

SPELEO SPIEL 374

September - October 2009



STC Office Bearers

President:

Matt Cracknell
Ph: 0409 438 924 (m)
crowdang@yahoo.co.uk

Vice President:

Geoff Wise
Ph: 0408 108 984 (m)
geoff.p.wise@gmail.com

Secretary:

Serena Benjamin
Ph: 0449 183 936 (m)
serenab@postoffice.utas.edu.au

Treasurer:

Sarah Gilbert
Ph: (03) 6234 2302 (h)
sgilbert@utas.edu.au

Equipment Officer:

Gavin Brett
Ph: (03) 6223 1717 (h)
gavinbrett@iinet.com.au

Librarian:

Greg Middleton
Ph: (03) 6223 1400 (h)
ozspeleo@bigpond.net.au

Editor:

Alan Jackson
Ph: 0419 245 418 (m)
alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au

Search & Rescue Officers:

Tony Veness & Jane Pulford
Ph: 0437 662 599 (m)
Tony.Veness@csiro.au
jlpulford@yahoo.com

Webmaster:

Alan Jackson
Ph: 0419 245 418 (m)
alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au

Web Site:

<http://www.lmrs.com.au/stc>

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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.



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Editorial

My apologies for the tardiness of this issue. I've actually had too many things to do for once and my feeble mind has crumbled under the pressure. The lingering energy-sapping disease Anna brought home for me from childcare a few weeks ago isn't helping things in the slightest either. I guess they won't be a patch on the 'diseases' she'll be dragging home to meet me once she's a teenager ...

October–November 2009 seems to be 'leave the country' period for STC members. Greg's off in the Madagascar area (again), Arthur (and Siobhan too?) are floating about China, Ric and Janine have just headed over to NZ for some walking, Ken only just got back from NZ and Gavin is touring Europe spruiking his engineering goods. I kind of feel left out – although I will be heading to the Arthur River area for work for most of November, which feels like you've been on an international flight by the time you drive all the way there from Hobart!

Despite the wet weather the last couple of months appear to have been reasonably productive in regard to local caving. Serena and the McTinnies seem to be knocking off lots of classic tourist trips, while Bunty and I continue to lance the festering boils that comprise the JF-X caves. There's still plenty of pus to go round though.

I've put Niggly on the forward program for December. Realistically that means January. A good opportunity for Rolan to resurvey the cave properly and reclaim that depth record that was cruelly taken from him a few years ago ...

Serena, it would appear, is still doing drugs. Either that or she's hell bent on trying to make what must have been a boring and uneventful trip interesting – see "The Beast of Hastings" on page 4.

Alan Jackson

Stuff 'n Stuff

TRAINING

As you are all BIG kiddies, I am presuming that you will contact me if you need, or wish, any of the following training:

Novice SRT, refresher SRT, more advanced SRT, basic rigging, "more than basic" rigging, and anything else that would come under the "training" umbrella but doesn't step on the S&R people's toes. *Janine McKinnon*

STC GIRLS ARE HARD

6 pm, 5°C, 96 kmph wind gusts and these three figure that some rope washing is in order. One of them even has bare feet! Just plain hard or hard of thinking? – you decide.



C. Brett

Trip Reports

IB-23 Little Grunt

Serena Benjamin

13 June 2009

Party: Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell

It was showering when we left the car and got progressively heavier as we went up the hill. By the time we got to the head of the quarry we were both quite wet. Matt leapt into the cave quick smart while I decided to change into some slightly drier thermals. Progressing quickly down to the point where we had run out of rope on the last trip, Matt rigged the two remaining pitches. We touched bottom and quickly got out of our vertical kit doing an Alice in Wonderland style disappearance into a rabbit-sized hole at the bottom. Emerging into a larger streamway passage we progressed along this to a chamber where we admired a bird skeleton and puzzled on its origins. Going upstream from here, we noted how turbid the water of the main stream and its side passages were. It must have been quite wet on the surface.

Proceeding downstream next, we did some interesting manoeuvres under some flowstone obstacles; any thought

of remaining remotely dry diminishing rapidly as noses skimmed the surface of the water. Taking many photos along the way allowed time to admire the spectacular large streamway passage which got bigger as we went. Things came to a halt at one section just beyond one of the most beautiful waterfalls coming in from an aven. The turbid stream disappeared under a long stretch of low crawl which looked too wet for our liking so we decided to call it a day. It was here that Matt queried where I had put some of the gear I had previously had with me. Groan! More absent mindedness. Back we went, with Matt commenting that the water looked like it had risen while we went under some of the low sections. Luckily it was one of these parts where he found the gear (no mean feat in the murky water). Any doubts about the rising water were laid to rest when we got back to the pitches. The creek was quite full! Up the pitches we sped, prusiking under a full-on waterfall. I was soaked quickly and had fun trying to get to the top of pitches before my gumboots got so full they threatened to peel off. Both back on the surface within one and a half hours, we found it was still showering but not too badly. What a cracker of a cave!

H-8 Wolf Hole – “The Beast of Hastings”

Serena Benjamin

16 August 2009

Party: Serena Benjamin, Chris Chad, Matt Cracknell, Kate Edney, Sarah Gilbert, Michael Helman, Adrian Slee, Geoff Wise

‘Seek out the Beast of Hastings and slay it’ was the decree; a perilous mission indeed.

Occupational health and safety had deemed it a hazard to any future quest for the Crystal Lake. So the Beast must be despatched.

The long, cold, wet and arduous winter had given way to an unexpected heat wave. Allergic to this brazen sun a motley bunch was assembled at dawn outside the place of learning. Once again Captain M was called upon to chivalrously lead the fray. Alas the Doc, his enthusiastic assistant, had long since been carted away to an asylum, the chatter of chirruping still tumbling off his tongue. The remaining survivors from the last quest, Red and The Maniac, had once again been summoned. Red was much healthier now that her rock eating habit had been curbed. Apparently she had been confusing the rocks for chocolate. And the Maniac was more manic than ever, though she was semi-sedated by something she had ingested. However, to succeed on a mission so fraught with danger a message had been sent to all corners of the kingdom.



The motley bunch – minus the Maniac.

Also joining them was a rather distinguished gentleman who held rigorous dress standards and had instituted a rule that all executives must wear the correct shade of red and accessorise correctly. He had deigned to go on the mission as his speciality being in gathering visual documentation of various phenomena was highly prized. Newer to such missions was a freakishly tall interloper from the Eastern realm with a mighty smug look on his face and a penchant for referring to himself as AP, as he was quite proud of where he resided. However, one has to admire his dedication for having travelled from such distant shores into the shadows of Mt Wellington. Then there was the dwarf, skilled in steep ascents and the art of stealth and a man that was reputed to have been one of the four riders of the apocalypse in a previous career. To complete the complement was the gallimauf, known for his vast knowledge of the Earth’s inner workings and also an inexplicable tendency to misplace his socks. So with all and sundry present and accounted for the kitchen sink and explosives were packed and the mission began.

A foul tempest blew them towards the imposing peak of Adamson, sheathed in an ominous dark cloud. As they approached the steaming lair the sense of foreboding hung like a weight between them. Gallantly they descended into the abyss from whence they had escaped before.

Finishing the descent, Red immediately set off with three of the newcomers toward the far reaches. Their mission: to retrieve the leash of the Beast. “If we’re not back by lunch on the fourth day send out a search party” were her parting words before she disappeared into the dark.

The remaining four, led by Captain M, assisted the gentleman in his task of trying to capture an image of the elusive Beast. He needed such assistance as he would not part with his heavy briefcase despite its impracticalities. With the Beast of Hastings as their quarry they crept through passages thick and thin. A most dastardly fiend by repute. A man eater. Whether it was a woman eater as well was uncertain. Some of the party decided that if they embraced their feminine side they would be safe. Only time would tell. With mechanical devices emitting tunes designed to entice the Beast they progressed through chamber after chamber on their hunt.

The nymphs had been crying, and copiously so, such that Lake Pluto was now overflowing. After many a day it was on these shores that the party led by Red rejoined them. She said things had gone well and they had progressed quite fast right into the bowels of the Earth. Up climbs and down, through catacomb and squeeze till they’d stumbled across what they had sought. Red had picked up the leash, her eyes showing her dread. For the leash held nothing in check. The Beast was loose and they were its quarry. Its baying haunted their steps as through squeeze and catacomb, down climbs and up they fled from this maze once more. Till breathless and panting they came to the Lake to recount their tale and advise on the state of the quest.

All thoughts of slaying the Beast were abandoned as fear coursed like a wildfire among them. So amongst the remains of the dwarves that had sat still for too long the desperate scramble out of the lair once more ensued. Emerging into the thin sunlight of the entrance chamber all were high that they had once again gotten out of the dark realm unscathed. Up the desperately thin rope they slowly progressed, the baying of the hound echoing in their ears. But soon the echoes were joined by more. There was not just one Beast of Hastings – there was a pack!



The Beast?

IB-23 Little Grunt

Sarah Gilbert

22 August 2009

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

We had all planned to have one last visit to Little Grunt over the previous few weeks but had been turned back or deflected into other caves by the recent heavy rain. The prospect of crawling up to our necks in icy water just wasn't that appealing. (Yes, yes Ed, I know, we're all soft). The wait was worth it though; the pitches were pretty dry and we (the short arses of the group) only got moderately soggy when wading. Overall it was dryer than my last visit to the cave in July.

The De-rig Team had to beg to be driven down to IB in the Tourists' black-mobile as we combined forces for one last foray to Little G. We arrived at the carpark at 9:30 am and were underground by 10:30 am. We zipped down the pitches in about an hour, and then into 'tourist' mode. We

proceeded rapidly past the big avens and through the nasty-looking duck-under crawl that had turned us back last time, driven on by rumours of amazing wonders beyond: tight squeezes, wet crawls, muddy side passages, pebble art, straws, chocolate, photos, gypsum wonders, and more chocolate. The highlight was definitely the dry, relic cave passage where flowers and delicate gypsum filaments twisted their way out from the wall. In my opinion, all the squeezey pitch heads were worth it just for that. Great cave!

For the trip back we split ourselves into a workforce of three teams: de-riggers, pack haulers and Ric. The derig went pretty smoothly, but the ancient rusted spit and its hanger on the second pitch was left in situ. The next batch of enthusiastic cavers in the future might want to take a drill to replace that one with a proper bolt.

