SPEIEI SPIEI SE September - October 2005

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Front Cover: Growling Swallet entrance streamway (photo by Matt Cracknell)

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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Stuff 'n Stuff

HATE MAIL. Albert Goede stumbled across some speleo hate mail recently. In May 2005 the National Geographic published an article on Krubera Cave in the western Caucasus (Abkhasia). The discovery is also mentioned in the latest issue of the Caves Australia Journal. The National Geographic article caused one of its readers to send a letter to the journal which was published in Forum in the September 2005 issue of the National Geographic:

THE LONG WAY DOWN

I do not see the scientific or cultural value of burrowing 2,000 meters into the Earth for its own sake. What I did see in this story of Krubera Cave were silly snapshots of strutting Marlboro men flexing their biceps and living an overgrown boy's fantasy of playing in dirt with high-tech toys and explosives. Equally grating was the shameless self-congratulations, declaring their enterprise on a par with the conquests of the North and South Poles. Timothy Griffin, Sparks, Nevada

I must admit that Timothy appears to have got it spot on, especially the bit about high tech toys and explosives! That's the only reason Gavin and I cave anymore! It was surprising how many cavers around the world were upset by this letter – there are numerous email forums on the net regarding this letter. These people should learn to look at life from Timothy Griffin's perspective – one of ignorance.

CONGRATULATIONS to Arthur Clarke for allegedly finishing his Masters Thesis – now all that remains is the tedious process of correcting the changes suggested by his peers... Hopefully he can start caving again too.

MADPHIL IN CHINA – most would have noticed Arthur's email to the list server about the China expedition that Madphil is currently involved with. You can have a look at

http://www.hongmeigui.net/~hmg/expeditions.php?expedition=tianxing2005

It was noticed that Madphil doesn't have a bio – Geoff Wise suggested we could do one for him... Any volunteers?

CAVE MANAGEMENT. Those who subscribe to the email list server would have seen an email from club member and DPIWE employee Rolan Eberhard regarding the installation of log books in selected caves in the World Heritage Area (WHA). The idea is to gather data on visitor numbers to selected caves to get a better understanding for future cave management requirements and the like. If you have any queries, comments or bile on the matter then contact Rolan - Rolan Eberhard@dpiwe.tas.gov.au

ARTHUR IN CHINA – It sounds like Arthur is having a good time in China on his latest expedition – I wonder if he'll bump in to Madphil? Below is an extract from an email he sent to Robyn – sounds like the Chinese

Editorial

350 *Speleo Spiels* – not a bad effort really! Here's to another 350.

This edition of the *Spiel* is remarkable in that it contains not one, but two trip reports by Gavin Brett. Getting Gavin to even recall past trips and discuss them verbally is a challenge. Needless to say, I'm concerned for his well being and there could be some underlying medical condition causing all this.

A fine mixture of relaxing Mole Creek caves and hard Junee Florentine exploration has been conducted this last couple of months. I have been fortunate enough to be involved in most of it. Let's get the momentum up and maintain it through the approaching summer. There are a few new faces around the club that need a thorough drenching in cave related activities while conditions are nice.

Enjoy the read

Alan Jackson

Forward Program

- General Meeting (Republic Bar)...... 2nd November
- Social Meeting (Republic Bar)...... 16th November
- Christmas BBQ 14th December
 - at Gavin and Claire's (4 Clutha Place)



take a different approach to caving compared to us. More info about the expedition can be found at www.chinacaves.org.uk

Today we 'expeditioners' (the ten from UK, plus a guy from Hungary and myself from Oz) were the guests of honour for the official opening of the first international geo park, centred on the cave which has the same name as this village we are staying in: Jiang Zhou, where about 300-400 people live. The village does not appear on maps, but is located about 12 km north of Pingle,

about 60 km south of Fengshen (pronounced as Fung Sanh).

It was an amazing exhilarating affair with Chinese musicians playing their traditional bronze drums with bullock horns, acrobatics from Chinese dancers in traditional ethnic costumes and ladies also in costumes serving us drinks (in bowls) for toasts, together with Communist Party and UNESCO officials from the local town, County, Region, Province and national bodies, plus a bevy of newspaper people, cameramen and television people, plus an audience of locals including school kids in an open air setting on the side of the doline, outside the huge cave entrance with banners strewn / stretched across the valley, listening

to speeches from numerous Chinese officials, crudely translated into English for our benefit. The ceremony culminated with us in full caving attire marching off and up to the cave entrance with a fanfare of drums and Chinese fireworks (big big bangers, sky rockets and lots of smoke).

WHERE'S JOE? This is a question that has gone unanswered for years (even when he was physically nearby his mind always seemed to be somewhere else). He now has an excuse to not come caving with us anymore as he has taken a position at the Beaconsfield Mine. Good luck and bring us back some gold next time you're down!

JF-338 Lost Pot: 17 September 2005 Alan Jackson

Party: Gavin Brett, Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Amy Ware

Following our previous visit to Lost Pot a few months back we had decided a return trip to take a few happy snaps on the big pitch was in order. We knew Bunty had some camera gear and when we asked him he told us that he thought Lost Pot was the only cave in his and Rolan's book that he hadn't visited.



Alan being a star and double packing for Gavin *Photo* by Janine McKinnon

On the way up the cursed hill we dropped packs and popped up to Serendipity et al. to see how the hydrology was going. The recent changes were still in place (the fallen manfern was still blocking the newer swallet) and water was flowing down into JF-346. During recent high rainfall the easily missed swallet right on the lip of the JF-346 doline has been bypassed as a result of scouring and erosion of the creek bank. No water enters here now and it all proceeds to the lowest point of the doline. It may be worth another look in both these spots to see what other changes have occurred (and see if I can get stuck again...)

