning to exit from. There is a handline here for the punters to be belayed up but it is easily free-climbable. The trip had been a comfortable 4.5 hrs.

This cave made the trip to Waitomo worthwhile all by itself.

Before exiting we then spent 1.5 hours clearing out flood-borne rubbish from the 500m of cave upstream of the tomo, but you don’t want to hear about that!

It was then back around to the Deodoriser pitch (for Zane, Ric & me) to retrieve the rope. We noted that the dry entrance hole now had a muddy trickle running down it, along the passage and over the lip of the pitch – it had been raining all day.

Hollow Hill - 28/4

This is a permit cave on reserve land but is accessed from private property. DOC issue the permits and the current requirements are that there is a minimum of 4 years membership of NZSS in the party (e.g. 2 persons having 2 years each or 4 persons having 1 year each etc...) with all in the group being members of NZSS. Fortunately, we qualified.

The cave was a short walk across farmers fields (again) with yet another stile across a fence into natural bush. The entrance led to a short down-climb over boulders to a stream which we followed up 50m where it emerged into a large chamber. This chamber led into “Giant’s Cavern”, a railway tunnel like passage of “Exit” proportions. Very impressive, however not very long. It only went for some 250m.

Near the start of Giant’s Cavern there is an area of decoration called “Castle Grotto” up high in the chamber. There is a platform where you are meant to leave your boots to walk into the “pretties” but this does not appear to have been as successful in keeping the area clean as the same policy in Kubla Khan (Mole Creek). There was quite a bit of mud traipsed up all the way through this area of formations. Pity.

Fred - 30/4 (attempt 2)

What is it with “Fred” and us? Some sort of massive psychological incompatibility? This time we thought we’d go in the “other” entrance - the “main” entrance. Shouldn’t be too hard to find with a name like “Main Entrance” you’d think? Not for us! We had our directions to find the entrance, on a sketch map no less this time! AND it’s supposed to be only a couple of hundred metres from the car. Should be a snack.

1.5 hours of searching and we had had enough. I won’t bore you with the details of every dint in the topography we looked at over 1 square kilometre or

how many times we went around the promising looking doline guarded by a 20m thick mass of 2m high blackberries, deciding if it could possibly be in there (but this cave was supposed to be visited fairly often, surely there'd be a way through if this was it).

Back to the hut for lunch, very annoyed.

It turned out when we spoke to Kieran that night (he happened to stop by) that the directions we had been given were wrong, the entrance wasn't out in the paddock as marked on our sketch, it was in the opposite direction at one of the fence junctions marked and back in the pine forest. Bugger. But after two stuff ups involving "Fred" we felt "jinxed" and decided not to bother going back there this trip. Another time.

Back to Gardners Gut for some more photography in the afternoon instead.

Ten Acre Tomo - 1/5

With a name like this it should be impressive. Getting to it involved the longest drive so far - about 45 minutes - but the walk from the car to one end of the tomo was the shortest - about 20 seconds. And we had managed to find it! Things were looking up.

It IS very impressive. Sitting in the middle of a farmer's (very steep) paddocks, it is a several hundred metres long, 100m wide and 60m deep steep sided, vegetation filled hole in the ground. It had a cave running off from each end and we'd been told we could either: a: abseil in *or*

b: walk down from the (far) western end.

We took a rope and gear to abseil and started along the southern edge of the Tomo. We couldn't find anywhere to abseil from so when we arrived at the far end decided we may as well go down here. It was quite steep, slippery and thickly vegetated (lots of annoying vines) but not a problem to descend. We found the resurgence cave at the bottom and went in. This was largely an anticlimax and not really worth visiting. It consisted of a couple of hundred metres of rock fall and small grotty passage. It didn't look as if it was visited very often either. We could see why.



Ten Acre Tomo. *Photo Ric Tunney*

We then decided we'd have a look at the cave at the other end of the Tomo and after briefly considering traversing along the floor of the Tomo decided this would be very slow and unpleasant (a jumble of large boulders and thick vegetation) and opted for retracing

our steps and trying to get down at the eastern end. We hadn't been told if this was possible or not.

At the eastern end, near the car, we climbed the fence and headed down into the scrub. It was possible to get down but the ground was now extremely muddy and slippery as it had been raining all morning. We found ourselves in a blind doline at the bottom and continued west to the lip of the doline, which was about 50m from the entrance of "Taranui Cave". This is a through trip and apparently is quite good fun (we were told later), so we probably should have done it first! As we started down this final approach I slipped and badly wrenched my shoulder. It wasn't particularly serious but we decided to call it quits for the day. Thus to be able to cave another day.....

We later learned that the abseil is down a cliff on the northern side of the doline and that the pitch in Taranui Cave is about double the length shown on the map, so the rope we had taken wouldn't have worked anyway.

