

# SPEIEO SPIEL 372

May - June 2009





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**Front Cover:** The good old days.  
Andy and Alan at the bottom of Art  
Deco pitch, Tachycardia, after  
wrestling 200+ m of shitty rope up  
Bermuda Triangle (July 2007).  
*Photo by Matt Cracknell*

**STC** was formed in December  
1996 by the amalgamation of  
three former southern  
Tasmanian clubs: 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

Newsletter of the

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## Editorial

Nothing to whinge about here – I’ve used up all my creative juices filling up “Stuff ‘n Stuff” with guff.

Live to cave, cave to live.

Alan Jackson

## Stuff ‘n Stuff

**SERENDIPITY – LAST DRINKS PLEASE** – *The Mercury* reported recently that scientists believe that Phobos (one of Mars’ moons) will smash into the surface of the planet within 50 years. Further internet research suggested this figure could actually be up to 10 (or even 50) million years but either way I think it’s best that if you have any desire to experience the full pleasure of Serendipity then make it soon before the Phobos pitch gets turned into an orbiting ring of dust. Serendipity is a great cave and it’ll be a shame to see it go.

**FINALLY, A USE FOR ROPE PROTECTORS** – Bunty has stumbled across a use for at least a small portion of the hordes of rope protectors lying around (a remnant from the ‘developmental’ days of SRT). I’m sure we’ll see Bunty down at the Salamanca Markets flogging bowsaw blade covers to the tourists before long.



A. Jackson

Steve, proud as punch, practising ‘safe bowsawing’. What does he look like? One of those garden gnome thingies perhaps?

**RIC TUNNEY QUOTES WINSTON CHURCHILL** – On two occasions recently Ric has gleefully recounted an old quote from Churchill to me; “You can always count on Americans to do the right thing - after they’ve tried everything else.” It has been bandied about lately in regard to the current global economic situation. The thing I find most interesting about it is that if you replace ‘Americans’ with ‘Ric’ then it rings even truer!

**DEAN MORGAN** – Is he just another washed up caver desperately clinging to the memories of that halcyon period when he was king of TCC/SCS/STC? Short answer – yep.

**SARAH GILBERT A BRIDESMAID** – Ken Hosking managed to spot Sarah recently while not in her usual garb of thermals and trogsuit. →

**FREE HARNESES AND SOILED UNDERPANTS** – Congratulations to Bunty on his new harness (The Whipper, *Rock Autumn* 2009 – page 11). Luckily it’s a ‘Unisex’ harness, so it’ll fit him regardless of whether he’s being an old woman or not.

**AWARD WINNING CAVERS** – Arthur Clarke and Alan Jackson received their keepsakes with great fanfare (trumpets, streamers, confetti etc) at the AGM. Matt presented Arthur with his trophy thingy for the Edie Smith award he was awarded at the 2005 Conference and then Bunty dangled the 2009 Jeff Butt Exploration award around Alan’s neck. Until this year there hadn’t been trophies to hand out but the last few conferences’ worth were backdated and awarded this year (hence Arthur’s belated Edie Smith block of wood/plastic/metal).



K. Hosking



**MEETING VENUE** – Just when we thought we’d settled on a new meeting venue, after about 12 months of complaining and unrest about the Waratah, it turns out that Sublime Pizzeria has decided to have regular Wednesday night live music. So things are back to square one on the complaining and unrest front. Maybe we should change from a ‘caving’ club to a ‘live music’ club and then we’ll blend in anywhere. Until a new venue can be decided upon, (guessing it’ll take another solid 12 months), meetings will be held at the editor’s house – 45 Gormanston Road Moonah. However, Alan will be away for the July meeting, so somewhere else will have to be found for that one, though the front porch is a possibility.



## Trip Reports

### H-8 Wolf Hole – Checking out the end

**Matt Cracknell**

**18 January 2009**

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Marco Zocca and Martina Schiavinotto (Gruppo Speleologico Padovano)

We met up with the Italians in Dover and jumped into their 4WD packed to the brim. At the carpark Marco kitted up with enough gear to drop 1000 m and camp for 3 nights. It seems that the Italians do it differently ...

Once in the cave it didn't take us long to find Lake Pluto and crawl up "Hells Passage" (named by Nicholson (1977)). This stream passage is the link to Cub Hole. Jeff and Dave found string and a burglar alarm in the top end of this extension. These items were presumably left over from the mission to force a through trip in the late 70s.

After a little bit of crawling through the active streamway we made it to the waterfall climb. Marco and I headed up with the aid of an old hemp rope. We pushed our way into the area that should have had a daylight hole (Clarke, A., pers. comm., 2009). This seems to have now been filled in. Only tree roots, organic matter and insects remain. Is this evidence of lyre-bird disturbance on the surface?

Back at Lake Pluto we regrouped and had lunch before heading out across the lake. Martina, who didn't want to get wet feet, stayed behind. Once on the other side we checked out the passage to Lake Charon. From reading a few of the *Spiele*s it seems that most of the scout and school trips in the late 70s and early 80s trogged this path, turning a once beautiful white crystalline pool spar and flowstone into a mud highway. Cleaning this up will be a mission. If one was to wash and scrub it down the muddied water

would flow into white crystal pools. Dirty water would have to be collected and removed. Not an easy task.

The next area investigated shoots off to the left. This active streamway passage is coated in silt and fine organic matter. It looks distinctly like material found in the sump of King George V cave. One thing is for sure, it eventually closes off to a rabbit sized hole.

"The Mud-Brick Factory" was next on the list. Jeff's survey notes comment on the presence of amazing boxwork. He was not wrong. Silica boxwork protrudes up to 300 mm from the wall in intricate crisscross patterns. The entire section of this cave (below previous water level limits) is covered with it!

To the west is a large breakdown chamber. The orientation of which is controlled by a large steeply east-dipping fault-plane. On the map this fault is the continuation of the main Lake Pluto chamber fault. Beyond the breakdown chamber is a large section of nasty breakdown. Thank god for knee pads. Gypsum encrusts the walls in many places. Then the passage turns sharply east and descends to the end of the cave. Marco put his head into the very tight flattener but to no avail, even the Italian met his "Estremita".

By this stage Martina had got very cold waiting for us so when we got back to the Lake Pluto Chamber she was nowhere to be seen. Presuming she had headed out the entrance we followed suit. On the way back we found her wandering the extensive entrance chambers having missed the turnoff. We regrouped and quickly ascended to the surface.

#### Reference:

NICHOLSON, B. 1977. Hastings – 24, 25 September, 1977. *Speleo Spiel* 128:8-9.

### H-8 Wolf Hole – Invasion Day

**Matt Cracknell**

**26 January 2009**

**Party:** Guy Bannink, Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Sarah Gilbert

It was a relatively uneventful trip to the cave entrance, except when Guy had to dash down the hill to get his harness out of the car. By the time he got back it was his turn down the pitch.

First up we surveyed a steeply ascending route in the rock-pile at the downstream end of Lake Pluto. Somehow Jeff had missed this bit of the cave. It took us about an hour to complete the job. On the way we found fine and friable green clay stuffed in the ceiling. Sarah noted that the surrounding rock contained quartz veins and contorted bedding planes (or is it flat lying palaeokarst deposits?). In a past trip report I speculated on the origins of the green clay, tossing up the possibilities of it either being fault gouge or clay alteration from a hydrothermal event (Cracknell, 2009). I am now pretty sure that the majority of the large chambers and associated rock-piles in Wolf Hole are a result of faulting and the green clay is not

metamorphosed protolith. That begs the question, are the faults thrust, normal or lateral?

Sarah and Serena were keen to get some idea on the cave's previous water level history. Most of us had seen the dissolution notches and prominent "bathtub rings" on the walls in many areas. We thought it would be a good idea to see if we could measure their relative heights. Survey shots were taken using permanent survey stations as reference points, the wonderful Yum-Cha disto (as long as what you are aiming it at is less than 25 m away) and a clinometer. We didn't need to take a compass bearing because a point on a plane was the only reference needed, however in the true spirit of making sure you don't stuff things up we recorded a compass bearing anyway. The difficult task was actually identifying the 4 or 5 water marks in each chamber that we could all agree on. To be accepted features had to be horizontal and not merely the upper limit of sedimentation.

We stopped for lunch near the entrance before trundling off to where the survey had ceased a month or two ago. On the way there I kept joking (and hoping) that we were about to stumble across big breakdown chambers. However, before the fun began a nasty bit of surveying in low and narrow meandering passages had to be completed.

A good system was developed. Sarah (no magnets on her head) took the readings while Serena carried the disto and Guy scouted ahead selecting survey stations; before long we were cruising.

Things were really dusty. It was like crawling over a desert, the Atacama Desert perhaps? Our movements stirred up the fine dry silt/clay covering the floors and soon all of us had nice big black mud-boogers to pick out of our noses. Serena then started making funny noises, burbling something about it getting smaller but we should go and have a look anyway.

Finally we could stand up ... we could have gone surfing too. It was like being at the beach. We weren't sure if the slumped mud banks looked like swell waves rolling on the ocean or dunes near the shore. One thing was for certain, treading in the "Dune Room" without leaving obvious footprints on everything was going to be a challenge.

Several survey legs of 10-20 metres made things quite enjoyable. It was slow going though, each of us taking care not to scuff things up. After about 100 m of negotiating subway tunnels we climbed into breakdown. Stuffed in a steep, north-east dipping fracture/fault was glacial till. Well I think it is till ... it looks like a pile of plum pudding. The material is semi-indurated sediment consisting of a green-grey matrix and angular to subangular pebbles, cobbles and boulders. Clasts are comprised of a wide range of rock types. There is even something that looks like granodiorite nested amongst the dolerite and fossiliferous mudstone clasts. We placed a couple of permanent survey stations where passage continues on, then carefully retraced our steps.

**Reference:**

CRACKNELL, M. 2009. H-8 Wolf Hole – Unfinished Business. *Speleo Spiel* 370:8-9.



*The Dune Room.*



*A quartz vug.*

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## **IB-120 Valley Entrance – IB-14 Exit Cave thru trip – The Project Begins**

**Matt Cracknell**

**8 February 2009**

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Sarah Gilbert, Ken Hosking, Greg Middleton, Jane Pulford, Tony Veness, Geoff Wise

It didn't take us too long to scale the Southern Ranges track. Only one detour was made to poke our heads into a small vertical hole. Before heading into Valley Entrance (VE) Tony briefed us on the day's objectives. They were to familiarise ourselves with the main route, relocate and record theodolite survey stations and try out a bit of sketching.

We took a little over an hour to negotiate the VE rifts and squeezes. Greg experienced a couple of constricted moments but eventually popped out the other end. Once in the main Exit passages we set about finding the end of the theodolite survey. Things didn't initially start well, the last few stations either didn't have a number or could not be

located. However, Greg's disto/clino/compass (uncalibrated) made measuring long distances relatively easy as long as you had a steady hand. This machine consistently ranges up to about 60 m comfortably. Matt feverishly took photos of survey stations and scribbled illegible notes in his book, only occasionally being distracted by slickensides and gypsum crystals. Sarah had a go at sketching while others took turns to take survey measurements. We spent 4 hours following the survey to Broken Stal (or should that be Broken Column) Chamber.