We bundled into Lost Pot and proceeded to the bottom - Bunty could now put a tick in that box (he also put something else in a box while at the bottom!). Amy headed out the big pitch first with a flash for the top, and while she did this Gavin and I investigated the short pitch above and across from the last pitch. It continued via a small drafting hole and a well aimed rock seemed to land in a pool of water somewhere. Because the hole was so small, and would require too much effort to enlarge, we convinced ourselves that it must link up with the little lake further down and headed out to check Amy's progress. After Amy cleared the pitch head I got the job of being halfway flash man and duly prussiked halfway up (and actually got a little nervous about being 40 metres of the ground with time to look down and think about it!) An array of clicking and flashing ensued and then I continued up. We all headed for the surface.

JF-36 Growling Swallet: 25 September 2005 Janine McKinnon

Party: Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon.

We wanted to test out our new plastic suits and particularly see how much clothing we needed to wear in splashy conditions, and also start getting a few photos in those caves we've done heaps of times and have somehow never managed to get photos of (KD next?) So Growling seemed a good candidate.

Yet again there were no other takers for what was a trip within the abilities of anyone not yet reduced to Zimmer frame aided mobility (or maybe I just need to change either my deodorant or personality?)

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Janine extracting herself from the shallow end of the pool (it just looks deep because it's Janine) *Photo by Ric Tunney*

We got underground at 1030 and photographed our way down to the sump via the usual route. The water levels were much lower than I'd been expecting, up on normal summer flow of course but not particularly sporting.

We checked out the Windy Rift to see if it had been blocked during winter flooding and it was fine.

More photographing back up to the junction of the "dry route" and after a bit of poking around in the passages there we decided to try the main ("wet route") streamway out. We haven't taken this section of the cave in over 20 years. It was quite wet and sporty! Particularly the waterfall duck under that hadn't been there before. Great fun! I've developed a deep emotional tie with my new suit already.

We were back out into the sunshine before 1400.

Very gentlemanly (and womanly) caving indeed. So where were you all?

MC-1 Kubla Khan: 1 October 2005 Claire Brett

Party: Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon, Matt Cracknell, Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett, Claire Brett

I'm sure most people reading this article have had the pleasure of experiencing this cave. Words are inadequate to describe the beauty, richness and extensiveness of nature's work in this cave. I will try to leave out the adjectives, but it is difficult! The group met up at the delightful Mole Creek campground. Gavin & I drove up from Hobart that morning and arrived 11 minutes late (at 8:11am). We set off shortly after in the two lowest cars owned by club members (Subaru and Peugeot). We made it to the carpark without too much scraping. [Any scraping is too much scraping. Ed.]

Alan and Janine kindly rigged the bottom entrance so we could do a through trip. We walked up to the top entrance to the sound of zero factorial and the birds tweeting. Gavin rigged the first pitch. After another nervous pee, I was "on rope" and descended the pitch without a hitch. After two more pitches in close succession, we marveled at the view before us – amazing shawls and a huge decorated chamber. We had an early lunch break at the Opium Den. The decorations were lovely – one was like a spider with large spindly legs going out in all directions. Ric & Matt took some pictures using extra flashes. Alan was quick to offer his flashing services.

We continued on to the most beautiful scenes in the Silk Shop – pools and stals galore. The others commented on the enhanced prettiness of the cave due to the extra water. We then marched by Khans Army on our left and reached the famous Khan. It was so intricate, yet so big! The crowd favourite was the

nearby Begum, a floor to ceiling column [Shawl technically? Ed.], maybe 20 metres high. How can any cave match this one?, I thought.



Claire's traversing technique is scrutinised by the others (either that or they were all hoping to see her fall in...) *Photo by Matt Cracknell*

I think it was about 1:30 pm, apparently we had been making very good time. We expected to be out of the

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cave around 4:30 pm. We continued on, I was getting tired. I decided to take the safe option of descending the rope rather than the Leap of Death. We then did our last abseil down to the point just above the streamway. We walked across the stream (knee high-ish), changed shoes and explored the Pleasure Dome. More photos were taken. The sight was amazing. The pools were full of water and we watched the water flow down the cascade in regular pulses.

We then started on the final section. This is where things got interesting. The water was quite deep - I hugged the walls and struggled against the current. I found it difficult, and didn't even have a pack. The water was over head height in a couple of sections - the rope came in handy. The last effort over the waterfall was fun. Fortunately Alan went through the Stal Shuffle and was able to provide help from above. We made it through but one member of the party was cold and shivery. We walked up the final steps with sloshing gumboots and prussiked out. The very final 5 metre climb up was hard work - my arms and legs were jelly! We exited the cave at around 6 pm. Luckily it was just a short walk back down to the cars and then back to the campground. That hot shower (40 cents) was value for money. Energy flowed back into my limbs and we enjoyed a nice meal at the pub with the other groups.

After a couple of days to reflect upon the entire trip, I would put the Begum column up in my top 5 of incredible natural formations. Uluru would be number 1 for me, the Haleakala crater on Maui would be up there as well.

Again, thanks to my fellow cavers who helped me out in certain sections.



Everybody looking way too clean before embarking on the Silk Shop *Photo by Matt Cracknell*

MC-32 Baldocks Cave, MC-114 Kohinoor: 1 October 2005 Geoff Wise

Party: Annette Swinnerton, Scott Cragg, Liz Canning, Hugh Fitzgerald, Dexter Canning, Geoff Wise

Our intention was to visit Honeycomb in the morning and then decide between Baldocks or something else in the afternoon. The weather from the previous month (the wettest Mole Creek September in living memory!) changed the plan.