Waipuna - 3/5

This cave was just up the hill from Luckie Strike and we'd already found its location the day we had visited Luckie Strike, so getting to it was straightforward. The entrance is on reserve land but you have to walk over farm land to access it and the cave passage runs under farm land so permission is again needed from the farmer. As usual, this was no problem. (We actually met him when he dropped into the hut later to invite us, and a group of Canadian geology students doing field work in the area staying there also, to a BBQ with locals. What a difference from the attitude of the Mole Creek landowners!!).



Waipuna Cave. *Photo Ric Tunney*

The entrance is at the base of a 60m Tomo but it is easy to climb down all the way. On reaching the streamway we decided to go downstream first. The cave was several hundred metres long in this direction and was a fairly narrow passage with quite a few waist deep wades and scrambles around pools. Quite sporting and wet. We managed to avoid actually having to swim though. The stream terminated at a sump.

The nature of the cave upstream of the tomo was totally different. It was much bigger-dimensioned with a shallow stream that was a gentle stroll and lots of formation everywhere. Big ones. The sort people give names to, such as "The Leaning Tower of Pisa".

We wandered up to the end where the cave degenerated into a very low wet gravel before retracing our steps. This needed a photography trip.

The next few days were taken up with photography trips to Gardners Gut and Waipuna, walking at Tongararo and taking the Canadians caving.

Rumbling Gut - 7/5

We enjoyed this cave so much we did it twice!

Rumbling Gut is a through trip, with the two ends about 500m apart. It was easy to find the Phosphate Pot entrance as there is a large stile over the fence on the road about 50m across open paddock from the obvious small pot. We did the short climb down and found ourselves in old, dry, narrow passage. We explored all the passages in these upper levels which amounted to several hundred metres in length. Generally we were walking but some more sporty scrambling was involved here and there. And mud, but we had come to realise this was inevitable out of the streams in the caves here. There was also a fair amount of formation but it was largely old and frequently mud covered so not worth getting too excited about.

We then moved to the lower levels via a bit of squeezing and climbing and found ourselves in a pretty, little streamway. As we moved upstream it just got better and better. There were a couple of lovely little waterfalls in beautifully smooth-sculptured rock, flowstone and lots of climbing about to find our way through. Great fun. A high(er) level traverse to bypass sumps led to a chamber with some lovely decorations and a fine straw collection. We took quite a few photos here, which was good as it made lugging the camera through all the climbs and squeezes worthwhile!

After the chamber it was back down to stream level and more wading and climbing around pools and stuff until after another couple of hundred metres we reached the last deep pool. This had a chain permanently rigged across and up the small water chute at the far side. The pool is only 2m across and easily swimmable but the chain means you can keep from getting fully immersed, and makes getting up the smooth walls at the other side much easier. I understand some cavers actually walk on the chain to keep dry.

A short distance further and we were out, in a doline surrounded by pine trees. It wasn't too hard to work out which direction to walk and the trip back to the car took about 10 minutes. Even with photography, exploring all side passages and finding our way (and having lunch) we were underground for only 3 hours.

We decided we liked the streamway so much we would come and do it again on the last morning before we had to start drying and packing our gear. This was the following Monday and we did a quick trip straight down and along the streamway, taking just under an hour to do the traverse.

Mangawhitikau - 8/5

We'd wanted to come back here and take some photos in the streamway and just to see it again. We decided that we'd do it in and out the Deodoriser pitch rather than the through trip as we didn't want to push our luck again asking the tour operator for permission to traverse the section of cave the commercial trips use. It had been raining each day for most of the last two weeks, but not continually and - apart from a trip into Gardners Gut in torrential rain when the water level rose considerably - the streams didn't seem to be rising enough to cause a problem. We headed off from the car at 9am in light drizzle and got a big surprise when we reached the entrance at Gollum's Hole. Where it had been dry at the start of our last trip there was now a proper creek running straight down the hole. Oh well, we were wearing wet suits. We got thoroughly drenched on the initial climb down the entrance but weren't particularly concerned until we got to the top of the Deodoriser pitch. The stream ran straight over the drop. I rigged the pitch anyway and started down. About 5m down the drop is a small ledge. The rope is rigged to hang free of the water until this point, so until then I was just getting hit by the waterfall from mid waist to feet. At the ledge the rope goes straight under the water. The other small waterfall coming out of the opposite wall (as noted in the previous trip report in this cave) was also much bigger than last time. I hung around looking for rebelay spots and generally weighing up options for 10 minutes and after being unable to see anywhere to rig even slightly out of the water, decided to pike. Having done my fair share of prussiking up under waterfalls in my youth I have a healthy respect for how unpleasant and potentially dangerous it can be. 25m of waterfall pounding on my head as I prussiked up did not appeal. Photos would have to wait for another day. Ric agreed and we derigged and exited.

Summary

Waitomo has lots of moderately well-decorated, short, enjoyable caves. They are easy to get to and not particularly technically or physically challenging. There are many requiring no SRT at all. Quite similar to Mole Creek in many respects.

