Speleo Spiel 356

September - October 2006

Celebrating 60 years of organised speleology in Australia 1946-2006

Newsletter of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc, PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7006, AUSTRALIA ISSN 1832-6307

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Front Cover: The Blair Cave Project - Gormenghast can do strange things to an individual. Ruth Whitely sums up her experience after emerging from this horrible place (photo by Tony Veness)

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.

Speleo Spiel

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CONTENTS

Editorial

Another two months, another *Spiel*. Life rolls on …

The club has now officially clocked up 60 years. Does that mean we can all retire, get our senior's card and access our super fund? Or does John Howard now want us all to work on and pay taxes until we're 100? The 60th dinner was a hoot and I thank all those that attended and made it what it was. From all reports (including my own) the food was fab, the beer was cheap and the company great. I think I even managed to overcharge everyone by a dollar or two so the club's accounts are looking a little healthier for it! My thanks go particularly to Robyn Claire for handling all the really boring bits of the organisation process that I couldn't be bothered doing. I have also appreciated the many pats on the back from attendees. Thank you.

I have managed to not only survive the arrival of my first child but the much more difficult task of 59 days between caves (a couple of surface days don't count!) Let's hope I never have to do the latter again (I haven't made my mind up on the former yet).

Hopefully we have a productive summer ahead of us. Tachycardia is beckoning with the lure of making that depth record just a little more convincing.

Alan Jackson

Stuff 'n Stuff

HATCHED, MATCHED AND DISPATCHED. Loretta and Alan are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Anna Louise Jackson. She'll be getting measured up for her first trog suit by the New Year.

Congratulations to Gavin and Claire Brett who have refused to be outdone by Alan and Loretta and are having a dig at this baby thing too. We all wish you a care-free pregnancy and painless birth (if there is such a thing!)

Congratulations also to Amy Ware and Dion Robertson who recently announced their engagement. How long until we hear the pitter patter of little blood nuts in Geeveston?

Thankfully, I don't think anyone has been dispatched with.

THE SOUTHERN TASMANIAN CAVERNEERS 60TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Saturday 16th September 2006

Stephen Bunton

As Australia's original caving club it was most important that we celebrated this milestone in an appropriate manner. Alan Jackson took it upon himself to organise the event, in the same manner as he organises just about everything else for the club. Robyn Claire organised the Derwent Sailing Squadron as the venue, which came at a nicely discounted rate thanks to Ken Hosking. This had a bar which was the most important requirement for a bunch of cavers to have a good time, chew the fat and stroke their beards.

The catering was supplied by Food2u and they provided a superb buffet of gourmet foods to all tastes and in sufficient quantities to satisfy the hungriest caveman. During dinner Alan organised a continuous show of digital images, from recent *Speleo Spiels* and Fred Koolhof's collection, to be projected on one wall and this added greatly to the ambience.

Over sixty people attended, enough for one per year but we didn't do anything dorky like a time line. Robyn Claire organised a commemorative attendance booklet into which people made entries pertaining to the era in which they were active. We even had a founding member of the club Jesse Luckman in attendance. Jesse is a Tasmanian "living treasure" more noted for her bushwalking exploits than her caving although she was able to relate a few tales from the club's earliest trips into Hastings Cave. Rien de Vries and Albert Goede showed some slides from the fifties. Andrew Briggs and Stephen Bunton then showed a few slides covering the period from the eighties to the modern era.

For most people the opportunity to catch up with old friends and associates was the true highlight of the evening and in the end many people wanted to linger longer. Eventually they had to throw us out. Surely this was an indicator of a successful event. [*Or maybe just that those people had kids at home with a babysitter and wanted to escape reality for a little longer – Ed.*] Our thanks to Alan, Robyn and all those people who made it such a memorable event.

Trip Reports

IB-1 Revelation Cave – A breath of fresh air

Ken Hosking

10 June 2006

Party: Serena Benjamin, Ken Hosking, Janine McKinnon, Heather Nichols, Dale Pregnell, Ric Tunney, Amy Ware – and a cameo appearance by Arthur Clarke [*That's all he ever does these days – Ed.*]

After the lack of progress on the dig during the last trip to this cave, this was to be the last attempt prior to moving on to other things. Ric and Janine wanted to place bolts on the Baguette pitch, Dale and Serena wanted to try some more climbing and Amy, Heather and I were intent on having a further try at the dig.

As the assembled team prepared to descend, Arthur emerged from the valley below so he and I checked out the new hole discovered on the previous trip. With the assistance of daylight, we concluded that what I could see was merely a gap between the limestone cliff and a pile of rocks leaning against the wall. [*This is still better, in my opinion, than Carpark Caves I and II – Ed.*]

Down at the dig progress was encouraging with a change from the silt being dug out to rocks and then cobbles. The passage began to trend to the left and a faint but unmistakable draft could be felt. This is worth another look soon.

The climbers pushed upwards, but found no obvious continuation. The stream inlet near the bottom of the cave was also pushed, as it has been surmised that this could be the stream from the bottom of Hobbit Hole, but with the

water levels being relatively high, this push was abandoned when it became somewhat tight and very wet. A simultaneous trip to Revelation and Hobbit Hole - in the summer when the water levels are lower - is in order.

Dale begins his descent into the 'new' entrance

A brief description of the new and improved Revelation Cave follows.

The Lunchtime entrance series begins at a pretty little pot, about three metres in diameter and about five metres deep [*Does it have a number and tag yet? Ten thousand trips to this cave in the last 12 months and still no tag. Slackers – Ed.*]. This drops onto a steeply sloping muddy floor.

There are two ways on. At the deepest point a muddy crawl leads to a small chamber. A pitch, not yet descended, drops from the far side of the chamber from a rock bridge. The alternative way on, leading to the same place, is a short traverse, probably free climbable, to a steep and loose ramp where a rope is highly desirable due to the presence of quantities of loose stones. This slope culminates in a short drop of about three metres, which can be rigged easily from a large flake (on the left as you look down). This leads to the bottom of the Baguette pitch.

The alternative, and preferred, way on is to chimney up a rift immediately before reaching the muddy crawl, and to rig the Baguette pitch. The pitch is initially best rigged from the top of the climb, using an obvious and very large boulder as a back-up and then dropping back and climbing below the boulder to the take-off chamber. From there it is possible to access the newly installed bolts on the far wall of the pitch, although it is advisable to clip into the back-up rope hanging over the boulder before so doing. Once past the rebelay (see notes below) the Baguette pitch is a pleasant 16 m free hang. Part way down a window provides a view of the adjacent pitch described above (the one christened the Violent Crumble).

Beyond the base of the Baguette Pitch a muddy climb leads down to a junction where the original IB-1 entrance is on the right and the way on down the cave is to the left.

A series of climbs and slopes eventually culminate in the two chimneys that mark the beginning of the 18 metre pitch. The chimneys are easily negotiated by those of tall stature, but less lofty persons may find a hand line useful, if only to get back up or to lower packs. Bolts have been installed on this pitch also (see the rigging note below).

From the base of the pitch the way on down the cave passage is obvious, although there are numerous passages and climbs off to the side. The avens towering above this section of the cave are particularly picturesque. Towards the bottom of the cave a stream of approximately the same volume as the stream in Hobbit Hole enters on the left and flows down a pretty flowstone passage. The dig is at the far end of the cave, to the right of where the stream flows into a low fattener (which can be followed for about 15 metres by those who like lying in the water).

Rigging notes:

(All directions facing downstream)

P1 (7m): Tape around horizontal fallen log across pot. Back-up to large tree 2 m back from lip. There are a few glancing rubs down the pitch. About 12 m rope needed.

P2 (The Baguette): (19 m from bolts, 16 m from take-off ledge) Belay from 2 x 8 mm bolts on LH wall level with top of large boulder. A 5 m approach line would be useful here. Take-off is from a ledge approached from underneath boulders on RHS. Again, a 5 m approach line would be helpful. A redirection needs to be placed about 1 m under the ledge. About 22 m rope needed, plus approach lines.

P3: (18 m) 3 m tape or wire trace around blade directly above pitch on RHS. Back-up is an 8 mm bolt, about 5m almost vertically above pitch head, on RHS. (This is not easily spotted at first - look out and around corner.) About 25 m rope needed.

All bolts have had their hangers removed, but have plastic tags to aid location. Rope lengths have not been precisely measured.

Revelation is a pleasant cave to visit, with a mixture of short vertical pitches, climbs and horizontal sections. It is an excellent cave for the developing caver because of this mixture of terrain and the challenging, but not overwhelming, technical nature of the pitches.

