

SPEIEO SPIEL 376

January - February 2010



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@iinet.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>

Front Cover: Alan ponders tags, entrances, 'zero' points and shattered dreams at the entrance to Niggly Cave. *Photo by G. Brett*

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

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Editorial

2010 is upon us. Do something with it. (A short spiel for a long *Spiel*).

Alan Jackson

Letter to the Editor

Dear Ed,

On a recent visit to the entrance of Niggly Cave I noticed that the cave tag was mounted quite high on the wall above the lip of the entrance [see cover photo]. I measured this height to be 2.4 m. On consulting the survey data, the highest point in the survey is named JF237, i.e. the tag. This is an unfortunate situation as it will reduce the depth of the cave from 374.8 to 372.4, which now places it third on the deepest list just after Anne-A-Kananda.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Brett

(Co-Current Australian Cave Depth Record Holder)

Editor's Response

Dear Gavin,

I must admit I share your concern and thank you for bringing it to our attention – I guess at the time the explorers felt the need to squeeze a few extra metres out of the survey to get Niggly's nose in front of Anne-A-Kananda. I'm afraid those Eberhards will stop at nothing to defend their honour and retain bragging rights, so I won't be surprised if we see some more devious manipulation of the Niggly survey data in the near future in an attempt to (and I quote Rolan Eberhard from a recent conversation you had with him) "restore it to its rightful place." Who knows where it will stop. I will make sure that Ric Tunney gets an updated deepest caves list to me for the next Spiel.

Thanks

Editor

(Co-Current Australian Cave Depth Record Holder)

Stuff 'n Stuff

2010 MEMBERSHIP

Sarah sent this out via email recently. I thought I'd reprint it here to help bed the message in:

It's that time of year again. You are all invited to renew your annual memberships for 2010, to expire 31-Mar-2011.

This reminder is a little earlier than normal this year as the ASF is becoming more strict with their membership payments. Once your current membership expires on 1-April-2010, if you haven't paid your membership you will not be covered by insurance, no ifs, no buts, no exceptions. This means you won't be able to participate in club trips until you have renewed your membership.

I'll be accepting cash & cheques at the February GBM (Wed 3-Feb) as well as the March AGM (Wed 3-Mar). For EFT anytime from now on is fine.

Membership early bird rates including ASF component as follows:

Single - \$85

Concession (Student/pensioner/junior) - \$71

Household - \$150

Introductory (3 months) - \$30

Active Life member - \$45 (STC pays \$23 to ASF for you)

Inactive Life member - \$0 (STC pays \$23 to ASF for you)

STC only memberships (for inactive cavers or existing members of ASF)

Single - \$17

Concession (Student/pensioner/junior) - \$10

Household - \$28.50

For an additional \$15 Alan can send you a printed copy of *Speleo Spiel*.

(free electronic versions available via the website).

Please forward payments either:

1) with a cheque payable to 'Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc' by mail to:

STC, PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, TAS, 7006

2) by electronic funds transfer to the 'Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc'

account at the Commonwealth Bank: BSB 067000, account number 10162123. So I can keep track of things, PLEASE make sure you add your name into the comments/reference section when making a payment, and send me an email to let me know you have transferred the money.

3) cash or cheque in person at the February GBM (Wed 3-Feb) or the March AGM (Wed 3-Mar)

Thanks in advance, your treasurer

Sarah

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING COMETH!

The AGM is on Wednesday March 3rd – traditionally **the AGM starts at 7:30 pm** (instead of the usual 8 pm for GBMs). The venue is Arthur Clarke's residence – 17 Darling Parade, Mt Stuart. Most positions are able to roll over if the incumbents are happy to do so, except President. Matt has served his three years without parole (and a fine three years they have been – good job Matt). A little birdie told me that we currently have a very ambitious Vice President who has been preparing to stage a coup to unseat the current President, so probably what we really need is a new Vice President.

JF-238 CASAMASSIMA NAME ORIGIN?

Greg Middleton got me interested in cave name origins a few years back but Casamassima interested me long before Greg taught me how anal one can really be on the topic.