From there we headed toward the resurgence. The most difficult parts of the route to follow are in the Grand Fissure streamway/breakdown and the notorious Rock Pile. Apart from that you follow the river. We made it out through the Wind Tunnel gate at 8 pm having spent 9 hours underground. The walk back up to the saddle and Benders Quarry then took 2.5 hours! It was slow going as one member of the group was feeling the long day underground. Luckily emergency resuscitation wasn't necessary on this occasion.

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## H-8 Wolf Hole – F..k Me Dead

**Matt Cracknell**

**15 February 2009**

**Party:** Guy Bannink, Serena Benjamin, Arthur Clarke, Matt Cracknell

I rigged the entrance IRT style as Arthur was not confident passing the rebelay. We then promptly negotiated “Atacama Crawl”. The dust, numerous tight spots and stewing in his own sweat was not to Arthur’s liking.

We reached the limit of exploration from the previous trip, marking a track using strips of blue flagging tape on the way. Guy manned the instruments while Serena pushed ahead. Arthur started taking photos and musing on the complex juxtaposition of phreatic passages formed in dolomite rudely truncated by major ceiling collapse in pink quartzite/silicified dolomite.

The cave dropped down off some monstrous blocks into mud covered phreatic passage liberally coated in pink stuff. We surveyed out and then explored a chamber high up in the fracture zone. Here cracks in the walls contain gypsum needles.



*Guy demonstrates that he’s still pretty flexible for an old bugger (possibly the most photographed groin in caving history).*

I gingerly crept into a small room beneath strawberry coloured fallen blocks. No mud down here, just rocks peeling out of the walls and ceiling. This is not somewhere you would want to spend eternity. I quickly retreated after shooting a single survey leg and taking a couple of quick photos of indurated flat-lying palaeokarst. I would have liked to have spent more time in here but body retrieval would be a nasty experience for all involved.

After a quick bite to eat we decided to explore some of the larger leads present in this area. One ended in a large chamber after about 50-60 m but continued in another direction via a small flattener. Another was a little more interesting. Following a linear phreatic passage ~5 m wide, 8 m high and 50 m long took us to some decoration.

Arthur summed it up beautifully with his surprised retort, confronted as he was by the awesome decoration in this chamber ...“F..k Me Dead!” Who could have imagined that something like this was possible in an otherwise barren series of passages (in terms of decoration). It was literally an orgy of gypsum and aragonite needles [see cover of Spiel 371], some of which could do you severe internal

damage if they were poked in the wrong place. Though I guess the sun never shines down here and they would feel quite at home? The only possible way on is blocked by decoration. In the true spirit of doing things properly we surveyed back to the “Dune Room” and tied in a loop via a small passage (~50 cm error).



*Guy in Strawberry Cascade.*



*Mud crack detail (toe at bottom for scale).*

Time was getting on. We had surveyed about 200 m of cave thus bringing Wolf Hole tantalising close to 4 km. On the way out Arthur and I stopped for a chat on the day’s discoveries and for a look at the massive sediment banks in “The Catacombs”. As usual Arthur’s camera was produced ... possibly for the last time. The camera lens was jammed – 900 photos (!) in the dust had taken their toll.



*Laminated paleokarst in Strawberry Cascade (pen for scale).*



## Sunshine Road Surface Work

Alan Jackson

22 March 2009

Party: Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson

The original plan was to do some track maintenance, for the impending Splash Pot push trips, followed by a surface bash south and west of Splash Pot. This area was last investigated back in 1999-2000 by Rasch/Butt et al. They found lots of holes, GPSed most of them, tagged very few of them, surveyed a couple of them and tied about half of them into a surface survey network. Rolan also did some fine Z-caving through this area for his Forestry report. Basically, there is unfinished work in the area. We also hoped to run a surface traverse between this area and the end of the traverse we did last year in the 'Sunshine Road' area (as that survey didn't tie into any point from the existing survey network – it only required about 200 m of surveying to achieve this). Plan A was thwarted when the Junee Quarry Road key wouldn't open the lock.

Plan B was to access the same area via the Sunshine Road (the end of this road is only ~250 m in a straight-line from the end of the KD track road and at a similar elevation. Forestry has completed further road 'maintenance' activities on the road and slashing of vegetation has occurred right to the end of the road. Unfortunately, just like the F8 Road, they have left slash all over the road. An hour or two is required at some stage to move all this so you don't scratch the crap out of your car (I didn't care as I was in someone else's car). What is interesting is that this section of the road falls within the "high sensitivity zone" in Rolan's Forestry Report (Eberhard 1994) in which he recommends no forestry related activities are appropriate. He actually suggests that this bit of road should be rehabilitated [Fun Police]. Whether this slashing indicates that the operator got a little carried away and did too much or that Forestry don't know or care about Rolan's 1994 recommendations is unknown to me. [Bunty later rang Bruce Hayward at Forestry, Derwent Office and made some enquiries. Bruce explained it was routine keeping the road open, there is no logging planned there, that they are very aware of the report and the sensitivity and wouldn't do anything not by the book. Bruce also enquired as to what we were doing in the area and asked to be kept in the loop with any discoveries that might need to be considered in their harvesting and management operations. This is all good to see/hear.]

We were expecting torrential rain but it cleared up just as we arrived in the Junee area (usually the opposite happens). We were so enthusiastic that we decided we should survey from the road all the way up the track to the contact and tie into the survey network. This we did, linking it in at JF-424 Dead Heat. Three quarters of the way up the hill we installed a 'permanent' survey station in a slab of limestone on the track (more permanent than a pink tape with a number written on it, anyway). It is simply a number tag fastener (nail/bolt in a plastic sleeve) drilled into the rock – with some pink tape hanging off it). A photo of it, with GPS coordinates appended, has been placed in the archive.

We had some lunch at JF-424 and then set off for JF-426 Canis Horribilus. We had walked about 20 m into the large

clearing west of the cave (a place we'd walked over several times before) when I heard a yelp from behind me. Bunty had found a foot sized entrance that had taken him up to the knee. 15 seconds of digging exposed a small 1x1x1 m cave (proper solid rock walls). It was all quite weird. Despite aspiring to be more like our mainland counterparts, we didn't tag it.

We made it to JF-426, via the orange taped track (of unknown origins), and plugged 'Hole39' into the GPS to get a bearing. Hole39 was the closest of Raschy's holes (and Hole11 was not far from 39, which was the nearest cave surveyed into the surface network by Rasch/Butt). We set tapes as we went (for surveying back between). About 30 m from the 'orange taped track' we found a ~15 m deep shaft on the contact which we called E1 (entered into the club GPS as E1 and wrote E1 on the tape we hung over the entrance). E was for equinox – 22 March 09. We couldn't tag it because there was no suitable rock accessible without rope and harness. After this the ferns and rainforest started again and we descended steeply into a gully.



*Bunty got very excited every time I produced the camera and posed with the reverse side of the home-made Disto target (a piece of plastic core-flute cut out of the "for sale" sign from my house). He thought of himself as some kind of renegade real-estate agent and tried to sell every bit of bush and cave we found.*

The old 'Hole##' waypoints aren't super reliable, as they were back in the day of older GPS units and around the age of 'selective availability.' Once we got close we set off in opposite directions looking for a cave that would hopefully have a yellow tape hanging over it with 'Hole 39' written on it, or even better, 'Hole11.' We found a series of deep dolines in the gully (one with a yellow tape) and another nice little horizontal cave with a vertical limestone headwall nearby. We decided to sit down and read some notes to see if we could identify either of these caves (we had printouts of all the relevant trip reports and hole descriptions). We made no headway. The day was getting on, so we decided we'd tag the little new cave (with no tape to be seen indicating it was known). It was tagged JF-439, photographed, GPSed etc ... We then surveyed back from this tag to the JF-426 tag.

Back at the car we looked about for a suitable 'permanent' survey station for the end of the track. We figured that Forestry might be getting ready to thin or harvest in the area (based on the recent road maintenance) and that any tree or even star picket that we chose/installed ran the risk of being graded, fallen, smashed to pieces. About 70 m

further up the road (east of the track start) there was a good road cutting in solid limestone. We figured they wouldn't bother recutting the road and installed a temporary bolt/fastener. This has been entered into the GPS as CHD00 (and listed as this in the survey data) – meaning *Canis Horribilus Datum 00*. On our next trip we'll bring an aluminium plate with 'CHD00' stamped on it for installing in the same spot. It will then be photographed, GPS coords appended, and placed in the archive (let's do things

properly this time so the next generation doesn't have to come along sorting out another mess of 'Holes', Z caves and the like).

**Reference:**

EBERHARD, R. 1994. *Inventory and Management of the Junee River Karst System, Tasmania*. Report to Forestry Tasmania. 125 pp

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## **JF-10 Splash Pot – Good caving on Good Friday**

**Alan Jackson**

**10 April 2009**

**Party:** Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker

Caught the JB/DR bug associated with this cave again and didn't get away from Hobart till well after 9 am (even that's pretty early by their standards). Bloody Jackman was closed (not so 'good' Friday after all) and we forgot to stop in New Norfolk to grab some inferior bakery goods from Flanjos. We tried our luck at the Bushy Park store. Bunty had grabbed a drink there one morning a few weeks back and came out reeking of fish and chips. Conditions appeared similar again this day – I reckon you could put on 2 kg an hour via airborne fat inhalation and osmotic skin absorption. A 'large' woman made us up some salad rolls (she was featured in a poster on the wall claiming that she was a finalist in the 2008 "Cleavage of the Year Calendar"). I told her to secure the rolls well, as we were heading caving, so she double bagged them and claimed that no action could cause her robust rolls to be squashed. We laughed at her – only we knew that we were heading for passages with an average width less than the length of her cleavage.

The next potential hurdle was the Junee Quarry Rd gate. The gate, however, was open. It looked like the same slightly-shot lock was on the chain and the key wouldn't open it, so I think Norske's short-term solution to our enquiry about access was to just leave it wide open till they put a new lock on it.

The cave was nice and wet – much wetter than the start of the previous trip, but much drier than the end of the previous trip! A trace was placed on the nasty sharp nubbin on the third pitch and then we headed in to Close to the Bone. It was pretty ordinary, but not terrible. Pack passing was usually possible in the nastier bits, the rock was all nice and solid and the correct route fairly easy to pick first time – only a couple of turn-arounds were required. The bottom of the Punishment Series (Stockholm Syndrome) in Dissidence is much nastier passage than this (tighter, filthier, crumblier), but CTTB is about three times as long, and then of course there is lots of cave on the other side to explore as well. The two pitches immediately after CTTB abounded with suitable natural anchors and were quite simple to rig. We pulled out our smashed salad rolls and had lunch at the bottom of the pitches.

