

SPEIEO SPIEL 343

July - August 2004



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Front Cover: A likely mob in Ross Walker Cave entrance (Photo by Gavin Brett)

Back Cover: Matt Cracknell getting a little too excited in Owl Pot (claustrophobia?, achluophobia? or taeniophobia maybe? (Photo by Yoav Bar-Ness)



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.

Issue No. 343, Jul. - Aug. 2004

CONTENTS

Regular Bits

Editorial	2
Forward Program	2
Stuff 'n Stuff	2

Trip Reports

Tassy Pot	2
Tassy Pot	3
Midnight Hole	4
Milk Run	4
Owl Pot	5
Milk Run	5
Midnight Hole	6
Milk Run	6
341	7
Gormenghast	7
Khazad Dum	7
Serendipity	9
Ross Walker Caves	9
Frankcombes and Cashions Creek Caves	10
Gormenghast	10

Other Exciting Stuff

The Chronicles of Adamson	11
Current STC membership	13

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.

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Editorial

Another two months, another Spiel... Time flies. Thanks to all the contributors. Having a wide range of authors makes the Spiel much more interesting to read (and edit!). It would appear that we've had another active period of caving with not many weekends getting by without a trip of some description. The thoroughly enjoyable 'Florentine Frenzy' has no doubt bolstered trip numbers. The Spiel isn't just about trip reports though, so any other karst or STC related ramblings you might have in your head then send them in.

Alan Jackson

Forward Program

Social Meeting (Republic Bar).....15th September
General Meeting (Republic Bar).....6th October
Social Meeting (Republic Bar).....20th October
Mole Creek Madness (S. Phipps).....21st-24th October
Ric has a Kubla permit
General Meeting (Republic Bar).....3rd November
Beginner Trips/Training – if you want to go somewhere then let Alan know and we can organise it!
New Karst Exploratory – Alan has a tip off from Rolan for some potential new karst, so any one up for a day's bush bashing in the Picton River area is welcome. Talk to Alan if you are.



Stuff 'n Stuff

GAVIN BRETT would like it known that if you rearrange the letters in his name you get... "Big Aven Ratt", however the Editor thinks that "Big Aven Tart" is far more appropriate.

CAVEX 2004. As most of you would have noticed there has been much a do on the list server regarding this year's Cavex exercise to be held on 30th/31st October. The importance of this year's event cannot be ignored with the threat of squillions of mainland cavers invading our shores in January 2005 for Cavemania. Damian and Alan are busy, (OK, Damian is busy), laying out the plans as you read! Interest from the wider Tasmanian cave community has been great so far, thank you, so our plan for a full scale vertical rescue is on track. Details are still sketchy at this stage, however the following can be confirmed:

When – 30th/31st Oct. 2004 – most likely an early start from the Maydena Hall (9am ish?)

Where – Khazad-Dum, Junee-Florentine area, but meeting at Maydena as above

What – multi-pitch patient extraction and surface extraction
More details will be available soon! If you haven't done so already, please let Alan know if you intend coming along
There is also the possibility of a 'refresher' hauling exercise at Fruehauf Quarry in the weeks preceding the main event just to brush of the cobwebs for interested persons.

QUOTE OF THE 6BI-MONTH?: "On a similar, unrelated topic..." Yoav Bar-Ness

FRUEHAUF TRAINING SESSIONS The weather is warming up and the days are getting longer... We had a good 'quarry session' on Saturday 28th August with some new members learning a few tricks and some older members practising rescue techniques. Once the weather picks up a bit more then I will continue Jeff's legacy of regular Wednesday evening sessions. Alan



Photo by Ken Hosking

JF-223 Tassy Pot: 10th July 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett, Dave Rasch, Matt Cracknell, Yoav Bar-Ness

An impromptu Tassy Pot trip organised at the July business meeting with the aim of pushing and surveying the bowels of the MOROCL passages.

Everything was looking good, particularly the abundant snow up the Nine Road, until we realised that we didn't quite get enough rope. Plan B – we would push Dave Rasch's lead in the Good Bye Chamber. We rigged off

two large boulders in the floor and posted me backwards through the slot (the slot is the 1x0.5m window on the left just after you traverse the ledge as you enter the Good Bye Chamber). The result was an enormous dripping aven above, and an 8m drop to the floor. A lovely projection was located high on the right, (as you abseiled on the rope, looking back through the window to the Good Bye Chamber), which acted beautifully as a rebelay. Unfortunately we only had a 10m and a 45m rope with us, and the ten was too

short by the time it came through the window. A total waste of 45m of rope – a 20m would be ample.