Accommodation nearby is cheap and adequately comfortable and information is available at the hut to help with planning, although we did have some problems in this area and I can foresee situations when it could be difficult to get information on cave locations at all.

It is an excellent place for an enjoyable yet relaxing and not too stressful caving trip. The minimal amount of rope work means that 2 person parties can easily cope with gear requirements.

JF-223 Tassy Pot : 24th April 2004

Dave Rasch

Party: Dave Rasch, Gavin Brett

We went to Tassy Pot, looked around a bit then went out again. We hope to go back there again sometime

(Thanks Dave, a top effort indeed. I never want to hear anyone say that writing a trip report takes too much time or effort again! Ed.)

JF-344 Serendipity – Derig: 6th June 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett

After some lengthy discussion between the born again 'serendipiters' and us others it was decided that with winter approaching, a long list of caves to p-hanger before the conference and the state of affairs in the Bering Sea, that we would pull the pin on Serendipity until such a time that it wasn't raining so much, the conference was under control and we had all worked out what my reference to the Bering Sea was all about. Dedicated de-rig trips are rarely popular, and this one proved no different. Ric and Janine had some paint to watch dry, so Gavin and I (being the extremely hard men of caving that we are!) decided that we'd at least make a start at it. Mister Rasch raised our hopes for a moment and indicated he would come along too... but only for the car trip (see 'Less energetic and slightly more nerdy alternative to derigging Serendipity').

The weather was pleasant (nice snow on the mountains etc...) and the water levels in the cave, despite recent nasty weather, were pretty good. There was noticeably more water in the cave, but we didn't get all that much wetter than the previous trips. I got to be the hero who went all the way to the bottom for the last 4m rebelay and then we slogged our way out with ever increasing baggage. Suitably tired and feeling very proud of our achievements we bumbled back to the 'Croozza' to find Dave waiting for us. Back home we weighed all our gear and it totalled almost 65kg between us (at least 15 of which would have been water and dirt). I can now put a tick next another item on my 'stupid things to achieve in life' list (it's a big list!)

Serendipity: we'll be back to crack the well of enigma when a new dose of enthusiasm arrives from England.

Less Energetic and Slightly More Nerdy Alternative to Derigging Serendipity : 6th June 2004

Dave Rasch

Party: Dave Rasch

(Note: Numbers in () brackets are GPS estimated positioning error in metres.

Datum was Australian Geodetic 1966).

Sunday was turning out to be one of those amazing blue sky winter days so I piggybacked a ride with Alan and Gavin to the 8 road for a solo "surface day". I would encourage any other "slightly shop-soiled" or suitably "cellared" cavers to consider this type of day out - the slightly 'techie' aspect of this activity (hopefully) lends it some air of respectability among fellow cavers. There is also a need to get GPS fixes on cave locations before they (or at least their tags) disappear to the place where the Hairgoat dwells...

I was originally not going to go underground, but when the 3 of us arrived at the entrance to Serendipity and there was a general putting on of caving suits and so forth, I found myself standing there in caving suit with Petzl head torch considering whether I might perhaps accompany the lads down to the top of the first pitch for a look-see. Then I remembered that my Petzl was actually pretty dodgy and I had no backup light source - and as I didn't relish the thought of having to wait it out in the dark at the top of the pitch for six hours or so until the others returned...so I reverted to Plan A.

Once the guys had disappeared into the ground and the evil grunting and cursing sounds had finally fallen silent, I took out my little eTrex GPS unit, stood 2m from the lower Serendipity entrance (at the point where cavers go in at the sharp 'elbow' in the streamway) and I got a (surprisingly) good GPS fix (9m). Then, based on the known survey offsets I had recorded the previous evening on paper, I sat down and calculated the UTM positions of the surface locations that would be directly above the furthest upstream (known) passages in the Serendipity streamway (survey stations "SH73" and SH82"). This area is near Asteroid Pot (JF366). I installed these into my GPS and used the 'Goto' feature to walk to these points. I calculated "SH73" to be 30mW, 5mN of JF366. The other station "SH82" I calculated to be 3mE, 10mS of Asteroid Pot. In both cases, the GPS led me pretty much right into dolines about 10m in diameter, but I didn't find any holes in the ground (which is, let's face it, what caving is mostly about). The area around Asteroid Pot is pretty "lumpy" though, so there is something trying to happen down there...

Anyway, I got an excellent GPS fix (6m) holding the unit right over the Asteroid Pot entrance, then I started heading up the dry valley that runs east from Asteroid

Pot. As I climbed, I crisscrossed the valley left and right trying to cover as much area as I could.

The first hole I came across was a vertical shaft about 1m diameter with a pink tape on a nearby tree. The tape was so ancient as to be almost transparent. This shaft is located 141m east and 38m south of Asteroid Pot (7m). I have no idea whether this shaft has been descended or whether the tape was placed during a previous trip with the intention of returning?