I was expecting the next bit of passage to be a challenge to find, as I figured that if Rolan didn't manage to find it back in the 80s when he first pushed CTTB it must have been

hard to spot. I was totally wrong, with the way on being large open passage – Rolan must have been cursing to himself when shown the new stuff by JB and Co. Admittedly he did place a big "?" on his memory sketch in the spot where the continuations were found and the words "The ascending continuation of the rockfall chamber would be worth following" (Eberhard 1987), so he did spot it, but why he didn't push it at the time eludes me. These EberHARDs are proving to not be as hard as everyone thought. Stefan was on this trip too but didn't even make it down the second lot of pitches! Soft.

A series of signs and survey tape left behind by JB guiding you around sensitive bits (lots of spectacular straw displays that need careful navigation) were a great help in both picking the right route at a couple of junctions and to keep your mind focused on avoiding the straws. One straw column in particular is quite a challenge, which you have to inch past down on one side, back against the wall with only 3 inches of air between your chest and the straw.

Tend'n Down Pitch was reached, rigged and rappelled and pretty soon we were in the beautiful bit of stream passage heading towards Harrow the Marrow. Lovely bit of cave and a frigging awesome pitch! With no more rope we couldn't go any further. We decided to leave the Mad Englishman and Dogs area for a future trip and instead we turned our attention to negotiating CTTB in the uphill direction. It wasn't too bad (with almost empty packs!) The only real drama was while passing packs through one of the tighter bits – still half wedged in the second of two adjacent squeezes, I grabbed my pack from Andreas and then passed it up over my head and dropped it behind me. As I let it go the haul line looped around my light and nearly broke my neck. After a solid bout of swearing and neck rubbing, I continued on.

Relieved and alive, we kitted up for the pitches. I went up first and as I changed over onto the middle section I yanked on my pack line to drag it up over the lip. There was a funny noise and things felt different. The sound of something plummeting filled the air. By the time my pack hit the deck Andreas was half way back down CTTB in full "danger avoidance mode". I checked the line and discovered that the barrel knot had come undone – all the pack passing and wiggling in CTTB must have loosened it and the tug I gave it was the final straw. Andreas kindly brought both packs up the pitch series!

We got back to the cars about 8 pm after a not overly long nor hard trip. Soft.

**Reference:**

EBERHARD, R. 1987. A splash in the pot is worth two in the bush – Splash Pot. *Speleo Spiel* 228:5-7.

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## **IB-8 Mini Martin**

**Alan Jackson**

**13 April 2009**

**Party:** Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker

While gazing down into the void of Harrow the Marrow a few days earlier, we had decided that Andreas should have a test run on an easier 100 m+ pitch before tackling this one. Correctly pacing yourself on a big pitch is critical when you still have 200 vertical metres of cave to gain at the end (especially when a section of which is reputedly one of the nastiest around). Mini Martin was the cave of choice for Andreas to prove himself.

The walk in was terrible – all the good work on the Skinner Track was quickly forgotten during the scramble along the Mini Martin track – quelle horreur! Dry, middle-aged 10.5 mm rope on a relatively new Stop made for high friction abseiling – give me some lashing water spray and a liberal coating of mud any day! The next rope was also 10.5 mm, bone dry and stiffer than the first – Janine would have been left stranded without enough Newtons working in her favour. The new 9.5 mm rope for the third pitch was sheer delight.

Andreas admitted that he was a bit scared while descending the big pitch. He was reassured when I

admitted that it scared the shit out of me too – with all that daylight, the exposure is pretty good! He was similarly concerned about the exit but I convinced him that he'd be so busy being exhausted and trying to breathe that he wouldn't have time to be scared.

Exit still looked like Exit – big, impressive, over done, found too long ago to be of any interest anymore. We headed out.

I'd threatened all potential participants on this trip via the email listserver that any time over 20 minutes for the big pitch would result in my cutting the rope and any time over 11 minutes would suffer a solid verbal berating (normally I offer the latter for nothing). Andreas cleverly headed out first so I couldn't cut the rope on him. He managed it in a respectable 25 minutes (with a light bag and only room in his leg loop for one foot ...) – room for improvement but not a bad effort with a one legged handicap. I left my bag tied onto the pile of rope and got up in 12 minutes – well below the 11 minute par, but acceptable, just. Andreas confirmed that he had been too busy dying to notice the exposure on the way up.

Good trip. Horror walk out – Mini Martin to 40 Minute Creek with a heavy pack is almost equivalent to Close to the Bone, so it was quite an appropriate training exercise really.

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## **JF-10 Splash Pot – Dropping the big pitch**

**Alan Jackson**

**19 April 2009**

**Party:** Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker

It was D-Day – time to drag over 100 m of rope through Close to the Bone and see what all the fuss is about on the big pitch. The only lengths of rope over 100 m in the gearstore were 11 and 10.5 mm. The bulk of these ropes was unacceptable. Instead we scavenged three 9.5 mm ropes and would simply have to cope with the two knot-crossings this would cause. What better way to appreciate a huge, free-hanging, mind-blowing pitch than to have to do two knot crossings partway down! We'd tested Andreas' mettle on a big pitch with a visit to Mini Martin the week before; now we just had to teach him how to cross knots! He did a few practice runs hanging off his balcony and figured it wasn't too hard.

On the walk in we greatly upgraded the marking of both the main KD track and the Splash Pot branch. We figured we'd be out in the dark again and didn't want a repeat of the previous week's walk out. On the drive up we spotted a whole roll of pink flagging tape on the side of the road (near Granton) which we snaffled – very nice! Negotiating Close to the Bone with a bag full of rope was not pleasant. We had a few moments of colourful language but survived ok. It took us almost two hours to get to the top of Harrow the Marrow. Here I rummaged through Andreas' pack looking for rigging gear, but instead I came out with handfuls of some strange gooey mess. It turned out that Andreas had figured that a brown paper bag would be sufficient protection for his Jackman and McRoss muffin. He was gravely mistaken, apparently wet paper isn't very

robust, and his muffin was spread evenly throughout the contents of his bag. A lesson learned.

The rigging for the big pitch isn't ideal. The value of hindsight is powerful indeed and makes one realise that the up-down zigzag approach to the primary, double bolt, anchor would be a bit untidy in the event of anchor failures. The spits were wonderfully rusty and not remotely confidence inspiring when dangling over such a vast void. I got the bolts all screwed in and then headed back over to help Andreas feed out the rope. My super efficient rope roll had half shat itself and had turned into a two person untangle job. I had coiled the rope backwards and forwards along a central spine (cut down hollow broom handle – much like the one Gavin and I used on a Mini Martin trip once). The ends had spooled off and tangled. With the rope sorted, I headed down.

Two knot crossings, 113 m, a few buckets of water down my suit and plenty of 'lead scoping' later I touched down at the base of this immense conical monster. I now have a new 'best pitch I've ever been down' to place at the top of my list. Wow. Watching Andreas come down was probably even more spectacular, as you could see the shaft better when illuminated with his light (all one can see from your own light is lots of reflected mist 5 inches in front of your face). Wow again. Scanning my main spot up and down the length of the waterfall showed the constant snaking and surging that the water does. It was like a great silver serpent plummeting down at a hectic pace. I checked the disappointing downstream conclusion and also the climb that Rolan had done. It would have been a bit of an epic using only traditional gear but at only ~7-8 m high and in solid rock, it would have only taken about 15 minutes with the drill and etriers! By the time Andreas arrived I was getting cold. Andreas was already cold



before he got there. I headed back up, taking lots of time to scope the theorised leads.

Despite all the hype from previous visitors (Jeff, Dave, Rolan) I can't really describe the alleged 'mega-draft' as anything other than fantasy. To suggest that a sideways draft coming in from the evident development on the far side of the pitch was sufficient to be noticeable, let alone causing the movement in the waterfall is outrageous – unless there is a 747 parked over there with its engines running. The sheer volume of air movement required is simply unimaginable in a cave environment. I suggest that the erratic lashing of the water fall spray is simply 'self-generated'; in fact, erratic is the wrong word – it is actually quite rhythmic and regular. In all rivers and streams the water levels surge and fall – slight variation in the way the water falls over the lip of the fall in Harrow the Marrow will have a significant effect on where it hits the ledge a few metres down and therefore at what angle and horizontal velocity it deflects off that ledge before entering free-fall. It's then all down to resistance with the air and there would be an absolute chaos of forces, localised air eddies etc on the way down causing droplets to move about. I think that every now and again you just get a cumulative effect which causes a big lash out to one side (unfortunately, due to the rope's position, some of these lashes cop you right in the face!)

I digress. My verdict on the lead: yes I could certainly see that there is significant development on the far side of the chamber, the majority of the length of the pitch (suggesting that either it is fossil vadose passage carved by the stream currently flowing over the pitch, or it is vadose origin passage from an independent stream entering from the opposite side). I'd suggest the former. With my Scurion I could see it all quite clearly and there was certainly no great void about 30 m down as described previously. It would be possible to bolt traverse (you'd have to start right at the top and go all the way round as the receding walls of the pitch would not allow large pendulum traverses). It would be a little more difficult than the traverse we

installed in Lost Pot. But as it's such a bastard of a place to get too, and the lead isn't screaming hot, it's not really worth the effort at this point. If a KD connection were to be made, making it relatively simple to get to this point, then I'd have a crack, but what I've seen so far doesn't get my juices flowing.

While Andreas started up, I investigated the chambers and passage upstream. This was one of the areas where the survey didn't make sense to me so I needed to check it out before I finish drawing up Jeff's survey. This is in fact one of two bits of survey data that were collected on a trip where Jeff was absent, which is why it wasn't good enough for a third party to draw up. One simply can't stress enough the importance of good bookwork – I often find myself falling into the trap of "oh, I can't be bothered drawing that in, I'll just remember that bit and add it in when I draw it up properly ..." This may work if it is actually you who ends up drawing the final survey up and also that you do it within a few months of surveying it. Saving 30 seconds here and there being lazy on an initial survey trip may end up costing someone else a whole day a few years down the track!

I also headed up to see if I could spot the way into Mad Englishman and Dogs (MEAD) and am pretty sure I have it licked. Andreas arrived, eyes wide and adrenalin flowing, shortly after and we sat down to discuss 'the lead'. He agreed that it wasn't that exciting so we made the decision to derig it. We pulled the gear up, made it as small as possible again and then headed out. Close to the Bone was bad, but not horrendous, with the heavy packs. We were out and back at the cars by 8:30 (the freshly marked track was a joy to follow). We'd headed underground about 11 am, so a medium length trip of ~8.5 hours or so. Our bodies were sore.

One more trip to check the survey and some leads in the MEAD section and derig the bastard. If we find KD we'll come back for the traverse but until then it's not worth the bother.

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## **IB-14 Exit Cave – Western Passage I**

**Janine McKinnon**

**25 April 2009**

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, David Wilson

Ric and I have acquired the job of doing the Western Passage section of the Exit Mapping Project.