Nick Hume discovered the cave on February 10th 1990 with Leigh Douglas (SS257:10-11). With a little help from Google it can be demonstrated that Casamassima is a town in the Bari Province of Italy. The surrounding geology is limestone and the town is located in the *Conca di Bari* – Bari Basin – essentially a freakin' great karst depression. I figured that this was a pretty good link – JF-238 is a pretty large doline and entrance (and the local possums speak Italian).

I've been walking past the cave numerous times in the last few weeks and it has sparked my interest in the origin of the name. In between my initial interest and finally

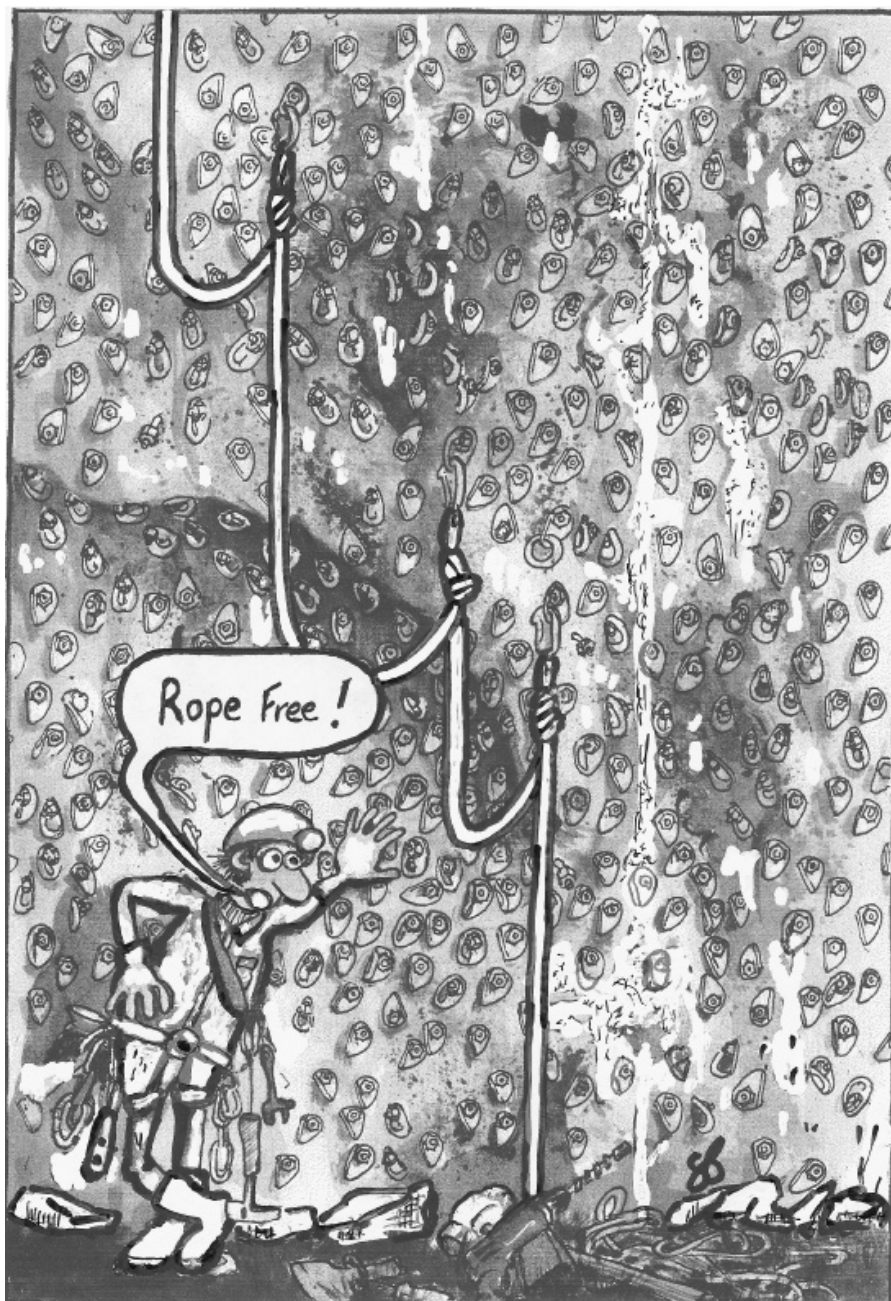
viewing the cave I have met and acquired the email address of the cave's discoverer – Nick Hume (all sympathy cards are welcome). I thought Nick might be some use – i.e. was going to recall his trip to southern Italy and so forth. Instead I got: *“Some mystery person used to put interesting words up on the whiteboard in Psych 1. Psychomachia was another one that took my fancy. Haven't the foggiest what they mean, but it dates the cave naming at some time around first or second year uni, for me, ie 1988 - 1989.”*