Not quite the same as the rainforest you get in other Tasmanian karst areas, but a pleasant enough back drop all the same *Photo by Geoff Wise*

Mole Creek was quite high making Honeycomb 'exciting'. We decided it was a little too exciting for a beginner and a couple of others who weren't keen on

getting wet. We walked up to the abseil hole but decided that wasn't worth doing. Liz, Hugh and Dexter had arrived in the meantime and after a short discussion we decided to head for Baldocks.



Scott and Annette take in the sights in Baldocks Cave *Photo by Geoff Wise*

The car trip to Baldocks is worthy of its own trip report but to summarise, due to only having half a map and Annette's faded memory (she had been to Baldocks all of six weeks ago) we took a couple of wrong turns. We drove past the people from the Honey Farm in Chudleigh about seven times. That was a little embarrassing! After a little bit of excitement in the

'rally-bred' Lancer [sic] we arrived at the end of the road and made the short trek along the fence line to Baldocks. Annette led the way having been in this cave previously. We split into two groups; Liz Hugh and Dexter chose to avoid the less civilised bits while Annette, Scott and I had a bit more of an explore. The cave is quite interesting with parts of its old lighting system still in place and the relics from tourist days of old (signatures, steps made from ferns etc). We exited the cave around an hour and a half after getting there. After a bit more slippin' and a slidin' and one push to start it all off we made it back to the caravan park for lunch.

After lunch we headed into Kohinoor, minus the 'Fitzcannings'. This cave is short and reasonably uninteresting but has a couple of squeezy and climby bits to test out the less experienced caver. There was water at the start of the passage at the bottom of the large rock pile chamber so we turned back here, no one was keen to push through to the festering, mosquito riddled cess pit that is the entrance to Maze Puzzle. After Kohinoor we headed back to look for Diamond Cave. I had looked briefly for this with Madphil once but failed to find it. This time I walked straight to it but after heading down the corkscrew we decided that we wouldn't go in. It was approaching three; heading back now would give us some time to clean up before beer o'clock.

MC-13 Croesus Cave : 2 October 2005 Alan Jackson

Party: Gavin Brett, Matt Cracknell, Scott Cragg, Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson, Geoff Wise

Croesus was one of the Mole Creek classics that I still hadn't seen – I was trying to save them all up for when I was an old withered man incapable of doing hard caving in the south of the state, but curiosity and peer pressure got the best of me.



Streamway cobbles cemented in the ceiling *Photo by Matt Cracknell*



Matt's best angle in the Croesus streamway *Photo by Matt Cracknell*

It was very pretty, especially all the dams in the streamway (it should have been called Hydro Cave really), but having done Kubla Khan the previous day it all seemed a bit lame in comparison. Geoff and Matt took lots of photos, we all got really cold feet and spent a while cursing the stupid gate that is really hard to lock. Nice cave, but a pity about all the stringline.

MC-32 Baldocks Cave : 2 October 2005 Tony Culberg

Party: Tony Culberg, Pat Culberg

We were only able to leave Hobart on Saturday afternoon and arrived at the Mole Creek Pub by 6 pm. We had dinner and then went looking for everyone else who we eventually tracked down in the dining room. A pleasant evening's conversation was had with us deciding to "do" Baldocks - a cave we hadn't seen.

Next day after discussions at the camping ground we were off with the keys and Ric's map. We parked some distance before the locked gate – by the big tree – as the mud wallow looked challenging.

Off through the gate, across the (unheated) creek and up the open grassy area. The map shows this as Crown land so we were a bit daunted by a further fence. We continued up the hill for a while but decided we were getting bushed and returned to the fence line which led to a dry creek – though obviously recently in spate – and started checking out the cliff line. We soon found a hole with a gate and crawled through (MC33). We later discovered this was a back entry.

The passages were really interesting with some very pretty decoration - a beautiful suspended pool, lots of straws and some quite impressive columns. The piping and old carbide light fittings were still in place.

Some of the formation was very black. We had by now found the front door with the remains of the acetylene gas producer still in place. As we didn't trust our batteries we left, locked up — waded back across the creek (still unheated) and took the keys back to

Marakoopa. The rest of the group were not reappearing until 2 so we decided to head home – to the inevitable wash up. Another trip – this time with cameras and a range of lights – would definitely be worth while, for both the cave itself and the historical artefacts.

IB-8 Mini Martin / IB-34 Skyhook Pot Exchange – 'Short Changed' : 8 October 2005 Gavin Brett

Party: Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett

The team came together in dribs and drabs but we were all together by the Hastings visitor centre. We loaded up 365 m of rope and struggled up the hill. The Mini Martin track could do with a clean up after the Milk Run turn off but we managed to make it through. Matt and Serena had a slight look of terror in their eyes but we left them to descend Mini Martin. Alan and I found Skyhook pretty quickly - it is a small entrance just down the gully from Mini Martin.



Gavin suggesting that Alan apply the brakes in a more appropriate spot (i.e. less likely to burn your hand!) on the 'you beaut' gravity defying prototype rope packing technique *Photo by Matt Cracknell*

The first pitch went by uneventfully, and then the fun started - Skyhook Pot is a spectacular cave. The second and third pitches are in clear view of about two thirds of the well illuminated first pitch of Mini Martin, with its rope powering down in clear view. You also look out at a massive wall that extends over to Mini Martin and out in the other direction; it's almost like being outside. The next pitch is a nicely formed circular pot, with a couple of nondescript pitches after that.

We meet up with the others who had had a great time descending and had been off gallivanting about in Exit. Alan and I have a pact about not going to Exit unless it is from the north side of Marble Hill so we swapped partners and started to head out. Matt went up Skyhook with Alan, and Serena and I went up Mini Martin. It was great fun seeing the other team across the void, lots of scope for trading insults. Soon we were on the surface packing up all that rope and heading down the hill to the Skinner Track, which is always uphill in both directions.