About 80m further up the gully I found my path blocked by a length of topofil string running approximately north-south. My next find was a 40cm diameter hole which looked like it had appeared relatively recently. The ground looked pretty thin right around the entrance as though it 'belled out' just inside, so I lay down to peer into the hole. The entrance dropped a few metres to a sloping dirt ramp. No air movement was detectable. This hole is located at 358m east and 54m south of Asteroid Pot (9m).

Just 12m west (downhill) of this hole I arrived at JF368, an impressive vertical entrance about 5m in diameter, described in the archive as **"JF-368: ARMADILLO POT.** A spacious shaft with a 50 metre pitch leading to a large chamber". It is not terribly far from sections of "New Feeling" - about 80m to the east of the closest surveyed part of NF- so it might be worth a re-visit sometime. I got a GPS fix on the tag which was installed on a small boulder on the northern lip of the hole (14m). The tag was partly covered with moss.

I continued up the valley, spotting the occasional dark blue tape, and eventually discovered another pathetic little hole at 529m east and 190m south of Asteroid Pot (7m). The entrance was about half a metre in diameter, partially covered with sticks and tucked in behind a log. I dropped a small branch which fell a couple of metres. Again there was no obvious air movement. Hardly inspiring finds, but at least there are still holes to be found in the area. There is certainly plenty of exposed limestone around.

My original plan was to continue up the valley towards Ice Tube but time was pressing so I turned north, eventually intersecting the track descending from Ice Tube. I turned left and descended, crossing several streams (and losing the track more than once due to lost tapes) until my ears navigated (APS) me to the main Growling water. I crossed the river on a log because the water levels were above gumboot height in places due to snowmelt, and headed down to Growling Swallet entrance. I took a GPS fix (16m), correcting the fix for my estimated offset from the tag which was clearly visible on the righthand wall at the entrance.

Then I headed back to the vehicle to wait for the Gavin and the Alan. It was about this time that I started to realise that winter was definitely approaching because I started getting bloody cold waiting around for an hour! Nothing that a coffee and hot chips at Westerway couldn't handle however. A fun, low-impact day out.

IB-37 Milk Run: 12th June 2004

Janine McKinnon

Party: Gavin Brett, Alan Jackson, Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon

This was the first of several trips to put P-Hangers into this cave. There are several reasons to P-Hanger this cave:

1. It is a good vertical trip with each pitch near to the next pitch (like Midnight Hole and Big Tree Pot), but the biggest pitch is not too daunting at 41m.
2. The current rigging is very difficult with few good naturals and some decidedly suspect unnaturals! This makes it quite a challenging, and somewhat risky, undertaking precluding many cavers who would otherwise have the skills to do the trip. (There are plenty of other unbolted and unP-hangered caves for those who want to do challenging rigging).
3. With reliable, easily accessible rigging points it would make an excellent visitors' vertical cave and intermediate training cave for STC. There aren't many caves that are not rain dependent that fit this bill.
4. It was on Jeff Butt's list of caves to P-Hanger and he put a lot of thought into which caves should be done.

We started off bright and early (for winter) from Hobart at 7:30 and were walking by 9:40. The packs were quite heavy with caving gear, ropes and rigging gear plus the drill, spare battery packs, bolt tester and other P-Hanger paraphernalia. We were saved the added weight of the actual P-Hangers as, despite being a well organised and methodical bunch (!) we had somehow neglected to bring the P-Hangers themselves!

Not to worry, after a lively conversation discussing the options we decided that it didn't matter and we could get some rigging done and holes drilled anyway.

The walk in took 1 hour and we were pleased to see there haven't been TOO many tree falls on the track since our last track session. There is one very large tree down on the Mini-Martin track that created a mess and needs fixing however. Anyone want to volunteer for a nice day in the bush clearing/re-routing?

It was a lovely sunny day so we took a while discussing life, the universe and everything whilst we got kitted up and organised. It was decided that Alan and Ric would do the first lot of drilling whilst Janine and Gavin rigged ahead. We started down the first pitch at 11:00.

The first pitch is a beautiful free hang (after the rebelay 2m down – but this will disappear with our new, you-beaut P-hangers!) with 3 little (4-6m) pitches to

follow. A bit of discussion went on with these before Gavin rigged them with the 3rd drop having a very interesting start. Although I found going down fine with gravity assist, it was getting up and over on the way out that was more challenging. For me and Ric anyway, not, of course, for the Young Turks who have sheer brute strength, not to mention superior skills, to draw upon.

Anyway, it was at this point that the drillers caught up and much discussion over lunch was had deciding what to do on the 26m pitch. At the moment there is a home-made bolt plate at the end of a quite wide traverse over the pitch head on the LHS (going in). Access to this is quite scary and difficult; certainly for us “short arses” and an approach/safety line of some sort is needed to access this rigging point. Getting on and off the pitch head here could be quite fiddly and not good for the inexperienced. We put a lot of thought and discussion into it and finally decided to put the P-hangers in near the start of the traverse, with a re-belay P-hanger to go in part way down the pitch. We think this will be much more user-friendly. It does involve a hanging re-belay, but you can’t really do multi-pitch vertical caving these days without having the skills to pass re-belays, and the much easier access to the pitch head and getting on and off rope compensates.