We emerged from the cave in the fading light around 5pm and slithered our way up the muddy bank to the top of Benders Quarry. After yet another good day's caving on not enough sleep, we dozed in the back seat on the way home, lulled by the Tourist's gentle driving.

JF-284 Carpark Cave III, JF-415 Pol Pot and some surface surveying

Alan Jackson

23 August 2009

Party: Serena Benjamin, Gavin Brett, Stephen Bunton, Chris Chad, Alan Jackson

Tidying up some unfinished business was the order of the day – dropping a couple of vaguely looked at holes and surface surveying. We wandered into Slaughterhouse Pot and then up the rough route to Lost Pot that we created several years back. At JF-285, which is one metre left of the route, we turned downhill to JF-415 (which is about 10 m away). I issued Gavin with some vague instructions on what the cave was like (Serena and I had found and partially explored this cave in March 2007 – SS359:5) and the rest of us departed for nearby JF-284 Carpark Cave III. Bunty made history by being the first man to complete the trifecta of Carpark Caves; Chris and I joined him shortly after. A photo-shoot with two matchbox cars followed – a Ford Prefect and a kind of Nazi-style hot-rod.



Bunty poses with his Matchbox cars in Carpark Cave III.

I exited first so I could join Gavin in JF-415. He had made it down the first pitch (but not without incident – a redirect had popped-off and scared the shit out of him) and was sussing out the previously undescended second pitch.



A. Jackson

Gavin demonstrates why the fastening clip on the chinstrap of Petzl helmets were clearly designed by some French wanker who's probably never been caving his life. Gavin spent 5 minutes engaging in cunninlingus with his helmet to remove the mud from the clip so he could fasten it securely.

Once the gear from Carpark Cave III was derigged, I headed down with it and we set about rigging the next pitch. Bunty joined us. Three exciting natural anchors got

us out over the pitch proper and from there a convenient natural spike got us down the ~12 m pitch (but not without a knot crossing in the middle ...) The wall of the pitch was covered with the slipperiest substance known to mankind. A short section of low passage led to an adjacent aven which appeared terminal in all directions – the floor in this final chamber, and the previous one, was littered with copious numbers of skeletons of unfortunate mammals. In the opposite direction an ascending rift was followed by Gavin; after ~15 m it turned back on itself and descended again to a drafting hole. Gavin got excited excavating the hole while Bunty and I surveyed from the bottom of the second pitch towards Gavin. Good progress was made at the dig but not enough to fit Gavin's hefty bust through. With harness off, I slipped through with ease to find a disappointing, impenetrable muddy slot at the lowest point of the small but comfortable chamber. A climb up at the other end terminated in a small chamber blocked with the conglomerate/mudstone cap-rock that generally overlies

the limestone in the Junee-Florentine. The show was over and we surveyed out. We named the cave Pol Pot. On the walk in we had discussed dog names. Chris's dog was called Rouge (a deliberate joke so he could say "Come 'ere, Rouge" and have a laugh at the Cambodians' expense). This, combined with the large quantities of skeletal remains in the cave – evidence of mass murder and other atrocities – provided the inspiration.

Serena and Chris had been scouring the surroundings for new holes but had returned empty handed. It was around 2 pm, so we opted not to head for Ice Tube for a crack at JF-400. Instead we headed down towards Trapdoor Swallet and swung across to JF-286 Crystal Meth – this cave hadn't been surveyed into the surface network. We surveyed down to the JF-38 Trapdoor Swallet tag, running a side branch out to JF-421 Snail Pot on the way. Not too bad a day in the end.

IB-10 Mystery Creek Cave

Alan Jackson

29 August 2009

Party: Guy Bannink, Chris Chad, Alan Jackson, Amy Robertson

I had commenced the drawing up of the MCC survey and noted a few holes in the sketches in a few spots. It seemed like a good excuse for a bit of a lardy-dah trip. There'd been a lot of rain and we were half expecting to find the cave at dangerous levels. The reality was quite disappointing, with levels only marginally above normal summer flow! We figured it was all perched as snow in the upper catchments.

I revised my sketches of the entrance section while the others toured. I did the same through the first dry chamber and down the right hand side of the Skyline Traverse. Here we realised we'd lost Guy and Chris, so Amy went back up to check the top of Cephalopod and then planned to rendezvous with me at the back end of the Skyline route. I would finish some sketching of the lower Laundry Chute area and then go up the Chute and meet Amy at Skyline. We met up but neither of us encountered the others. I started investigating the system of tunnels off the side of the main trunk passage between Skyline and

Confusing Chamber, noting that this hadn't been surveyed nor sketched. While I was sketching the others appeared down in the lower left of Skyline, having been temporarily misplaced in that general area. We reconvened and then headed down the Laundry Chute to the back end.

A ladder was placed on the pitch down into the Labyrinth and the others darted about while I checked a couple of bits that had confused me during the draw up. Amy found a ~3-4 inch fish (presumably a trout) in one of the pools. Guy's brother, Peter, had a 20-year-old lead in the area which we quickly dismissed as a now regularly visited bit of the maze. We headed out, taking the high route from the top end of the 'Back End' chamber through the crawl and steep mud-slope to reemerge at the top of the Laundry Chute. Once at the start of the Skyline Traverse we bade farewell to Chris, who was on a tight schedule, while we planned to survey in the few 'new' (to me) passages in this spot. I soon discovered that I'd left the Disto sitting on the ground at the entrance, so we settled for the sketches I'd done earlier and headed out too, 5 minutes behind Chris.

We stopped at Arthur's on the way home and fleeced him of some raspberry canes – dismantling his summer raspberry cage and doing some pruning as payment. All in all it was a very soft day (call it preparation for the days ahead following my imminent 30th birthday).

JF Surface Surveying (8 Road)

Alan Jackson

5 September 2009

Party: Stephen Bunton, Chris Chad, Alan Jackson, Geoff Wise

The initial plan was to continue the surface work south of Splash Pot. Stupidly I had failed to pack the chainsaw (lots of wind in the previous couple of weeks) and we didn't make it far up Sunshine Road before we encountered a large, long tree that wasn't going to yield to either of the 'just drive over it' or 'attach the snatch-strap and pull it out of the way' approaches. We tried our luck on the Junee Quarry Road but the gate was locked and we had no key. We needed a new plan. Pretty much every 'sub-area' of the JF karst has a long list of caves that need checking,

surveying etc. so the only hard bit about devising a new plan was deciding which of the myriad of choices we'd go for. We settled on the Eight Road.

First stop was JF-421 Snail Pot (near JF-38 Trapdoor Swallet) which we had surveyed into the surface grid a fortnight before (see pages 5-6). From here we surveyed the ~150 m or so to JF-419 Chief Inspector; the vegetation was pretty scrubby and it was slow, zigzagging stuff. We gleefully downed tools, wandered up to JF-265 Diversion Pot, picked up the tools again and surveyed nearby JF-418 to JF-265, then surveyed up to JF-345 Ice Tube (linking in with JF-361 on the way). Next we located JF-400 and dumped bags for a look around the general area. We relocated the small horizontal cave that Gavin had spotted back in September 2007 (SS362:14) and this was tagged JF-470 (note, the jump from JF-449 to JF-470 is because

Rolan Eberhard has been assigned JF-450 to JF-469). I have now realised that this cave must be the ‘Unnumbered Cave’ Rolan refers to in his cave numbering report in SS220:3-4. Bunty assigned the name Munted Tag Cave as the 270 tag was the one Gavin had made up in the 8 Road carpark a fortnight before and he’d stamped the 7 on rotated 90° - i.e. the tag was ‘munted’; read ‘stuffed’. We also relocated JF-399 (the tiny swallet up on the contact) and then surveyed from there back to JF-400 via JF-470. I wanted to check the lead (dig) in JF-400 so we tossed down the ladder (fortunately we tied it to a tree first). While I was about to start descending the ladder Geoff narrowly averted a crisis by ‘calling’ a small piece of moss he had dislodged upslope. The new danger call “MOSS!” is now firmly entrenched in our standard caving vocabulary (and was used repeatedly throughout the rest of the day).

Down the hole I could confirm that one can easily hear what must be the Ice Tube streamway. Chris joined me for a look. The tight passage from which the draft and sound emanates from is only 150 mm wide though and stays that way for at least 3 m. It could be dug, but it would be a lengthy campaign. [Survey appears on page 13]. Once we surveyed it in we’d know if it was worth it (i.e. would increase Ice Tube’s depth enough to take back the Australian depth record). More dangerous moss was narrowly avoided on the way out. These three holes were then joined into the JF-360 tag (Ice Tube upper entrance) and also into the day’s earlier survey to the JF-345 tag.

Next I wanted to look at the water/mud/vegetation-filled doline just up the valley from Ice Tube. I wanted Bunty’s opinion on whether it should be tagged. In SS361:12-13, I theorised that this feature was Rolan’s JF-Z89 – the description matches perfectly. We decided that while normally we wouldn’t tag such a feature, the fact that it was already recorded as a ‘Z’ cave meant that we should give it an official JF number if only to slowly rid the entire area of those wretched Z caves. Chris certainly seemed enthusiastic about the doline and boldly strode into it (only to disappear up to his knees about two paces in). He extracted himself and spent some time emptying his boots while we tagged it JF-471. Bunty decided to call it Ice Lake as it is next to Ice Tube, is kind of a lake/water body and it was covered in an inch of remnant snow and ice from recent snowfalls. [Survey appears on page 12]



Alan in the bottom of the JF-471 Ice Lake doline getting a GPS fix – note the ice/snow.

Not far away from Ice Lake is JF-401. This was located and laddered (when I’d been here once before [SS361:12-13] we couldn’t find the tag and confirm its identity as we had no way of descending it). The tag was located ~3 m down the entrance pitch. I didn’t manage to make the cave go any further than Rolan had when he found it (SS220:3-4). [Survey appears on page 13] To finish the day off we surveyed from JF-401 back to JF-345 via JF-471. A very productive, cold and at times dangerous (MOSS!) day.