So, the jury's still out on the origin of this name. Nick isn't clear about if he was a psych *student* or *patient* at the time – resolving this question could narrow it down. At the very least we've short-listed another good cave name which Bunty and I will use as soon as we deem appropriate – Psychomachia.

CAVING AREA PROTECTIONISM

I recently discovered this sign while completing a weed survey for a northern Tasmanian mine, admittedly not far

from the Mt Cripps karst. I'm not sure if it's a hangover from the competitive days of SCS versus TCC, or if SRCC have located a new karst area and are concerned about pirates from the south.



When not plagiarising cartoons, Bunty likes Pina Coladas, getting caught in the rain and spending time holed-up under his house in the 'Bunt Cave'. The doorway to the 'Bunt Cave' – which even Janine would have to duck her head to walk through – now sports a bat motif. What relevance bats have to Tasmanian caving is lost on me, but Bunty's excited about it and I have a gap to fill – I really couldn't justify making that cartoon on the left any bigger. Now, if I could just find something to fill this awkward gap below this text box ...

Trip Reports

IB-9 Big Tree Pot – A Midsummer's Daydream

Matt Cracknell

12 December 2009

Characters: Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Janine McKinnon

SCENE 1

The black Subaru arrives at Taroona to collect Matt.

JANINE: (*Jumping out of car as her legs do not reach the ground*) Hi Matt, have you got all the ropes?

MATT: Only if you brought the 40 m?

JANINE: No

MATT: (*To Serena*) I thought you were going to ask her to bring it?!

SERENA: I thought you were going to do that?

MATT: (*Shaking his head in disbelief*) But you rang Janine yesterday to organise pick up times. No worries, I have a 45 m that will do fine.

All participants get into the car having loaded up the appropriate gear and quickly fasten their seatbelts in anticipation of Janine's digital driving prowess.



Matt doing Yoga in Scene 2.

SCENE 2

Our intrepid cavers crawl out of the car at Mystery Creek Cave carpark. Serena and Matt hug the ground and quietly thank their deities for a safe arrival.

MATT: I hope that we have all the gear that we need. Serena, are you sure that you got all the gear we picked up from Gavin's?

SERENA: Yep, I brought everything mentioned in Jeff's trip report.

JANINE: Jeff's report? I have Alan's most recent one here.

SERENA: Oh, my search engine didn't pick that one out.

JANINE: Luckily I brought our bolting bag. There are a couple of spits that need bolts and plates.

SERENA: Yep that is lucky ... who wants to carry the rope for the big pitch?

An eerie silence descends upon the group.

MATT: Alright I will carry the pig. I need the training if I am gonna follow Alan into Niggly this summer.

SCENE 3

Big Tree Pot entrance

SERENA: Hey Janine do you remember there being a cave here somewhere before? There seems to be a lot of mud and crap in here instead.

Serena begins kicking crap out of the way to eventually reveal a cave. Several eons later all are safely into the cave. Janine and Matt sit back to watch Serena deliberate over the rigging.

MATT: (*Quietly to Janine*) Can you give me a hand to adjust the rigging? She has made it too tight.

JANINE: Sure but wait till she is out of earshot.

A couple of minutes later as Serena frags around with the rigging on the next pitch.