We drilled the holes at the pitch head. (My turn for one here - the easy one to get to.) I let Alan do the one

stuck out low and over the pitch. It has its advantages caving with young, keen strong guys, even if I can’t keep up most of the time! And with only enough battery power for 2 more holes we moved back to the previous pitch. We had left that until we decided what to do with the 26m as that affected the placing of the previous hangers. I drilled these and the battery gave out a couple of millimetres short of finishing the second hole. Ric started out whilst I was drilling and by the time that exercise was finished Alan was clear to head straight out. The only event on the way out was a quite large rock that fell on my head whilst waiting at the bottom of the second pitch. Thank god for good helmets!

It is one problem of this cave as there are a lot of loose rocks and few places to hide at the pitch bases.

We were all out by 15:00 and back to the car not long after 16:00. The whole trip was done in daylight, in JUNE, despite having drilled almost eight holes. That’s what I call gentlemanly (and womanly) caving.

Next trip: finish drilling and get the P-hangers (we’ll remember to bring them next time) glued in and a few tested.

P.S We decided at the end that doing all the drilling before putting any hangers in is actually a better way to go so we’ll probably do it that way in the future.

IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot – Tourist Trash Trip: 19th June 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Steve Bunton, Rolan Eberhard, Yoav Barness, Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Geoff Wise, Andrew Thomson

I would firstly like to thank none of the above for writing a trip report for this trip!



Rigging the entrance – thanks to Bunty for the gumboot cameo. *Photo Rolan Eberhard*

The possibility of a Rocket Rods trip was mooted at a general meeting and appeared to spark considerable interest, which grew further with an email to all the would be cavers. Saturday morning came, complete with rain, hail and snow, and the hordes made their way to the small hole in the ground called IB 171. The

painful process of watching 10 people abseil 34m then began.

Once in the hole we split up into two groups to explore level one; Rolan, Serena, Matt and I headed to the ‘Refusal’ end and the others went for those deceiving echos with Geoff acting as guide. I can’t say much for what the other group did, but we moseyed around, did some more track marking, took in the sights and a few photos until the two groups bumped into each other again and swapped ends.



Probably Yoav breaking out into the chamber at the bottom of the entrance pitch. *Photo Rolan Eberhard*

At this point Rolan, Janine and I departed for a quick jaunt down the next couple of pitches for a squiz. We got to the top of ‘Date with Destiny’ and admired the

large vertical development, cursed at how filthy we had become and headed back up. We got to the bottom of the entrance pitch just in time to hear Geoff's 'rope free'. Perfect timing!



Difficult to tell which one makes the cave prettier, Serena or that stuff hanging on the ceiling? *Photo Rolan Eberhard*

We were greeted by hail at the surface but no one else other than Geoff. Can't say I blame them for not hanging around considering the weather. I think everyone enjoyed it, I know I did. Madphil will be

happy to know that Rolan found his steel brake crab that he misplaced almost two years ago. It was looking a little worse for wear but I have managed to resurrect the gate and it should be ready for another work out when Phil returns in November.



Crikey what a long straw! Easy to tell which one is prettier! *Photo Rolan Eberhard*

H-1 Newdegate Cave : 19th June 2004

Claire Brett

Party: Claire Brett, Gavin Brett, David Chiam, Heather Nichols, Annette Swinnerton

We picked up the access permit from Rob Wass, the very friendly ranger, at Hastings Visitors Centre. Just as we reached the entrance to the cave, we met a tour guide who was finishing a tour (with only 2 people). He was kind enough to switch on some lights in the first part of the cave which really showed off the formations.

We had lunch at about 12pm at the far end of the tourist section, where Jeff's ceremony was held not long ago. Then it was time to explore. We went "off track" at the Cathedral and started worming our way through Binney's Tunnel. The mud was a lovely consistency – very good for pottery? We reached a larger chamber with some formations and then kept squeezing through the passages until we reached the top of the 6 metre pitch. The boys set up the ladder and one by one we made it to the bottom. The descent was rewarded by a corner with lots of stalactites and helictites (see picture). We continued on a bit further to the streamway. There was a fair depth of water, some of us got wet feet when crossing. We decided that we didn't want to get any wetter and it was probably time to start heading back. The feast at Dover beckoned!

Dave and Gavin enjoyed sliding head first down Binney's Tunnel knocking into each other along the way. We walked out through the tourist cave (in socks to protect the pathway from being muddied) and had a

brief chat to another tour guide who was taking another group through the cave.