Skyhook has been noted as being a bit dodgy for loose rocks, but we took it carefully and found it fine, better than Milk Run for example.

Rigging (all left and right directions are as you look forward down the cave, not as you abseil)

P1 14 m - Tie off to a nearby tree and abseil down the short muddy slope into the entrance. A 4 m sling over a dubious rock spike on the left serves as a rebelay.

P2 28 m - Tie off around a large rock against the wall in the small chamber with an \sim 8 m trace. Abseil down the ramp to the head of the pitch. Rebelay off a beautiful thread on the right with a 3 m tape. This thread is formed through the wall between the main shaft and the really cute 1 m diameter shaft beside it.

P3 20 m - This is a continuation of the previous pitch. Rebelay over the edge off a through bolt (8 mm) and a spit.

P4 47 m - Tie in at the through bolt on the left at the top of the nasty little slope above the pitch just after you come around the corner. Rebelay off the two through bolts on the right just above the little, potentially dry, stream.

P5 11 m- Two through bolts on the left.

P6 4 m - Considered a climb by hard men, but as you already have your gear on there is a nice rock in the centre of the passage that a ~4 m tape fits over nicely allowing you to abseil down in style on the right hand side.

Note: The whole cave could be rigged with one rope (about 170 m long). We had all our ropes tied into the previous one. The through bolts have a nut and washer on them and just need a 13 mm spanner and a hanger. [Also, all the p-hangers in Mini Martin had reflective tags put on them, except the bottom one because Gavin 'forgot'. Ed.]

JF-36 Growling Swallet – Tarting up Avons Aven: 14 October 2005 Janine McKinnon

Party: Ric Tunney, Matt Cracknell, Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon

This was the long planned second instalment (and we hoped the last) in re-rigging the ladders in Avons Aven. Anyone who has ever been up or down these ladders will probably remember them with less than affection (terror maybe?)

We had placed an abseil (ONLY - no prussiking on it!) rope down the pitch on the last trip and were equipped with drill and hangers this time to replace the spits holding the middle and bottom ladders.

The weather report was basically fine so we were happy with the winter level flow rate as we passed the Growling Swallet entrance on our way to Slaughterhouse. We got underground at 1015 and were at the Windy Rift junction in less than 1.5 hours without having attempted to hurry.

Lunch was here, before Herpes, and we sorted out who was doing what. On reaching the Aven, Serena started up the ladders whilst Ric and I organised the gear and Matt attempted to take photos without destroying his camera with gluggy mud. A very brave man!



Janine rigging at the top of Avons Aven with an informative sign *Photo by Matt Cracknell*

The odd muffled comment wandered down the pitch as Serena made her way upward and we gained the general impression that she was finding the climb an interesting and character building exercise. Matt went up next with some plastic hose we had bought and the two of them started re-rigging the abseil line with this as protection.

Ric and I then moved to the top of the bottom ladder and I sat and provided moral support and the odd hand whilst he did all the work.

The pitch had been rigged with a single length of rope ladder with plastic rungs. At the top of its middle and bottom parts, it was rebelayed to an 8 mm spit with a piece of rope. The spits were very old. These have now each been replaced with two 10 mm stainless steel through-bolts with stainless steel hangers.

The middle part of the ladder is now attached to the hangers with two stainless steel 10 mm maillons. These maillons are hooked around the ladder ropes just below a rung and the rungs are now quite level.



Serena with a bad case of Herpes. What a grotty shit hole! *Photo by Matt Cracknell*

The rebelay for the bottom part of the ladder had been quite off to one side. This meant the middle part ran diagonally down the face and it was quite annoying to climb. The ladder has now been cut at the top of the bottom part, so the middle part now hangs nicely vertical.

The two bolts for the bottom ladder are a bit to the left of the old bolt. It's a 1 m horizontal chimney from here to the bottom of the second ladder. The bottom ladder is tied to the maillons with a piece of rope. This was done as the two bolts were put in a bit far apart to use the same set-up as on the middle ladder. Two more maillons will allow direct attachment to the ladder's ropes and make a neater set up.

The bolts in the old spits unscrewed easily, but the old carabiners were jammed, so we couldn't tidy up the self-belay line or the old hangers.

We put a sign on the top and bottom of the abseil rope and used some left-over dynamic rope to rig a safety line across the climb immediately past the ladders. Please remember, there is a dynamic rope to abseil on and a static rope to self-belay up the ladders.

The next party through can undo the screw-gates on the jammed crabs, fix the top of the bottom ladder, and tidy things up.

All this had taken roughly 2.5 hours.

The run out to the GS streamway was quite quick but we were a bit surprised to see how much water was in the stream. Progress up the streamway was steady but cautious and we kept close together as the chance of someone falling or being swept off their feet by the pounding water was high. The cascades were certainly fun! At least all the water washed most of the Herpes mud off. We exited, with ringing ears, at 1715. It had been raining quite a bit; our tyre prints had been washed away and the track was saturated. Maydena had 9.2 mm and Strathgordon 15.2 mm of rain.

JF-338 Lost Pot – Horizontal experiments in vertical caves : 16 October 2005 Gavin Brett

Party: Damian Bidgood, Gavin Brett, Alan Jackson

During the recent photographic trip to Lost Pot (see page 3) I was sitting at the top of the big pitch and having a look around and noticed that there seemed to be a fair bit of cave development directly opposite the pitch head on the other side of the pitch. I pointed this out to Alan and a plan was hatched; we shall return for a bit of airy traversing. Weeks passed, as they do, but we got back to the cave and were at the pitch head with Damian in tow. What had seemed like a good idea when standing around full of bravado with no immediate intent, now seemed quite disturbing. Damian and I decided that our bowels were too full to cope with the fear, so we attached a very flimsy looking rope to Alan and poked him out into the unknown. It was very hard to tell what was the best line to take, but after a while we decided that about 4 m down on the right hand wall had the most promise due to its slightly rougher nature, i.e. more stuff to rig off and stand on. It was an interesting process, as anything Alan cleared off while trying to rig would take a few seconds to hit the bottom. This acted as a constant reminder of the hideous exposure. The rigging went well; he was able to find an Indiana Jones style ledge to stand on and was soon near the other side and calling for friends to join him in a small room. Damian and I were soon across and looking along some ~20 m high serpentine development.