MATT: I love you Serena.

SERENA: (*Confused*) That's nice Matt.

MATT: Um, please don't kill us.

SERENA: F...ing hell Matt, don't patronise me, if you have a problem with the rigging tell me to my face!

JANINE: Whoa there guys, you are acting like a bickering married couple. And I should know, Ric and I have been doing it for years.

Eventually Serena dresses her knots and all make it safely to the next pitch.

MATT: (*Moving a large boulder with his knee, the one that Serena is eyeing off as a tie back*) Serena, I hope you weren't considering this as an anchor?

SERENA: Yep, is there anything wrong with it?

MATT: Err, it seems to be a wee bit mobile.

SERENA: Oh yeah it does now that you mention it.

SCENE 4

Having appropriately chosen the correct main anchors, Serena leads the increasingly excitable participants toward the BIG pitch.

JANINE: Alan's notes suggest that a 110 m rope is sufficient to rig the approach and drop the 90 m.

MATT: Oh shit, the rope in my bag is only 97 m! Serena, you are so lame. We will have to cross a knot at the bottom of the rope. Why couldn't you find the correct rigging notes!

SERENA: Shut up Matt! I am in charge here, everything will be fine. Pass me the end of the rope and I will sort it out.

Several minutes later Serena is dangling in space (where no one can hear you scream). Matt in the corner is attempting to prevent himself from hyperventilating.

JANINE: Are you OK Matt?

MATT: *(Weakly)* Yes I am fine but I may never poo again. I think my sphincter has got cramp.

Moments later Matt too is dangling in space, slowly descending to the bottom of the awesomely big pitch.

SERENA: *(Triumphantly)* Ha Ha. The rope was perfectly chosen Matt. LOOK! *(Pointing to the knot gently bobbing on the floor)*. Ah well, now it is time to get out of here.

Less than an hour later, all three cavers are together once again, although Matt still has to derig and get back to safety.

SERENA: Hey Matt, you slow poke. It took you 18 minutes while Janine and I only took 16 minutes to get up.

MATT: Please don't talk to me, I am trying not to fall to my death.

JANINE: A 90 m fall is really no different to 10 m fall Matt. It's not the fall that kills you, it's the sudden stop at the end.

MATT: You are not helping

Moments later Matt is carefully negotiating the traverse. Then when he is almost back to safety he stops.

MATT: F..k, I am snagged. I am going to have to go back!

Matt gingerly steps backward to unhook the rope looped under a poorly placed rock projection.

MATT: That was nasty!

SERENA: You are soooo lame Matt!

MATT: Give it up Serena. You were the one who didn't want to derig! Just help me put this pile of spaghetti back into the bag.

Matt heads out in front with his large and cumbersome pig. Serena and Janine follow derigging as they go



Matt eating pie at the bottom of the 90 m pitch.



The Big Stal at the top of the Big Pitch in Big Tree Pot.

M. Cracknell

SCENE 5

A couple of hours later on the surface – it is raining.

JANINE: It's raining!

MATT: *(Having been sitting in the rain for some time now)* How observant of you Janine, you should have been a meteorologist.

JANINE: Careful Matt, I still have to drive you home.

SCENE 6

All have bundled back into the black Subaru. Serena and Matt are reluctantly anticipating the wild ride home. Moments later Janine is respectfully tailgating a Winnebago.

SERENA: Janine there are double white lines and a blind corner approaching. Now's your chance to overtake!

MATT: *(Holding on for grim death)* Yeah now now now!

Fades to black.

JF-237 Niggly Cave

Alan Jackson

20 December 2009

Party: Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

All the young'ns were off bushwalking and the like, so it was up to the "Dad's Army" section of the club to get the ball rolling in Niggly. Having turned 30 the previous day, I figured I was just old enough to be considered "Dad's Army".

We made it up the hill in an hour (the two days of track work is paying dividends) and set to work on the first pitch. We had decided to replace the ageing bolts (circa 1990) with long-life stainless steel glue-ins, which meant a lot more gear and weight. We drilled holes on the way in and filled them on the way out.