Postscript

So I guess you’re all wondering whether the survey data indicated that joining JF-400 to Ice Tube would reclaim the depth record. I’m kind of still wondering that too, even after a couple of hours playing with survey data and reading through the archives. The question is “how deep is Growling Swallet/Ice Tube and what are considered the ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ points?” Trying to answer this question can lead to a severe headache. Here is my interpretation of the situation:

In SS235:3-6 appears Nick Hume’s account of his dive into the second sump in Coelacanth (called Swallowing Gullet) in February 1988. This point appears to be accepted as the lowest survey station in the system (in numerous references not listed here). I believe station COEL19 in the survey file in the archive is a station at sump level. Nick’s dive pushed Swallowing Gullet to -19 m (corrected to 18.8 m for the super anal – see the last paragraph of his report to understand that). At the time Swallowing Gullet was considered to be at -356 m (COEL19), thus the dive extended the total cave depth to -375 m (374.8 for the anal). This figure trumped Anna-Kananda (-373 m) and was quoted widely for many years.

In SS277:3-6 Rolan published a ‘Deepest and Longest Caves’ list. It still listed Growling Swallet in position number one at -375 m, but the article contains a postscript which reads:

A certain amount of confusion has recently arisen in relation to the precise depth of Ice Tube-Growling Swallet. The deepest point in the cave appears to be a sump in an area known as Coelacanth. New data from an overland survey from Ice Tube to Pendant Pot which allows the depth of the Coelacanth sump to be calculated with far less survey legs than previously, suggests a total depth for the system somewhat less than the figure of 375m cited in the list above. However, until such time as the data can be more fully scrutinised and perhaps additional surveying undertaken, it seems reasonable to stick with the 375m figure.

In SC59:7, as a component of a larger article, Rolan publishes a Junee-Florentine deepest/longest list which places Growling Swallet at -360 m. A note in the table header states:

The depth of Growling Swallet, previously thought to be 375 m deep, has been amended on the basis of new survey data.

Close examination of the survey data file for Growling in the archive shows that if you assign station COEL19 a depth value of 0, then the highest point in the system (station IT0) is at 345.9 m. Station IT2 (which is approx. the JF-345 tag – see below) is located at 340.5 m. IT0 is more or less in the same spot as the current location of the JF-360 tag (Ice Tube upper entrance) – our survey places

station JF360 (tag) at 347.8 m; 1.9 m higher than IT0. The Ice Tube data is labelled 'Ice Tube JF345 from daylight hole'. Comments within the survey indicate that IT2 is "approx location of JF345 number tag", which suggests that the two number tags were affixed after the survey (not an ideal situation).

Add 19 metres to the value of 345.9 (IT0) and you get 364.9 (a bit more than the quoted 360 m), but we're in the ball park. I have no idea where this 5 metre difference is generated. The thing that interests me is that it would appear that they didn't squeeze every available metre out of the system – according to our recent surveying the lowest point in the lip of the Ice Tube doline is about 6.5 m higher than the JF-360 tag (or about 8.4 metres higher than IT0). Factoring that in suggests the whole system is 373.3 m (oh great, another 373-375 m deep cave ...)

Getting back to the original story, what I can tell you is that the JF-400 tag (which is located +/- 0.5 m from what I would class the 'top' of the cave) is located at 358.9 m (where COEL19 is 0 m). This is 13 metres higher than IT0; so ignoring all the previous paragraphs, this would mean adding 13 m to the quoted figure of 360 m to get 373 m again (what is it with this number?!) But it is only 4.6 m higher than my previously established 'lowest point in the lip of the Ice Tube doline', which makes it 377.9 m (373.3

+ 4.6), if you use the 364.9 number instead of the quoted 360.

So depending on which way you look at it, joining JF-400 to Ice Tube may or may not get you the depth record. I have done some talking to the old gurus who did the Ice Tube surveying to try to sort this one out (Rolan and Trev) but they can't offer me any more than I've already theorised on my own. So, the question is, "Is it worth spending three days digging to claim a depth record by ~2.5-3 m?" I guess we spent months in Tachycardia to drive it up by half a metre, so this would be six times as rewarding! Perhaps the best option is to dig in JF-399 and join it to Ice Tube – this would give you a total depth of 399.2 m (380.2 + 19). I find it interesting that before Ice Tube was joined to Growling it was quoted as 345 m deep (JF-345) and that JF-399 is now panning out to be 399 m deep. Clearly all we need to do is skip a few numbers and start tagging caves in the JF-500 range and we'll bag ourselves an awesome new depth record! But maybe we're destined to never break through that magical ~375 m mark ...

The survey does place JF-400 directly over the Ice Tube streamway about three quarters of the way down to the first pitch (~40 m vertically apart, with about 30 m of that unknown).

JF-4 Khazad-Dum – Serpentine Route (Ladies' Day Out)

Janine McKinnon

19 September 2009

Party: Serena Benjamin, Kate Edney, Sarah Gilbert, Janine McKinnon

After the obligatory coffee at Jackman & McRoss, and a non-eventful drive up to the gate, we encountered a fallen pine tree across the first road branch up to the KD car park. I thought we were stuffed as I hadn't had the foresight to bring a saw, but with some concerted teamwork we dragged enough of the tree clear to drive the Subaru around the fall. This did involve driving half off the road, so anyone with a two wheel drive planning to go there should think about taking a saw to clear the road properly.

We got to the cave with no more delays, the track still being in very good condition, with only a few falls.

The stream at the entrance was vigorous, as expected, but once in the Serpentine all was dry and peaceful. The pools were quite full but there was little, if any, flowing water, which I was very surprised by. On my last trip there in high water for the main stream (in 2003) there was a good stream flowing all the way down the Serpentine and it was quite wet on the pitches. Maybe some water course changes have occurred?

So I had been expecting a moderately wet day and it was going to be a dry trip. Small blessings. Pity about the choice of plastic suit, but it would be of some use later in the trip ... *[Not another suit gripe! – Ed.]*

Serena was rigger for the day and thus rigged the first pitch, with a rebelay from the P-hanger at the ledge. This proved to be very tight for Sarah and so it was decided I would re-rig it as a redirection when I came third. The rigging notes describe it as a "P-hanger out on the right

wall at face height when standing on the ledge". Ah, the self-centered world of the 6 ft caver (I was actually on the trip this was installed and so can vouch for the height of the installer).

After various gymnastic manoeuvres by my (5ft 3in) self to reach this hanger, I finally got it re-rigged.



J. McKinnon

Kate traverses the entrance waterfall. A black caving suit is an interesting choice – she's good at sneaking up on you.

The trip continued on smoothly after this, with the three of us chatting and relaxing at the pitch heads whilst Serena

did all the work. Occasionally she would disturb our pleasant discourse by asking for an opinion on some aspect of the rigging. Very inconsiderate, I thought.

When we reached the junction with the main streamway, we decided to look both up and down stream between the pitches. The stream was really flowing fast and was quite noisy. We went downstream first, to the top of the first streamway pitch; this was looking fairly impressive. Then upstream to the waterfall chamber; this was very impressive. The blast of air and water as we stepped around the corner was considerable (this is where the plastic suit got to pay its way). We couldn't climb up to the bottom of the 70 footer at the usual spot as it was actually IN the waterfall, so we scrambled up back near the corner of the chamber. We spent some time exploring the area, and watching the waterfall, before retreating back to the Serpentine.

No dramas on the way out, with Sarah and Kate heading up first and Serena and I de-rigging.

The water level at the entrance was higher than when we went in, possibly added to by snowmelt, and a light drizzle was falling.

One of the old 11 mm Bluewater ropes we were using was hit by a rock, and although we could find no damage, we have retired it as a precaution.



Sarah looking genuinely fearful for her life on a climb in the Serpentine.

JF-341 Threefortyone

Serena Benjamin

3 October 2009

Party: Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

Drove a bit. Up a bit. Down a bit. Up a bit. Down a bit. Cave a bit. Disconcerting encounter with large rock for a bit. Reverse the first bits. That is it.

Cave Hill – Relocating Rescue Pot

Stephen Bunton

4 October 2009

Party: Serena Benjamin, Stephen Bunton, Ken Hosking

Cave Hill was the site of numerous exploration endeavours in the late '60s early '70s by the Slipshod Caving Society (SCS) and whilst we have some details of depths and lengths for the caves and some grid references, no maps exist, except for those which were produced 10 years later by the Take-over-other people's Caves Club (TCC). My objective was to rectify some of the deficiencies of our founders.

For Ken this was his 4th trip up to this area and his sports plan was to go via Rescue Pot and then head west into an area, towards Tachycardia, where nobody had looked previously. We parked almost at the Tachycardia carpark and headed off into the bush in a roughly NE direction. The going was horrible, mostly through cutting grass, logging slash and recent tree-fall. After half an hour the vegetation changed to horizontal scrub, which continued for an eternity. Just when we thought we would never see anything we encountered the cliffline on the west side of Cave Hill and a place that Ken recognised. From here we ascended a scree-filled gully to a cave that Ken pronounced as Pygmy Cave. It was tagged JF-216 so a quick look at the notes indicated that it was not Pygmy

Cave (JF-214) but a cave for which we had few details. We decided to survey it.



Bunty in the entrance passage of JF-216 Dementia Den.

At this stage Steve realised that the survey gear, that Alan had kindly left out for us, was still sitting on the back seat of the car. We were reduced to a "pace and compass" survey with a bit of extra detail filled in with camera photos. Steve named it Dementia Den in recognition of his deteriorating mental faculties. [Survey appears on page 12] Having completed this survey we headed around the cliff and relocated Escardead (JF-440).

From Escardead it was onwards and upwards avoiding the noise of water we could hear in the distance to our right. Ken was convinced that this was Tarn Creek Swallet (arguably JF-364 – see last paragraph of SS372:13-14) and so we tried veering left to find Rescue Pot. This took us into a place where nobody goes (and should never go again!) Despite the fact that this was our target area, it was all dense, demoralising horizontal scrub. We stopped for lunch in a standing-room-only “clearing”. Before long we encountered numerous surface streams and realised that we were above the contact. At this stage Steve punched the Rescue Pot co-ordinates into the GPS (based only on the old Grid References) and we headed back in that direction.

The noise was eventually identified as JF-202, which is a very impressive swallet, with a huge stream flowing forcefully into a steep doline and plunging 14 m into an abyss. In high flow this is one of the most awesome swallets in Tasmania and really deserves a name to distinguish it from all the other, non-event trickle-like streamsinks that exist in our records. I proposed Tyenna Tomo, due to the fact that it is so close to Tyenna Peak and that it is a true tomo, a water-filled shaft in Ken the former Kiwi’s parlance.