Preparing to be 'posted' from the Good Bye Chamber
(Photo by Yoav Bar-Ness)

Gavin and I dosed up on exploration fever, (Dave Rasch is the only known person to previously explore this passage), and hared off down the passage. A steep and mildly difficult climb down led to a short tightish (SRT gear off) squeeze and then larger passage. Gavin shot off into a groovy worm hole, but returned soon after. We then decided to wait for the other three to catch up – it was Dave's lead after all! All together again we headed on until we got to the point that had halted Dave on his previous foray here several years earlier – a 4m climb down. It was free climbable, but we had a 10m rope with us, so we put it in so as not to kill the less experienced amongst us. We were now into truly virginal passage – which was surprisingly not all that tight (sorry, I've reading some of Bunty's old

trip reports!) We only got about 8m before the little stream plummeted off into an enormous chamber. Gavin got too excited and emptied his bladder – this pitch is now known as Slash Drop. It looked about a 10m pitch, but we only had a 10m rope that we scavenged from the climb down back up the passage. Everyone decided 'oh well, we'll do it next time', except Gavin. After caving for many years in Victoria he hasn't got his exploration eagerness under control. He found a thread about 2m from the lip and extended it out with as much tape as he could, inserted packs as rope protectors and appointed me official safety spotter (I think I was meant to call out to him and warn him of imminent death when the rope frayed through). We could see that the rope didn't touch the bottom, but we couldn't stop him. What followed was quite entertaining; there were the normal gasps of excitement, descriptions of caverns measureless to man and whoops of 'Ca Plane Pour Moi', until the obscenities began flowing when he couldn't reach the ground and get off the rope. Gavin wasn't beaten yet though. The chamber floor was a sloping rubble pile, so if he could get sideways about 4m he could get off. He managed to loop his hand ascender leg loop around a rock on the floor and started swinging – inch by inch. From my vantage point he would disappear from sight, then come hurtling back into view frantically grabbing at the floor for something solid. For the vision impaired it went something like this: whoosh, whoosh, f\$%k, whoosh, whoosh, b*^%@r, whoosh, whoosh, YES! He found something that didn't pull out in his hand and he could stand and get off the rope. He seemed to be gone for ages, but he insisted that all he did was one quick lap of the chamber (it must really be quite large). On his return we surveyed out to the Good Bye Chamber, however it may need to be done again as Dave must have been making the clino numbers up (I had a look through the lens afterwards and couldn't see a bloody thing – time to spend some of the Science Account money on new survey instruments!)

Next trip: take some sensible rope lengths and push through to master stream way passage, surely!

JF-223 Tassy Pot : 24th July 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett, Matt Cracknell

Back to good old Tassy Pot to push the lead found on the last trip. Dave Rasch had a reunion of some kind to attend, so we assembled a fast moving party of three and set out. The cave was still rigged from the last trip, except for the entrance pitch, so progress to the Good Bye Chamber was quick.

We had done some research since the last trip to investigate any names that may have been thrown about previously for this extension. The window from the Good Bye Chamber was named 'Excavation Crawl', and the momentous aven that it breaks out into was

named 'Second Shaft'. What an imaginative group they must have been! Whether it will ever be official or not, the current exploration team has chosen to call the window 'US Postal', as it is somewhat of a post box slot shape, and Lance Armstrong and his US Postal team where doing pretty nicely at the time in Le Tour de France.

We posted ourselves through the slot, descended the 8 metre pitch, climbed down the boulder pile, shredded through the Cheese Grater (squeeze), shook through the Salt and Pepper Passage, climbed down again and along to the top of Slash Drop – the 10m pitch that kind of halted our progress last time – and set about rigging

it. We backed up to a projection about 3-4m up the passage, used the bed rock thread on the floor about 2m from the pitch and found a reasonable projection out and up to the right (as you look out in to the chamber/pitch) to choke a trace around for a redirect (it could be used as a rebelay, but we weren't all that inspired by it and decided it would be less distance to fall if it failed as a redirect!)

For a 10m pitch it is quite spectacular, as the Mess Hall, (as the large chamber/collapse is now known), opens out in all directions to leave you free hanging about 10m from all walls. Nice decoration in places too. Gavin had been here before, but only did a hot lap and ascended again and noted that while he didn't look very hard, there wasn't an obvious way on. The floor of the Mess Hall is one big sloping pile of rubble with 2 or 3 sources of water entering in various places from the roof. All the water kind of flows on and through this rubble to the lowest point of the slope (no surprises there!), where an opening into another smaller room is. From this room we followed the obvious way down, kind of rejoining the water. This entire area is an enormous pile of manky boulders, my favourite! We had a prod around the 2 or 3 leads and followed the tightest one down and along, past lots of great mushroom like gypsum, to a bit of a pitch ~ 6m. I originally thought, 'yeah, free climb that for sure', but

got a few metres down and realised I was seriously mistaken (it's amazing what exploration fever can do to your perception of danger!) I went back and got Gavin and Matt who agreed whole heartedly that it wasn't climbable. Luckily we had a bit of rope left over. We spent about 30 minutes 'gardening' and scouring the place for something that even vaguely resembled a feature to rig off. Eventually we found a small chock placement, a nubbin to tape and a seriously dodgy notch to rig the pitch in a very unconventional way – i.e. we could abseil half way down the pitch to the bottom of a loop in the rope, then off rope and scamper over to a ledge and climb down from there! We then gained a further 10-15m depth through a rock fall coated with gypsum and stumbled out in to large stream way passage. Foot prints were discovered, so we knew we'd made a connection, but with what cave?! We went downstream about 60m to its termination, and then upstream until we got to 'the circle room' – we were in Tassy Pot streamway!