I took the pointy end and rigged the ~ 10 m pitch on the other side of the room and slid down. This led to another ~ 10 m of passage and another ~ 10 m pitch into a medium sized canyon shaped room. I rigged again and Damian came down and led off into a short bit of passage with a dropping away floor. The floor dropped away entirely and revealed a ~ 25 m pitch into a large chamber. We had no more rope so we turned around.

Later reviewing of the survey suggests that this room may be the known big room at the bottom of Lost Pot, but let's hope it isn't.

JF-229 Welcome Stranger : 20 October 2005 Serena Benjamin

Party: Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Scott Cragg, Cath Gyr, Briony Jones, Dion Robertson, Tony Veness, Amy Ware

Leaving Hobart at a respectable hour, the warm start to the day forebode a pleasant day for a beginner's trip in the Florentine. After picking all members of the party up from their respective locales, what seemed like musical cars and Amy's attempt at a bakery crawl we set out to what has been touted as an easy, horizontal and well-decorated cave. Following the directions to the cave proved easier than anticipated (greatly aided by Amy's memory of the area), though the blue tape we were looking for has been replaced by the ingenious

use of some white plastic bags. Splitting into two groups, we each entered the cave via a short muddy slope followed by a crawl down to the stream passage. From there the passage is easily negotiable with lots of formation including straws and flowstone, as well as fossils and the odd millipede (?) or two. Passage to the sump and back proved to be a satisfyingly pleasant stroll after which we had a picnic lunch in the mossy clearing where we had parked the cars. Following this we quickly headed up to the ever impressive Growling Swallet entrance, finding along the way that near the entrance a large tree had in the last week fallen across the track. Satisfied by the day's outing, many were enthusiastic to plan future trips.

Confessions of a Gear Addict – Petzl Omni 'biner Review Geoff Wise

My name is Geoff and I'm a gear addict. I think it comes from working in IT where things are constantly evolving [except the people themselves. They seem to be regressing if anything... Ed.]. I enjoy trawling through the new season catalogues when they are released and seeing what the major caving (and it's not limited to caving – IT and photography are included) brands have come up with or refinements made to existing lines. Some of these refinements are not always popular with many cavers. My mind is cast back to when Petzl introduced the rubber thumb levers on their ascenders. Many people thought that the old pin type and the hole in the Croll lever were superior designs, especially when being used with cold, wet and numb fingers. I note that some brands that make ascenders now advertise a "pin lever similar to the old Petzl model" in an effort to attract buyers.

Anyway, the '05 Petzl catalogue introduced the Omni carabiner (standard or triact locking) as a replacement for the ½ round (D) maillon used as a central attachment point of most caving harnesses. The idea appealed to me having spent five or so minutes on several occasions using the top of my Stop as a spanner to undo a particularly stuck maillon or when my fingers were too numb to turn the thread. I also liked the idea that even if the thread became undone when prussiking, the gate is still closed, so I got my hands on one.

The Omni is slightly larger than a 10 mm maillon equivalent and its strength (20 kN across the horizontal and in a three way pull and 15 kN across the gate¹) and weight are about the same as an alloy D. It has the Petzl carabiner standards of the keylock and the red safety indicator. Opening and closing is a breeze, even with muddy gloved hands. 'Real' caving awaits, but in both abseil and prussik mode it works fine.



This is obviously not for everyone. Some people prefer using a steel maillon for strength and at around twice the price of an alloy D the advantages may not be justified. But if the n+1 rule (the correct number of bits of gear to own is n+1 where n is the number of bits of gear you already own) applies to you then it may be worth a look.

¹ Strength rating as marked on the carabiner, the catalogue states 15 kN is all directions but as the carabiner is marked with CE approval and the catalogue is not I'll use those.

A Modern Fairytale Stephen Bunton

Not far in the future, in a land close to here, there were a group of people who believed that their planet was hollow. Some of them were even actively involved in advancing this theory by reaming it out, in a series of mines which were totally illegal. Even though the King disapproved of their activities he was benevolent enough to provide search and rescue facilities which would be used, in the not unlikely case that there was a cave-in. The Kingdom was one of those societies where, even though the subjects were all rugged individuals, people did not need to take responsibility for their own welfare. (There was a similar, nearby kingdom where people considered taxation to be theft and cursed Federal intervention in their affairs, until part of their kingdom was wasted by a natural disaster and then the subjects complained that the Government had not done enough to help them.) There was no doubt that it was an ideology of rebellion which prompted the Teranoia Reamerneering Club to conduct their unsanctioned activities.

In truth they were petty anarchists, although some could argue that belonging to a club was rather hypocritical and not really in keeping with the true spirit of anarchy. The most significant characteristic of

the reamers was that they rejected various social conventions like public liability insurance, the use of computers for record keeping and they showed total reluctance to draft policies like equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and workplace safety. Nevertheless they had their own word of mouth conventions which enabled the smooth running of their operations.