Another look at the notes lead us to Rescue Pot (JF-201) a further 30 m around an impressive cliff to the NNE. A quick look inside this was all the time we could afford before needing to extricate ourselves from this vegetation prison. I just wanted to be rescued myself! We followed the dry scrub along the ridge over the exposed limestone towards Cave Hill. Eventually we decided to veer right (west) and avoid going over the very top. Unfortunately we found ourselves at the top of a sizeable cliff. The route down a scree filled gully co-incidentally lead to JF-216 and for the only time during the day we thought “Oh goody!” We traversed back along the base of the cliff before having

to resort to dead-reckoning and cutting grass avoidance, until we encountered the road.



The impressive hole of JF-202 – big black hole (centre-bottom), waterfall (centre) and caver (small red dot, centre-right).

Ken was keen to tape the route but at this stage calling it a “route” would be an exaggeration. It would be better to cut a track, tape it and then survey along it as a reference baseline. In the end it didn't matter that we left the survey gear in the car because we would not have had time to use it overland.

Due to its strategic location over the top of the June Master Cave there is good potential here, although much of the development in this area looks as though slope processes have eroded the big caves away. Certainly Ken was keen to return and both of us were of a like mind, that the next deep cave that we do will be The Big One (TBO for Get Smart fans!) ... the one that we will find, one day. [Ah, misguided optimism – the thing that keeps us cavers going – Ed.]

JF-373 Punishment Pot, JF-423 (almost), JF-393 (maybe?), JF-384 Eagle Pot and JF-438 (definitely!)

Alan Jackson

17 October 2009

Party: Alan Jackson, Geoff Wise

[I put this trip report before the following Milk Run report (from the same day) because its participants departed Jackman and McRoss bakery as the Milk Run group was arriving. Things MUST be chronological! – Ed.]

I'd wanted to survey Punishment Pot ever since we extended JF-382 Dissidence and located what we suspect is PP water coming into Vertical Euphoria pitch. With all the recent rain it was looking even more uninviting than usual. We surveyed in, getting a bit damp on the showery free-climb half way down and then had a bite to eat in the terminal chamber. A smoke bomb was let off to see if the draft (which roars at the entrance) is present in the lowest chamber. The smoke went up, around and then down again – no detectable draft here. We bumbled back up to the first roomy little chamber above the wet climb and checked a side lead. A short narrow drop into a rift passage was followed by a smaller drop with a tiny crack issuing forth the sound of the stream. Then there was a short step up into a roomier rift with another ~6-7 m climb up into a clay-

choked pocket. No draft here. We headed out. [Survey appears on page 14]

Next I wanted to find JF-423 as it was one of the few caves left in the Serendipity valley that hasn't had a survey published. JF-423 is a small hole Serena found back in September 2007 (SS362) while Andy and I commenced the dig in Dissidence. We failed to locate it.

We wandered down the valley on the southern bank, locating a 'new' hole just after we crossed the Warhol track near Gelignite Pot. It only went about 4 m though. We then continued further down the valley and looked for JF-393 (a cave I've never located). Having just scoured the archive more carefully I now realise that I've been looking in the wrong spot. The cave numbering report in SS216:4-5 states that JF-391 thru 395 are all located near Serendipity but that JF-393 is lower down in the valley, a short walk beyond the Asteroid Pot turnoff. This has always led me to believe that it is a fair way down the valley from Serendipity. I'm now not so convinced. The description of JF-393 in SS216:4-5 says ... *a very small entrance about 1 m wide. A descending rift choked with mud at 4m.* This is identical to the cave I found just down the hill after crossing the taped route to Warhol. One would assume that the 5 caves tagged that day in December 1985 were done so in numerical order. Gelignite Pot is 391 and the first cave you find just off the side of the route to Warhol. Warhol, 392, isn't far away then. 394 (unnamed) and 395

(Sunny Cave Hole – rediscovered, explored and surveyed by Serena only recently) are also not far from 391 and 392. So why would they have walked much lower down the valley to do 393 in between? Or leave a gap and tag 393 on the way in or on the way out? It seems much more reasonable that 393 isn't far away, located somewhere near 391 and 392. The hole I found, which matches the description for 393, is a short distance away. I didn't even look for a tag, since I "knew" that there were no other tagged caves that close to Gelignite Pot ... It all smacks of something Ric would do, so I'm very annoyed with myself. Familiarity breeds contempt and I am guilty as charged. It

would seem another day in the delightful Serendipity valley is required.

After we came across JF-366 Asteroid Pot we headed for JF-384 Eagle Pot. It was another that needed 'surveying'. It is too small to survey properly so I just sketched it. We let off a smoke bomb in the lower section again searching for a draft present at the entrance. Nothing was found. JF-438 was next on the list (only recently found and tagged, but not sketched at all). Geoff relaxed whilst I inserted myself into the narrow entrance and sketched the ~8 m or so of horizontal phreatic passage. It was time for home.

IB-38 Milk Run

Janine McKinnon

17 October 2009

Party: Serena Benjamin, Chris Chad, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

This was Chris' first trip along the Exit track and I can't say it was a wonderful introduction. After all the rain and wind lately the track was very muddy and slippery, with quite a lot of tree-falls. Our pace was slowed considerably. I was anticipating that the track up to Mini-Martin would be even worse, particularly after Alan's comments about it on his trip up that way last autumn, but I was pleasantly surprised that it was no harder going than the main Exit track.

Ric claimed to remember where the cave was (as opposed to my recollection that it was somewhere near Mini-Martin and Big Tree Pot but I couldn't remember PRECISELY where) and so we turned off the Mini-Martin track at a gully he was confident led to the cave.

45 minutes of scrub bashing and mountainside wanderings later, he and I converged on Milk Run at the same time, from different directions. [*GPS. Wonderful invention. I suggest you switch on the one that you own – Ed.*]

The show was now on, if a little delayed.

Serena was keen to rig again, so she headed in first, with me behind carrying the ropes for the next few pitches. Chris came next, with Ric last. The rigging went smoothly, with each pitch being tied back into the previous one. P-hangered caves are so quick and easy to rig.

At the bottom of the second pitch Chris' club light failed. We were about a half hour into the trip. Ric and Chris fiddled for a while and then declared it dead for the duration. The batteries were new and the cave was dry, at this point. Ric loaned him his spare, and on we went.

At the top of the "Cheeses" pitch Ric leap-frogged ahead of me, as he had the ropes for the final two pitches.

Chris decided he had had enough "going down" for the day at the top of the 50 m pitch, "The Separator", and so he waited there, whilst I followed Ric and Serena to the bottom of the cave.

"The Separator" pitch is a beauty and it certainly warrants a photographic trip sometime. Not after a lot of rain though, for we encountered "wet bits" for the first time today as we descended. A small trickle of a stream had

appeared from an alcove near the top of the pitch and ran down the pitch, to disappear in the talus at the bottom.

The 8 m and 30 m pitches (Cream Series) to the bottom were again dry, with the stream reappearing through the gravels in the rocks below the pitch. Serena and I climbed down through a short rock-pile to it but weren't prepared to grovel in a puddle to continue in the tight passage (yeah, just wimps, or smart; if it's worth doing, wait till it dries out). It could be seen disappearing through small and grotty bits.

Ric headed out whilst we were playing at the bottom, but from the top of the pitch we heard the cry that all cavers dread, particularly at the bottom of a cave. A cry, followed by "I've hurt myself". Shit. Thoughts of rescue plans flashed through my mind.

He had apparently badly strained or torn some muscles in his thigh whilst getting off the pitch head. Luckily he could still walk and so we decided that he would slowly make his way out of the cave, picking up Chris as he went, and Serena and I would de-rig the cave.

We caught up with Chris on the pitch above "The Separator". He was in trouble. The cord on his Croll which is pulled to open the cam had got caught, jamming the device.

Rescue plans flitted through my mind for the second time that day. I started trying to remember the stuff we practiced at the last rescue practice session on how to get a person off a rope. Chris probably weighed twice what I did, he was significantly heavier than all of us. Conclusion: a pick-off was not going to work. I was thinking of various other (not necessarily workable) options when he managed to get the Croll un-jammed, just before Ric was about to pass him a sharp knife.

OK, all going well again. The rest of the trip out was uneventful, and when Serena and I had filled our packs, we tied the last few pitch ropes together to haul them up the cave.

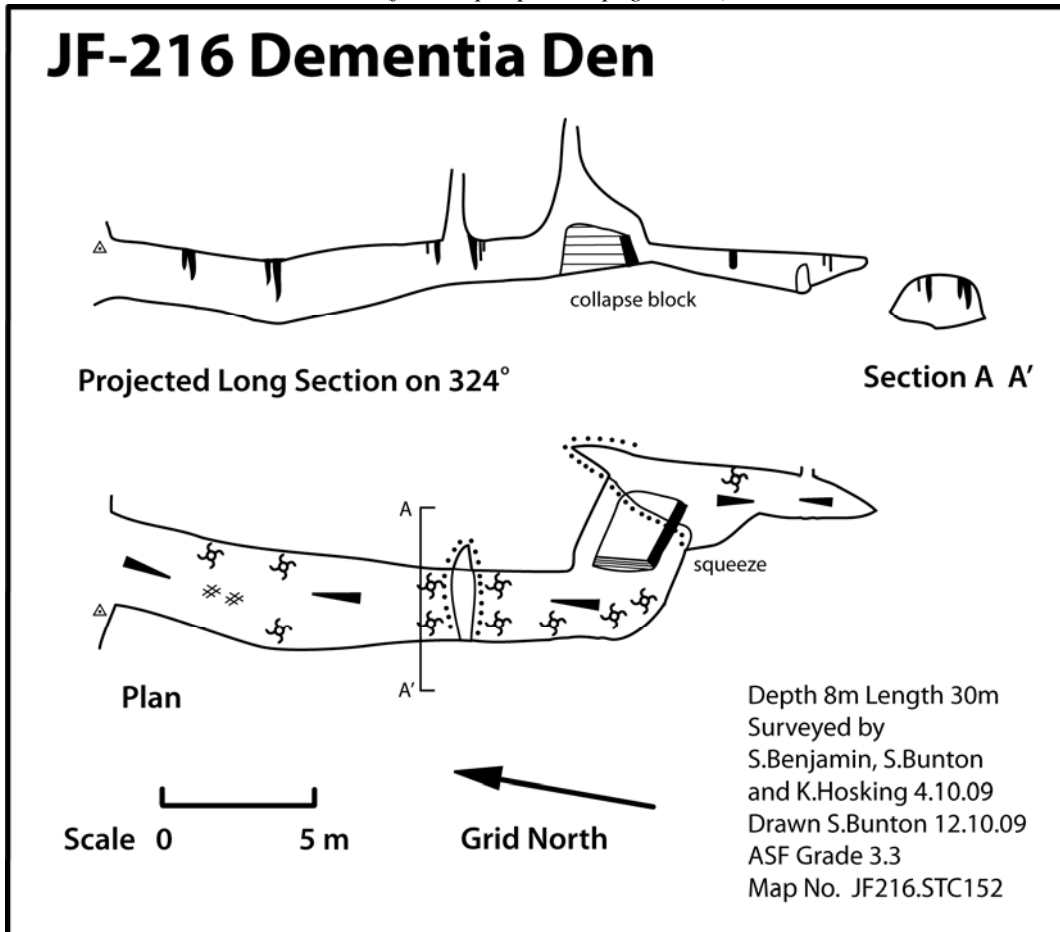
I was last out and discovered that Ric had already left to start hobbling slowly back to the cars. It was 5.30 pm and we had taken a neat 5 hours to do the trip.