This was our first trip to start sorting out how the information we have, including survey data, some first draft sketches maps and some original "in cave" sketches, fit on the ground. We need to make sense of the drawings, see if they cover all parts of the cave and are accurate, do any drawings and full surveying of any bits that have been missed and check for new leads while we are at it.

We got away from the car at 9:30 and arrived at the entrance at 10:30. The track was very wet and muddy after a heavy night of rain but we were surprised to see that the water level in the cave was low. Very low.

We made a bee-line to Camp 2 (no side, touristy trips for new member, David) and arrived there after an hour from the entrance. All going well so far.

So now, after working on speed and efficiency to get in to our work area, we could lose some time having a relaxing Devonshire Tea. Serena had brought Tablecloth (can't let the standards drop) Scones (homemade, of course), Jam and Cream. I supplied the hot water and tea bags. It's easy to see who is the more valuable member to have along.

We eventually decided we had better get on with some work, and so reluctantly leaving a few scones for "Ron", we headed off along the passage. Caving can be tough.

We had planned to go to the end and start working out. This we did. We looked up all small side passages as we moved, checking any question marks on the drawings. After about 4.5 hours from leaving Camp 2 we decided we had had enough for the day and made our way back to Camp 2, along a slightly different route for part of the way (not necessarily totally by plan!)

We have checked about half of the passage length. I don't think we have done half of the "on ground" work yet though. We found a small amount of surveying missed, which we will do on the next trip. We found several areas that were a bit confusing and took some time to ensure all the data was there and accurate.



Mini-Devonshire Tea was partaken of back at Camp 2 before we started our exit. This time we made it back to the changing point in the forest outside the entrance in 50 minutes. That rock-pile is getting shorter and quicker each time I do it. Serena knows the way so well now that we don't lose a second in route finding. Keeping up with that girl is getting harder all the time though ...

Luckily it wasn't raining when we arrived at the entrance, although it looked like it may have during the day sometime. The water level in the cave was the same as when we entered though.

After a one hour slog back to the car, we arrived there at 8 pm. Luck had been on our side; it didn't start raining till we were driving home.

David has now had an introduction to caving in Tasmania (he's from South Australia). He just cruised through the day.

Afterthought: I can't really keep up with Serena, she had to keep stopping on the walk out for me to catch up. I might have to steal her bike and give her a bus timetable ... [*The scones, cream and jam are all part of an evil plan to keep you old farts fat; or maybe to keep your mouths full so you can't talk as much – Ed.*]



R. Tunney

*Somewhere in Western Passage (a western bit, probably).*

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## **GP-27 Great Western**

**Alan Jackson**

**25 April 2009**

**Party:** Stephen Blanden (NC), Alan Jackson

I was up north for the weekend for other reasons and caught up with Stephen to collect some material for future *Caves Australia* issues. I figured that I may as well pop down one of the alleged caves in the area while I was there. Great Western, one of the longest caves in the Gunns

Plain area (over 1 km), was Stephen's suggestion, so Great Western it was. It was dark, made of limestone and looked decidedly like a cave to me. It was VERY horizontal, quite pretty in spots and extremely pleasant to negotiate without the burden of SRT gear, rope and all manner of other crap that accompanies most other trips I do. I could get used to this caving-without-a-bag caper. Thanks to Stephen for providing the time to enlighten me on the simple joys of lame caving.

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## **JF-223 Tassy Pot**

**Serena Benjamin**

**2 May 2009**

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

"Have a great day of adventures!" were the parting words from the random lady on the street that I'd just helped to lift her kayak onto her car. Random milk delivery guy at the bakery gave me some chocolate milk after I'd assisted with the door. Ah, what a great place Tassie is!

With a good vibe the three of us headed out to Tassie Pot for a bit of a fun day out. I rigged to the bottom, getting faster once I'd taken my p-hanger blinkers off. I also managed some beaut bunnies-ears.

Once at the bottom, Janine and I headed through Moroccl Passage and out to the Mouse Trap while Ric headed out. After checking out the sump we started heading out where I got distracted by a small rift passage leading up. It kept going ... and going ... and going ... until I popped out into a large chamber of breakdown. Oddly enough, while the passage itself had seemed like someone had gone through there was no obvious tugging in this section and no cairns or the like. I poked my nose down several of the less likely

looking areas before proceeding to a larger drop off, which I tackled by a down-climb under one of the boulders. Through a bit of a flattener across some more fresh looking breakdown the passage opened up a bit more and came back to a stream. I headed down this for a short way, encountering definite signs that people had passed this way before. At a point where the roof began to dive toward the floor I turned around and made my way back through the rock-pile to meet up with Janine who'd just minutes before decided she'd better come see where I'd disappeared to.

On our way back out of the cave we found the down-climb I'd been thinking about since my last trip to the cave. It was a non-event so we kept heading out, with Janine derigging. It was also noted by all that the cave was noticeably wetter on the way out though no major hassles were encountered, except that Janine had difficulty with some of the carabiners that had tightened during the day and managed to drop one from the second pitch.

Later it came to light that Ric had noticed some damage to the 107 metre rope used on the entrance series of pitches. His repressed false memory syndrome means he can't confirm whether he'd noticed it on his way down or when packing it up later in the day.

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## **H-8 Wolf Hole – The Quest for the Crystal Lake** [*a ‘trip report’ most likely a result of illicit drug consumption – Ed.*]

**Serena Benjamin**

**3 May 2009**

**Party:** Guy Bannink, Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Sarah Gilbert

As the Doc emerged from the depths his insane grin bore testament to the state of his mind.

“Do you hear it? Do you hear it?” he breathed.

Surprise and confusion spread among the others as the Doc writhed about in the confined space.

“The chirruping?”

“The chirruping!!!”

“Do you hear the chirruping?”

After some time the manic convulsions of the Doc’s limbs quietened enough for Captain M to suggest that, after the long and arduous journey they’d undertaken, their quest for the Crystal Lake was over.

The Captain sighed and began to think. While nearby, Red sat down and furiously began to take more notes. Anxious that they would never again see the light of day, she’d thought it best to document everywhere that they went. What these notes were, no one can tell as even she professed as to not being able to read them. That she’d not thought to start till they were many days into their quest meant they were of limited use anyway. Laughing like a hyena the Maniac began rolling around in tears.

The Doc looked at them in expectation and twitched some more which prompted more furious note taking from Red, an exasperated sigh from the Captain and another fit of laughter from the Maniac.

So what had brought these intrepid explorers to this cursed place where all was dark and the only sound was the thump-thump, thump-thump of their own hearts?

It had begun with a decree that the legendary Beast of Hastings should be faced in pursuit of an underground lake to rival that of Lake Pluto, formed from the tears of nymphs. With few in the populace eager to face such a perilous mission, four poor souls were selected and dispatched in a white chariot to descend into the bowels of the Earth. Fortified on the long journey there by potent cups of gruel from the villages along the way they came to the pit into which they would descend. Rope as thick as a finger was lowered from an ancient tree and our four characters descended the three hundred metres into the mouth of the Wolf’s Lair. Signing the book of the underworld they faced the unknown as they passed into the shadows and the dark pressed close about them.

Silently they went into the depths with Captain M as their leader. He had a querying mind and was a natural choice for the quest. Fearless and bold he led them through the maze of passages that were known as The Catacombs. All

were nervous that they would meet the Beast of Hastings, reputed to be large, with sharp teeth, and an appetite for human flesh. The Doc by his side had been chosen as he was a gentleman of sorts. He’d mysteriously appeared from the north the preceding year where he’d been the founding member of the Lanky Leprechaun League. Apparently he’d been ousted when it was discovered that he’d organised the Gnomes Against Gardeners’ Activities rebellion of 2009. Little else was known. Third in the party was Red, who was known for her co-ordinated and polished attire, of a certain colour. She also had an inexplicable tendency, despite the lack of nutritional content, to start eating rocks. Last of the four explorers was the Maniac, dragged from who knows where. Like an ostrich she would attempt to find places to bury her head in the sand. This often saw her trying to fit into the most unimaginably tight places. Her companions however, didn’t have the heart to tell her that the furthest out of sight she ever got still left her boots clearly visible wiggling around.

Up climbs and down, through chasm and squeeze, our four adventurers went until they came across the Chasm of Doom. The dark void below yawned to greet them as first the Doc, then Red, followed by the Maniac, teetered perilously close to the edge, stretching across to reach safety on the other side. A boulder the size of a car perched on the ledge was dislodged by their passing. Trickle of sand rolled out from beneath it. For a brief moment it balanced on the edge before gravity took hold and it crashed to the depths below. An almighty echo resonated throughout the chamber and the four looked at each other with fear in their eyes. The Captain just rolled his eyes and stepped across the space and they continued on their way.

Up climbs and down, through chasm and squeeze our four adventurers faced many perils, it is true. Past cascades of blood and chambers so awesome they compelled one to swear. Further into the maze they descended. After many a twist and many a turn one last fateful decision was made. In pursuit of the lake the Doc disappeared down a tunnel, attesting that it would be there. In the lengthening silence that followed the Captain, Red and the Maniac looked at each other and blinked. That is when they heard the strangled cries of the Doc, eerily sounding from the depths. So we find ourselves back where we left them, the Doc emerging from below showing clear signs of madness. The Captain just sighed at all and sundry and dragged them from this maze of insanity swearing he’d never be back. By now all their minds were affected for up climbs they went which were impossibly steep and narrow, to end in confusion when no exit was found. Days later they emerged, weary but glad to have survived. The beast had not been seen but what had the Doc heard that had sent him over the edge? Or had he found the portal to Hades, where the shades of heroes wander despondently among lesser spirits, who twitter around them like bats? All that is known is that forevermore the odd gleam in his eye spoke of the horror that had befallen him that fateful day when he had wandered into the dark realm on his own.

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## **IB-14 Exit Cave – Western Passage II**

**Janine McKinnon**

**9 May 2009**

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

This was trip two of our Exit Project exercise. Ric and I had gone down in the slug the night before so we could get an early start on the day. Serena is much better at getting up early than us and so she had decided to come down in the morning. Despite our pre-arranged departure time from the car park being 7:30 am, she was knocking at our door at 7 am. We had barely got dressed and put the kettle on. God knows what time she left Hobart (she did tell me but my brain wouldn't retain such improbable information).

She does like early starts though, so maybe we had finally made it early enough for her liking.

We headed off at 7.30 am, as planned, and were trogged up and heading into the cave before 8:45 am. The water level was low; 45 minutes saw us at Camp 2. This was almost too early for morning coffee! We made an exception to the rule though and had the thermos of coffee I had brought, whilst we organised ourselves for the day's tasks. Unfortunately our usually reliable cake/scones provider had failed in her task this trip and so we had to make do with chocolate and nuts with our coffee. Quite disappointing.

We moved to where we had finished checking the survey data from the archive on the last trip and began with surveying the small passage that we had discovered wasn't in the survey data. We had thought this would be a quick half hour or so but the task took about three hours. There was more there than we thought and it was all slow going.