We decided that de-rigging and/or surveying was out of the question and shot out to the surface. Next trip we intend doing Tassy Pot the old way, via the 70m pitch, and heading through the MOROCL passages and back up the new way – plus doing some surveying of the extensive horizontal stuff at the bottom.

IB-11 Midnight Hole : 28th July 2004

Matt Cracknell

Party: Matt Cracknell, Damian Bidgood, 3 members of Police SAR (Steven, John, Robyn)

This was planned as a training trip for some of the members of Search and Rescue and I thought I would tag along to get some time on line.

As seems to be the norm, we geared up at the car park in the rain and hail, loaded up excessive amounts of rope and headed for the entrance. We planned to do a 'bounce' trip to get practice going down and up and also to work on our rigging skills. The main problem

that we encountered were a couple of nasty rubs especially on pitch 3 and 5. It was so bad on P5 that we pulled the pin at that point and headed on our way out.

One thing worthy of noting was the Mystery Ck water levels. At Hasting we had 27mm of rain, for the 24 hrs to 0900. The river levels were high enough for us to use the log 20m down stream of the usual crossing point.

Wet and bedraggled we got back to the cars in the dark after about 4 hrs underground.

IB-37 Milk Run : 29th July 2004

Matt Cracknell

Party: Matt Cracknell, Damian Bidgood, 3 members of Police SAR (Steven, John, Robyn)

Again another 'training' trip. This time to that lovely wet hole, milkrun. A glorious walk through the Marble Hill rainforest, in the rain (nothing different eh?). The plan for today's trip was to rig the 50m pitch and drill the P-Hangers on one of the pitches below and thus finish the bolting in this cave.

I led the group down to the top of the unrigger pitch. Damian followed in the rear to test the completed P-Hangers. John and I got to the bottom of the big 50m (a little bit of a sprinkle from above) sat down and had a

bite to eat. 45 min later! Wondering what was going on we got the message that there had been a problem with one of the party. Robin had got hung up on one of Gavins dodgy re-belays, he was also using a rescue belay device as a descender (?) and that compounded the problems, an hour later he was exhausted and ready to get out so Damian pulled the pin on the trip. Better to be safe than sorry.

The fun and games were not over, as I found out. Damian's bag loop snapped at the top of P1 and his bag, due to the attraction to the centre of the earth plummeted 35m-40m, one very loud bang and some crushed gear later I found that I was nominated to bring

the fallen bag, plus my bag with the unused drill out to the surface. Lots of mist rising from my overheating body was enough to warm the guys at the top of the pitch (always keen to help!). 4-5 hrs later we were all out safely to the world of light and forest.

Lots of stuff (rocks, bags etc.) seem to be falling large distances in this cave. The danger seems to be compounded by the fact that the pitches are practically on top of one another. Take care in this hole; learn to hug the walls!

JF-221Owl Pot : 31st July 2004

Yoav Bar-Ness

Party: Alan Jackson, Joe Farrell, Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Yoav Bar-Ness

Early starts to the Florentine for us all. The usual sadness at the lack of inspiring snacks available in New Norfolk, and then zipping into the Florentine in a station wagon. A fair bit of snow on the ground.



Serena and Alan at the entrance (Photo by Yoav Bar-Ness)

The entrance to Owl Pot is a triangular gap and involves a pitch down a muddy slipslope which opens into a large chamber, and then hop down some rocks into passage ways slanted along the bedding plane. The second pitch brings you through a gap and down a rocky slope. Continue down past two climby bits with excellent handholds, and down along the bedding plane to a rock fall area. One tight squeeze through and another pitch to a flat walk chamber with a roof sloped

45 degrees with the plane. This brings us to a creek with dolerite boulders laying about.



Joe fiddling with the redirect on the third pitch (Photo by Yoav Bar-Ness)

The highlight of the trip was the final pitch down next to a 40 metre waterfall. The combination of bolt locations and low water flow meant a pretty dry path. Looking into the gushing water by torchlight brings out wonderful shapes. At the base of the waterfall is a large chamber, the windiest and noisiest place underground. We followed a side passage and bottomed out the cave in a medium sized tunnel where the water began and the air ended. Excellent fun, nothing too scary or technical, and an incredible experience on the last pitch. Everyone left the cave happy, just in time for the sunset.

IB-37 Milk Run : 5th August 2004

Damian Bidgood

Party: Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett, Matt Cracknell, Damian Bidgood

This was to be the return trip to finish the 'P' hangers in Milk Run to make it ready for the Conference in January. I actually managed to plan a trip and then come along this time without any work commitments getting in the way.

After picking Gavin up slightly late we made our way down to Lune River getting Alan and Matt on the way. Once Matt was in the vehicle the banter started with Alan cutting loose on him, but still managing to hold himself back from a full frontal attack until later in the day.

The exciting walk up along side the old Bender's Quarry was next, (during which I had left my gloves back at the vehicle and had to go back and get them), then along to the cave entrance and a plan was formulated. Alan and Matt descended first to go ahead and rig the 49m pitch then start drilling beyond that. Meanwhile Gavin and I followed behind and began testing the hangers placed already.