The walk out, with moderately heavy packs, actually seemed a little less slippery, so possibly the track had dried just a little over the day. We caught up with Ric on the track down from the top of the quarry. No rescues today.

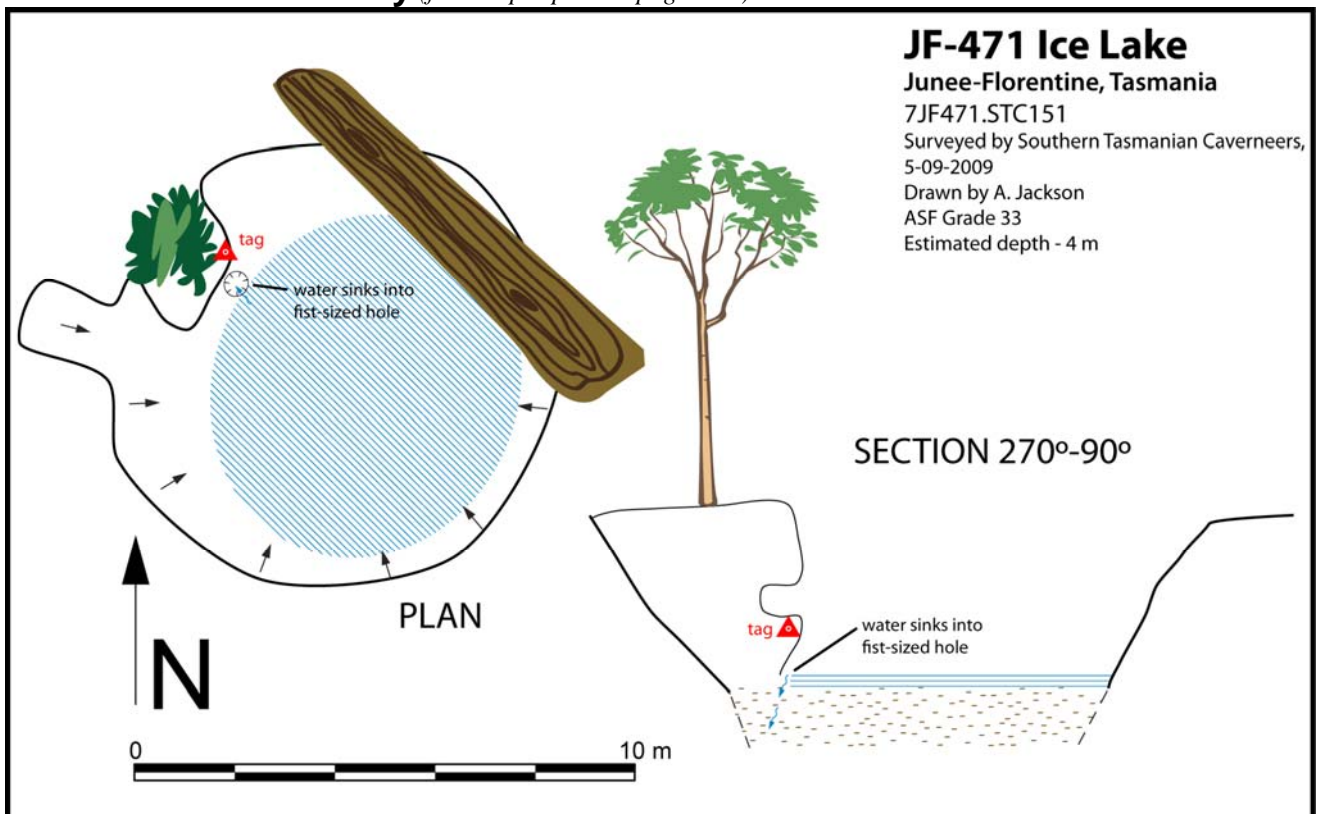
So despite a few problems it was still a very enjoyable trip. It is a great vertical cave.

Rigging details are excellently detailed in SS349.

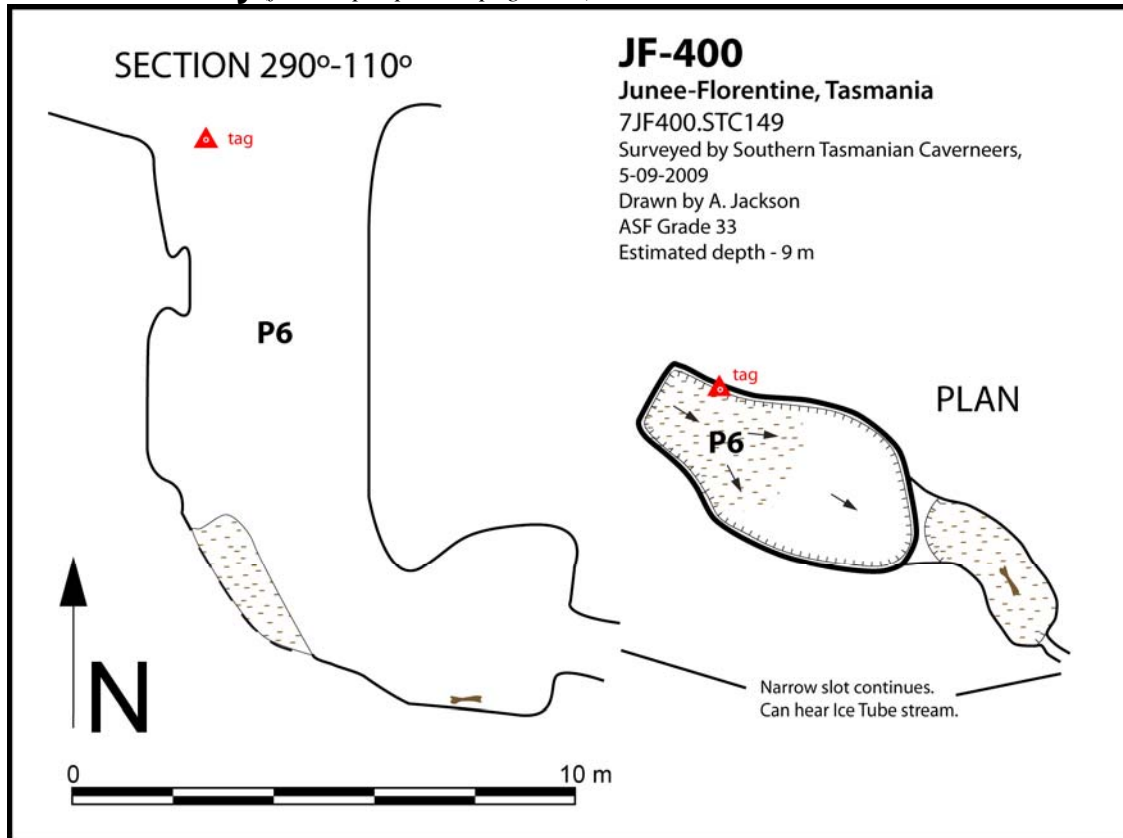
JF-216 Dementia Den (from trip report on pages 9-10)



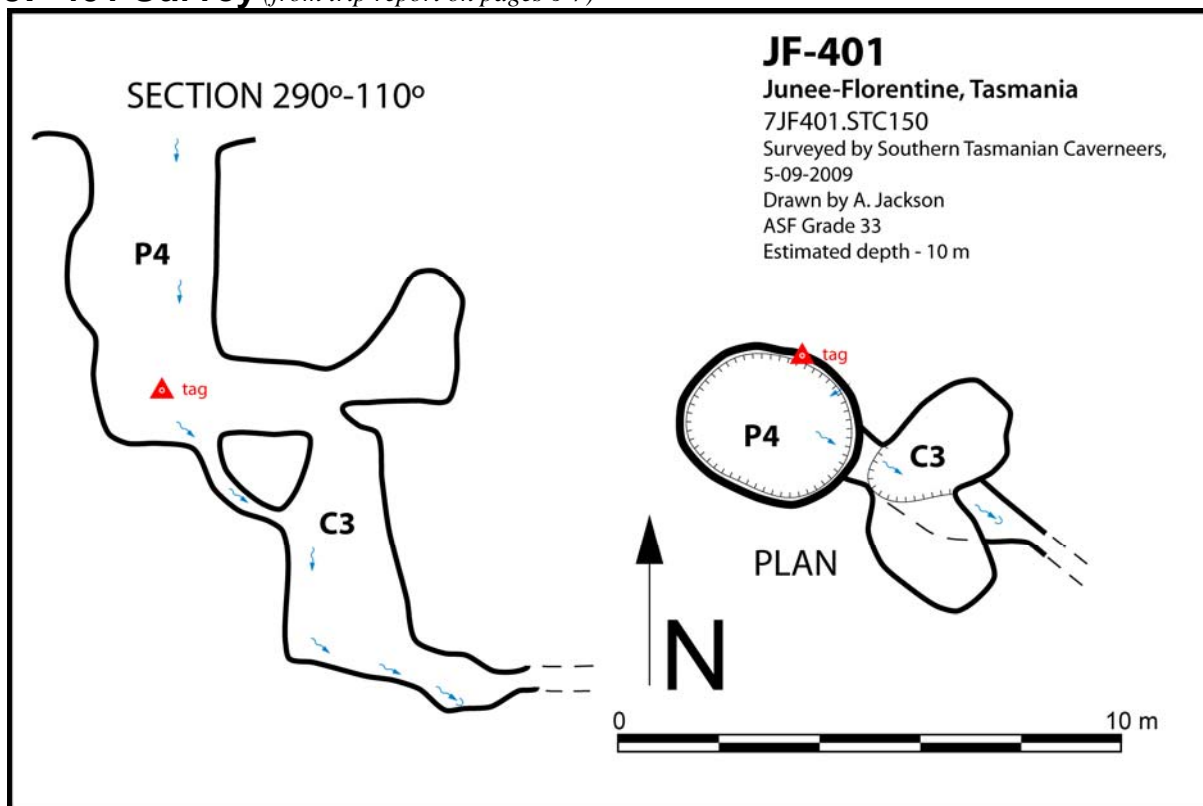
JF-471 Ice Lake Survey (from trip report on pages 6-7)