We found a small part of previously undiscovered cave that had a 10 m aven, small waterfall and pool. We thought this find was pretty good in a cave that has been so thoroughly looked at in earlier years. Mind you, the way in did involve small bodies, and lots of climbing all over parts of the anatomy of a compliant companion to get up through the small hole that accessed the aven. Serena used me as footholds and I used Ric. It looked like Ric wouldn't get to see it until Serena found a loop-back entrance

through some narrow serpentine and ended up standing behind him. Hence three hours of surveying.

Next we moved to the Half Way Hole passage and looked for the reputed unsurveyed connection with the main passage. We found it and surveyed the loop.

Then we moved slowly back along the main passage checking all side passages against the data and looking for any more missed passages. We found nothing missing and the drawings all fitted the cave on the ground.

At 6 pm we had reached the beginning (or end, in our case, approaching it from the direction of the distal end of the passage) of the very large and confusing chamber in the entrance series of the passage. We didn't want to start what we expect will be a difficult task here, and so decided it was enough for the day.

As we moved back along the main passage and through the rock-pile, the main stream was a little higher than on our entry, but only marginally. Then we arrived at the confluence with the D'Entrecasteaux River, at Camp 1. Ric remarked that it looked a bit "up" as we approached. Classic understatement; it was mid-calf deep. The first crossing below the junction was crutch deep for me (yes, yes, I can hear all the jokes about that being ankle deep for anyone else) whereas it had been ankle deep on the way in. The crossing at the entrance was ALMOST nipple deep for me (alright, it was only waist deep for the other two) and we hadn't got our feet wet coming in.

We started the walk back at 7.20 pm and when we got to the log crossing, the river was only about two feet below the log. It looked like it was still rising. The weather was only light drizzle. We decided it was probably a good thing that we had come out an hour or so earlier than our projected time.

We got back to the car at 8.40 pm. Showers, wine and pre-dinner nibbles, and then a nice pasta dish (courtesy of Ric), finished the day. Very civilised.

Serena checked the rainfall later and found nothing of significance, so the rapid rise of the D'Entrecasteaux River seems hard to explain. This makes predicting water levels in the cave for winter trips somewhat difficult.

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## **Cave Hill (JF-216, JF-440, JF-364)**

**Alan Jackson**

**10 May 2009**

**Party:** Gavin Brett, Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson

Cave Hill was the target for the day, with the intention of finding and dropping JF-201 Rescue Pot. Not far along the Florentine Road we got distracted by a couple of new roads being put in by Forestry. Unfortunately they were 'excavator access only' still. But this sowed the seed and I couldn't resist having a look up Dewhurst Quarry Road (which recently had thinning activities undertaken in its vicinity). There is now a new road constructed as a side branch and this has opened up the view of the old quarry itself – an impressive cut into limestone. We took the opportunity to GPS the ends of the other branches of the road so we could see which bits are earmarked for closure by Rolan and his band of merry bureaucrats. It turns out

that there isn't even 50 metres of trafficable road that actually extends into the national park, so Rolan's plans should have very little impact on cave access in this area.

Next we moved to our target area, Chrisps Road. We went right up the eastern branch (start of Satans Lair track) for a look-see (mainly so we could tear up the road a bit and cause some more erosion ...) We then headed back down, trying to pick the best spot to commence our walk. The start of the JF-210 Sesame track was located and some pink tapes were hung about to make this more obvious for future use (the track follows a snig line up). Hopefully the tapes won't encourage any more wood hooking ... We then looked at the starting point for Rescue Pot recommended in some old notes ("50 m past the first right hand bend in the road after the split"). The vegetation looked hideous. We decided to keep driving and go to the end of the other branch of Chrisps Road to see if the vegetation on the other side of Cave Hill looked any better. It didn't. We almost decided to just keep driving. We



didn't. Getting out of the car here was bringing back horrible memories of Tachycardia.

The idea of carrying rope and rigging gear into the bush had lost its appeal by this stage so we cut back and only took enough gear to bush bash. We charged off into the scrub (which was as hideous as it looked from the road) and then thankfully dropped into a sizeable gully with proper callidendrous rainforest (i.e. easy walking). Towering limestone cliffs appeared on the other side of the gully. I scampered up a rubble slope and found a large horizontal cave entrance. It was tagged JF-216. It was about 15-20 metres long and very nicely decorated. There is no real record of this cave in the archive that I can find (of discovery, tagging, survey, anything). Gavin got excited about scaling further up the cliffs so the two of us went climbing while Ken used his head and stayed down below. We summited Cave Hill (586 m high but, disappointingly, not on the peak bagger's list) and admired the view (Mueller, Needles, Tim Shea, Wherrets, Florentine Peak etc.) We could clearly hear the sound of tumbling water off to the north-east. We headed north along the ridge until we could hear Ken's shouts and we retreated back into the gully via an easier slope to get our bags.

Heading up the gully, we located a drafting slot. Further investigation suggested that the draft was coming from another hole a few metres further away, upslope. Ken and Gavin stayed up high on a sparsely vegetated limestone plateau while I stayed in the gully. A cliff ~6 m high separates the two. They apparently found lots of limestone canyons up top and I found several drafting holes at the base of the cliffs. All drafted out and it was thought that it was yet again just air coming in from up top. One had a good 6+ m drop in it and would be worth a look. I then made my best discovery of the day – a fern called *Cystopteris tasmanica* which I had been looking for for almost ten years! Ken kindly donated his snaplock lunch packet for me to put my collected specimens in. I was ecstatic!

We continued up the gully and at the point where the cliff-line petered out Ken found a hole. It wasn't drafting and rocks only fell about 5 m, but then I lobbed in a smaller rock and it rattled on for some time. It was enough for me to get my suit on. It was quite narrow and very grippy solid rock so I could chimney down the ~5 m entrance pit with ease. It then continued down a ramp (still very narrow) and then opened up a little into a more exposed ~7 m drop. The rock was razor sharp and quite ornately sculpted by water flow. Against my better judgement, I free-climbed down into a small chamber with a high aven coming in. It

continued down steeply via a few sinuous turns, then under a large chockstone, thru a tight bit and finished at a constriction. The other side of the constriction was a small (4 m diameter) chamber with a 100 mm deep pool in the bottom. It looked like a miniature sump and there was no detectable draft. The majority of the cave was coated with a fine layer of creamy white, brittle formation – it was quite stunning. In a few bits there were remnants of old false floor not dissimilar to the stuff in Sesame (which is quite close by). The dolerite pebbled floor/ramp was littered with dead forest snails the entire length of the cave. I estimate that I made it to around the -30 m mark. The tight climbs out proved quite challenging. Gladly back on the surface, we tagged it JF-440. Following my comments on the vast quantities of dead snails, Ken suggested the name Escargot. Gavin counter-suggested Escardead. Escardead it was. (Map on page 16.)

Up on the karst plateau (the saddle/ridge of Cave Hill) we could clearly hear that waterfall again so we headed straight for it. A sizeable stream was encountered, which soon disappeared into a large doline (~20+ m diameter). The stream sunk just over the northern lip into an horrendous jumble of collapsing wall and boulders. It sent shivers down one's spine. There were a few ways down amongst large blocks below the sink point and a roaring draft was detected in a small hole in the far southern (and almost bottom) end of the doline. This could be worth a dig. The cave didn't fit our JF-201 or JF-202 descriptions and we couldn't find any other descriptions on our list that fitted this hole.

It was mid afternoon by this point so we decided to head south down the dry gully with the plan of intersecting Chrisps Rd at the point that we had originally intended leaving it. The vegetation was evil but the ~200+ m passed fairly quickly with the aid of gravity. We trundled back around to the car.

A bit of later research suggested that the swallet we located was Tarn Creek Swallet. *Spiel* 199 contains two trip reports that have matching descriptions. The second trip report tells of Albert Goede and party looking for a recently discovered Ring Hole. They found the swallet, located a circular entrance in the eastern side of the doline, figured (incorrectly) it must be the 'Ring Hole' they were searching for and tagged it JF-364. We didn't find this entrance or tag, but will look harder next time. So Tarn Creek Swallet is kind of tagged JF-364, but not really. We'll be back to open up the drafter and have another look around in this interesting area (yay, just what I need – more unfinished business in yet another sub-area of the JF karst ... bugger it).

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## **JF-10 Splash Pot – A short extension and derig**

**Alan Jackson**

**17 May 2009**

**Party:** Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker

Snow to ~600 m on Friday night / Saturday morning wasn't a real concern (frozen water doesn't flow into caves). The concern was the typically fickle Tasmanian weather, which meant it was highly likely that it would warm up again straight away and all that snow would melt

and be running into the cave by Sunday. Needless to say, it warmed up.

Water was the order of the day; plenty of it. The first main lot of pitches was flowing well and the entrance water that joins at the bottom of these pitches was almost as high as our first trip in here recently (when the big thunderstorm dumped on us). This meant that CTTB was a very noisy affair (and quite wet in the couple of spots where you crawl at stream level). It also meant that the first of the two pitches below CTTB was utterly wild. All good fun.

First we checked the ascending passage from the station 131 junction. On all previous trips this had been totally

dry; today there was a lively stream flowing down the rubble. At station 143 I assessed the lead. It was quite climbable (free) in the up direction but coming back down it would be difficult safely without a handline. Our spare bit of rope was waiting at Tend'n Down so we put the climb in the 'on the way out' box – knowing full well that we'd be too knackered to even care by that stage.

Next job was to sketch survey detail between the top of Harrow the Marrow up the start of Mad Englishmen and Dogs (MEAD) (including the large breakdown chamber that sits over the top of the main stream passage joining the two). Thirty minutes later we were in the little rockfall chamber looking for the way into MEAD proper. A series of low, "fracture ledges" were negotiated adjacent to the main stream and we were in. We progressed to station 242 and headed into the GST Extension (our main aim for the day). We located Raschy's "Wombat Hole" with ease and prepared ourselves for hell. You post your legs down the hole then head up the VERY narrow passage. About 1.5 metres in is very tight, then a further metre or so the passage kinks slightly (right then left). Beyond here looked even tighter than the previous tight bit. My hat goes off to Raschy for pushing this – it's one thing to push tight passage that you know someone has been through before, but pushing virgin passage this tight (with no knowledge of whether you can turn around etc.) is very psychologically demanding! I contemplated this next manoeuvre but was struggling to commit. I then decided that even if I did get through it, (which I figured I would, since I am a pretty similar build to JB in his heyday – me perhaps just a little more 'finely' chested), that Andreas would have no hope. Andreas had proven quite convincingly in Close to the Bone that his backside/pelvis was a limiting factor and that his chest was also a bit bigger than mine. We baulked. The GST extension – right hand branch – can wait for future generations.