Corner with lots of stalactites and helictites! *Photo Claire or Gavin Brett!?*

We then arrived back at the Visitors Centre around 4:30pm, had a quick hot drink, said hello to Matt, Jason and Alice and then pressed on to Dover for a fun filled evening.

A very enjoyable trip.

H-216 King George V : 20th June 2004

Steve Phipps

Party: Yoav Bar-Ness, Serena Benjamin, Claire Brett, Heather Nichols, Steve Phipps, Annette Swinnerton

Having never visited this cave before, I was keen to have a look. A permit had been organised as part of the Midwinter Extravaganza, and so I volunteered to lead the trip.

Of course, trip leaders have normally visited the cave at least once before, but this wasn't going to be one of those trips. As it turned out, no-one else in the party had visited King George V before either. We also decided to dispense with such conventional niceties as actually looking at a survey of the cave before the trip, setting out with nothing more than a vague sketch provided by Arthur. And as other people's opinions of the cave seemed to range from "very boring" to "very pretty", we had almost no idea as to what was in store. Of course, there's nothing wrong with this. All we had to do was ignore the vandalism, trog marks, entrance ladder, route markers, washdown station and other such signs of prior human presence, and we'd be able to pretend that we were exploring the cave for the first time!

So after a relatively efficient start on the Sunday morning, the improbably hangover-free party set out for the cave. We found the entrance quickly and easily, the new track from Chesterman's Road making the walk to the entrance a doddle. Heading down, we spent the next few hours checking out everything that we could find. Serena, our resident cave ferret, proved to be the most enthusiastic member of the party, and could be relied upon to investigate every little crawl that we encountered. A promising career in cave exploration undoubtedly lies ahead!

Much of the cave is well-decorated, although there's some obvious damage in places. To this end, it's pleasing to see that some work is now being done to clean mud off the formations. It's also a bit of a maze, and there's plenty to look at if you feel inclined. Indeed, when we ultimately returned to the surface, it was because we'd run out of time and energy, not cave! Hot chocolates in the visitors' centre afterwards helped to revive us, and can be highly recommended.

We all had a good time, and I'd say that King George V is well worth a visit.

IB-37 Milk Run – P-Hanging Effort #2 : 20th June 2004

Gavin Brett

Party: Gavin Brett, Dave Rasch, Matt Cracknell, Dave Chiam

This isn't really a trip report in its truest form, it is actually a brief email account of the day's events. After almost a month it would appear to be the best I'm going to get out of Gavin, so it'll have to do. I have elaborated on several points in an attempt to improve quality. Ed.

Big Day Out.

I went the direct route through the quarry, was 3 seconds quicker, I'll tape it next time. *(Gavin has been concerned that we have been walking further than we have to by zig zagging up the quarry track, thought a straight line would be better. Ed.)*

Got to the cave at 12.

Raschy dropped the pipe cleaner down the first pitch.

I pressed on and squirted glue every where.

Went down the 20m pitch, no rebelay, damn it! *(Gavin and I had been having lengthy arguments about whether this pitch would need a rebelay. I was on the against team. Ed.)*

Looked at the rigging for the next pitch and went arrrrh!

Whacked in a few holes and P's.

Left the cave.

Got the cruiser bogged on Francistown road. *(The most exciting thing the locals had seen all year. Ed.)*

Winched her out. *(Discovered that Dave Rasch gets excited about winches. Ed.)*

Pizza at Sandy Bay.

Sleep.

Midwinter Extravaganza – 19th-20th June 2004

Steve Phipps

Party: 24 adults, 2 babies, a cat and a dog

The Midwinter Extravaganza is something of an STC tradition. Arthur and Robyn's hospitality, aided in no small part by Robyn's skills in the kitchen and Arthur's winemaking abilities, can be guaranteed to make these events immensely enjoyable, and this year was certainly no exception. Indeed, the Extravaganza has a reputation that seems to grow with time, and I'm sure that this year's event was the largest and most extravagant Extravaganza to date.

As always, the highlight of the weekend was the Midwinter Feast on the Saturday evening. We kicked off this year's festivities with a bonfire, which roared into life - with the assistance of a considerable amount of diesel and sump oil! Moving inside for dinner, Robyn ensured that neither our stomachs or taste buds could want for anything more, while Arthur provided us with an ample supply of delicious fruit wines with which to wash it all down. A very pleasant and sociable time was had by all, with card games continuing well into the night.

Plenty of caving took place too, with trips to Rocket Rods and Newdegate Cave on the Saturday, and Milk Run and King George V on the Sunday. Another staggering success – thanks Arthur and Robyn!

Something Old, Something New

Stephen Bunton

I received a phone call on the 29th April from a Mr Philip Burgess of Geeveston aged 59. He is no relation to the Burgess for whom Burgess Bluff is named but he certainly knows a lot about the local area. He had been in to Judds Cavern and told me about the tree fall danger he experienced whilst camped there. He had visited Weld River Arch and when he heard of the caves on Mt Weld in the mid Eighties he had been into there to investigate. His most interesting tale however, was in relation to what has come to light recently.