JF-400 Survey (from trip report on pages 6-7)



JF-401 Survey (from trip report on pages 6-7)



JF-373 Punishment Pot Survey (from trip report on pages 10-11)

JF-373 Punishment Pot

June-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF373.STC156

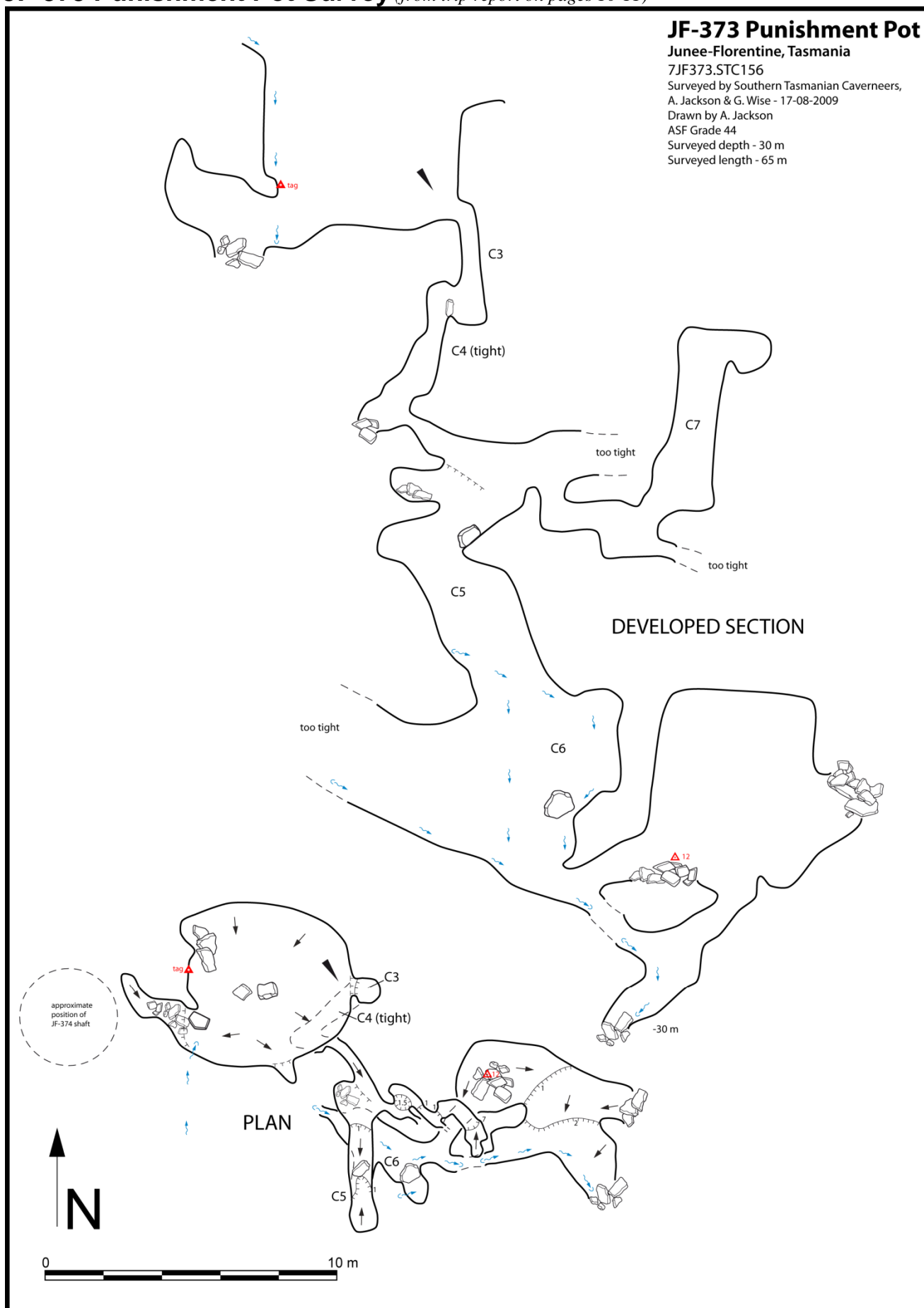
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Cave-neers,
A. Jackson & G. Wise - 17-08-2009

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 44

Surveyed depth - 30 m

Surveyed length - 65 m



Other Exciting Stuff

STC Car Rally

Alan Jackson

Sunday October 11 saw five teams (total of 17 people + one child) roll up to the Rally Master's house around 9 am for the inaugural STC Car Rally. 'The Stygs' (Stephen, Kathy and Grace) came in customised overalls, helmets and ski goggles but were asked to remove them before they entered the house due to the risk of scaring the two small children playing in the front room!



'The Stygs' – front and back.



The Rally Master briefing the teams – note Christine trying to read the clues over Alan's shoulder ...

The rules were laid down, first lot of cryptic clues handed out and the starting gun fired. This saw a superb start for team 'Team' – Ric, Janine and Geoff – with the Stealth Machine out of action on Gormanston Road with a flat tyre. Whether the puncture was an act of sabotage by another team (or even by Geoff, so he wouldn't have to suffer the maniacal driving prowess of the McTinnies) or purely coincidental is still unknown.



The Stealth Machine out of action with a flat tyre.

"A little bit of history repeating ..."

From a *Spiel* some time:

"EVENT: General meeting to discuss and vote on ASF membership.

DATE: Wednesday December 4, 1985

PLACE: ??? *hmmm, I wonder ...*

Clue 1 was pretty simple with most teams finding their way to Stuart Nicholas's old residence at New Town. Someone nabbed the clue stash before the last team (the 'I Wouldn't Have a Clue' team of Arthur, Siobhan and Chris) arrived here – some local do-gooder cleaning up rubbish in the street no doubt. They phoned a friend and were supplied with their next clue.

"One for the geologists"

I am many things. I am a cave. I am a creek. I am a JF limestone. But most importantly, I am also a Hobart street.

Clue 2 was geology related and pretty soon all five teams were trawling up and down nearby Gordon Avenue on the premise that the clue referred to Gordon Limestone (and JF-430 Gordon Bennett. Eventually they worked out that it was actually the Cashion Creek limestone beds in the Junee-Florentine that the clue referred to and they made their way to Cashion Court in Lutana. Reports were received of some creative parking by a Toyota Landcruiser which impeded the progress of another team.

"A little bit of Mole Creek in our own backyard"

I need to iron out the creases in my trogsuit. Look for the checkpoint at the obvious number.

Clue 3 was an easy one with teams making their way to Croesus Court in Rose Bay (property number 13, of course). Tony Culberg used to do the property owner's tax, so they were more than happy to have the next clue stashed under their letterbox! Team 'Rockpilestiltskins' (Serena, Amy, Sarah and Julie) picked up a nice pair of gumboots at a garage sale in Croesus Crt as a bribe for the Rally Master.

“Remembering the fallen Diggers”

I’m trying to track down the location of IB-72.

I sense its domain lies not only at Ida Bay.

There should be a tree with a number nearby but the map suggests it has been destroyed for sporting purposes. The checkpoint at the northern-most map will tell me what to do next.

Clue 4 had teams searching for IB-72 at the Domain. All teams eventually figured out the reference to “Kens Hole” (IB-72) which appears on the Soldiers Memorial Walk signs (one Private Eric Kenshole), located his memorial tree and provided correct answers to the bonus questions.



Team ‘Strepera’ trying to nut-out the Kens Hole problem at the Domain.

“Doubt you’ve been here before”

Nobody really knows where it is or what it contains. The keeper guards his treasure to ensure that what goes in never comes out.

Clue 5 bamboozled most teams, with the first envelope being opened to inspect the second tier clue for most teams. Team ‘Team’ ended up searching for cricket references at the Cornelian Bay cemetery. Team ‘Strepera fuliginosa’ (Currawong – Gavin, Claire, Ken and Christine) tried the Treasury, the Barracks and various other strange locations. Greg Middleton’s house (the STC library) was the correct pit stop.

“Time to brush up on your SRT skills”

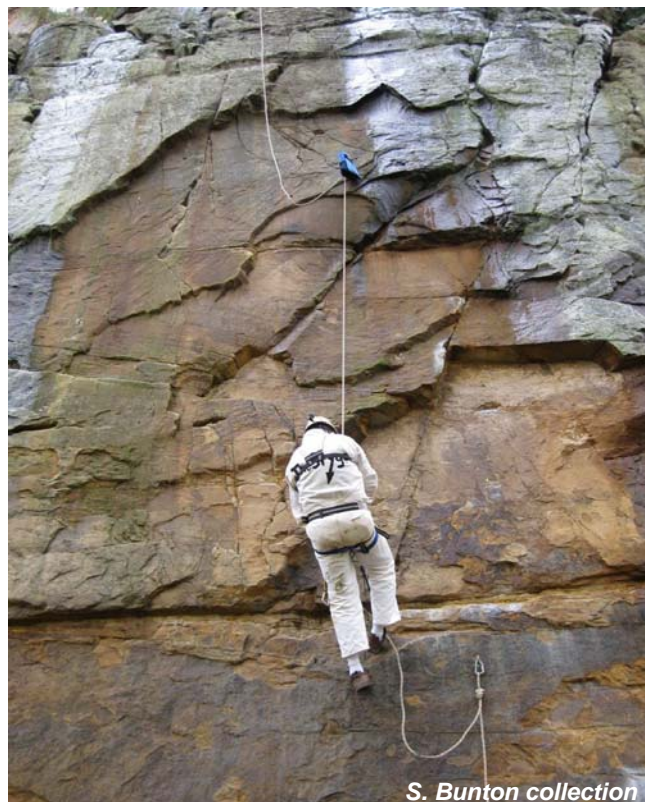
“[stcaving] SRT practice session wednesday next week

Say about 3pm? we can finish up on dark

let me know if your coming and I can drop by the gear store?