Pitch one has a single spit (placed in a most bizarre spot) – we drilled a hole in a much more sensible spot, to compliment a nice natural jug nearby and then rigged down off the old bolt. A short section of annoying but interesting passage later and we were at the second pitch. We replaced the two spits with new holes in very similar locations. Tigertooth Passage was next, which is very interesting and quite pretty, but quite annoyingly long and catchy too. Once the arse dropped out of the passage Bunty indicated that we should stay high and proceed to the nasty traverse over the ~85 m pitch. This was somewhat ball-tinkling (for those with balls). Janine (being more vertically challenged than the rest of us) baulked at the first wide bit and Ric indicated that he wasn't having a bar of it either. I spotted a chicken-route up over some flowstone beside the gaping chasm and they both happily scrambled over that instead. The following ~40 m is a 'bottomless' traverse as well, but the passage is narrower. It was still exciting (with loose, sloping, friable ledges) and Ric had had enough about half way along. He handed over his share of the gear and headed for the entrance. It certainly isn't the most warm and inviting bit of passage – not for the feint-hearted!

The remaining three made our way to the end of the traverse and then zigzagged our way down to the floor about 10 m below. Time for pitch three. This was rigged with a single spit up high on the right and then a second single spit on the left down lower. There was a rebelay spit about 8 m down over the edge and the rub was pretty crap by the time you got there. I came back and we agonised over bolt placements for some time. Eventually we placed two holes on the left hand wall a metre or so further back from the pitch than the second spit. Another hole was placed high on the left hand wall (above an undercut/overhang) which would provide a much nicer approach to the rebelay down lower. I imagine this placement could be used as a rebelay or a redirect. Another hole was then placed at the rebelay (next to the old spit).

The first short drop of the next pitch is all on good naturals, followed by a single spit for the longer second drop. We drilled a hole near the original spit and ran out of batteries with 2 mm to go. The last little bit was done using the drill bit and a hammer! We then rigged the next pitch (last one before the 190 m) but the rope came up 2 m short so I couldn't get off it. This pitch started on two good naturals and then a single spit out on the vertical wall. I think I'll replace this single spit with two glue-ins.

We headed out, swapping the ropes on the last two pitches and gluing the new bolts as we went. It was quite a long trip in the end (9 hrs underground) but it was still daylight when we rendezvoused with Ric at the car (who'd found the book Bunty had brought along just in case he hadn't fitted through the tight bit below the first pitch!) So it looks like six more bolts will be required (two on the fifth pitch, two on the approach to the big pitch and then the two final anchors for the big one). Next trip should see the last of the bolts installed, all the bolts tested, the rigging swapped over to the new bolts and the 200 m pitch rigged. Then we're good to go for the bottom on the following trip!

Thanks very much to the old farts for helping with the donkey work. Even Ric's 'halfway' effort meant that the rest of us didn't have to struggle with stupidly heavy and full bags through the worst of the narrow passages.

JF-37 Pendant Pot

Janine McKinnon

24 December 2009

Party: Ric Tunney, Trent Ford, Janine McKinnon.

I appear to have discovered a method for gaining new, active members for the club. This is as opposed to the new, very little, if ever, non-active members we so frequently get by the old "come to a meeting, join up and maybe go caving ... or not," method we usually see.

This is the second new member who has contacted me directly first, done their SRT training session, and gone on a vertical trip, all before making it to a meeting.

Seems a very successful method to me, albeit on a very small sample pool.

So I thought we'd keep the innovating theme going by taking Trent to Pendant Pot as his first trip with the club. Now I'm not totally silly, despite opinions to the contrary.

We weren't planning to go to the bottom and we had a belay rope for Pandemonium Rift.

I headed in first and we all gathered at the top of the initial prusik up into the entrance. I then moved through the Bunty sieve and rigged the first pitch. I used a trace, as suggested by both Alan and Gavin, as the lip is a bit sharp and it partly cut through a tape on the last trip there. Admittedly about four times the number of cavers passed up and down it on that trip, but better safe than sorry.