An hour or so had passed when Gavin and I started wondering why we could still hear Alan and Matt, who appeared as though they were still not far away. We continued testing and re-rigging certain sections of the cave. As time went on it appeared as though a party

was beginning to start further down the cave. Noises such as throat music and attempts at singing were reverberating up the cave. We did comment that whatever they were on we wanted some. But no strange smells (other than those you would expect from Alan), were coming up from below us so we put it down to cave-narcosis. Comments were also made about the lack of noise from the drill. We thought that work progress may have been slow as we could not hear the drill above the singing and yelling. Upon reaching the top of the 49m pitch we could faintly hear the drill, so came to the conclusion (that was corroborated later) that Alan was using the drill and most of the decibels were disappearing up his nose.

The bolt testing program for today was finished, so Gavin and I turned into recreational cave mode. We descended the 49m pitch and caught up with the party. Upon arriving last I thought I could catch up with some food intake. But I was wrong, orders were being thrown around at everyone from everyone, I had a tube of glue thrown at me and was told to glue two hangers. After doing the two hangers I handed the glue kit down to the others and was given my marching orders to leave the cave collecting the testing kit on the way through.

Alan and Matt weren't finished with their party yet so elected to stay behind and glue the last two hangers then de-rig as Gavin and I left with the drill kit and testing kit.

Upon reaching the surface Gavin and I were shortly followed by Alan who had an extremely heavy bag with him (I think he had his lunch wrapper in it). There was a short wait for Matt, so to fill in the time I suffered a short frontal attack of verbal stirring from Gavin and Alan. Then Matt arrived at the bottom of the entrance pitch to save me (thanks Matt). By this stage the communication skills between Alan and Matt had deteriorated to the extent where Matt was finding it hard to decipher that when Alan said $1\frac{3}{4}$ plus $\frac{1}{2}$ equals 2, it did actually equal 2 not $2\frac{1}{4}$ (???? Ed.). Matt finally worked out what he was wanting in relation to hauling the ropes up the last pitch (but failed when he forgot to send his bag up as well).

All gear was finally out of the cave and the walk back to the car began (in daylight). On arriving back at the car Alan conducted a weight test of everyone's bags to improve his manhood status in the group (I won with the heaviest). The cave is now ready with the only remaining task to test the last four hangers on the next trip. In all there are 14 hangers in the cave.

PS If anyone has any old 1 pint milk bottles they want filling we will gladly take them with us on the next trip to get them filled for you.

(And the author of this trip report was wondering what Matt and I were on?! What was he on when he wrote this? Freak! Ed.)

IB-11 Midnight Hole : 7th August 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Pete, Kat, Kylie, et moi

Some rabble from the mainland (MUMC and SUSS members) had approached Ric and Janine for some expert guidance, (guidance is one of the many things that Ric is good at), but they were partaking in some frolicking on the mainland and were unavailable. Ric forwarded them to me. They hadn't been to the Ida Bay karst before, so I thought Midnight Hole would be a good trip to test if they had acceptable vertical competency for a more serious trip the following day.

They enjoyed the down, knew how to thread their racks and had a sense of humour (these are all good caver qualities). Once into Mystery they became very keen and we did several legs and circuits into all the well known bits. They were sceptical of my claims about the glow worms until they saw them. We spent the evening at Francistown (thanks Arthur), with excessive amounts of pizza consumed. Much discussion was had about what would be done the following day – nothing was decided.

IB-37 Milk Run : 8th August 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Pete, Kat, Kylie, et moi

We rose a little late and finally decided that Milk Run wouldn't be too dangerous for them. I escorted them to the entrance and sent them on their way with a bit of yellow flagging tape to put on the recently installed p-hangers (I might start doing this as a standard in p-hangered caves as they can sometimes be difficult to spot if you don't have your eye in). They only had 150m of rope, so weren't going to get past the

separator. I then had to nick off as I'd recently received a letter from my bank stating that my brownie point account was in the red. I bade them farewell, told them to come back again soon (with airfares as they are it almost turns out cheaper and faster to cave in Tas than to drive to Buchan!), and hoped they all survived. I received confirmation later that evening that they were all well, had a pleasant trip and would return some time.

JF-341 : 15th August 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Gavin Brett, Dave Rasch, Alan Jackson

Unable to get inspired about returning to all that surveying in Tassy Pot, we took the easy option and headed for a jaunt in 341. The drive was nice and short, (June Quarry Rd caves are the best), and after a quick impersonation of a well endowed ballet dancer by Dave, we walked in. Dave's lightening quick moves when removing fern fronds from the track were formidable, and my knee breaking stumble (too busy crapping on about something to watch where I was going) kept the walk in entertaining. We took a quick diversion to admire the Rift Cave swallet – very impressive – and then dragged our bodies through the crappy entrance series of 341. Plenty of 'Dave bashing' ensued (we didn't have Damian or Matt, so we had to improvise!), and a few hours of dodgy and excessively slow rigging later we dumped our SRT and bound off into the cave. Seeing all Jeff's hand written notes requesting low impact caving gave us a warm feeling. Watching Dave come 'a cropper' and test out the impact rating of his helmet provided me with a similar warm feeling!