Matt Cracknell”

Clue 6 provided few problems – the requirement to bring SRT gear on the rally made it clear that some rope work was going to be in order. Teams had to ascend a rope rigged on the quarry face to collect their next clue. Conditions were quite wet, slimy and drippy – just like a cave.



Master Styg ascends the wall at Freuhauf – it was wet and drippy just like a real pitch!

“Erik Halbert would be proud”

I seem to have found myself in between Coventry St and Piccadilly.

0523739 5248909

Find and follow the instructions once you’re there

Clue 7 had teams navigating to GPS coordinates within the Waterworks Reserve. A lovely little sandstone cave (locally referred to as Sixpence Cave) awaited the teams, which had to be named and sketched.



Sixpence Cave – inside and out.

“This surveying caper is child’s play”

You’re not far away. You probably parked next to it. The instruments of torture await you.

Clue 8 was the final clue and directed teams to the children’s play equipment in the Waterworks BBQ area. A seven leg (~45 m) survey course was marked out (completing a loop). The data was entered into OnStation where the closure error was assessed and points awarded accordingly. The ‘I Wouldn’t Have A Clue’ team forfeited their chance to compete in this section (the lure of the nearby BBQ was too strong); team ‘Team’ competed but probably shouldn’t have wasted their time, with an error approaching infinity (they failed to take into account that play equipment is predominately made out of steel these days ...); the Rockpilestiltskins managed 2.2 m (pretty poor); the Stygs managed 1.6 m (acceptable, just), team ‘Strepera fuliginosa’ topped the class with 0.4 m (not a bad effort). Gavin was quietly chuffed with his instrument work and has remained smug ever since. No doubt Madphil, had he been present, would have shot himself if he’d got anything greater than 0.005 m.



Janine holds the compass as close as possible to the steel post during the survey exercise.



The Rally Master tallies the points – note the gumboot bribes to his left.

Once the points were tallied, and the numerous bribes taken into consideration, ‘The Stygs’ were named the winners (with 318 points). They narrowly pipped team ‘Strepera’ (303 points), followed by ‘Rockpilestiltskins’ (279 points), ‘I Wouldn’t Have a Clue’ (243 points) and team ‘Team’ (a dismal 145 points). First prize consisted of a bottle of Mystery Creek wine and the The Dave Rasch Memorial Cave Troll Perpetual Trophy (commemorating Dave’s death from the caving scene, not his actual death) – this was the small cave troll figurine that Dave Rasch and Hugh Fitzgerald placed in the Mystery Creek Cave extensions several years back. Loretta was very happy to see it gone from the spot at our house that it has sat since we removed it from the cave about a year ago.



A happy Styg with his bottle of wine and cave troll.

It was revealed during the debrief that team ‘Strepera’ had engaged in some creative cheating and they provided video evidence of the deed. Gavin steamed open one of the clue envelopes over the engine of the ‘cruiser’. They later dropped by home and ironed the clue to re-stick the glue but were overzealous and burnt the envelope. Coffee was then spilt on the envelope to disguise the burn mark. Unfortunately they didn’t reveal this devious activity till after the presentations. I had earlier stated that extra points would be awarded for creative cheating and with the margin so small between first and second places, it may have been enough to get team ‘Strepera’ over the line.

As winners of the inaugural STC Car Rally, ‘The Stygs’ have been charged with organising the second STC Car Rally for some time in 2010.

Tassy Touring Highlights

Stephen Bunton

Present: Grace, Kathy and Steve Bunton.

Virgin country is where the hand of man has never set foot and whilst I don't mind violating a few filthy Florentine virgins there are times when I cast my interests elsewhere. Although it is not original exploration, going somewhere you have never been before has enormous appeal, even more if it involves something to do with caves and karst.

On our recent round-Tasmania road-trip, Kathy and I checked out an overview of the karst in the Vale of Belvoir. Our objective for the day, apart from climbing Mt Beecroft, was to get a view of Cradle Mountain and the Vale of Belvoir. The Vale of Belvoir is of great conservation significance for its alpine grassland diversity and karst, although there are no caves. The Tasmanian Land Conservancy is raising funds for its purchase so that it can apply a conservation covenant managed by the TLC. I would recommend that all members support TLC's objectives in this and other worthy areas with donations of the odd few shekles now and then.



The Vale of Belvoir.

Mt Beecroft used to be called Mt Mayday but emergency services had the name changed so that it didn't use the international distress call. You can imagine the scenario unfolding across the radiowaves:

"Two bushwalkers lost on Mt Mayday."

"Did you say Mayday? Where are you? Stay put. We'll come looking for you ..."

"I've got a Mayday on Mayday and two other guys lost somewhere else."

"Roger, Roger! Mayday, Mayday!" The snowball effect!

As it was it could have been us who were lost, since the cloud was down so low and the visibility on the summit was almost zero. The walking was easy but wet underfoot as you would expect. The bonus was that all the dolines in the Vale of Belvoir were full of water and could easily be seen from the opposite side of the valley.

At Sisters Beach we visited the caves developed in quartzite. These are easily found by following various well-marked tracks in the Rocky Cape National Park. They are known to have been used by Aboriginals, although they now bear white fella names, like Wet Cave. (Yes, there is

another one in the state!) At the entrances to some of the caves there are viewing platforms and signs ask to "Please show respect and not enter the caves". Show respect? To whom and for what reason? Please Mr National Parks Manager show me some respect and tell me why I can't go into them. Obviously they want to prevent delinquent youths from having drunken orgies in the caves but the only litter I removed was the wrapper off a packet of biscuits.



Respectful Rocky Cape (with Table Cape in the background).

Dismal Swamp. You couldn't get a more no-hoper of a name or place for a tourist development than Dismal Swamp. Of interest to cavers is the fact that it is a Polje (pr. Poll-ya), which is a large flat-bottomed depression, not unlike teenage girls get, but very different to a doline, otherwise it would be called a doline. We don't have many poljes in Tasmania and this one is full of climax blackwood forest. Like all real reserves in Tasmania it only exists because exploitive industries didn't consider it economically viable in the past. When Forestry tells you that 42% of Tasmania is reserved you have to remember that most of that is buttongrass or mountain top and of no use for timber or sheep! Obviously enough blackwood was harvested in surrounding areas that this bit remained in the too hard basket, although it is still a State Forest. State Forests are those areas that Forestry haven't got around to destroying yet but are quite entitled to do so. They are counted in the 42%!! I fear for the myrtles of Mt Victoria and these blackwoods in years to come!

After years of pooh-poohing any green rhetoric about the future of Tasmania being in tourism, Forestry Tasmania built the Tahune Airwalk, a multi-million dollar undertaking that flew in the face of their contempt for the value of tourism. They paid it off in a month and half, given the huge numbers of interested visitors (and the high entry fee!) Unfortunately it has spelt a less bright future for Hastings Caves, which is just that bit further afield and therefore not so often visited by interstate day-trippers going south from Hobart.

Buoyed by that success, Forestry Tasmania embarked on the Dismal Swamp venture. With a non-inviting name in a horrible, rainy neck of the woods, well off the beaten track for 5-day fly drivers, it was never going to be a viable concern. Forestry have, of course, got out of it by leasing it to private operators who have at least adopted the name Tarkine Forest Adventures. The draw card in the

development was a huge metal slide that gets you down into the forest, quite quickly! But this isn't really enough of a draw card. At the bottom you can explore the rainforest on boardwalks.



S. Bunton

Kathy embarks on the well signed slide.

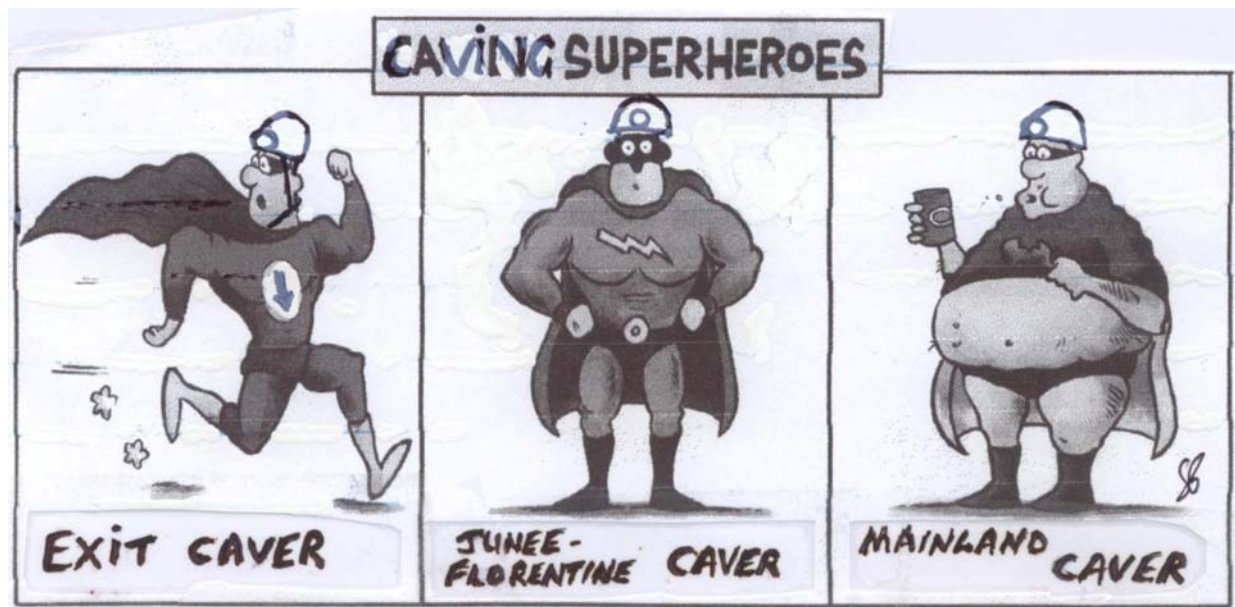
Because it was pristine karst we cavers should have made more of objections to this development. In fact I should have boycotted visiting it on ideological grounds but curiosity got the better of me. The slide is something else! The engineers got their calculations wrong here. In fact it was so fast that when it was first opened, before they put you in a body bag / sled thing, to slide down it, people were breaking bones. At the bottom the “artwork” that interprets the forest was pretty second rate except for the piece titled *The Green Room*. Whilst we could argue that all this development is part of the “death by a thousand

cuts” really the ecological impact is quite small. In reality we cavers should have objected to this development not on environmental grounds but on the grounds that it was just a dumb idea, much of it is ugly and it was never going to be profitable.