Senior reamers, who always dressed in red overalls, were always in charge of any mission and their word was lore because they were the ones who reported back to the official campfire at the end of each shift. To organise the diggers there was a system whereby different coloured helmets signified other important information, which had absolutely nothing to do with their activities, such as blood group, medical conditions and family relationships. The Police were aware of the identities of most of the reamers; like all of the King's subjects they carried an ID card. The Search and Rescue Division were also aware of the colour code and combined this information into their Homeland Security Database. In Teranoia, files were kept on all subjects but there were more serious crimes than reaming, besides it was difficult to catch these criminals at work involved in their illicit activities. The

easiest way to capture a reamer, with evidence of their illegal activities, was when there was a passage collapse and some of the reamers were trapped underground with the tools of their trade, close at hand. Muddy fingerprints were a dead give away!

So it was that one dark day in the middle of the night, the seismographs registered a C-Category collapse. This was the most serious of the three categories of collapse and it meant that some persons were likely to be trapped underground for many days.

That day hadn't started well for two reamers who would prefer to remain anonymous. Let us call them Grug and Drog. Unfortunately, that morning on their way to the excavation, they were detained at a random antiterrorism checkpoint. In some ways this was lucky for the heroes because Grug realised that he had left his helmet at home. This was no great trouble since they could easily backtrack to Drog's hovel and grab his spare, the one which he used before he was promoted to Supervisor.

When the collapse occurred there was a good chance that the relatives knew that their loved ones were involved since the tremor was easily felt by most of the population. Unfortunately the kinfolk could hardly inform the Police or Missing Persons Department that their loved ones had not returned that particular night. Nevertheless the Police were on the case.

Locating the excavation was never easy since the reamers went to great lengths to keep their excavations secret, not just because their activities were illegal and that they needed to hide them from the authorities but also there was an unofficial competition between reamers as to who had made the largest volume excavations. Whilst the reamers were willing to boast of the various dimensions of their holes, they never divulged the precise locations lest someone dig in someone else's pit and thereby claim all the credit for its final size. This code of secrecy helped with their culture of anarchy but it meant that no one group of reamers was of any use at all at rescuing another because they didn't know their whereabouts. The primary advantage of this ignorance was that reamers did not have to practice search and rescue procedures nor keep logs of rope usage, test their rigging anchors and generally waste productive excavation time on peripherals. The club motto for the Teranoia Reamerneers was "We'll all go together when we go!" and they nearly did.

By the time the Police Search and Rescue found them, several days after the cave in, Grug and Drog were in a bad way. Luckily they were not crushed in the collapse but in the rush to escape the falling debris Grug had tripped and fallen down a small drop. He was covered in lacerations, he'd lost a fair bit of blood and was slightly shocked. Both were seriously dehydrated

despite the high humidity and neither had eaten for days despite the numbers of rats, bats and cockroaches which inhabited the voids. More seriously they were both trapped on the inside of the rockfall and they weren't sure if there was a way out.

Drog felt that he was fit enough to explore beyond the region where they were stranded and set off in the vain hope of discovering the surface. Grug being the weaker of the two remained behind, fell asleep and finally collapsed.

What the Coroner had to decide was whether Grug had passed away before the emergency services administered the fatal penicillin shot. Had he been wearing his own green helmet and not the white one which belonged to Drog, the paramedics would have instantly recognised his allergy to the drug. Conspiracy theorists believed that he had been deliberately murdered to save the expense of a trial and the extensive media coverage which would only have proved embarrassing for the King. Surely they had discovered his ID card on him! It could also have been a case where a bungled set of computer records, out of date information on an old computer file, was reloaded into the system when it crashed. Because the Kingdom was responsible for its subjects and because no subjects could possibly take responsibility for their own welfare, there was no way that ordinary citizens were ever likely to keep their own information up to date.

As for Drog, he made it to the surface but he was detained indefinitely under new law and order legislation for "leaving a car unattended in a non-designated parking space". He is currently serving time packaging food, snorkels, and other vital supplies into relief packages for Greenhouse refugees.

Oh, sorry! Unlike in the fairytales of yesteryear this one didn't have a happy ending. At least only one of them lived miserably ever after!

As a result of further coronial enquiries the following changes were recommended for implementation by Coroner Geoff Wise

The coroner recommended that all the Kingdom's subjects be tattooed with an individual barcode visible on their forehead. The barcode would then be able to be scanned by authorities with a device that would notify them of such conditions and allergies. However, for liability reasons the government would not be held responsible for errors in the information and would not have to apologise for any mistakes it made. It would be up to the individual subject to update their details, even though they would not be able to view the information held on them.

Dwarrowdelf P-Hanger Rigging Guide Alan Jackson

If you read the *Spiel* then you would know that JF-14 Dwarrowdelf has been p-hangered. Various trip reports in previous issues gave outlines of the new rigging, so this guide acts to formalise things rather than add anything new to previously published stuff. Unlike the Milk Run rigging guide this guide does not have the benefit of a recently conducted trip to measure exactly how long each rope needs to be – sorry people, I'm getting slack. Instead I've just taken an educated guess based on the new bolt placements and the pitch lengths outlined in *Vertical Caves of Tasmania* (Bunton and Eberhard 1984).

Pitch 1 (22 m) – The traditional way of rigging this pitch off the large log traversing the entrance is approaching its use by date. The log still seems quite strong but another tree fall has broken it in two. Suggested rigging is now to start around the Sassafras tree a few metres from the entrance and abseil out to reach two bolts on the back wall (just below the contact). About half way down the pitch an obvious natural spike of rock will be encountered (probably tearing the bum out of your suit if you're not paying attention). Bang a trace or tape around it and rebelay to the bottom. Assuming 22 m is correct and allowing for the three knots and approach line required I'd suggest at least 27 metres of rope, or 30 to be sure.