JF-221 Owl Pot – New stuff

Alan Jackson

29 July 2006

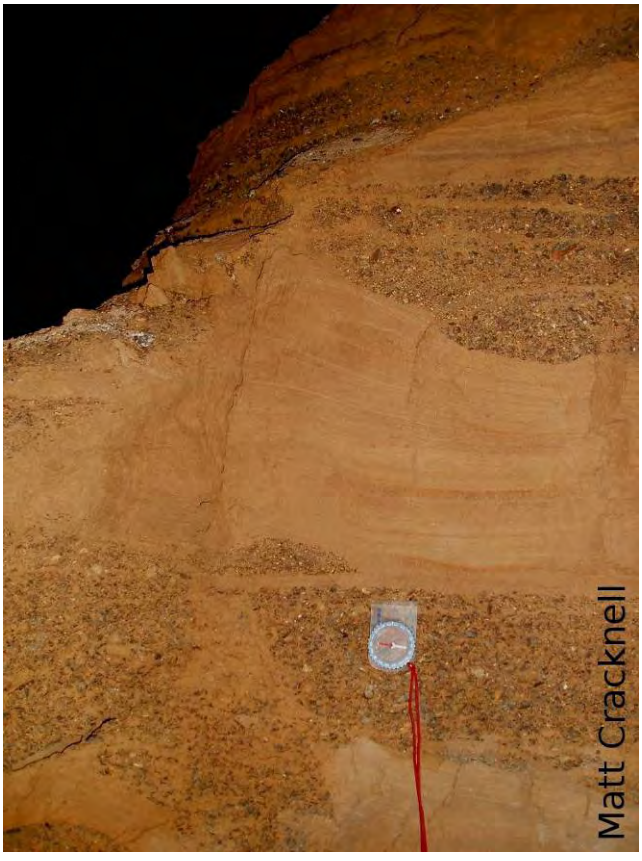
Party: Serena Benjamin, Gavin Brett, Matt Cracknell, Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson

The mention of new passage in Owl Pot had grabbed attention. Matt and the others moved ahead rigging while Gavin and I flailed about on the surface looking for new holes. We found one up above and to the right of the Owl Pot entrance. It looked tight and without draft but worthy of a closer look and a tag one day.

It was Gavin's first visit to Owl Pot. He tried to overtake everyone by finding an alternative route through the rock-fall on the Bowling Alley pitch, but failed. He was to succeed on the way out though. At the streamway intersection we split up for various activities. Ken went to do the waterfall pitch, Matt and Serena went to investigate the sediment deposits Matt had found on the previous trip while Gavin and I headed off to the easier of the two new leads. I can't report on the other events in detail, so I won't.

We installed a thread back-up and then whacked in an 8 mm bolt at the pitch head and affected a rudimentary y-belay between the two. Most of the development in this area (and in fact the whole cave) follows the bedding planes and hence the 'pitch' is more of a ~60 degree ramp. The 17 m rope ran out four metres from the bottom (the only vertical bit!) so I clipped my bag to the end and climbed down. A quick look indicated it was worth Gavin coming down so he joined me, tying a 5 m tape to the end of the rope so we could more easily climb back up.

Immediately below the pitch the passage intersected a large perpendicular passage and a long gone stream had cut its way through 2 m high sediment banks on either side. The distinct layers in these banks were exquisite with alternating bands of fine and course material. Matt ('Sediment Boy') was going to like these.



Exposed sediment banks at the base of the new pitch showing alternating bands of fine and course sediments

Climbing the sediment bank we came to another junction, one with a small stream which we followed in the upstream direction due to the inviting looking passage. This soon led to breakdown and we wormed our way up through enormous blocks into a large chamber and a high aven. The water dribbled down an inviting slope (~60 degrees – what a surprise) that should be easily ascended on a future trip. A complete and well preserved skeleton of what I assumed was an *Antechinus* sp. was found. We decided the survey gear would have to come out so we headed back to our bags at the bottom of the pitch. Serena was on the pitch, heading back up, after having reached the last 4 m and bailing out. We told her to grow some balls, tell the others that we had lots of going passage and to get her arse back down here and help us survey!

Antechinus *sp. subfossil in the large break-down chamber*

By now Gavin had headed off in the other direction from the sediment bank junction. This terminated after some ten metres. We commenced the survey from there. Back at the small stream junction we continued straight on into fossil stream passage. Serena noticed a superb skeleton that I had failed to spot (and thankfully also failed to stand on). It was clearly very, very old but in excellent condition (all bones still semi fused in their correct spots). After a good look I concluded it was carnivorous (from the teeth and pronounced sagittal crest) and seemed the right size for a quoll (*Dasyurus* sp.) We placed some white survey tape around the skeleton in the hope of preventing future accidents and continued. Later investigation suggested that it was a Spotted Tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculata*) and this was confirmed by Kathryn Medlock, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

The passage swung left into a small room complete with aven and breakdown floor. On one side a small hole led to the sound of running water (we assumed the main streamway) and on the opposite side another adjoining chamber lead to tight passage that lead back to the small stream junction. The lap completed and surveye, we focussed our attention on the sound of water. Gavin emerged from the hole with a big grin – it was indeed a stream but one of much smaller dimensions than the main streamway. We had an independent streamway that looked as though it continued!

The stream issued from a tight slot (impenetrable) and then ran through and across the rock strewn floor into a small chamber. A slightly smaller volume stream entered here from the roof of the chamber via a 6 m waterfall and the two combined to flow into small dimension but solid passage. This was followed for some 30+ m before it became too narrow. Bummer!

Entact Dasyurus maculata *subfossil*

Retreating to the first small chamber, we found Ken and Matt had joined us. Ken had investigated some small passage that headed off from the corner between this chamber and the quoll skeleton. He said it didn't go far. I didn't trust him and had a look myself. Just before its 'end' a narrow slot in line with the bedding plane headed up to the right which I followed up for some 15 m. It was still going but I guessed it was heading toward the big chamber Gavin and I had investigated much earlier so I left it for a later date.

Serena and Ken started heading out while Gavin, Matt and I quickly surveyed in the upstream passage to the big chamber. Gavin was hungry and was accusing me of being the new Madphil with my insistence on 'just surveying that little bit more'. He eventually promised me three more legs only which just got us to the base of the big chamber.

We headed out, leaving the cave rigged for a return visit the following weekend. Gavin realised his dream of getting up the Bowling Alley pitch without using the rope and Ken declared that his caving days were over (he was a little tuckered out). Earlier I had declared that I was 'ultimate man' to which Gavin had responded "I am penultimate man." Ken had quipped "that makes me Ken-ultimate man" but soon corrected himself with the label 'Ken fucked.' We were appalled at his language and shuddered to think what 'the ladies' would think of this outburst. The muddy entrance slope drove the feeling home for Ken. I think we need to approach Parks about putting a staircase on this slope (like Kubla).

At home I plugged in the survey data. We had collected 217 m of it. The general trend was the usual NW-SE passage alignment for caves in the JF. The streamway we had found was beautifully positioned, running almost directly above the sump passages of the main streamway. If it had continued it may have led to a high level bypass of the main sump. It all fits in quite nicely with my hydrology theory for Owl Pot and Three Falls Cave. I reckon the water that you follow to the 'bottom' of Three Falls Cave is probably the water we encountered on this trip while the main waterfall at the doline of TFC takes a more direct route to its intersection with Owl Pot (undoubtedly proven by the previous trip's water tracing experiment). We didn't get around to dropping the tight pitch that had the sound of the waterfall found on the previous trip. Next time.

Lateral and dorsal views of Dasyurus maculata *subfossil*

-Plan and vertical surveys of the extensions appear on page 8.

JF-221 Owl Pot – No more new stuff

Alan Jackson

6 August 2006

Party: Serena Benjamin, Gavin Brett, Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson, Dale Pregnall

A further look around the 'new stuff' in Owl Pot was warranted. On the way we collected Franz and Alfred (two visiting German 'retired' cavers) from National Park and they followed us to the Florentine Road. At this point I fulfilled my lifelong dream of piloting a white maggot (campervan for those who don't know my lingo). The pain of 20 km on the Florentine Road at 20 kmph was not going to be bearable! We left the maggot at the bottom of the Nine Road and ferried everyone up to the cave.

While we got changed, Franz and Alfred checked out Tassy Pot and then joined Serena and I on our way to Three Falls Cave for some more dye tracing. I tipped about a quarter of a cup of fluoroscein into the small stream (the one resulting from the union of the two small waterfalls entering the doline) which sinks near the tagged entrance. We left the Germans here; they intended walking back down to their maggot and then checking out Growling Swallet and Junee Cave on their way out.