Trent and I both free-climbed Pandemonium Rift, on belay, and Ric abseiled down. I have to say that in the future I don't think I'll bother with the belay though. After the unbelayed rift climbing and traverse I've done since in Niggly, Pandemonium Rift is a doddle. Good rock and plenty of holds.

We were at the top of Pel Mel within an hour of entering the cave, and as everyone was still keen, I started rigging the pitch. We only had enough rope to do this pitch and so the plan was to bottom the pitch and then head out (pretty obvious plan really). I had brought a 48 m rope for this (the

pitch is 40 m) as I thought it would be enough and the next size up in the gear store was 70 m. I should have brought a separate rope for the initial traverse. By the time I put two sets of bunny ears in at the top of the pitch the rope wasn't long enough to reach the bottom.

Oh well.

We all went down to the big ledge half way down and then started out.

The trip out was easy and smooth. Trent really enjoyed the climb up Pandemonium Rift.

It was a very non-pandemoniumy day in the rift. I don't recollect a single rock being dislodged down it. We might have to rename it "Once Was Pandemonium Rift".

Ric realised as he prusiked up the first pitch that Trent hadn't done a single hanging rebelay all day. This had to be remedied and so Ric put one in.

The whole trip took something like 4 hours.

Trent seemed to have enjoyed himself as he popped up on a trip to Zulu Pot the following week.

Yep, this is looking like a good way to recruit newbies who actually go caving. That, or we filter them out fast! Alan's style must be rubbing off on me a bit ... That's a worry.

JF-215 Zulu Pot

Alan Jackson

28 December 2009

Party: Stephen Bunton, Chris Chad, Trent Ford, Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson

~40 m pitch, ~60 m deep, climb/traverse to unexplored passage required – that was what Ken had told me. We figured it sounded suitable for beginners too, so Chris and Trent tagged along too. We started on the western (left) branch of Chrisps Rd and more or less headed up the ridge on the nose of Cave Hill. Just above a little plateau we encountered a limestone bluff with lots of weird phreatic holes in it. We couldn't see a number tag so I suited up to investigate while the others (except Trent) continued up to find Zulu. Chris went right to avoid the cliff while the others went left. I popped in (wearing a balaclava to filter the millions of small flying insects residing in the cave) and looked about. It was interesting, with one low lead heading into the hill, but not overly exciting. We discussed the merits of tagging it but decided to defer that decision till the way out. Trent and I also took the left route and joined the others at Zulu.

It had been laddered originally so I had the drill with me to make it SRT friendly. Several natural anchors provided a good approach down the initial steep ramp. Where the pitch went seriously vertical there were a few razor-sharp natural spikes I could see. The first one snapped off and the second, higher one was difficult to reach. I took the soft option and placed two bolts on the left wall. This got me down about 15 m to a rub, from which I could see a further 8 m or so to a large ledge/blockage of the rift. I placed a single bolt redirect here which got me to the ledge with only a small rub on the other wall. I then climbed the small mound at the end of the blockage and continued down the next steep slope. The pitch goes vertical again here so I placed another two bolts on the left wall. This was a trickier rebelay as it was free hanging and quite a bit sideways from the redirect above. From here the rift flares out wide into a beautiful chamber totally covered with moonmilk (the soft squishy stuff). It was lovely. There was then a further 8 m drop or so down a steep slope that I continued down on without any intermediate anchors. A short climb from here led to the final ~6 m or so pitch. The

traverse lead was obvious from the top of this little climb down also.

The other four joined me without much drama and then I tackled the traverse. I used the rope from the pitch above me as a safety and then looped a tape around a large nose of rock. I clipped the etriers into this tape and climbed up. It was easy to scramble around the nose and stand comfortably. I then placed a single bolt to protect the step across to the other side and scrambled up the rubble slope. The passage continued up for 20 m or so and then dropped again into the floor of a large aven. The floor had quite a lot of small bits of timber and the like (and many tree roots in the aven above) so there may be a another small entrance up above. I attempted a climb up a mud/moonmilk bank to access a phreatic passage I could see 7 or 8 metres up but it got too steep and sketchy so I bailed. I headed back out, derigging the traverse.