Pitch 2 (21 m) – Previously descended off a natural and a couple of spits, there are now three p-hangers and a natural to play with. The natural is a knob up high on the right (as you stand looking down the pitch). An additional back up/approach anchor is available in the form of a p-hanger on the left wall (at about waist height). Leaning out over the pitch you should then be able to reach two further p-hangers that form a y-hang from either side of the shaft. Allow about 27 metres of rope or 30 to be sure (déjà vu).

Pitch 3 (55 m) – A back up hanger is located at the base of the previous pitch, at the entrance to the tube that leads to the third pitch. At the other end of the tube two hangers have been installed in the vicinity of the multitude of existing spits and carrots. One hanger is on the left wall and should be easy to find, the other is theoretically on the left wall also, but up high, across to the right and slightly hidden (one could almost say it is in the roof). It sounds difficult, but you should locate it easily enough – it has a reflective marker, as do all the other hangers in the cave. About 6 metres down the pitch turns a slight corner and a rebelay hanger is situated adjacent to the original spit placement. Various natural anchors abound for the second rebelay (or redirect if you're tricky) about 15 metres off the floor. This pitch should be tied into the previous pitch (and the one continuous rope could indeed be used). Allow about 64 metres of rope here.

Pitch 4 (14 m) – This pitch immediately follows the previous one. It used to be rigged off a boulder on the

floor and then a spit over the lip. A p-hanger is now located at about chest or head height on the left wall, slightly out over the pitch (you'll need to be on the rope from the previous pitch to reach it safely). A second hanger is located adjacent to the original spit a few metres down for a rebelay. About 18-20 metres of rope should suffice.

Pitch 5 (37 m) – Back up off one or more of the boulders in the floor. A p-hanger is located on the right hand wall at the edge of the pitch. A second hanger is located a few metres down on the same side (this hanger negates the use of the traditional chockstone). The rebelay bolt a further 15 or so metres down from here has moved slightly. The p-hanger is positioned a couple of metres further down and out from the original spit – in the hope of avoiding the water a little longer in winter. Allow about 43 m + of rope for this pitch.

Pitch 6 (67 m) – The original y-hang off two spits has been recreated with p-hangers. The two hangers are located on opposite sides of the shaft and are quite a long way apart, thus resulting in quite a rope hungry y-hang. About 75 m of rope should suffice. Also, two recently (mid to late 1990s) installed spits were placed in this chamber above the last pitch as a safety approach line for people who get off here and wait etc... We didn't think it was worth installing p-hangers here as the two spits were well installed and relatively recent. Using these spits is also not necessary to travel between pitches 5 and 6. An extra 7 or 8 metres of rope would be handy if you intended using these two bolts for the traverse.

You have now reached the bottom of Dwarrowdelf – congratulations! However, depending on how confident/capable you are, it may be worth taking a 30 m hand line for the descent into the final KD chamber.

Pitches 2, 3 and 4 could be done on a continuous piece of rope and should be tied together if individual lengths are used. Similarly pitches 5 and 6 can/should be joined.

All bolts have a reflective marker (the two spits on pitch 6 have large white plastic markers also). You have to find the naturals for yourself (we can't take all the fun out of the cave!)

As mentioned, the rope lengths suggested above are not necessarily perfect. It is always better to have a few metres of unused rope at the base of a pitch as opposed to having to free climb the last four metres of a free hanging pitch.

In addition to the abovementioned ropes about 25 or so carabiners would be handy, as would half a dozen tapes or traces.

Hastings Stuff – Spring 2005 Matt Cracknell

Spring is on the way and the caves were busy over the school holiday period. Keith has gone on leave and staff have been left to run things on their own. Along with the usual jobs running a remote area visitors centre, several staff were busy preparing group sessions for Earth Science Week (9-15 Oct). The aim was to demonstrate to school groups some principles of cave development and the role that karst landscapes have in defining the surrounding ecosystems via simple experiments, data collection and interpretations. This may have all gone well except for the last minute cancellation of the school groups. If we choose to attempt this again we will need to focus more on promotional and advertising areas of the project.

Several discussions with Hastings staff, including Senior Ranger Rob Wass, have revealed that Newdegate Cave entrance was possibly struck by lightning in early October. This has not been reported to have occurred before in the history of the tourist cave at Hastings (R Skinner, pers. comm.). It seems that visitors on the day reported seeing sparks fly out of the cave entrance while waiting at the shelter and the guide on duty reported that a flash of light was seen in the

cave office in the corner that the radio occupies. Subsequently the cave lighting system shorted out and an electrician was called in to rectify a problem with the computer CBUS system.

As absurd as this may initially seem there is the possibility that the microclimates (conductive air flow) and landscape (overhangs) of the cave/surface interface may increase the risk of lightning strikes occurring. Human infrastructure, in the form of steel handrails and gates, also enhance the conductive properties of tourist caves (Gookin 2003).

A recent trip into Mystery Creek Cave revealed that heavy rains in September have again altered stream flow into Cephalopod Ck. The stream now splits at this point and a portion of it flows along its previous course down the main passage and under the right hand wall of the main chamber.