Philip Burgess is good friends with a certain Mick Fabbian, an Italian migrant to Australia after the Second World War. Mick Fabbian went with Trevor Newland (the same Newland, now deceased, who was on the first descent of the Franklin River and for whom Newlands Cascades was named) up to Blakes Opening in 1954. From there Fabbian and Newland went up to Red Rag Scarp where they turned right and followed along the scarp for quite some distance. They discovered some large sinkholes in the area and then returned to the area in 1987 to take some photos. Fabbian has photos, one of which he left in a billy at the hut at Blakes Opening to show that he and Newland had actually been in to Red Rag Scarp to explore caves there.

Fabbian also made a copper plaque which he left at Blakes Opening to commemorate the trip that he and Newland made into the area in 1954. Philip Burgess went to Blakes Opening shortly afterwards to retrieve the plaque which he still has to this day.

The other exploit of note was that Fabbian and Newland took with them a 22 yard fishing handline to use in exploration but the cave that they found was so narrow that they couldn't climb down it. Instead they tied a rock on the end and lowered it down. The rock got stuck on a ledge but they jiggled the rope and eventually they were able to get the cave to swallow its whole length.

The point of the phone call was merely an inquiry as to was I interested in visiting the caves. He had got my name from an issue of Wild magazine and just phoned up speculatively.

I was puzzled about how he knew so much precise detail about Riveaux but consoled myself that Tasmania is too small a place to keep secrets. I told him that his phone call was timely and that possibly as we spoke cavers were in the process of exploring the karst and looking for caves in the area. I promised that I would let him know the outcome of our work and anything that he might find interesting. I promised to contact him to have a chat one day and see what else he knew. I was keen not to lose this link with the older generation now that it had been established.

I even suggested that it might be appropriate to name a cave after the first explorers in the area as a token of respect. We are always looking for appropriate names and it is appropriate to recognise that even though we may think we are the first to explore an area this may not be the case. I also think it is important to document this stuff since the only reason it is not common knowledge is the lack of documentation initially.

It was uncanny what Philip Burgess knew. He knew which areas were dolomite and which were limestone. He knew that the limestone extended beneath the Huon and asked if it was possible that a cave could indeed go under the river. He

knew of sinkholes in the button grass beyond Blakes Opening and wasn't phased when I started to explain that they were perhaps subadjacent karst features. All in all it was a most fascinating phone call. I thanked him for his time and assured him once again that I would get back to him especially with regard to the location of any other features he may know of. I talked about our aims to document all this stuff and the role the GPS now plays in our work and he engaged intently.

Mick Fabbian is still alive and lives in Wellington, South Australia where he milks a heard of 400-500 dairy cattle. Phillip Burgess is still in contact with him and believes that Mick Fabbian is about 80 years old.

After this phone call I was now even more inspired to get out into the field and find out just what caves and karst feature lie in wait in the Tasmanian wilderness.



There's always room for silly photos! Assorted idiots engaging in generally silly practices. Top left – Alan digging under Gavin's house (*Photo Claire Brett*). Top right – Janine in NZ (*Photo Ric Tunney*). Bottom left and middle right – Damian and Alan in Tassy Pot (*Photos Alan Jackson, Damian Bidgood respectively*) Bottom right – Bunty in Rocket Rods (*Photo Yoav Barness*)

The Good Deed

Words and music by Joe Farrell © 2004

Verse 1

G7

In the current climate we're

D

concerned for the environment what with

G7

D

global warming hap'ning and en-dangered species dy-ing.

G7

'Specially in caves with all their

D

beasties and their pretties and their

Am

G

D

ecosystems sensitive to greater global chan-ges.

Verse 2

G7

Don't step on the sediments it

D

compacts all the nutrients, don't

G7

D

touch the stalactites 'cos it will make them grey and tar-nished

G7

Scrub your boots at washing stations,

D

Don't spill crumbs from Banjos bagels,

Am

G

D

Please don't shine your high beam on Hickmania troglo-dy-tes.

CHORUS

Am

There's a situation that us cavers sometimes face,

A#m

If you do it wrong you'll be in MIC disgrace,

Bm

Do it in a cave and it can never be erased...

Bsus A#sus A Em

YOU... HAVE... TO... POOOOOO !!!

Verse 3

G7

You're sure you went before the trip, you

D

got that feeling off your chest, but

G7

D

now its back and twice as bad, it's bodily decep-tion!

G7

Seven pitches underground, you're

D

cold and wet and in your harness

Am

G

D

but you'll have to do something it's getting very ur-gent.

CHORUS... with: YOU... MUST... NOT... POO !

Verse 4

G7

There must be some container that is

D

big and partly water proof, your

G7

D

wee jar isn't large enough, your lunch box isn't ei-ther. To

G7

sacrifice your camera bag would

D

be a quite expensive option,

Am

G

D

What about the first aid kit there must be something quick-ly.