The other contentious development in the Tarkine is the Western Explorer, the so- called “road to nowhere”. Again we should have boycotted this on the grounds that it violates the environment and is a thinly disguised excuse to get forestry roads into otherwise untouched areas, thereby making more resource available. Indeed there are sections where we realised that we were driving down a corridor of trees beside the road and that beyond the proximal 20 metres there was the usual Tasmanian devastation. At Lake Chisholm and Milkshake Hills further north in the Tarkine there is the veneer of “Forestry Tasmania –managing for multiple uses”. These remnants that disguise the tree-mining, assuage the guilt of the megalomaniacs and fool the odd tourist are insulting to us all.

The current Bartlett Government proposal to put in a M\$25 Tarkine Loop Road is no doubt a free-kick to forestry, disguised in the budget because it is funded as tourist infrastructure. The purported thousands visitors each year equates to hundreds of people per day doing the trip, every day of the year and this is just isn't going to happen. On our trip down the Western Explorer, during Tasmanian school holidays, we saw only two other cars and a bike, a total of eight people! And whilst the Government might find the money to build this road they probably won't fund its maintenance. To my way of thinking there are better things to spend the money on, even karst management at Hastings, now that poor cousin of Forestry, at Ida Bay and Mole Creek ... and don't forget that there is no legal obligation for Forestry Tasmania to behave itself in the Junee-Florentine. Actually, it would be good if they completed their obligations as cave managers for Welcome Stranger, Shooting Star Cave and Riveaux Cave.

Possibly an unexpected highlight of our tour of Tassy was the wattle trees in flower all around the state. I just didn't expect so many and that they would be so beautiful this time of year.



Given name	Family name	Postal Address	Phone (H)	Phone (W)	Mobile	E-mail
Members						
Guy	Bannink	52 Grays Rd, Ferntree 7054		6220 2456	0438 551 079	gbannink@bigpond.net.au
Cynthia	Benjamin	33 Coolamon Rd, Taroona 7053			0449 183 850	cynben@hotmail.com
Serena	Benjamin	33 Coolamon Rd, Taroona 7053			0449 183 936	serenab@utas.edu.au
Damian	Bidgood	54 Cornwall St, Rose Bay 7015			0400 217 117	damian.bidgood@police.tas.gov.au
Claire	Brett	4 Clutha Pl, South Hobart 7004	6223 1717		0419 731 969	clairemday@hotmail.com
Gavin	Brett	4 Clutha Pl, South Hobart 7004	6223 1717			gavinbrett@inet.com.au
Andrew	Briggs	2/28 Sawyer Ave, West Moonah 7008	6228 9956	6220 3133		andrew.briggs@hobart.tased.edu.au
Paul	Brooker	19 Franklin St, Morwell VIC 3840			0418 384 245	paul@pitchblack.com.au
Matt	Bruers	1/35 Proctors Rd, Dynnyrne 7005		6213 4333	0403 435 689	matt.bruers@roaring40s.com
Kathryn	Bunton	PO Box 198, North Hobart 7002				
Stephen	Bunton	PO Box 198, North Hobart 7002	6278 2398	6210 2200		sbunton@friends.tas.edu.au
Liz	Canning	124 Wentworth St, South Hobart 7004	6223 7088	6233 6176		Elizabeth.Canning@dpiw.tas.gov.au
Siobhan	Carter	17 Darling Pde, Mt. Stuart 7000	6228 2099			kstokescarter@gmail.com
Chris	Chad	20 Acton Crt, Acton Park 7170	6248 6990	6230 5838	0437 125 615	chris.chad@hydro.com.au
Arthur	Clarke	17 Darling Pde, Mt. Stuart 7000	6228 2099	6298 1107		arthurc@southcom.com.au
Matt	Cracknell	117 Channel Hwy, Taroona 7053			0409 438 924	crowdang@yahoo.co.uk
Pat	Culberg	PO Box 122 Lindisfarne 7015	6243 0546			
Tony	Culberg	PO Box 122, Lindisfarne 7015	6243 0546			culbergf@bigpond.com
Jol	Desmarchelier	6 Mackennal St, Lyneham ACT 2602				jol.desmarchelier@anu.edu.au
Rien	De Vries	45A Mill Road, Collinsvale 7012	6239 0497			
Rolan	Eberhard	18 Fergusson Ave, Tinderbox 7054		6233 6455		Rolan.Eberhard@dpiw.tas.gov.au
Stefan	Eberhard	PO Box 280, North Beach WA 6020		08 9203 9551	0401 436 968	stefan@subterraneanecology.com.au
Sarah	Gilbert	1/6 Hillside Crescent, West Hobart 7000	6234 2302			sgilbert@utas.edu.au
Albert	Goede	69 Esplanade, Rose Bay 7015	6243 7319			goede@inet.net.au
Klaudia	Hayes	Overseas ...			0409 521 104	klaudiamarte@yahoo.de
Kent	Henderson	PO Box 332, Williamstown, VIC 3016	9398 0598	9398 0598	0407 039 887	kenthen@optushome.com.au
Fran	Hosking	PO Box 558, Sandy Bay 7006	6223 8031	6231 2434	0418 122 009	fhosking@utas.edu.au
Kenneth	Hosking	PO Box 558, Sandy Bay 7006	6224 7744	6231 2434	0418 122 009	hosking@netspace.net.au
Ian	Houshold	134 Fairy Glen Rd, Collinsvale 7012			0419 744 500	ian.houshold@dpiw.tas.gov.au
Alan	Jackson	45 Gormanston Road, Moonah 7009		6231 5474	0419 245 418	alan.jackson@lms.com.au
Max	Jeffries	c/o Helen Maddox, PO Box 618, New Norfolk				
Warrick	Jordan	22 Wellersley St, South Hobart 7004			0418 684 383	warrickjordan@gmail.com
Simon	Kendrick	1283 Glen Huon Rd, Judbury 7109	6266 0016	6234 7877	0414 908 466	kend_sim@yahoo.com.au
Andreas	Klocker	182 Pottery Rd, Lenah Valley 7008		6232 5335	0404 197 887	andreas.klocker@csiro.au
AnnChie	Kloow	6 Mackennal St, Lyneham ACT 2602				jol.desmarchelier@anu.edu.au
Ron	Mann	10 Swinton Pl, Rose Bay 7015	6243 0060	6220 5246		
Janine	McKinnon	PO Box 1440, Lindisfarne 7015	6243 5415		0427 889 965	jmckinnon@tassie.net.au
Greg	Middleton	PO Box 269, Sandy Bay 7006	6223 1400		0458 507 480	ozspeleo@bigpond.net.au
Dean	Morgan	44 Forest Oak Dve, Upper Coomera, QLD 4209		07 5526 2244	0407 738 777	DeanM@resco.com.au
Steve	Phipps	5/460 Como Parade West, Mordialloc VIC	03 9580 6959	03 9239 4532	0422 460 695	sjphipps@csiro.au
Tom	Porritt	PO Box 60, Millaa Millaa, QLD	07 4056 5921	07 4056 5921		
Dale	Pregnell	10 Englefield Drive, Margate 7054	6267 1838		0418 587 641	dalepregnell@bigpond.com
Jane	Pulford	405 Liverpool St, Hobart 7000	6231 1921		0437 662 599	jpulford@yahoo.com
Dave	Rasch	25 Delta Avenue, Taroona 7053	6227 9056			dave_rasch@hotmail.com
Ivan	Riley	3B Aberdeen St, Glebe 7000	6234 5058	6223 9714	0427 626 697	iriley@telstra.com
Amy	Robertson	PO Box 177, Geeveston 7116	6297 9999		0407 651 200	amyware@yahoo.com
Dion	Robertson	PO Box 177, Geeveston 7116			0428 326 062	dion.robertson@forestrytas.com.au
Adrian	Slee	19 Audley St, North Hobart 7000			0458 545 788	rapidgeo@gmail.com
Aleks	Terauds	60 Belair St, Howrah 7018	6244 3406	6244 3406		aleks.terauds@optusnet.com.au
Richard	Tunney	PO Box 1440, Lindisfarne 7015	6243 5415		0427 889 965	rtunney@tassie.net.au
Tony	Veness	405 Liverpool St, Hobart 7000	6231 1921		0409 013 126	Tony.Veness@csiro.au
Trevor	Wailes	214 Summerleas Rd, Kingston 7054	6229 1382	6229 1382		trite@ozemail.com.au
David	Wilson	2/7 Summer Crt, Mt Nelson 7007	6224 5383	6232 3322	0447 114 667	david.wilson@aad.gov.au
Geoffrey	Wise	1/213 New Town Rd, New Town 7008			0408 108 984	geoff.wise@onecare.org.au
Friends of STC						
Bob	Cockerill	14 Aruma St, Mornington Heights 7018	6244 2439			susancockerill@hotmail.com
Mike	Cole	1/17 Twentysecond Ave, Sawtell, NSW 2425	02 9544 0207		0408 500 053	mikecole@tpg.com.au
Brian	Collin	66 Wentworth St, South Hobart 7004	6223 1920			
Chris	Davies	3 Alfred St, New Town 7008	6228 0228			
Therese	Gatenby	PO Box 153, Orford 7190			0428 391 432	pelicansrest@yahoo.com.au
Steve	Harris	17 Derwentwater Ave, Sandy Bay 7005				
Nick	Hume	202A Nelson Rd, Mt. Nelson 7007				
Phil	Jackson	8 Malunna Rd, Lindisfarne 7015	6243 7038			
Barry	James	52 Edge Rd, Lenah Valley 7008	6228 4787			
Kevin	Kiernan		6239 1494	6226 2461		Kevin.Kiernan@utas.edu.au