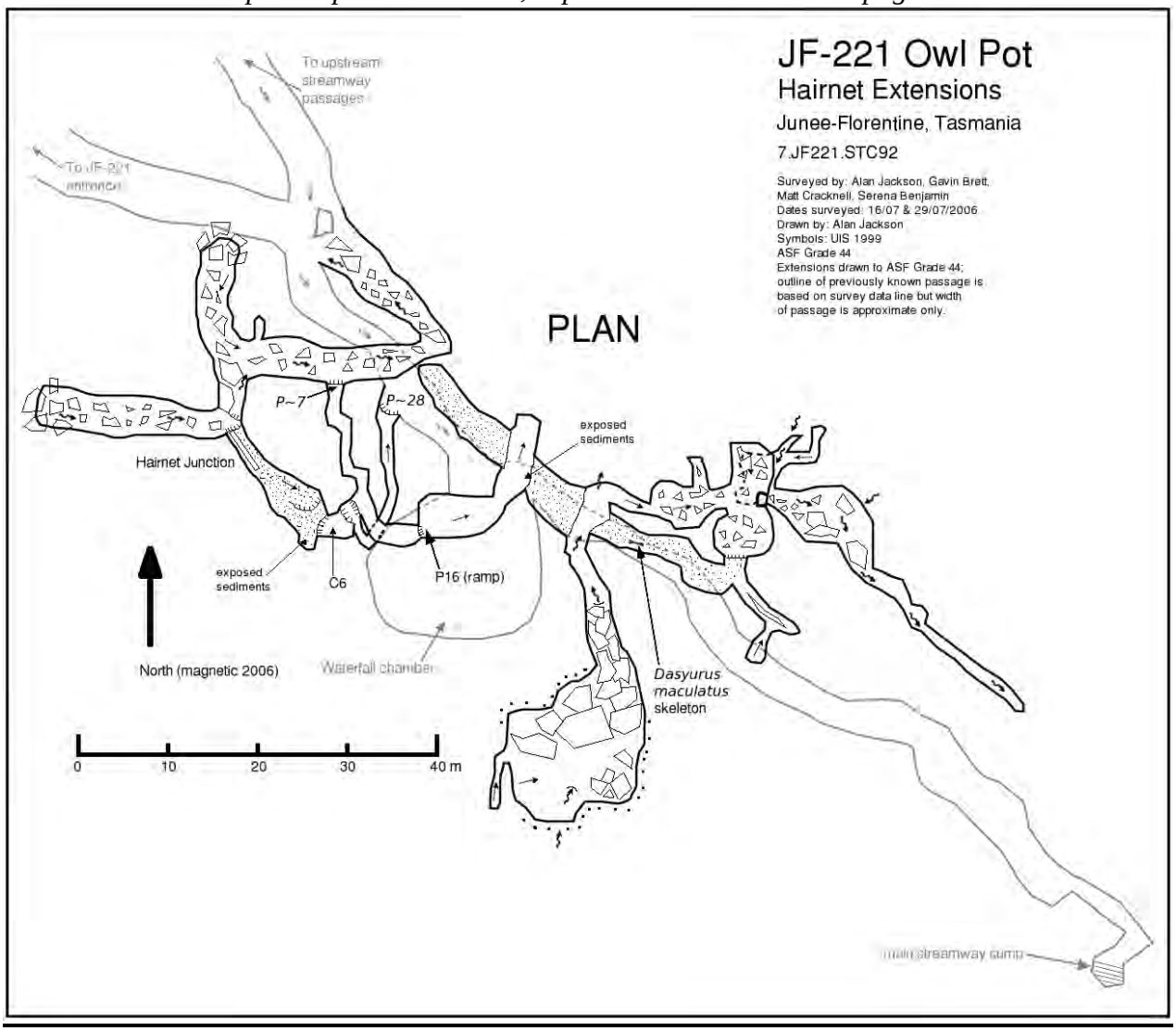
I raced down Owl Pot, overtaking the other punters on the way. There was no tinge of green in the main streamway when I crossed it about one hour after inserting the dye. I continued up and into the extensions and down to the recently discovered streamway: no evidence of green here either. I passed time waiting for the others by pushing a few of the left-over leads in the area with no great reward. Subsequent checks of both the main and new streamways over the next hour or so yielded no evidence of dye. It would seem that the two small waterfalls from the Three Falls Cave doline do not enter either the main Owl Pot streamway or the recently discovered 'new' streamway, although our methods were hardly bullet-proof. It really needs checking with the placement of detectors and the like so that much smaller traces of dye can be detected than that which can be expected with the naked eye.

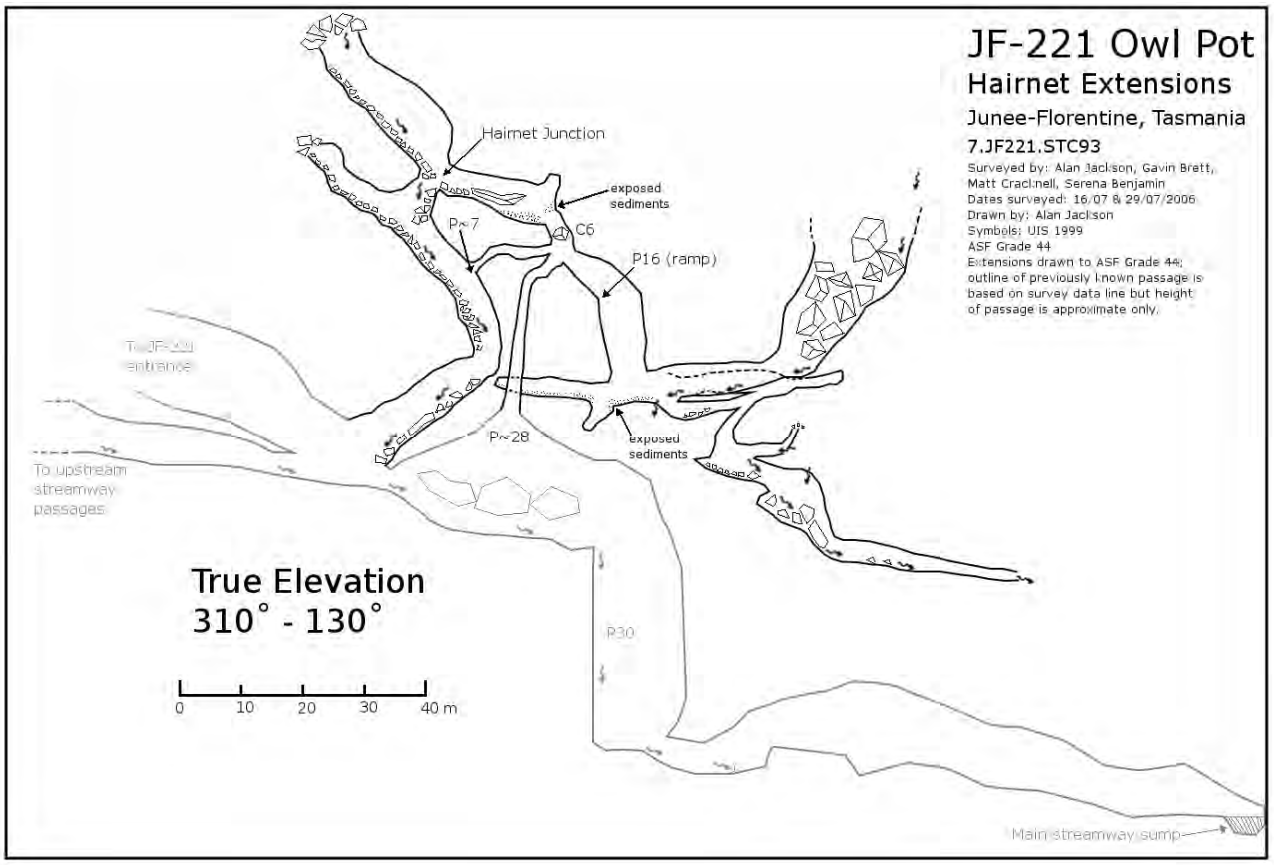
Everyone migrated to the large chamber through the rock-fall in the new stuff and checked for leads. I climbed into a small hole a few metres up one wall which lead to steeply ascending passage that terminated after 20 m or so. No other ways on were found. The only remaining lead in this chamber would appear to be the climb of the ramping aven. This would be quite simple to do but we couldn't be bothered. We left.

Dale and Ken began heading out slowly while Gavin, Serena and I went down the horrible tight passage to the sound of water that I had investigated on the first trip in here with Matt. Nasty, nasty passage. Eventually the passage flared out and became very vertical. A couple of bolts and I was on my way. Gavin was over the whole thing by now and he decided to head back out and wander down the streamway to see if he could confirm that we were simply dropping back into the passage upstream of the waterfall pitch. After a rebelay or two I was just getting off the rope onto some large blocks suspended in large passage above the streamway when I heard Gavin below me. He had come only 15 m or so downstream of the junction where the long rift passage intersects the streamway for the first time. To save carting all the heavy gear back up the horrible tight passage we passed everything down to Gavin. Serena went down too and I headed back up, armed with nothing but a spanner to derig the hideous pitch.