We decided to make a dash for the far end of MEAD just for a look see. The going is pretty easy, a bit low in spots, but easy. Close to the end a section of soaring avens, clean-washed marbleised rock and sporty climbs is encountered. It is really classic JF cave (reminiscent of KD streamway – which isn't far away really). Atop these climbs a fairly large streamway is encountered which disappears into a tight passage with a kink in the end. The survey notes showed a 6 m pitch in this vicinity but I couldn't ascertain whether it had been dropped or not. I located it to see that it dropped back into the aforementioned streamway just before it pinches out, so it was a no go. Further upstream we headed, where the cave alternates between low rockfall scrambles and lofty open stream passage. In one of the final chambers I had drawn a small side passage that terminated a few metres in (based on JB's notes). I located it, scaled the wall (a couple of metres) and poked my head in. It looked as though it went further than JB's notes indicated. It was obvious that no one had been in there because a large (~100 kg) boulder was perched precariously on the edge of the window into the passage. One flick of the little finger dislodged the rock and the way was open. A short drop (~3m) presented, which was easily negotiated by tying the short rope we had with us around a large natural arch. At the base of this drop an anabranch of

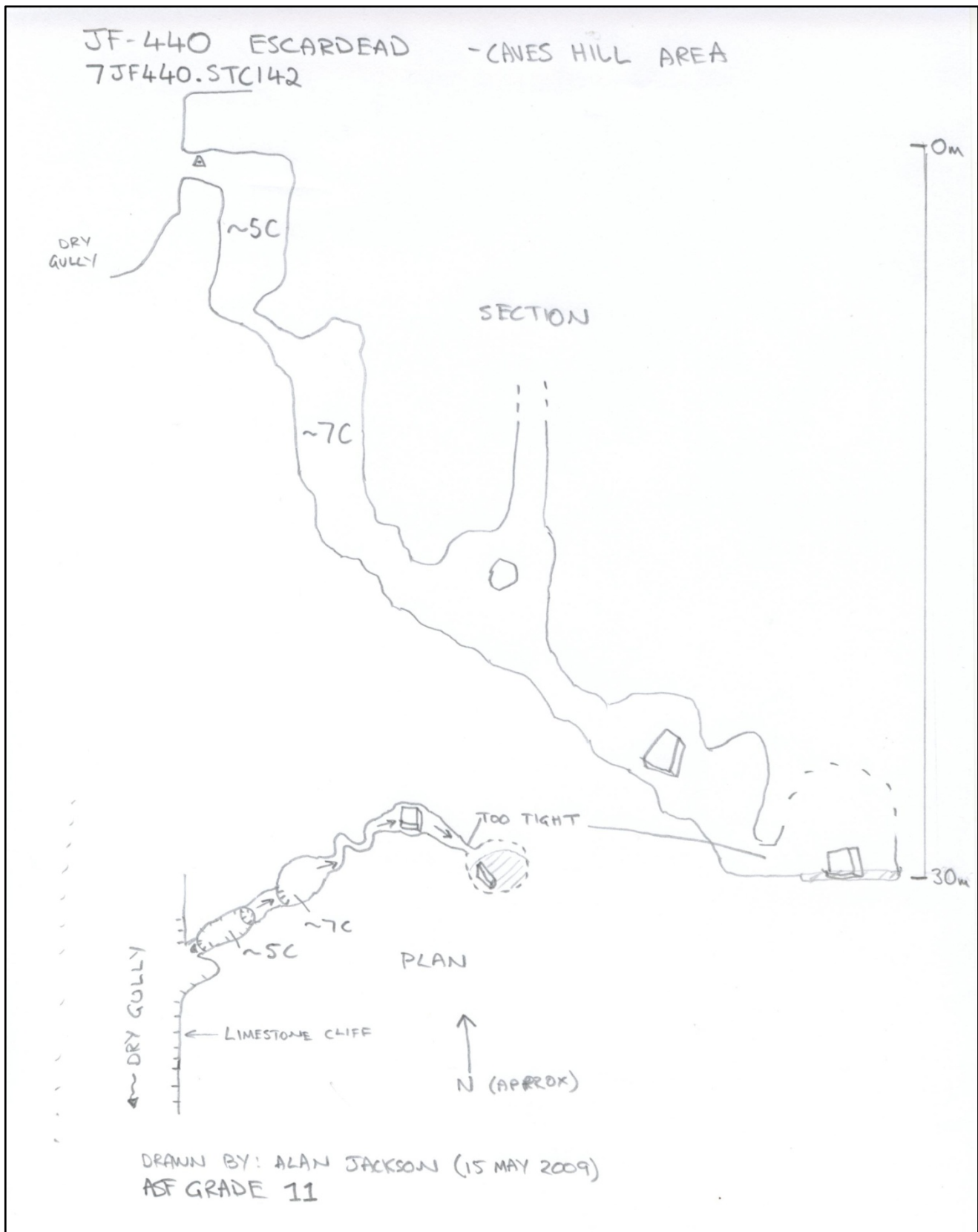
the stream from the main passage briefly appeared and then disappeared again. A large slab of rock stood on end in the way of the continuing passage – it was about 200 mm thick, 1.8 m long and 0.6 m wide. It was also slightly wider in the top third which made it an almost perfect coffin shape. Bearing this in mind, I tried to squeeze past it while it rocked gently back and forth. Thankfully it swayed more forth than back and came crashing down away from me, smashing into about 20 pieces (which were used to build a step at the bottom of the rope/drop!)

The passage was high but narrow (a rift some might say!) and a ~2 m climb allowed access to a tight but passable section. I scraped through, headed round an awkward up/down/left/right bit and then up a couple of short climbs. The passage then opened up a bit and ascended in a long straight passage (1x1 m cross section). After 15 m or so it turned a right-angle left and continued for another ~10 m. Here it intersected another perpendicular passage and continued on out of sight in slightly larger dimensions. It was now long enough to warrant a proper survey so I headed back down to fetch Andreas and the survey gear. Andreas struggled greatly at the tight bit but to his credit he forced himself through. I showed him where I'd got to and let him go first from there. The passage ascended another ~30 m or so and then terminated much as anticipated (in a dolerite choke). There were several interesting little straws and helictites in this final ~30 m or so. We surveyed out, which thankfully wasn't too hard due to the long straight bits. Getting Andreas back through the tight bit was a good laugh (for me at least) and then we had a wash up, feed and consulted the watch. It was 5 pm – time to go.

The trip out was long and hard, as we slowly collected more rope and rigging gear along the way. CTTB was a bitch with one big pack stuffed with the rope from the 12 and 14 m pitches. At the bottom of the next lot of pitches Andreas scooped up my ascender with his bundle of rigging tapes and I didn't realise it was missing till he was most of the way up the first 18 m section! He lowered it back down to me. I then endured the long and very wet derig of this pitch series. It was then Andreas' turn to have his pack loaded up with rope for the final slog out to the entrance. We reached the surface around 10 – about ~11.5 hrs spent underground. It was the first longish, hard trip I'd done since some of the push trips in Tachycardia, and then Serendipity with Madphil before that. There should be more of it.

There are plenty of leads left in Splash Pot but with Andreas soon to depart our shores and no one else interested in deep hard trips in the club at the moment, they will have to wait until 'next time'. The back end of MEAD in particular has many 'up' leads that need some climbing enthusiasts. Splash Pot is an awesome cave and you can't say you've caved in Tasmania until you've "savoured its delights". Having experienced ~80% of it myself now, I have a much healthier respect for the efforts of Jeff, Dave and Co (in regard to conservation measures taken, exploration achieved and surveying everything they found). My only complaint is that I'm stuck with the job of drawing that survey up!





A high quality memory sketch of JF-440 Escardead ...

## JF-4 Khazad-Dum

Alan Jackson

24 May 2009

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker

This was just a tourist trip, mainly for Andreas' benefit (a reward for his assistance with Splash Pot). Water levels were medium (the usual winter flow) – this made a couple of the streamway pitches a bit wet and tricky but not too bad. It certainly made things noisy!

At the bottom Matt had a snooze while the rest of us headed to the Depths of Moria for a squiz. I wanted to investigate the drafts in this area. From the basal chamber (with the 42 m pitch, final waterfall etc...) the stream eventually disappears into breakdown. A high level crawl on the left atop the sand dunes gives access to another sizeable chamber which contains the first proper sump (which was a stagnant cesspool of foam, sticks and shit on this trip). Again, high on the left, the crawl continues in a strongly drafting passage. From memory I've never been able to detect the draft again after this point. We set off a smoke bomb in this passage just before the junction with the smallish (but passable) perpendicular passage on the right. The smoke quickly blew into the cave (towards sump 2) and we charged after it. The perpendicular side passage was clearly taking some of the smoke so I followed it in. I followed the passage into a roomy little chamber which was full of smoke, but none of it was moving in any distinct direction.

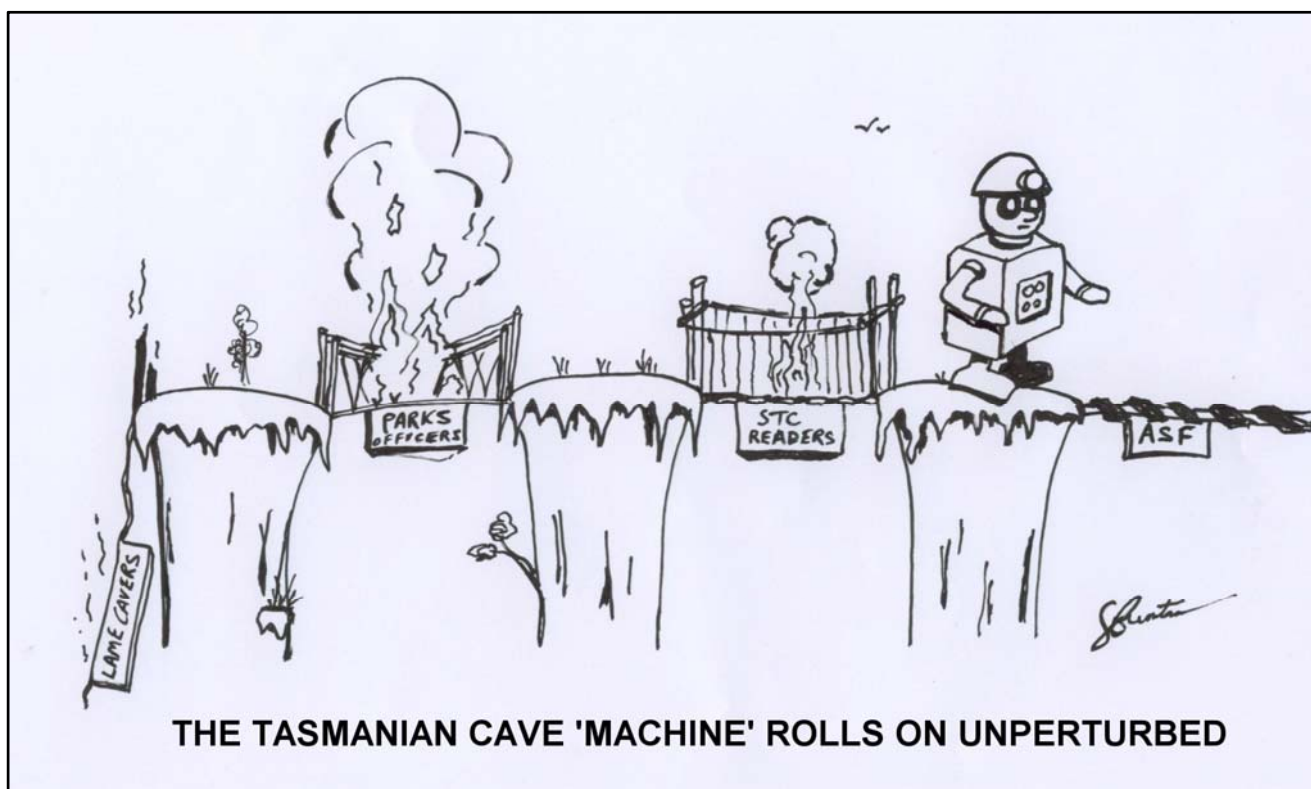
I backtracked to the main passage and followed it. There was a lot of smoke in here too and again it wasn't moving much. In all that time it had only just reached the junction

where there is a narrow rift carrying a small stream coming in from the left and the way on to sump 2 is via a ~1 m climb down through a window at floor level on the right – a deep pool is traversed just before you get to this 'junction'. We continued on through the squeeze bit and then through the labyrinth of tunnels to the sump. Stef's orange line was still firmly tied off and disappeared into the murky gloom. There is an interesting ascending passage on the right over the far side of the sump which doesn't look as though it has been investigated. I skirted the sump and had a look. It would be a difficult climb to access it (with a very wet result if you peeled off!) We let off another smoke bomb to see if there was a draft in this chamber. The billowing smoke cloud indicated that there was little or no air movement.