The aim of the trip (after much discussion) was to see the areas that Jeff, Dave and Rolan (and maybe others, I'm not sure), had spent so much time exploring and surveying. It was a bloody long way, with plenty of difficult climbs (for the shorter members of the group, anyway), some of which didn't have the hand lines in

place that Dave was expecting. The opportunity for destruction in these 'new' areas is enormous with mountains of mud interspersed with pretties. The damage that had already been done from the few people who have visited this area is very obvious. We reached our ultimate destination and marvelled at the grand chamber that Dave is proposing to be called "Jeff's Kingdom". It was a long way out, so we didn't waste too much time lazing around for lunch, but we did decide that some track marking was in order. It didn't take long to run out two full roles of flagging tape! Much more track marking needs to be done in this extension to minimise further damage – one beautiful section of flowstone that terminates in a large pool has had it's charm removed by what would appear to be a photo opportunity (the angle and position of the dead end trail of foot prints can really only be explained by some one wanting to get a little bit closer and have their photo taken with the flow stone – moronic).

The haul out was mostly uneventful, although Gavin's various attempts at negotiating the climb down near the blast site was entertaining. No song was left unsung, even Shannon Noll got a work out, and we got back to the car just on dark with enough time to pick up some hot chippies at Maydena.

All in all a most enjoyable trip and an impressive cave system, but some real scope for track marking and visitor management is required in some areas.

JF-35 Gormenghast : 20th August 2004

Matt Cracknell

Party: Matt Cracknell, Amy Ware

Amy had contacted me several weeks ago about caving in the Florentine on the days before the Frenzy weekend. I have not done many caves in the area (in fact Amy had seen more caves in the JF than I had), Gormenghast was one that I had seen and was reasonably confident of finding. It was obvious that we were both on holidays because we didn't start on the track at the end of the 8 Rd until 1400! This was after food, site seeing and a stop off at the Maydena FT office for catch up chat between Amy and Brad who works for FT.

Getting mildly lost because the stream not marked on the map was flowing, we eventually found what we were looking for thanks to some tape (orange) and a process of elimination. The swallet type entrance steeply descends into wet boulder climbs. At one point we used a 6m tape as a handline. *Symphylins* sp. and poo particles (see KD trip report 21/8/4) were seen in this area which was in an old phreatic rift. We reached the horizontal section and turned back just before the calcite areas because of the risk of being in the dark on the way back to the car. This is an exciting little cave, with some good crawls and climbs in the cascades. Out by 1700.

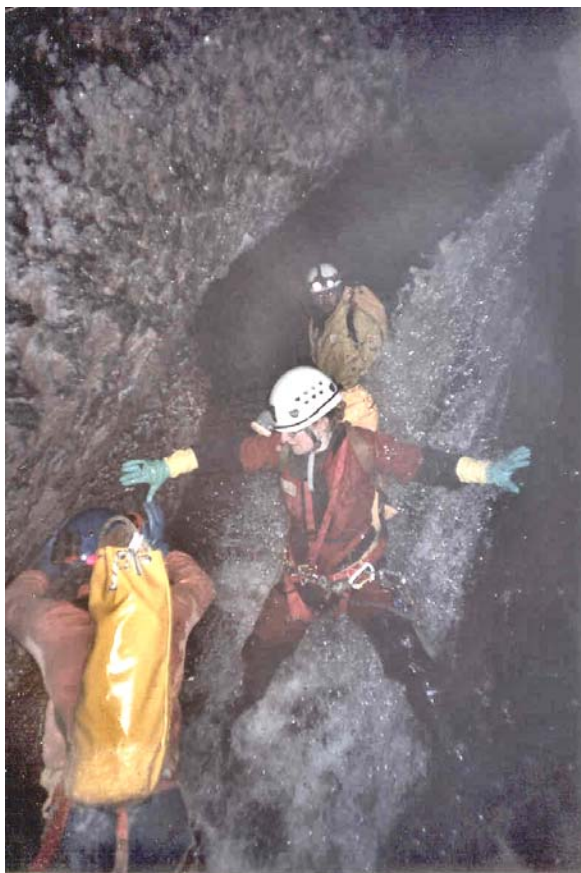
JF-4 Khazad-Dum : 21st August 2004

Matt Cracknell

Party: Alan Jackson, Geoff Wise, Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Amy Ware

As part of the Florentine Frenzy weekend it was eventually decided (after several gloomy looks to the snow covered mountains) that a party of 5 would brave the elements and bursting rivers to attempt Khazad-

Dum. Amy Ware from Orbost in Vic deciding to come with us and test her SRT skills, on her birthday. She seemed to think that a bit of wet vertical caving was just the right present for her, maybe there is hope for mainland cavers yet (*ooh, nasty! Ed.*).



Amy getting wet at the entrance stream traverse (Photo by Geoff Wise)

A lot of time had been spent mustering enthusiasm so we didn't arrive at the cave entrance until 1200. On the way Amy and I saw a dead feral cat in the rainforest. The swallet entrance was gushing loudly, a taste of things to come. One at a time we carefully crossed the swollen stream and headed down the serpentine passage to the left of the main streamway. Negotiated P1 (4m) and then the next climb down before the flattner. The distant rumble of the waterway our constant companion.