The derig was going well until I was approaching the back-up bolt. I was on the rope with both ascenders when I attempted to negotiate the very tight vertical bit just below the bolt. I became wedged and tried to back out but my Croll wouldn't allow me. I was now in serious trouble; I couldn't go up as it was too tight and I couldn't go down due to the Croll. I also couldn't unclip my Croll because I needed to go up the rope slightly for the cam to disengage. I wrestled with it for several minutes but I was getting very tired and the situation seemed hopeless. I could reach the carabiner on the bolt but didn't have enough slack to be able to disengage it from the hanger and I couldn't quite reach the bolt with my spanner to remove the hanger. My knife was safely stowed in my cave pack some 30 m below me! I felt like a right idiot. I repeatedly yelled out "I need help!" to Serena but the sound of the water rendered my message indecipherable. I temporarily resigned myself to a long and uncomfortable wait until Serena got concerned for me and came all the way back up and around to me to help. I was wary of not completely buggering myself trying to remove the Croll because I would be seriously endangering myself for any post rescue caving. Every now and then I'd have another go and finally I managed to force my body a centimetre or two further up into the squeeze and simultaneously disengage the Croll. Somewhat relieved, I negotiated the squeeze in a more sensible position, stripped the bolt and wearily dragged my aching body back out and down to Serena who was patiently waiting for me, oblivious of my recent predicament. So the lesson is: Be careful entering squeezes on a rope and in the event that you aren't careful, CARRY A KNIFE AROUND YOUR NECK AT ALL TIMES! A readily accessible knife would have solved my problem in about 15 seconds.

We then shuffled out and still managed to catch the front runners by the entrance pitch. The cave was completely derigged and any remaining leads in this area can be left for the next generation of optimistic cavers.


JF-221 Owl Pot
Hairnet Extensions
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7.JF221.STC92
Surveyed by: Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett, Matt Cracknell, Serena Benjamin
Dates surveyed: 16/07 & 29/07/2006
Drawn by: Alan Jackson
Symbols: UIS 1999
ASF Grade 4A
Extensions drawn to ASF Grade 4A; outline of previously known passage is based on survey data line but width of passage is approximate only.
PLAN
To upstream streamway passages
To JF-221 entrance
P~7
P~28
exposed sediments
Hairnet Junction
exposed sediments
C6
P16 (ramp)
North (magnetic 2006)
Waterfall chamber
Dasyurus maculatus skeleton
0
10
20
30
40 m
main streamway sump


JF-221 Owl Pot
Hairnet Extensions
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7.JF221.STC93
Surveyed by: Alan Jackson, Gavin Brett, Matt Cracknell, Serena Benjamin
Dates surveyed: 16/07 & 29/07/2006
Drawn by: Alan Jackson
Symbols: UIS 1999
ASF Grade 4A
Extensions drawn to ASF Grade 4A; outline of previously known passage is based on survey data line but height of passage is approximate only.
Hairnet Junction
exposed sediments
P~7
C6
P16 (ramp)
To JF-221 entrance
P~28
exposed sediments
To upstream streamway passages
True Elevation
310° - 130°
P30
0
10
20
30
40 m
Main streamway sump

H-6 Pretty in Pink

Serena Benjamin

12 August 2006

Party: Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Ruth Whiteley, Jarrah Vercoe

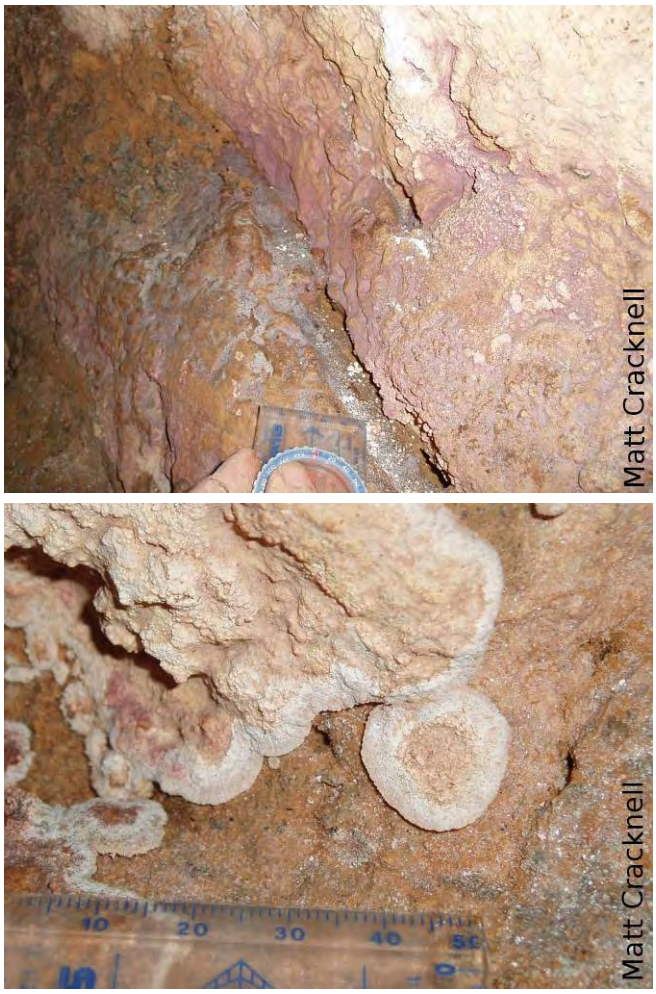
The scenic wonders of the Hastings karst were the order of the day with Matt in tour guide mode as we made our way to investigate an entrance he'd found during previous exploration of the area. First stop on the tourist route was a recently formed sinkhole within cooee of the sewerage facilities. This was shortly followed by another contender for Tassie's most slippery log carefully positioned to conceal what is theorised to be Tassie's only cenote. More like another of nature's pitfall traps!

Further along we traversed a log across Hot Springs Creek with the advisory warning not to drink it due to its occasional smelly nature. Hmmm … downstream of a septic system!?! We continued onwards and upwards via another large doline with a promising look to it. Matt had inspected it before but I couldn't resist confirming this statement. No leads but there were some nice fungi growing on one side.

Our whistlestop tour of these karst features ended soon afterwards with our arrival at the entrance of H-6. Located on the right hand side of another sizeable doline (as one is facing uphill), the entrance was roughly rectangular in shape with a large tree fallen to its left. A tape was placed around this tree with a back up line to a small tree growing about 5 m away. Matt did the honours and descended the short pitch down to see if it went, and it did if the exclamations of "it goes, it goes!" are anything to go by. Eagerly I followed, pausing only long enough to place my pack as a rope protector against a chock-stone 1 m down. My efforts to inspire Ruth and Jarrah to try vertical caving do not seem to be in vain as they watched us descend into the unknown, champing at the bit to follow. Alas, not today. As I touched bottom on a large sediment cone I was immediately struck by a smell I likened to that of alfalfa.

At the bottom of this a small creek heading to the north was the way on and we quickly got to a constriction which would clearly be a gear off area. While Matt had a fit getting through it I investigated upwards, climbing about 3 m to see if there were any bypasses. Above the start of the passage Matt had just ducked down the ceiling is composed of a jumble of boulders with no obvious way on. Matt called out that the cave continued and I ran back for his pack and to call out to the others to tell them our plans. This was to no avail as they had gone exploring in the surrounding forest. After navigating the squeeze I caught up with Matt in a larger chamber. He had already investigated a rift but once again I couldn't be dissuaded from checking it out for myself. So while he went up I investigated along it until it narrowed down into a potentially passable down-climb along the rift, but fairly unpromising. Venturing back to the main chamber, I also went to investigate the upper section but this also proved to lead nowhere.

From then on we began to survey out of the cave. Now, a peculiar feature that I have discovered about surveying is that it allows for the intense scrutiny of your surroundings. And at the end of a survey tape this often occurs in odd, if not precarious, positions. I couldn't contain my exclamations of delight each time I saw, brilliantly lit by my new light, something new and exciting. As this was quite often, I pitied poor Matt for having to put up with me. On later reference to *Cave Minerals of the World*, I found that these were speleothems with the rather non-descript title of 'powder'. Though I have not been able to find more than vague allusions as to what minerals this may be derived from. A more detailed knowledge of the geology of the area is needed on my part. Matt observed that in some places the *powder* appeared to have concentric rings reminiscent of the typical growth of some types of lichen. That, and the appearance of 'tide lines' around the small pools, displayed a more tangible connection between water sources and the appearance of formations. So in the end with all the fuss about the formations it was little wonder that we called it Pretty in Pink and the squeeze Pink Fit Passage after Matt's inclination to go into a pink fit while getting through.