On our way out we checked a few side leads (few to any sort of conclusion) and eventually encountered the smoke cloud from our first attempt. It had travelled a further ~6 m down the passage from where we'd left it on the way in; further indication that there isn't much air movement in this section. So where does that ripper draft go?

Back in the basal chamber I spotted a high lead up a steep mud bank (on the left as heading upstream before the last couple of boulder scrambles up to the base of the waterfall). It didn't appear anyone had been up there before (though it can be hard to tell in areas that sump, as footprints can disappear). It was a hairy climb but I got up and explored about 30 m of ascending passages to no conclusion. It heads up and away from the sumps, so isn't a hot prospect, but it is worth a proper look one day and a survey.

Matt was up the pitch by now so we commenced our retreat. KD is a cracking trip.





## Other Exciting Stuff



S. Gilbert

Chiang Dao Mountains

### Chiang Dao Caving - Thailand

**Sarah Gilbert**

**April 2009**

At Easter 2009 I visited Thailand with a couple of friends, and towards the end of the trip managed to take some time to look at a few caves in the north of the country. We survived the civil unrest in Bangkok unscathed, other than having our vague travel plans delayed for a few days. We eventually made it up to Chiang Dao, a small town, 1.5 hours by sweaty bus, north of Chiang Mai. The area is dominated by the imposing Chiang Dao mountains, a region of tower karst reaching an elevation of over 2200 m (its claim to fame being the highest limestone mountain in Thailand).

I managed to persuade one of my two friends that caves were in fact interesting, and on the first day we went to visit Tham Chiang Dao, the main tourist cave in the area. We paid our 20 baht (~\$1) entry fee to pay for the electricity and upkeep of the lighting and went on a self-guided tour of the main passageway. It was interesting to see the differing cultural attitudes to caves in Thailand, where easily accessible caves are traditionally places of worship. Tham Chiang Dao is quite an extensive and well decorated cave, with some large flowstone areas, shawls and stalactites. Unfortunately all formations below head height were well fingered, climbed on, prayed to and generally worn smooth. We then hired a guide inside the cave, to take us to see the better decorated parts of the cave. I was glad to discover that the local guides were all paid directly by the tourists and had a well organised system, with rotating shifts so everyone in the community gained some income from the guiding. It was a little disconcerting however, having someone else in charge of the lighting, as we were led around by our guide carrying a giant kero lantern which emitted copious amounts of heat and 'aromatic' smoke.

The second day we went on a tour organised through the lodge where we were staying which involved visiting a small, remote Lisu tribal village. Two local guides took us

to a cave nearby, with well decorated, relic streamway passage in much better condition than Tham Chiang Dao. I had my own small light this time, but managed to resist the urge to explore the many side passages.



S. Gilbert

*One of the small shrines in the heart of Tham Chiang Dao.*

The following day I had arranged to meet up with Martin Ellis, an English caver now living in Thailand, who spends a large portion of his spare time driving around Thailand finding and documenting caves. So I waved farewell to my travelling companions and, by myself in a foreign country, jumped in a car with a guy I met on the internet and headed out into the wilderness ...

We started by visiting several small, one chamber temple caves near Chiang Dao: Tham Pak Pbiang and Tham Pak Sung. Both had conveniently placed light switches by the wooden doorways at the entrance, and the latter was complete with wall to wall hardwood flooring (shoes off, of course) and internal guttering to stop those pesky cave formations from dripping on the Buda. We then visited another temple cave, Tham Ngung Chang, where by ducking behind the shrine we found ourselves in a ~20 m long rifting passageway. It was quite an unremarkable cave, other than the fact it was actually large enough to get out of the daylight zone and I finally got to use my light & helmet that I had been lugging with me through the cities of Thailand.

We then went to Tham Kleab Yai, a 2 km long streamway cave with beautiful smooth, tall and sinuous passage. There were very few formations, but the abundance of wildlife and the limestone itself were amazing and well worth seeing. These caves that I visited in Thailand were my first outside Tasmania, and I enjoyed the novelty of hot and humid, bat-filled caves. It certainly adds another dimension to the caving experience by having to duck low flying bats disturbed by an extra bright Scurion, giving consideration to the amount of bat shit you are prepared to cover yourself in when finding handholds, and keeping an eye out for slightly irate (although I was assured harmless) cave-dwelling snakes.

## CAVEX 2009

**28-29 March**

**Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Jane Pulford**

**Sat 28 March, 8am - 5pm-ish**

The first day of this year's Cavex involved a rope rescue techniques workshop (indoors) at the Tasmanian Police Marine & Rescue Office on Federal Street in North Hobart. The aim was to work in small parties, with an emphasis on hands-on learning and practising of rope rescue skills.

Those who attended were divided into teams to do a round-robin of the training areas that had been set up.



*Damian Bidgood's lasting impression on the Hobart SAR division – tall, regular, short and 'Damian' adjustments on the neck brace.*

The first component that I participated in was on First Aid by the Tasmanian Ambulance Service. The areas of discussion were focused on caving injuries. These were described as usually traumatic with an emphasis on always considering spinal / head injuries. With the prevalence of small party sizes in Tasmanian caving, any trip that is faced with a casualty will ultimately have to deal with the questions of who stays and who goes for help? So with this

in mind, we discussed methods of being prepared for the eventuality of a casualty, including suggestions of what could comprise a First Aid kit, how to log-roll a casualty and how to immobilise the neck and head. Also discussed were ways to deal with fractures and dislocated joints.

So for those who can't quite remember what was suggested for a caver's First Aid kit, see below:

- SAM splint – multi-purpose splint and very light
- Coban self-adhesive bandage (by 3M) – some stretch, sticks to itself, will resist being moved by clothing & patient movement, solid support
- Elastoplast – for sticking anything together
- Panadol and Nurofen Plus – for pain relief (the two combined allegedly provide better pain relief than either brand alone)
- Immodium or similar – to control toileting (handy for long stretcher hauls).

In the main shed area five ropes were set up and it was here that my group headed next and indeed remained for the rest of the day (interrupted only by a bbq provided by the Police). The rope rescue skills that were demonstrated by the SES and Police included various sorts of pick-off scenarios in which a victim had in some way become incapacitated on the rope (see article on Harness Hang Syndrome in *Caves Australia* 157 to see why this is a very bad idea). The scenarios included:

- Victim stuck on working descender – attach and descend
- Victim stuck on ascenders – counterbalance with pulley and cord footloop, attach and descend
- Rescuer starts above victim – downclimb on ascenders to victim
- Rescuer starts below victim – ascend to and past victim
- Descending past a knot or rebelay with victim attached – knot: leave an ascender behind to create 'rebelay', use both descenders to transfer to next rope

Other rope techniques looked at included some hauling systems such as in-line systems (using pulleys on mainline) and bolt-on systems (using pulley system on separate rope). And finally we also briefly discussed the counterbalance system (particularly the importance of having a pulley for this!), progress-capture devices (i.e.



prusik knots, ascenders) and other rope tricks including the Münter hitch, Double / Super Münter hitch and Petzl Tibloc mini-ascender.

**Sun 29 March, 7am - 5pm-ish**

In-cave rope rescue scenarios departing Tas Police Marine & Rescue Office at 7am.

After Saturday's intensive session on ropes and re-emphasis of just how much we should avoid getting hurt in a cave in the first place, we were dispersed into small teams for Sunday's in-cave practice. I'd been allocated to team 4, consisting of all the 'sons' (Alan Jackson, Mark Nelson and Robin Wilson) and moi. We were allocated Owl Pot and told that Robin would be our 'victim'. It was at this stage unclear as to whether he would be given a scenario to act out or if he would make it up as we went along. Given the time limits for the exercise, it seemed likely that we would not be going far into the cave. So early on Sunday morning we headed up to the Juneeflorentine via a caffeine injection at Banjo's in New Norfolk.

Unfortunately Maydena was as far as we got before it became apparent that a real rescue situation had eventuated. Two bushwalkers had been reported at 2330 as overdue from an afternoon walk near Growling Swallet. All teams converged at the car park and the Search & Rescue operation began.

With the carpark now 'command central' we were reallocated into small teams according to experience in the area, thus I was teamed with Robin and Ingrid (Police). Our team was first tasked to look up the Slaughterhouse Pot track and as far up toward Ice Tube as possible before we made our way back to the carpark to check progress at a predetermined time. At this stage we did not have radios for each team so communications were impossible. After standing in the car park for what seemed an age while all other teams completed their part of the search, we were given a compass bearing and directed to move along this from the carpark, until we reached McCallums Track. The radios had arrived from Hobart by this stage. Our team was given the bearing 127 degrees which was easy enough to follow, unfortunately not producing any results before we hit the track. Here, when we got into an area where the radio worked, we were directed to continue up the hill for 500 metres more.

Following the line of a gully up the hill, the three of us kept calling out. Then, when we were coming to the point where we thought we might turn around, some cries to our left alerted us, particularly as one was female (the team next to us was all blokes). Up the hill we went and it was relief all around as we'd found the missing bushwalkers and radioed the news back to 'command central'. Despite having spent the night in inadequate clothing they were in good spirits. Taking a compass bearing to Growling Swallet, we were soon back at the car park where the duo were reunited with their family. A successful end to the real search.