P2 (30m), what an abseil! Out of the slot and into that great chamber. Coming to rest on a pile of wedged blocks some distance above the floor. The roar of the water now drowns out any communication. Off through the boulder piles into the old phreatic zone. In this area several *Symphlin* spp. were noted closely associated with rod like mud deposits. Each rod is approx. 2mm long and 0.25mm wide. I have seen both *Symphylin* spp. and these rods in other caves in the Florentine valley. In some areas the rods completely cover the bedrock with a thick coating. One theory we had was that the rods are some sort of excrement from these beasties.

Leaving the bugs behind at the top of P3 (7m), we continued down the serpentine rift to the last abseil of the day P4(20m) into a waterfall chamber. The amount of spray and air movement in this place made it way

too cold to sit still for too long. We had a quick bite to eat, Alan, Geoff and Amy followed the streamway down until the first waterfall pitch while Serena and I headed up the nylon highway. This meant that no one was waiting too long in the cold and wet.



Quite a bit of water – clearly an exciting prospect for Alan (Photo by Geoff Wise)

Essentially in 2 groups we organized to meet up at the top of P2. This was OK until communication problems meant that Serena and I were waiting at the top for 20min and the others were at the bottom for 20 min. Some loud shouting over the water finally rectified the problem and we were all together again. While I was waiting during the confusion, I noticed that the noise of the waterfall was changing every couple of minutes, there were surges in the waterflow. Keen to move on, the group pushed through the flattener and up the climb and short prussik and back onto the surface world at about 1730.

Back in rainforest land with wet snow falling. Ahhh The Florentine! Light was fading and the track hard to follow in some sections but we managed without too much difficulty to find our way to the cars. By this stage all were keen for some home cooking and refreshing beverages that awaited back at the accommodation. What a nice feeling not to be thinking about the drive to Hobart.

JF-344 Serendipity : 21st August 2004

Claire Brett

Party: Claire Brett, Gavin Brett, Jol Desmarchelier, Joe Farrell, Heather Nichols, Dave Rasch

After checking in at Giants Cottages, we set off for Serendipity. The plan was to explore the horizontal section to see if the trip would be a worthwhile beginners/easy trip for the upcoming conference.

We arrived at the carpark at around 11:40am. After some discussion over the world's worst/unsafest place to hide car keys (inside the exhaust pipe was the winner) we geared up and set off. We walked through magnificent forest with towering trees, lush green ferns and moss covered fallen trees. A real contrast to the devastation on the Eight Road. It was a bit windy. Dave's quote of the trip was that the trees "hardly ever fall down, except when it's windy".

We reached the cave entrance at about 12:30pm. After some frolicking, we all squeezed into the cave at 1pm. We were greeted with massive boulders balanced

precariouly above us. We climbed down along the streamway and then up through a crawl into a larger chamber. We then followed the streamway along and down to the top of the first pitch. It looked daunting (well, to me anyway!). We sat down and enjoyed lunch. Thanks to Joe for sharing his yummy ginger nut biscuits.

We returned exploring side passages. We exited through the steeper alternative entrance. The rope came in handy. We popped out at about 2:30pm into the bush, up the hill slightly from the other entrance.

Verdict: an enjoyable beginners/easy trip.

We walked back to the car via Asteroid Pot and Growling Swallet and reached the cars just as the rain began to fall. A very enjoyable and straight forward trip. And then back to Maydena for the festivities.

JF-63 & 64 Ross Walker Caves : 22nd August 2004

Hugh Fitzgerald

Party: Claire Brett, Gavin Brett, Heather Nichols, David Rasch, Amy Ware, Liz Canning, Dexter Canning, Hugh Fitzgerald.

The above party left Maydena at 10 am to visit Ross Walker I & II. From Junee Quarry we took a route leading up the sloping bench to the scrubby bush above the quarry's southern wall. Dave led the way with his trusty Garmin Etrex Summit, which had the coordinates of the Ross Walker caves loaded from a previous trip to this location. Despite this assistance, the bush was as thick as ever, and the climb/slip down into the gully and the bush bash up the other side were time consuming. It took about three quarters of an hour to reach the caves on the next ridge.

The GPS unit proved very useful when it came to locating the collapse feature where the entrances to Ross Walker I & II are found: our scout Gavin passed within 10 metres of the site but failed to spot it in the dense scrub. Dave halted our westward progress and directed us up the hill to the right spot. The collapse resembles an old quarry site, complete with headwall at the rear. Newcomers to the place were amazed by the unlikely location of this cave, situated as it is on a ridge top.

We proceeded to examine Ross Walker I cave, the large entrance found at the rear right of the collapse feature. Plenty of ambient daylight penetrates to the recesses of this cave, such is its size. Consequently, much of the interior is covered in algae, and some parts apparently attract bacteria, presumably feeding on the algae and other nutrients. There was plenty of faecal evidence

suggesting that vertebrates use the cave for shelter. Plenty of dry old wood is to be found throughout.

Our youngest party member, Dexter, was freed from his backpack to explore the cave. He found the uneven floor a challenge, but with adult assistance he rather enjoyed the experience until he knocked a shin on a rock edge. The cave isn't suitable for unsupervised two-year-olds.