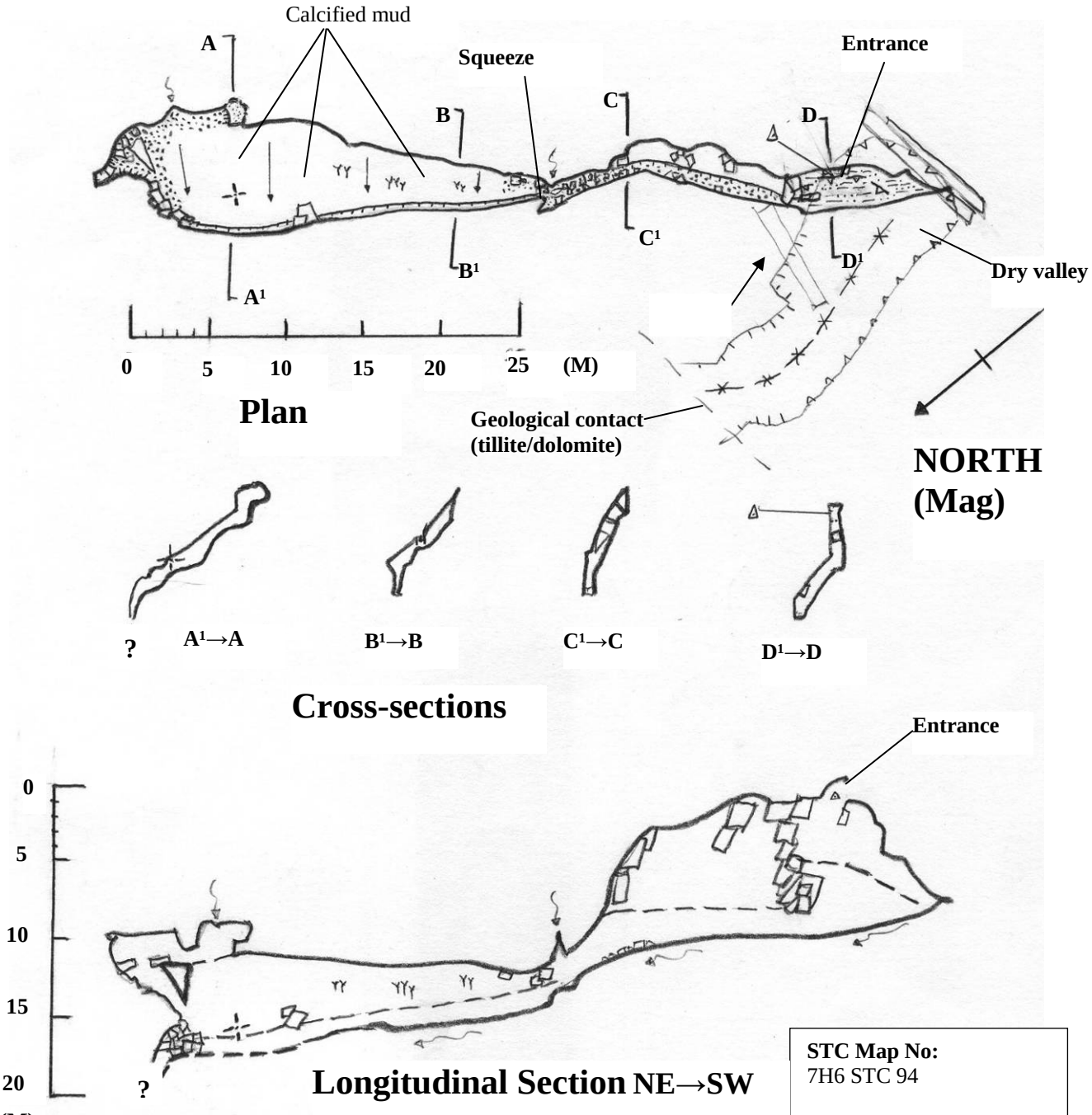


Pink 'powder' and lichen-like deposits in H-6

Meeting up with the others, we quickly tagged the cave before heading back to the car via an alternate route. This took us past Beatties Cave and another small cave, which reputedly contains a lot of spiders. With not a lot of interest from the others I quickly descended the entrance which spiralled around some tree roots. Having passed one spider and some nice fungi, I decided to turn around at the top of a climb a short way in. We finally capped off the day with a spin around Newdegate Cave.

-Survey appears on page 10

H-6 Pretty in Pink



LEGEND

- Earth/Mud
- Log
- Water flow (direction)
- Straws
- Boulders
- Gravel
- Break of slope
- Concave grad severe
- Convex grad severe
- Cliff-line
- Tag/Datum Point
- Permanent survey station
- Slope orientation

STC Map No:
7H6 STC 94

Drawn by:
M.Cracknell, 28-09-2006

Surveyed by:
M.Cracknell, S.Benjamin; 12-8-2006

Survey Grade: 54

Instruments:
Suunto compass and clino, fibreglass tape

Original Scale:
1/400

IB-14 Exit Cave

Matt Cracknell

20 August 2006

Party: Matt Cracknell, Sarah Gilbert, Olga Komanoscoviski, Dale Pregnell, Grant Roberts, Tony Veness

Hastings had received 50 mm of precipitation on the two days prior to the trip. We were greeted at the entrance collapse by the turbid tannin-filled D'Entrecasteaux River. The gate passage was howling and the river was high. Another chance to test out the dodgy Tyrolean traverse, hooray! After we were all across without getting wet, Matt set to the task of navigating the massive passages with his crappy light.

First stop was "The Ballroom", so named 'cos there's a straw with a big ball on it in a room. There, too, can be found a series of awesome straw columns, moonmilk coatings galore and clues in the ceiling to phreatic development during some stage of the cave's genesis.

Lunch was had sitting on one of the "beaches" by the river. Much of the sediment showed evidence of little critters burrowing into it.

The group threaded its way through "The Rock-Pile", assisting each other and building good team relationships. Our time was up at the Mini Martin junction so we had a snack and turned back.

Back at the dodgy Tyrolean emergency river crossing, Matt cleaned up the remains of an electron ladder that had spent way to much time flaking aluminium in the cave. Before collecting the ladder, and as much of its bits as possible, he took photos to ensure that any potential cultural significance represented was not completely lost.

"… awesome straw columns, moonmilk coatings galore and clues in the ceiling to phreatic development …"

JF-35 Gormenghast

Ruth Whitely

2 September 2006

Party: Serena Benjamin, Dale Pregnall, Ruth Whitely, Tony Veness

"…it has a reputation for being unpleasant…" so said notes on the map, cheerfully read out in the car on our way to the Florentine.

To say I was unprepared for Gormenghast would be an understatement but to say that it wasn't one of the most amazing things I've ever done would be untruthful. Those of you who regularly spend weekends crawling through wet, muddy caves may scoff, but for a relative novice who's only previous experience was a bit of a muck-around in Mystery Creek Cave, Gormenghast was an experience I won't forget in a hurry.

We realised pretty soon, as we followed the stream underground, that it was going to be a wet trip but my $12 bargain K&D gumboots – purchased especially for the trip – worked a treat; very comfy, very grippy and mostly waterproof.

In all we spent five hours climbing, squeezing and crawling around in Gormenghast. The formations were really beautiful but I think I discovered my limit of tolerance for being in confined spaces.

A highlight was Dale's 'shortcut' that was supposed to see us avoid getting unnecessarily wet by crawling thorough a tunnel on the ground but actually saw us crawling under a waterfall before realising it wasn't a shortcut and having to turn back, which meant crawling back under the waterfall and back through the tunnel.

I'm not sure I'd recommend Gormenghast to other beginners, at least not if the club wants to keep new recruits, but it was an amazing experience. Although next time I'll take a towel …

Ida Bay Surface Work

Janine McKinnon

23 September 2006

Party: Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Tony Veness

We had a few loose ends to tidy up in the IB-1 area and as the weather forecast was for a miserable day it seemed like a good time to do it.

We got away from the car at 10:30 am and stopped first to put a survey tag (IB-S1) on the large boulder outside the gate at the quarry entrance. This has yet to be linked to any of the surface survey routes in the area but is part of a set of (planned and actual) permanent stations for the area. Unfortunately the club drill bit was very blunt and it took more effort than expected to get the holes drilled. As we had only bought the little battery with us (we had anticipated that it would be sufficient for the 5 or 6 tags we planned to install) we realised very quickly that we were not going to get the number of tags placed that we'd planned.

We then headed to IB-1 on the taped route past IB-15. While I put a tag on the new entrance, which is now IB-233, Tony and Ric tied in the surface survey from the other side of the landslip to the new IB-1 entrance. As the landslip has removed lots of vegetation this only took three survey legs.

Confused? IB-1 - It's the first cave at Ida Bay! Can't lose that! But that entrance has disappeared under the landslip; the new, higher entrance is now the way in and it needed a number. But the cave is still IB-1, even though it's tagged IB-233! It's quite simple, really. [*The original IB-1 entrance hasn't actually disappeared. It has been renovated somewhat and the old tag can't be found but the entrance is roughly in the same spot and is still useable for accessing the lower reaches of the cave. Nearby IB-25 Yodellers Pot on the other hand would appear to have completely disappeared under the landslide – Ed.*]

Serena, meanwhile, had a good look in the "next door" doline and declared that it didn't go anywhere and then went off to have another look around the old entrance area under the tree fall.