SES backup had arrived while the search was on and 'command central' had been moved a little down the road, where improved radio communications and fabulous catering had been set up. As all the search teams returned from the bush, everyone gathered here to eat and talk over the day's events. Thank you to Tas Police Marine & Rescue Services, SES and Tasmanian Ambulance Service for their efforts over the weekend – both in running the Saturday workshop and providing us cavers with some real



*Tony brushes up on some theory while being counter-balance hoisted from above.*



*Janine attempts to pick-off a typically relaxed Tony.*



search and rescue experience! Maybe we can go underground next year?

#### **Janine's take on the day**

Jane, Geoff, Tim (police) and I were organised to do our practice rescue in Tassy Pot. Jane was being very coy about what the scenario would be, and would only tell us that it involved a rescue off a rope.

Not much of a surprise there, seeing we had spent all the previous day practicing just that, and we were going to be in Tassie Pot, somewhere before the final pitch (we hadn't brought the rope for that).

I have to admit to being intimidated by the idea of 3 of us (Jane was to be the victim, I suspected) doing a real person recovery off a rope, whilst underground. I was also looking forward to it though. I expected I was about to learn a lot, very quickly!

We were all trogged up and about to go when some police turned up and told us that a real search was going to gazump our practice.

Everyone re-assembled at the end of the eight road and my team was given the job of walking up the Serendipity track. There were several different prints of fresh boots, which we found out later belonged to the cast of thousands that had been looking there before the Police arrived (well, his wife and friend and a couple of other people they had roped in). An interesting point though was that the number of fresh boot prints dropped by the time we were in the vicinity of Serendipity. We could only discern two sets, of different types, one larger than the other.

Also, I am almost certain that I could just detect the scent of cigarette smoke in a dry hollow under a tree in this area. This is a fairly vague statement, I know, but I am very sensitive to the smell of cigarettes.

The pair were found only a short distance from this spot, over the ridge in the next valley, some 4 hours later. They admitted to spending the whole day moving about in an aimless manner, with no idea where they were or which way to go. I have to wonder if they had been near us in the morning but not heard our calls.

I was very disappointed that we had to abandon our plans. Real searches take precedent, of course, but I regret the lost opportunity.

#### **Alan's notes (essay) from the blunt end of the search – the search coordination thought process**

As Serena and Jane allude to above, we had not come prepared for a ground search. While our timing was impeccable (arriving on the scene about 2.5 hrs earlier than if we'd received a standard call out while based in Hobart), we didn't have any comms (radios) or area maps. While Jane is now the new S&R rep for the club, the group she was in was kitting up at Tassy Pot before they were collected and informed of the change of plans. In her initial absence, and since I was the person present who best knew the area (Growling and surrounds), I sat down with Sergeant Paul Steane to plan how we'd tackle things.

I drew a quick mud-map so Steanie and I could discuss likely scenarios and assign search parties to specific 'zones'. We also reordered the groups so that they contained a better mix of personnel to reflect the new mission. Groups were sorted so they contained at least one caver with knowledge of the area and at least one

police/SES person with knowledge of search protocol, first aid etc. Groups were then given quick individual briefings outlining what area to search. Where possible, we assigned cavers with specific knowledge of areas to search those areas (e.g. Serena knew the way to Slaughterhouse/Ice Tube, so she was assigned to this area).

Information gleaned from the missing persons' family (who were present at the end of the Eight Road) suggested that the missing persons had been to Growling before, had no intention of entering the cave and had not departed home (Westerway) till around 4 pm, i.e. any delays would have put them in the dark very quickly. Their car was sitting at the end of the Eight Road. Based on this, we figured that it was more likely that it had got dark and they had missed a turnoff and bumbled into the bush rather than got into strife in the cave itself. With the myriad of taped tracks in the vicinity of Growling, we also figured they could have located one of these and followed it to who knows where. Search parties were allocated the following areas:

Group 1 – to search the McCallums Track between the star picket (McCallums/Eight Rd track intersection) to Gormenghast and possibly beyond – in case they'd overshot the intersection on the way back in the dark.

Group 2 – to head to Growling Swallet entrance and head in as far as the climbs in the Dry Bypass and have a general scout about the entrance and surrounds.

Group 3 – to head to Slaughterhouse Pot and beyond to Ice Tube (time permitting) via the taped route.

Group 4 – to head past Growling on the McCallums Track to the Serendipity track and then follow the taped route to Serendipity and beyond (time permitting).

Group 5 – to head past the Serendipity track and follow the McCallums Track towards Four Road Swallet as far as time permitted.



*Group 5 (a.k.a. The Gestapo) search near Serendipity.*



With no comms, there was no option of reassigning parties 'on the fly', so all parties were told to be back at the search base by noon for further instruction. All parties eventually returned by 12 pm with nothing of interest to report other than some vague footprints up the Serendipity Track (as Janine reported on earlier).



*Search parties regrouping after the initial search.*

Group 1 and 5 were earliest to return and they were reassigned to check an area back out at the boundary of the Eight Road logging coupe (based on the idea that the missing persons may have decided to head downhill once they realised they were lost in the hope they'd intersect the Florentine Road). A group was also reassigned to Growling to check beyond the Dry Bypass, just in case).

By now the cavalry had arrived from Hobart – we had more SES bods, radios, the central command bus (radios, computers, maps, GPS units, food, water, spa, solarium ...) and some Police top brass. The chopper was also called in as an unlikely but possibly useful tool. A couple of SES bods quickly traversed the northern perimeter of the Eight Road coupe to mark it out as a potential search boundary for later on. Following this, they were assigned to traverse the McCallums track west to the Nine Road so we could plot its location and have it as another 'line in the sand' to work searches off.



*'Central Command' in the Eight Rd coupe.*

Things were getting interesting now. We were trying to work out what they would have done, but putting yourself in their shoes was very difficult. I found it challenging to not think along the lines of what I would do and think like 'normal' people. I continually neglected to account for the fact that I knew the area like the back of my hand and have

good bush navigation skills. We had to assume that the missing persons had neither. Our reasoning suggested that, since they'd been to Growling before, it was unlikely that they'd overshot the turn off on the way in (i.e. headed towards Serendipity/Four Road). This suggested that they would have got to Growling and then got lost on the return (in failing light). We figured they may have overshot McCallums Track on the way out and ended up in the scrub below, somewhere between the Eight Road and the Florentine Road, or they'd overshot the Eight Road track and headed towards Gormenghast (which is why the SES bods went out that way to plot things up).

Going for the McCallums overshoot option, we set multiple search lines radiating out from the end of the Eight Road, designed to intersect the McCallums Track in an arc from the Eight Road track intersection through to the Four Road side of the Serendipity intersection. Having never been in there before, we figured the vegetation would be horrendous and that it'd take over an hour for most groups to reach their destination, setting a new carpark rendezvous time of 2 pm. We were wrong! Within 25 minutes all parties had achieved their target and radioed in for further instruction. Those at search command looked at each other and scratched their heads ... what to do? Steanie made the call – all parties continue on the same bearing for another 500 m. That ought to keep them busy for a bit longer, we figured, while we came up with a new plan. Shortly after, Serena's group located the missing persons and all was well.

Unfortunately Serena's party didn't have a GPS with them, so the exact location at which they found the missing persons is not known. The bearing the group was searching placed it on a course to intersect the McCallums Track about 100 m on the Four Road side of the Serendipity intersection, so this, combined with discussion from Serena and Robin (her police escort) put the location somewhere in the vicinity of the ridge separating the Serendipity and Warhol valleys. It turned out that they'd never made it to Growling. They overshot the turnoff and ended up at the Serendipity valley. What they did from here is anyone's guess, but it seems that they generally cast about in circles until they were thoroughly lost. They did report locating several tapes and taped routes but didn't follow any of them. After dark fell they made a bed from dry fern fronds and huddled under a large fallen log. They slept very little, got bloody cold and did a lot of running around and star jumps to warm up (they were only lightly clothed). They did report heading down to a creek to get a drink, so this suggests they were further up the hill than Serendipity, as there aren't many surface streams below the contact up there. In the morning they had recommenced their wanderings but reportedly kept going in circles and coming back across familiar landmarks. (This is a concept I cannot grasp – the whole going in circles thing – how do people manage it?) The morning was cloudy and drizzly, so they were unable to estimate which way was north, but their plan was, once they could figure that out, to head east towards Maydena (south would have been better, so they could have intersected a logging road – it's a long way east through pretty nasty vegetation before you hit Chrisps Road on the way to Maydena!) Interestingly, the thing that prevented them from doing this after the weather cleared late in the morning was the sound of the helicopter. I had originally rolled my eyes at Steanie's decision to bring the



chopper in – you can't see the sky from the ground in that rainforest, so what hope did a helicopter have of seeing the ground, let alone two tiny people running around on it?) The characteristic bop-bop of the chopper, however, permeates everywhere and when they heard it they realised they were being looked for and decided to sit put till they were found. If not for the chopper (and the early drizzle which obscured the sun) they may have been up on the saddle of Wherretts Lookout by the time the search party traversed the ground that they were eventually found on (or they might have still been circling ...)

It was all good in the end and the feeling of relief once the radio call came in of their discovery was overwhelming. All other groups were back stuffing their faces when the final party rolled into search base (the bus etc. had been set up back in the Eight Road coupe as the end of the road was a bit restricted). Everyone clapped and cheered them as they drove past and pulled up. One highly constructive member of STC commented along the lines of "Gee, they could have smiled or waved to acknowledge us ...". Understanding how dishevelled and embarrassed these two must have felt was obviously beyond the grasp of some of our deep-thinking membership. The two, no longer missing, persons got out of the car, looking an interesting mixture of elation and deep embarrassment. The mood soon lightened as they were mobbed by all the others present and questioned as to all the 'whats', 'whos', and 'hows' they'd had running through their minds for the whole day. The police top brass said his piece, thanking everybody, as did the two walkers. There was a heartfelt gratitude in their words that made me feel all warm and fuzzy – OK, they were a bit silly, got lost, cost the taxpayer a few dollars and a group of us some time, but all's well that ends well and I think it restored my faith in humanity for a (very) brief period. Good job and well done to all involved. I thought the training day on Saturday was excellent – I learnt heaps – and the exercise on Sunday proved to be VERY realistic and rewarding!

## Rescued walker's heartfelt thanks

I WOULD like to publicly acknowledge our state's police force and SES workers for the amazing job they do and thank them on behalf of myself, parents, family and friends.

This past weekend a short and familiar walk in the Florentine Valley turned into my father's and my worst nightmare as a temporary lapse in concentration resulted in one wrong turn which will remain etched on our minds for years to come.

Within 24 hours they had located and evacuated us from the densest of forest (*Mercury*, March 30).

To the Tasmania Police, State Emergency Services crew, volunteers (local and visiting) and caving experts, our egos may be bruised but our hearts are forever thankful for your fantastic work. I have a newfound respect for your team and appreciation for your compassion and expertise.

From the 'Letters' section of *The Mercury*, 3 April 2009

Malinda Itchins  
Westerway



**Space Filler** – A superb parking spot at the start of the Weld Arch 'track' (recharges your batteries while you're away). I can't explain why Ric and Janine appear to be taking synchronised dumps (with their pants still on!)– Jan. 09



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