CHORUS... with: YOU... MUST... NOT... POO !

Verse 5

G7

Roller bandage, antiseptic,

D

notepaper and diarrhoetic,

G7

D

rubber gloves or resusc mask, there's no one else around to ask.

G7

Lat'ral thinking is required,

D

sports tape might just bail you out if

Am

G

D

you could only find something... YES... 2 trian-gu-lar ban-dages !!

CHORUS... with: NOW... YOU... CAN... POOOOOOO !!!

Verse 6

G

The long sides taped together gives a

D

square of large proportions which can

G

D

easily contain your most ex-cretory dis-tor-tions, when it's

G

rolled up in a package and

D

secured with the sports tape, then a

C

G

D

rubber glove on both the ends prevents from nasty es-cape.

Verse 7

G7

Remember cave environs when you're

D

planning your excursions and how

G7

D

damaging can be our sudden bodily incur-sions, but if

G

you have done the good deed that is

D

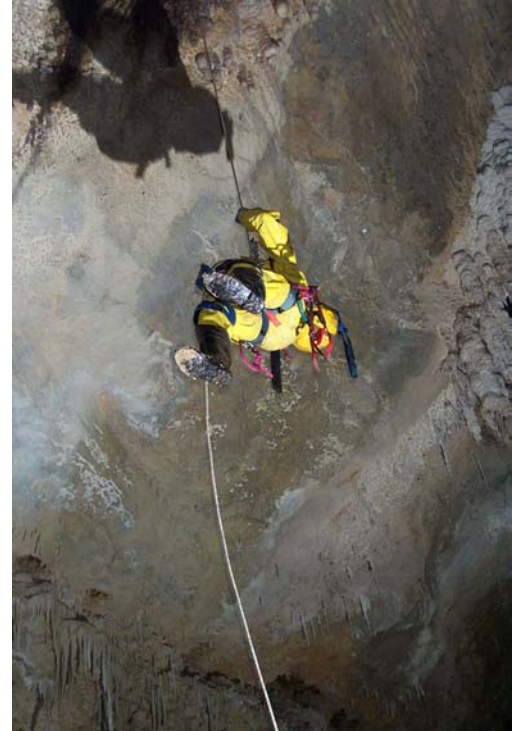
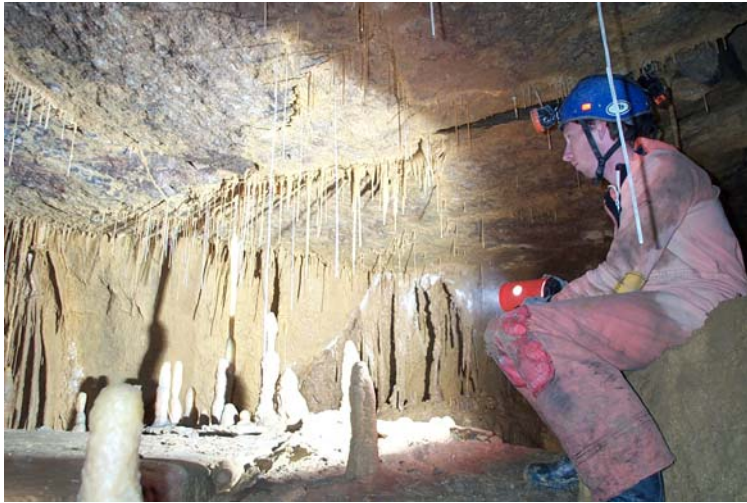
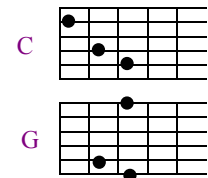
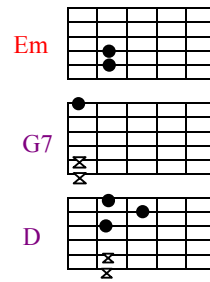
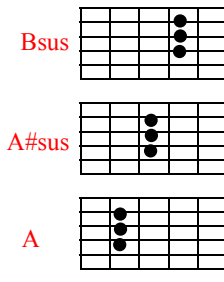
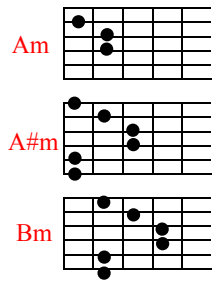
outlined by this song, may your

C

G

D

bowels stay healthy and your caving days be long.



A few more photos to fill the space! Top two and bottom right are in Rocket Rods Pot (Photos Rolan Eberhard). Bottom left is Janine in NZ (Photo Ric Tunney)

Current STC Membership

Given name	Family name	Expiry date	Postal Address	Phone (H)	Phone (W)	Mobile	E-mail
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Armchair Cavers							
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Geoff	Crossley	31 Mar 2005					

All membership enquiries should be addressed to the Treasurer. Current as at 16/06/2004.