We all regrouped to have lunch on the landslip in the 15 minutes of convenient sun and then we started back down the valley to see if it would make a better route in, rather than the current roundabout route.

It did seem to be a bit shorter but needs to be walked UPHILL to determine if it's a more efficient way in with packs as it is quite steep, with tree falls, and may be commensurately harder work going up than the current route.

We started to put a second permanent survey tag in at the Mystery Creek/Southern Ranges track junction, but the battery died before the first hole was finished. So that's another job that needs finishing.

Lesson: Always carry a spare battery even if you don't expect to need it.

As it was only around 2 pm we decided to walk down the road and actually find the entrances to Loons Cave and Bradley Chesterman, which Ric, Tony and I have never been to.

After a stop for coffee at the bakery in Dover, and dropping everyone at their doors, we were STILL home before 5 pm!

When we plotted our work we found we still couldn't link the survey of the new entrance down through the cave to the old entrance. There's a significant mis-closure. The problem is, we aren't sure where on the old survey the new survey joins. It looks like we'll need another trip to sort out the problem.

IB-1 Revelation Cave and Surface Work

Janine McKinnon

28 September 2006

Party: Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon.

Those loose ends in the IB-1 area just don't seem to want to go away. Those of you who are paying attention will have noticed that after last weekend's effort we still had "unresolved issues". So it was back again for us. We thought this might be an opportunity to test the new route in, with heavy packs, up the valley. It is definitely shorter and we were at the IB-233 entrance 45 minutes after leaving the car, but it is very steep and slippery. So I still don't know if it's a better way in, but it is a good way out, provided you can find your way as it is not taped.

Our first job was to go back in and check a few measurements from our earlier survey and to run the survey further down the main passage. That way we hoped to get the new survey to mesh with the original survey.

Rigging was straightforward and the redirection on the second pitch that we had guessed would work, but was untried, worked beautifully (the surveying and bolting was done by Ric and myself in June – see trip report on page 3).

We moved down the cave to where the main passage becomes narrow and winding and began surveying out, checking our new measurements against our previous survey. We had suspected a particular 30 m leg was too long and we were right. It was 30 feet; Ric had obviously read the wrong side of the tape! (Back at home this fixed our original problem but created another one.)

That job done, we checked out the old entrance from the inside, to help us identify it from the outside, so we could retag it (and if you understand that you win a prize).

We derigged and went to sit in the sun for lunch.

Our afternoon's work was fairly easy:

- Tag the IB-1 entrance (to replace the tag buried under the landslip for those of you who don't know).
- Tag and survey in the new(ish) hole, Crossword Cave, on the other side of the slip (now IB-234), discovered by Ken Hosking.

- Place a survey tag at the junction of the Mystery Creek and Southern Ranges tracks (IB- S2).

What's the new problem? We can now confidently superimpose the new survey over the old survey. The current map shows the IB-1 entrance joining the cave at a large boulder next to a skeleton. What we now take as the IB-1 entrance joins the cave from another direction some 30 m away! I'm suspecting the original IB-1 entrance is in the doline beside the IB-233 entrance. This will require more investigating.

All that done and we were home by 5:30 pm.

Lune Sugarloaf – Surface Work

Alan Jackson

30 September 2006

Party: Alan Jackson

After about two months of captivity I was very keen to escape the house and feel limestone under my feet again. None of the weekend's other options appealed to me and my chief playmate was interstate. I settled on a lone day (kind of …) thrashing the southern slopes of Lune Sugarloaf.

I had often wondered if the limestone extended beyond the large gully that runs south from the Marble Hill/Lune Sugarloaf saddle. There are no tagged entrances marked on the map in this area. Damian and I had a very brief look here a few weeks earlier while checking out our CAVEX options. We spotted a few dolines which suggested it did.

I headed into the scrub at the top of the quarry and traversed along the remnants of the old quarry/logging track. After a hundred metres or two I stumbled across my first pronounced gully. There was dolerite everywhere so I assumed I was above the contact and followed the gully downhill. A large doline was encountered with water dripping down the back into a clay filled choke but exposed limestone bedrock and a drafting hole waited on the other side. It went a few paltry metres down but the signs were good. I tied some pink flagging tape above the hole. I then continued round the hill to the next gully. This was a larger gully and a much more impressive sink hole existed. It was about eight metres in diameter and over six metres deep, complete with exposed limestone walls, large logs and a choked bottom. Although it was choked, it was initially enough to get my heart going. The signs were now very good. Another pink tape was tied to a nearby tree.

I marched on with high hopes but only got another 30 or so metres. Cutting grass became the dominant ground cover and my choice of shorts for the day was looking poor. It was so offensive that I turned back. I needed to come back better armed (head to toe clothing and a machete!) The grass wasn't that old or high and wouldn't present too much of a challenge to a properly dressed caver. Unfortunately the GPS wasn't liking the trees overhead and I have no idea how far around the hill I had actually come.

I filled out the rest of the day by inspecting the enormous choked dolines right in the base of the main gully below the saddle (down from IB-46 March Fly Pot) and then returned to the car park via the IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot area and the old 'blue taped' track (from the days of quarry protests). Standing at the entrance to Rocket Rods and feeling the breeze on my face invoked old memories and I am keen to have another look in there. There are a couple of things I want to check at the 100-150 metre mark.

So, in short: there is limestone and caves on the southern flanks of Lune Sugarloaf but they are fiercely defended by cutting grass. With enough enthusiasm this area could be opened up for new discoveries. It's only a short walk for Ida Bay and there is potential for an independent (to the Exit system) horizontal drainage system some 200 m down or an extension to the Little Grunt branch.

H-X8 Wolf Hole (now H-8!)

Janine McKinnon

1 October 2006

Party: Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Janine McKinnon, Dale Pregnell, Grant Roberts, Ric Tunney

The first day of Daylight Saving and we all arrived at our various meeting points at the right times; a good sign for the day. The loss of the hour was a bit of a shock though.

The aim of this trip was a combination of work and play. Ric and I had decided that it was about time the rigging for the entrance pitch of Wolf Hole joined the 21st Century. Generations of cavers have done the pitch by the "chuck it over and away" technique (IRT), be it by ladders or rope. Now they'll just bloody well have to cross rebelays here, like everywhere else!

We rigged two ropes so that the other members of the party could abseil straight down and go off exploring, then Ric and I did the bolting, side by side. ("Ah, isn't that sweet", I can hear you thinking. Or is it just a sign of excessive co-dependence? I know which one Alan would go for!)

Ric, Grant and Dale get ready at the entrance to Wolf Hole

It did mean that the bolting went more quickly with four hands to juggle all the gear and I could head further down the pitch and work out the spot for the next rebelay whilst Ric rigged the rope through the one just completed.

I managed to shift the log half way down, which was convenient as it was right near where we needed to place the second rebelay.

That job completed, we went to find the others. They were in a large chamber accessed via a short, twisted crawlway. The size of the chamber came as quite a surprise to me and we spent quite some time looking all around its various nooks and crannies. Matt was mesmerised by the boxwork formations and the rock types visible (as were Serena and I). The areas of pink rock were quite unusual for Tassie, I think, although none of us are geologists. At least we hadn't seen it before here. I have seen a similar rock in New Zealand which is a metamorphosed limestone, but whether there is a connection I don't have the expertise to say.

Serena found a beautiful pink crystal hidden well out of sight. How she found it is beyond me! Maybe SHE actually looks where she's going! This area of the cave was significantly less visibly trogged than the route to Lake Pluto, which we then went to find.

Serena's beautiful pink crystal

Following the squelchy, muddy mass of footprints made the route finding easy, although Ric and Grant did manage to follow a diversionary path that put them some 15 minutes behind us at the Lake.

There is a bit of an ongoing debate in my head as to whether I've been to Wolf Hole before. It has been such a heavily visited cave in previous decades that I can't believe that I haven't done it at some time. I just can't recall when. But as the trip progressed and no bells were being rung, I was beginning to wonder. Lake Pluto didn't look familiar either and I would certainly have remembered if I'd seen the fantastic reflections in its still waters before.

We spent quite a while playing around with our lights at different angles to vary the reflective effects. The optical illusions were amazing. In some conditions it seemed you were gazing through crystal clear water at formations under the surface and, if you got the light angles right, it appeared that there was no water at all and that you were looking down into a large pit. I think the high tannin level, which made the water opaque, enhanced the effects.

We started heading straight out after our lake gazing was satisfied and were all at the top an hour after I started up (first).