Reference

GOOKIN, J. 2003. Lightning Safety for Cavers, *Australian Caver*, 160:23-25

Pathetic Puzzles

Alan Jackson

On a recent trip to Ida Bay a member of the club was heard suggesting to the Editor that a crossword needed to appear in the Spiel. So I did some internet searching, found a free crossword software site and created 'Lame Caving Crossword #1'. I also found some popular puzzles and modified them to be cave/STC related. Other than the Madphil one they're pretty easy (it was more an opportunity to take the piss out of my favourite club members than provide a challenge to the likes of Gavin's and Ric's enormous brains). First correct answers received for each puzzle/crossword wins a prize – all entries to be sent to ajackson@lmrs.com.au

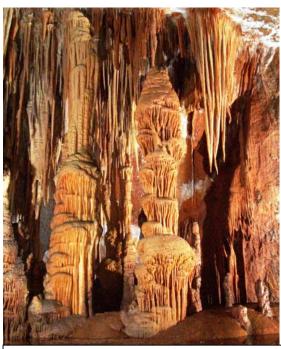
1. A new cave has been discovered and Rolan Eberhard has been given the job of assessing it for cave conservation issues (i.e. to suss out if he can justify gating it or not ...) As always, Rolan has a roll of string line in his bag for marking sensitive areas 'out of bounds'. Not long after erecting a log book at the entrance he finds a nicely decorated area that requires stringing off and ties one end of his string line onto the base of a superb, perfectly cylindrical stalagmite, 1.26 m high and with a diameter of 7.6394373 cm (he also has a superbly accurate set of digital callipers with him!). The idea of laying some string gets Rolan so excited that he does a little dance around the stal,

ultimately doing 7 laps. After regaining his composure he notices that he has wrapped the string around the stal 7 times, with the string starting at the base and finishing at the top. DPIWE rules state that he must keep a record of all materials used so his department can justify the outrageous budget allocated to karst conservation. How much string did Rolan deploy around the stalagmite during his power trip? Anally retentive people like Ric are asked to ignore the string used in the knot at the base of the stal – isn't it sad when you have to pre-empt stuff like this ...

2. You're out caving with Madphil in Exit Cave. It's been a long day and you're ready to call it quits, but at the last second Madphil finds a perfectly square chamber and insists that it must be surveyed before you can go home – the usual story. The plan of the room must be surveyed in so that all four corners are used as stations (the passage that joins the room to the rest of the cave, i.e. the way you entered, joins at one of the corners). What is the shortest length of surveying that can be done to achieve this goal? All four corners must be survey stations and you can have as many or as few additional survey stations in the rest of the room as you want.

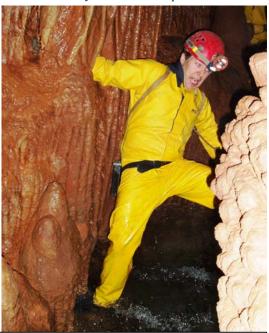
Speleo Spiel - Issue 350, September - October 2005.

3. Ric and Janine were heading up the Junee-Florentine for a day's caving. They had just had a new device fitted to their Subaru that would give them a read out of their average speed for every trip they took. They were hoping this would go part of the way to satisfying their insatiable appetite for travel time minimisation. On the way up this day they were struck by large amounts of slow tourist traffic. A good bout of pitiful whining ensued about the curse of hire cars and tourism on Tasmania's roads. As a result of this slow traffic they recorded a fairly low average speed and completed the trip in 80 minutes. On the way back they were having a much better run until they caught up to some dreaded log trucks. Ric was at the wheel because they were on



Kubla Khan in the forbidden city area Matt Cracknell

their way home – Janine drives to the caves (there is logic behind this rotation system too, but it is well beyond the minds of you, humble reader). A few mind blowing overtaking manoeuvres on double lines followed and they returned home. They excitedly read their device which showed their average speed for the return trip was exactly the same as the morning's trip, yet the time elapsed was 1 hour 20 minutes this time. They'd driven the same route in both directions and the device was not faulty. How was this possible?



Gavin has a 'moment' in Kubla Matt Cracknell

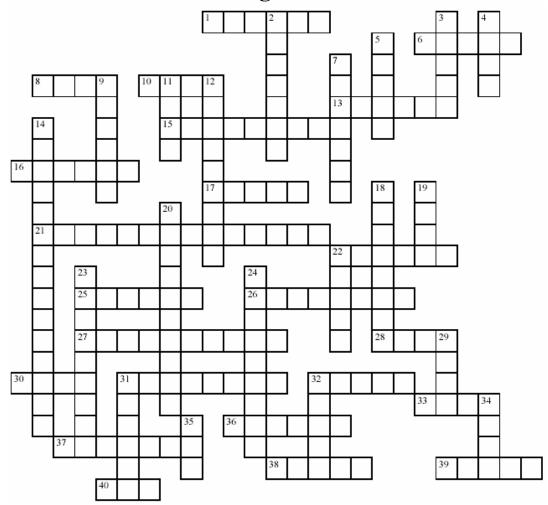


Bath time in Kubla Khan – isn't it strange what you find in some caves! *Matt Cracknell*



Perfection in Kubla is a clean gumboot *Matt Cracknell*

Lame Caving Crossword #1



ACROSS

- 1 Attractive cave sulphate
- 6 Loose rocks
- 8 No room to breath
- 10 Amphibious rope ascension
- 13 Victorian karst area
- **15** On your belly passage
- 16 Surface limestone rilling
- 17 Steel rigging object
- **21** JF-337
- 22 US cave club
- 25 Southern karst area
- **26** Below the water table
- 27 Rope construction
- 28 Longest
- 30 Rubber lace ups
- 31 Popular cave squeeze
- **32** SAR practice
- 33 Rimstone dam
- 36 Tasmanian limestone geological period/block
- 37 Plus water equals light
- 38 Cave expansion brand
- **39** STC parent group member
- 40 Layer

DOWN

- 2 Taking water
- 3 El presidente
- 4 Briefly submerged
- **5** Vertical drop
- 7 Nixon St
- 9 Madphil alias
- 11 Fissure
- 12 4 Clutha Place
- 14 A long pitch
- 18 Magnesium too
- 19 Slang bolt casing
- **20** Erect decoration
- 22 Shit pile
- 23 Iconic Tasmanian cave fauna
- 24 NW Tas. club rag
- **29** NZ pot
- 31 Cooked limestone
- 32 Ascending device
- **34** Pesky descender
- 35 Modern light

The Editor takes no responsibility for the accuracy, spelling or relevance of clues and answers!

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