Heather found much fanciful evidence of rock drawings, which failed to convince other party members. Dave and Hugh speculated upon the age and development of the cave. Amy examined the walls minutely. Claire and Dexter measured the rate of drip deposition in a small pool. Liz noted examples of speleograffiti throughout the cave. Gavin took photographs, and dreamed about grand hydrological diversion schemes to extend the cave's dimensions.

After 40 minutes we exited Ross Walker I, and half the party then looked into Ross Walker II. All emerged ten minutes later smeared with the abundant moonmilk found in this small cave.

We took an alternate route back to Junee Quarry, led by Gavin. After a quick descent into the valley and a long climb up the ridge, Dave and his GPS unit provided some more useful guidance, which steered us successfully to our vehicles. The return trip took about the same time as the outward leg. En route, Gavin found a small cave on the hill above Junee Quarry, not far from the top of the headwall, which he explored to 5 metres.

A rain shower hastened our change of clothes and departure, at around 2 pm. The Possum Shed in

Westerway provided a welcome diversion on the return trip to Hobart.

JF-7 Frankcombes Cave and JF-6 Cashions Creek Caves : 22nd August 2004

Steve Bunton

Party: Serena Benjamin, Stephen Bunton, Joe Farrell, Steve Phipps, Trevor Wailes (STC) and Debbie Hunter (Mole Creek Caving Club).

This was the second day of the STC Florentine Frenzy. I arrived at 8.30 to find people having breakfast and standing around. For the next hour it was decision time, everyone had to sort out which cave they wanted to visit and so there was a fair bit of standing around. It was Trevor that pointed out that this was an integral part of caving trips - something I'd really not noticed before but of course, now that I thought about it, he was correct. We finally loaded into two vehicles and headed off up the Florentine armed with map, Grid References and GPS.

Phippsy and Joe had been to Frankcombes Cave before but since then the redecorators had been through and nothing seemed to fit. Joe investigated some of the skidder tracks and the rest of us just stood around. After consulting the GPS and finding we were 300m too far south Phippsy and Joe headed off up the road. Trev pointed out that we were doing it again. Our scouts returned but even at a distance their body language told that they hadn't relocated the cave. Suddenly they dived off into the slash before returning shortly with a whistle to indicated success. We then headed off on a well marked track which we pruned and retaped in red.

Frankcombes is a nice cave with spectacular roof pendants and some good formation. I'm not sure that the best decorated passage is located in the correct

place on the survey. Most of the cave is a long low crawl but at one point a climb into the upper levels is worth the effort to see a straw of impressive dimensions. We eventually headed out and relocated to Cashions Creek Caves.

I'd been to this cave before but without the benefit of a map. After a quick scrute I realised that I had visited only one of the two caves shown and that neither cave was tagged. It was the more northerly cave which I had visited previously. This cave is quite short, wet and tight so it didn't entertain us for long. In fact this would be a horrible place to encounter a flood pulse. There was a lot of snow around and the weather was a bit inclement but it was probably so cold that it was snowing up there in the clouds on Mt Field.

After a quick exit, we went in search of the other cave and by orienting the map we closed in on it. Deb investigated a little hole which sounded like the go whilst the rest of us stood around. We compared Deb's description with the detail on the map and decided that this must be it, so in we all went. Cashions Creek Cave (the bigger longer drier one!) is quite nice but still didn't take long before we exhausted its potential. Again the survey is a bit funny at the end, the cave doesn't make such an outrageous U-turn! We located the daylight hole entrance and then headed out again taping the route to the cave entrance in red. All in all a good trip to two easy beginner caves.

JF-35 Gormenghast : 22nd August 2004

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, David Young, Bec ?

A couple of potential new members had seen one of my marvellous flyers at uni and expressed an interest in caving – they had done a few trips down at Hastings with Parks into KGV, Mystery Ck etc... and were keen for more. After much deliberating, caves were chosen for the second day of the frenzy and the three of us headed for Gormenghast.

We started the day by a quick look at Growling – everyone was most impressed. I hadn't been to Gormenghast before, but had heard it was pretty good. No worries finding the cave, just follow the large amounts of water. The entrance climbs were fairly

unpleasant (very wet), and the rest of the cave was a bit tight. If I'd known how wet and shitty this cave was I wouldn't have dragged along some beginners for fear of scaring them off! They tackled the climbs etc... with plenty of gusto, but were showing signs of 'not really having much fun', so we returned to the surface after reaching the horizontal section. They still swore that they had fun and were still interested in becoming members etc..., but I don't think it was an appropriate trip for them, in fact I doubt if I'll even go back again myself! A most uninspiring cave by all accounts.

Hopefully David and Bec will return and I'll take them somewhere drier and more spacious.

The Chronicles of Adamson, Winter 2004 – A report on the happenings in the Hastings area in Southern Tasmania

Matt Cracknell

Finally I've got off my Public servant behind and actually sat down to set in stone the things that are happening at Hastings Caves State Reserve and the surrounding areas, namely Ida Bay. I reckon that most stuff will be cave related (no surprises there) but I also want to include anything that I believe is interesting, unusual and that paints a picture of this awesome wilderness at the very bottom of Tasmania.