Whilst the others were jogging up past all the rebelays I placed a tag (no, the cave has never been given one) on the tree used as the main belay point. I spent quite a while trying to find some suitable rock to use, unsuccessfully. I thought I'd found some at one point, but as a big chunk of it broke off as I drilled the first hole, I had a rethink. The cave is now H-8. Matt thinks it's really cool that the tag is on the belay tree as the tag for IB-8 (Mini-Martin) is also on its belay tree. [*This is not strictly correct. The original IB-8 tag was placed on the nearby belay tree but the tag is now located 'in' the belay tree. A new IB-8 tag was fixed to an outcrop of limestone close to the entrance in February 2003 (see* SS*336, page 21). I can understand attaching tags to trees as a last resort in the absence of any suitable rock surface but I would recommend avoiding it (I don't understand the original IB-8 placement). The new H-8 tag will need to be monitored to extract it from the growing tree in the years to come – Ed.*]

We met Amy and Dion as we joined the King George V track, which was very fortuitous, particularly as they didn't know where the turnoff to Wolf Hole was. What timing, or is it psychic coordination?

We were back at the cars well before 5 pm, with lots of daylight left. It's nice to get changed in the warmth and light.

ACCESS:

The track to the cave is off Chestermans Road, which is a right hand turn (second RH turn) a few kilometres further along the main dirt road running from Hastings Chalet to Hastings Cave. Several hundred metres up the road it levels off for a short section and there is space near an old tree stump to park cars. The track starts on the LHS about 20 m further up the hill. This is the track to King George V Cave, which is sometimes used for wild cave adventure tours, so the track is well defined. The Wolf Hole track branches off to the right a few hundred metres along. The turn off is immediately past some steps on a slight up-hill section just after crossing a small gully. It is not well defined but there is tape marking the way once you get onto it. The track heads up the hill for a bit and then contours right. The doline is obvious when you get there.

RIGGING NOTES:

Primary belay from tree on lip with tag on it. This tree is quite large and a 4 m tape would help. Back-up to smaller trees approx. 5 m back from edge.

1st rebelay at approx. 8 m where pitch becomes vertical. 1x10 mm stainless steel (SS) through-bolt with hanger in-situ.

2nd rebelay approx 10 m below and almost in vertical line with previous belay. 10 mm SS through bolt WITHOUT hanger. [*Why without hanger? If it's good for one, why not both? – Ed.*]

3rd rebelay approx 5 m below and approx. in line. 8 mm SS through bolt WITHOUT hanger. [*8 mm? … shakes head and shuffles off looking confused … – Ed.*]

Have fun carrying two spanners.

IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot

Alan Jackson

4 October 2006

Party: Alan Jackson, Dale Pregnall

After getting nostalgic about Rocket Rods the previous weekend I seized the midweek opportunity to get in there with Dale. I knew this cave would challenge Dale so I only packed enough rope to get to the bottom of the 23 m pitch after Let the Squalor Begin (about -130 m).

We wandered down the cave with no great sense of haste and Dale managed the sometimes awkward pitches and rigging with no great hassle. The 40 m rope I took for the 34 m entrance pitch was just a little short and I had to tie a tape on the end so we could reach it on our way out (I used the tail of the rope to go round the large rock on the surface though, so by putting a tape on this a 40 m rope would be spot on). The 38 m rope I took for the 21 m Man Trap pitch was Jeff Butt perfection, the knot hanging two feet off the ground. I took a ladder for the ~6 m drop between The Man Trap and Date with Destiny pitches (which I noticed isn't marked on the survey). It's a nasty little thing and really needs tidying up with some bolts at the pitch head instead of using the only natural which is several metres back from the pitch head. The ladder made things a little easier but it was still unpleasant.

The Squalor was particularly squalid and the 7 m pitch as awkward and ugly as ever. Our last pitch for the day, the 23 m, is quite a nice pitch. This was my main area of interest and reason for returning to the cave. I had always remembered a large chamber off the side of this pitch but could never remember why we hadn't looked at it, or why it wasn't on the survey. The answer became obvious as I descended the pitch; it was going to be difficult to get to it as it was on the opposite site of the pitch to the side that you descend from and it is located halfway down the pitch. I had a good look around and have devised a cunning plan for reaching it on a return trip that should only take one or two bolts.

We were out of rope now so we headed out leaving the cave rigged. I pulled the ladder of the 6 m pitch though so it wouldn't dissolve in our absence, and I intend redoing this pitch anyway. Once again Dale impressed me with his no fuss attitude on the pitches. Even I didn't like some of my own rigging! The mud was worse than I remembered it and rope feeding problems cursed us the whole way out. RR is a great cave (by Ida Bay standards!) and really deserves to get to Little Grunt.

On the way to the cave we took the traditional track up through Benders Quarry. This is a pretty good track apart from the section between the Skinner Track turn off and the very top of the quarry (lots of scratchy *Cassinea* in 300 m of this bit) but it is about 2.2 km. On the way back we 'straight-lined' it back to the booth/carpark down the hill. This is a distance of just over 400 m. The straight-line option is a bit steep on the upper bits and the vegetation is slightly annoying. The lower sections are quite good for off-track walking. With very light or no packs I would recommend the straight-line option but with a big pack I imagine the quarry route would be superior. With a medium pack I'd go up the quarry and down the straight-line. The other advantage of bush-bashing is that you're more likely to stumble across a new entrance! Remember, Rocket Rods was found not long ago, in 2002.

IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot, IB-110 Arthurs Folly, IB-10 Mystery Creek Cave

Dale Pregnall

8 October 2006

Party: Dale Pregnell, Grant Roberts and a friend named Ian Jones

We arrived at the Mystery Creek car park at 10 am. Our plan for the day was for Grant and myself to do the first pitch at Rocket Rods Pot while Ian waited at the entrance for our return. We would then take Ian on his second ever caving trip to Arthurs Folly or Mystery Creek Cave.

We arrived at the entrance at 11 am and after checking the rigging I descended the first pitch, followed by Grant.

With Ian waiting at the entrance Grant and I went down to look at the start of the second pitch then returned to look at the main chamber. After an hour of enjoying the sights Grant made his way back up the first pitch.

While Grant was ascending the pitch I had time to reflect on how strange it was to be alone in a cave with no one to cry out to if I felt the need.

I ascended the pitch with no problem other than the usual fitness issues and on my return Grant and I both agreed that you need to be fit to be a caver.

Then down the hill we went with hopes of Arthurs Folly.

After finding the correct entrance we made our way in only to change our mind at the site of the first large puddle. Another factor that changed our minds was Ian as we thought he would like a larger cave to enjoy for his first real trip.

Off to Mystery Creek Cave!

Ahhh, Old Faithful. The water was up enough to make some noise and freak Ian out. He he. We took Ian to the glowworms, waterfall, broken column and the muddy crawl that starts under the 'chasm of doom'.

Ian loved it and had a great time. He said "it was a nice change from the Longley pub on a Sunday arvo"

He would cave again, but he is not keen enough to become a member.

IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot

Alan Jackson

14 October 2006

Party: Serena Benjamin, Gavin Brett, Sarah Gilbert, Alan Jackson, Geoff Wise

For some reason I had suffered short term memory loss and I was returning to this grotty shit-hole. Gavin, Serena and I were heading to the sixth pitch to gain access to a previously unexplored side chamber while Geoff and Sarah lollopped about the upper level taking photos and enjoying the nice part of the cave.

First stop was the third pitch (~6 m) which was in desperate need of a tidy up. We rigged a back-up off the usual large block ~6 m from the pitch and then placed a single 8 mm bolt high and out on the left hand wall (as looking out, not as abseiling). This made the usually hideous little thing quite pleasant. I left a piece of orange flagging tape here for Gavin to mark the bolt with on the derig but he informed me later that he forgot to put it on (not the first time he's done this to me!)

Serena and Gavin were both impressed with Date With Destiny (40 m). In Gavin's words; "It's an Ida Bay classic." They were both unimpressed with Let the Squalor Begin immediately after the nice pitch. Within two metres of passage we were all turned into muddy blobs.

At the head of the sixth pitch (~23 m) we frigged with the rigging and I dropped it more to the right (as one abseils) than normal. This got me closer to the chamber I wanted to explore. I whacked in a two bolt (8 mm) rebelay after positioning the rope in a keyhole and this was far enough over to allow me to easily swing across into the chamber. The chamber floor is only ~8 m down from the top of the pitch. The chamber was much bigger than I originally suspected. It was about 10 m wide and 30-40 m long and ran in line with the direction of all the other passages in the cave. Lots of quite impressive pretties captured our attention. Far and away the most spectacular feature of the chamber was the ceiling. It had all collapsed at some point and enormous slabs had come down leaving a flat roof and right-angles at the edges and several right-angled steps in the ceiling. One large slab (10 m long, 6 m wide and 2 m thick) had become wedged half way and hung as ominously as a several hundred tonne rock does! At the back end of the chamber our hopes were raised when we spotted a 4-5 m diameter shaft intersecting the chamber. Unfortunately this didn't prove to be bottomless and was blocked ~9 m down at the general base level of the rest of the chamber. It also seemed that all the water entering this area drained out towards the previously explored part of the cave. My mind toyed with the idea that perhaps this shaft was the one that we had glimpsed the upper levels of when Madphil, Jeff Butt and myself had dropped Date With Destiny an alternative way and discovered a very narrow fissure leading to a large and deep shaft. With nothing else to see here we headed out. Madphil would be very disappointed that we hadn't taken survey gear, but he's always disappointed with something!

The derig was hideous with vile muddy ropes not only being nasty and heavy to drag out but also clogging ascenders to the point of uselessness. This cave offers so much but ultimately destroys you.

Some photos of the much more enjoyable section of the cave that the other two got to visit

A superb curtain of knobbly straws and stals in the upper levels

Sarah negotiating one of the slipperier sections

Other Exciting Stuff

Bunton's World of Karst – Part 2: Central and South America

Stephen Bunton

This was the really exotic part of our overseas trip, backpacking around the high Andes and then returning via Costa Rica. Despite desperately wanting to be a caver I find myself distracted by mountains, fantastic landscapes and really interesting biomes.

Peru

From not quite the coldest place on Earth to not quite the hottest. In fact the coast of Peru and northern Chile and the nearby Atacama Desert is actually one of the driest parts of the planet. Our first destination south of the capital, Lima, was Pisco, the place where the local fishermen and guano miners invented Pisco Sours. The land is very hot here and the sea is cold, because of the north flowing Humbolt Current just offshore. Any moisture in the sea air doesn't fall as rain when the air travels onshore because as the air is warmed over the land it can hold more moisture, not less. As a result of this aridity the land is almost abiotic – I have never seen so many rocks and no vegetation!

Offshore it is a different story. The sea contains high levels of nutrients which support a great abundance of life. There is a local fishing industry (which collapses periodically with El Nino events!) and on the nearby Islas Ballestas there are great breeding colonies of seabirds and sea lions that are safe from South America's land-based predators: various cat species and foxes. Las ballestas means "the arches" in Spanish and I was surprised to see these wonderful offshore islands are a mass of sea caves formed in limestone. Their upper surfaces are metres deep in bird guano which was mined up until the '40s when synthetic nitrates replaced it as a fertiliser (and America became an industrial and economic superpower and Peru slipped off the pace somewhat.)

Enroute to the Islas Ballestas

Cuzco

This part of the world is famous because of its proximity to the ruins of Machu Picchu, lost city of the Incas and Peru's largest drawcard. From Cuzco it is a long daytrip or you can stay overnight at nearby Aguas Calientes. Either way you are at the mercy of the world's most overpriced train ride. Over the decades, lots of cashed up Americans have inflated the price. The train trip takes two hours each way unless, like us, you are stopped by a landslide. The surrounding hills are almost too steep to see the tops and the sky above. When we stopped for seemingly ages, in order to clear the rubble from the track, I got a bit of a look around and most of the surrounding countryside is limestone. The Machu Picchu area is granite. Together these two rock types support the steepest slope angles of any geology. Machu Picchu is a very impressive place. Before I visited it, just from looking at the photos, I didn't realise that it was granite country because of the thick covering of verdant jungle. If you removed the vegetation it would have rock architecture as impressive as some parts of Yosemite Valley. The Incas picked a very auspicious place to build this wonderful city. Now partly restored, it looks as the Incas left just the other day and the thatched roofs just blew off.

Machu Picchu is not the only thing worth seeing around Cuzco. There are ruins of many other Inca establishments nearby. The most famous of these is a fort called Saqsaywaman (pronounced almost like "sexy woman"), located on a hill behind the city. Saqsaywaman has spectacular Inca stonework in carved and interlocked granite boulders but the ruins beyond were made from limestone. We spent most of a day visiting these ruins (until rain stopped play!)

The easiest way to visit them is to catch a local bus up the hill towards Tambomachay and walk back into town. The first ruin Puka Pukara was a sentry station which had a supply of running water from a spring, neatly modified with Inca stonework. Another ruin, Q'enqo means "zigzag" or "serpent" in Quechua, the Inca language, which is still commonly spoken in the area. This was a ceremonial place which consisted of a large limestone boulder and an altar propped up against one side. There were also a number of altars on top of this outcrop. There were steps carved up the rock and since the Incas were mostly barefooted, all the rillenkarren was also carved off. Beneath the boulder was another altar and no doubt, in this more secretive place, some rather hideous rituals, possibly of human sacrifice, were performed.

Costa Rica

We didn't see any karst in Costa Rica nor rocks of any description because much of the landscape is covered in dense jungle. That which isn't covered in jungle is either beach, farmland or volcanic debris. The most exciting part of our trip here was the zip-lines in the Monteverde cloud forests. These are industrial strength flying foxes.

This was the ultimate in SRT! Wire cables are strung between trees on opposite sides of a ravine and these are negotiated sitting in a harness connected to a pulley, which runs along the cable. There are several operators here and at other venues but the tour we did involved 14 cables interlinked with rainforest walks. The longest span was 700 m and it dropped an altitude of 150 m. It would have been real sphincter tweaking stuff except for the fact that we couldn't see very much on the day we did it.

Kathy zips off into the void in an appropriately named 'cloud-forest'

The cloud-forests are formed where warm moist air from the Caribbean blows SE over the 2500 m high mountainous spine of the country to collide with the cooler air of the Pacific side. On the day that we did the zip-lines it was blowing a gale, mist swirled around us and it was quite cool. Clipping your pulley onto the cable and launching off into the greyness at 20 m/s was quite an experience. In the rain the spray splattered into your face and covered your clothes in that lovely grey metallic sludge like you get from wearing out your karabiners. At the other end you slice through a window in the canopy and land safely on a landing platform. It was a buzz!

Whilst some of the zip-lines were within the trees you saw very little from these because of the speed you are travelling. Later that day we enjoyed a canopy-top walk at a more leisurely pace. Nevertheless it is a pity caves couldn't be explored in this manner. They will one day, mark my words!

Surveying and Helmet Mounted Lights

Ric Tunney & Janine McKinnon

A few months ago we replaced our Speleotechnics Nova headlights with Stenlights. The Nova has a magnetic switch and we knew it affected a hand-held compass to such a degree that we couldn't wear it when surveying. We had been using either our Oldham headlight or a 3-LED Petzl Tikka when surveying. We knew the Stenlight, too, had a magnetic switch, so we decided we'd test it and some other lights while we were at it.

The experimental set-up was quite simple. The compass was placed level on a non-magnetic surface. Janine looked through the compass without touching it. Ric moved the test object towards the compass obliquely from the side till movement was seen and then measured the distance with a tape measure. To make sure, the object was moved all around the compass to ensure there wasn't some combination of compass orientation and approach direction producing a non-representative result. The results are shown in the table below:

Tested Item	Powered OFF	Powered ON
JB Helmet with no headlamp	No effect	N/A
Petzl Helmet with no headlamp	No effect	N/A
Speleotechnics Nova 5	23 cm	Not tested
Stenlight	17 cm	15 cm
3-LED Petzl Tikka	13 cm	10 cm
5-LED Kathmandu headlamp	5 cm	5 cm
Oldham	1 cm	1 cm

Notes on results

The two helmets were controls and were moved towards the compass as if they were being worn. Both helmets had been set up with non-magnetic light brackets, but the JB has some small magnetic fittings. Neither helmet affected the compass.

Both the Nova and Stenlight had a very marked affect on the compass. I presume this is due to the strong magnets in their switches.

The result from the Tikka was quite surprising. Both the Tikka and Kathmandu are made from plastic and the electronics are essentially non-magnetic. We had overlooked the rechargeable AAA NiMH batteries though. These have a steel case and a strong magnetic field. Further testing showed the effect was attributable to these batteries. Interestingly, the batteries in the Kathmandu had a weaker magnetic field than those in the Tikka. The actual card movement for these two lights was much less than for the Nova and Stenlight, but was still enough to produce unreliable compass readings.

We had expected that the magnetic field from current flow when the lights were turned on would affect the compass. This was not the case.

Conclusions

The distance from a headlight to a compass when sighting is about 5 cm. None of the lights tested, except the Oldham, should be fitted to a worn helmet when surveying.

If holding a light such as a Tikka in the hand to illuminate the compass, it should be kept away from the compass.

Discussion

Since we moved from Oldhams, we haven't developed a surveying light set-up we're happy with. What does a surveyor do? Take off his helmet? Wear a helmet without a light and use a hand torch to get about the cave? How do we safely illuminate the compass card? I'm going to experiment with a light with a flexible fibre-optic tip to keep the batteries away from the compass. Are non-magnetic batteries available?

This is the back cover for this issue. There is also no membership list. I've decided that since the Treasurer hasn't been able to send me an updated list since April 2006 that there's no point even putting it in. I don't even know if I send* Spiels *out to all the right people anymore. Alas … - Ed.