In late May 2004 a few of us guides disappeared up to Mole Creek for the annual Cave Guides workshop called Gabfest. Lots of talking was done and a reasonable amount of caving. Highlights include; 'The Sam and Betty Show' (read about it in the next ACKMA journal); a trip up Long Creek to Marrakooa 2 with Ian Household; Andy Spate; and a look at a Farm where the paddocks are giant sinkholes (with names like Papa Bear) that frequently become giant lakes. Three guides from Hastings spent a week, talking and talking and talking, basically what guides do best. After the ACKMA conference several delegates came to Hastings and were treated to one of our Glow Worm tours (IB 10). They seemed to think that the tour was value for money and most of them were from New Zealand where you think they'd be sick of glow worms by now.

You may or may not have heard about the recent discovery of a cave that has been tagged H-5. It is named Circular Ponds (or *Chain of Ponds, who knows? Ed.*) (after a bottle of wine!!) but we at Hastings prefer to call it Secret Cave, 'cos no one's really meant to know that it exists. Some people do and there have been a few trips there in June. The reports are that it is cold and wet, too much so for Mainland cavers. Lots of mud and plenty of bat skeletons. The other place that I have heard of many complete bat remains is in the back of Lynds Cave at Mole Creek. Yay! Dead things in caves. Also in June a staff group went to Aquamire (H-208) the name says it all. Steep inclined entrance to a 10m mud chute. Then a mud filled middle area that branched down to a steep muddy collapse/sump. Very complicated rigging for the next section (no naturals) and as we didn't have any more rope we had a look and headed out. One very white harvestman was seen and it looked like the whole place back fills because there was a water level mark high on the muddy walls. Something worth noting is the weird yellow lichen/fungi stuff that was growing and colonising the underneath of a Blackwood log. It was dripping and oozing stalactite things and seemed to be developing spore heads. Very, very weird!

Most of July was spent in Newdegate cave doing cave rehabilitation. The target was the old lighting system that had been in since the 60's. There were four people employed for about 4 weeks. All of the old lights, cable and circuit boxes (except for one light and one box which are now gutted and on display) were carried out, up the stairs. The muddy awkward and heavy 3 phase cable being the big lung buster. All in all we extracted 2-3 km worth of cables and wires, four or five circuit boxes and countless lights and nails. While we were at it several large bags of broken glass, concrete and assorted crap that had been carelessly left behind by our fore fathers and the electricians! As a guide in the cave, heading off the pathways into areas I had only seen from a distance was a big thrill. Large areas of Flos Ferris (look it up in your copy of Cave Minerals) and some hexagonal monocrystalline calcite spars are a few of the new things that I saw.

SRT training for Jason and myself from Hastings and the Rangers Paul.H and Paul.F commenced with Damian running the show. Four days of intensive rope skills in and around Hastings mid July. The training is being organised by Parks Tas as part of our work safety programs. We are currently practicing our skills independently and will meet up again in the next month or two for the assessment, probably in the Florentine area. During The training we attempted a trip into Wolf Hole (Hx8), this was cancelled because of the amount of dangerous looking trees that were hanging precariously around the entrance, in fact most of what was giving us the heebie jeebies had moved in the last few months since Jason and I had done a trip in there in April. Parks staff has been notified of the hazard and hopefully before the summer someone is given the job of removing some of the more unstable ones. Found out today (25/8) that there will be no removal of trees near Wolf Hole until there has been an assessment of the impact to the natural values of the reserve. Any possible removal will be done by Parks staff under strict guidelines (*Bah, humbug! Ed.*)



A spot of 'picking off' training/crutch sniffing. (Photo by someone else not in the photo!)

What else? The data logger for mystery creek water levels has been checked; maybe I can get some results in the future. Not much activity on the guiding front, being winter and tourists don't like to swim. There has been some activity at Marble Hill that is in the Spiel, milk run has been P-hanged. Some of the flowstone in King George 5 (H-216) has been cleaned. The springs walking tracks were closed due to high water levels and tree falls after the storms around the 7th and 8th of August and the stream in Newdegate cave has flowed several times. There is an interesting double head of water a couple of minutes apart that enters the cave when the initial flow commences, it has been reported several times by guides and it was noted in S. Joyce's fluorometer readings from last Sept. The lyrebirds just keep getting worse. They now hang around the visitors centre during the day. Forestry Tasmania has closed off the Hastings forest tour (Tungahna Rd) and all roads in and around Coal Hill until further notice. Most of the guides have undertaken a training course through Jobskills; we signed up at the beginning of August and have 2 years to complete Certificate 4 in Guiding.

It is great seeing that things are gearing up for the imminent Cavemania conference based around Dover in Jan 2005. I can already smell warmer weather in the air and the possibility of some good caving to be done.



Alan being 'bloody huge' in the KD streamway.
Photo by Geoff Wise



Joe and Alan combining to create an art house spectacular in Owl Pot (water fall pitch). *Photo by Yoav Bar-Ness*



Gavin's self portrait (Matt, aka 'Mr Safety', won't like the Stop situation). *Photo by Gavin Brett (no surprises!)*



Gavin and Alan rigging the 70m in Tassy Pot.
Photo by Geoff Wise

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