Bunty and Ken headed out while the rest of us rigged the last little pitch. Chris also located a tight rift climb nearby which he kindly let me tackle. I detected a light draft and made it about 6 metres down but it then became very tight – still passable but it would have been very hard to get back up with gravity no longer in assist mode. We then all headed out. The beginners didn't do a bad job considering the less than simple rebelay on the ~40 m pitch.

On the surface we wandered about looking for Pygmy Cave. Bunty headed east and downslope a little bit and located JF-68 (a TCC cave in the thick of SCS territory). Apparently it's a ~15 m pit and our rock-dropping suggested the same. Trent and I headed back out to tag the little cave we'd found on the way up the hill. We placed the tag but then while waiting for the others to turn up I had a look at Chris's route up the right hand side of the cliff. There was a cave entrance and the JF-214 tag glaring back at me ... We pulled the tag off the other feature (since it's only 7 m from Pygmy) and bagged out Chris for being blind once the others got down to us. Back at the cars we ran into Jacko, Will and 'the boy', who had spent the day surface surveying from the road into JF-216 Dementia Den (SCS is watching!) – pity we never see any trip reports though (nothing ever changes ...) There is a new permanent station on the side of Chrisps Road – entered as CHD1 in the GPS.

A good day out – suitable for beginner SRT in the future.

JF-237 Niggly Cave

Alan Jackson

30 December 2009

Party: Matt Cracknell, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon

I'd managed to con Janine into another trip and Matt joined at the last minute. We also had some 'tag-alongs' with us in the form of two Sydney-siders, Peter and Steph, who were holidaying in Tasmania. I'd helped them out with instructions and maps for Midnight Hole so they were returning the favour by lugging gear up the hill for us. Peter joined us as far as the top of the second pitch and then turned around, expecting to fill the rest of the day with a drive up Tim Shea, walk to Growling Swallet and whatever else took their fancy.

Bags were heavy and progress was slow. Matt had the burden of the 200 m rope on its whiz-bang 'cotton-reel' I'd made out of the original rope reel. It was heavy and awkward, as were the other two bags with drill, glue gear and test rig ...



The 200 m roll of 9.5 mm.

All the previous trip's bolts passed the test and the rigging was changed over. With the ropes swapped around on the two pitches prior to the 190, I was able to actually get off the rope at the bottom of the ~25 m pitch this time. This now had a ~42 m rope on it so I was able to continue it all the way down the approach slope to the 190. I located the single spit on the nose of rock but didn't know what to do next. I added a dubious natural into the mix and then abseiled down the slope to the pitch. This route didn't seem trogged enough and I couldn't make out any spits over the edge. I went back to the bolt and then followed the trog marks, which went round the nose of rock and up the other side into the higher level of the large chamber. It was

an interesting free-climb, considering a mistake would have been followed by a tumble and a prayer that the rope didn't break as you hurtled over the edge of the 190 m drop awaiting you ... No such tumble occurred and I tied the other end of the rope off to a large boulder at the top of the slope so the others had a hand line secured at both ends to use.



Janine on the nasty traverse.

A bit of a search around in the chamber located the two spits at the top of the 190 launch pad. I put a hanger in the first one and screwed it in ... and screwed it in, and screwed it in. It seemed to be taking a lot longer than usual so I looked more closely. Ah, good, the whole casing was spinning around in the rock! So that's why we're replacing the bolts! I lassoed one of the large boulders nearby and set up a three-way tie with the 'good' spit and the not-so-good one. With heart in mouth I abseiled down to the rebelay a few metres down. What I found horrified me. The bolt location certainly gives a great hang but the nose of rock used is the end of an enormous boulder jammed in the base of the rockfall/collapse perched over the pitch. There was a lot of the rock visible and it was hard to tell how much of it was firmly wedged amongst the collapse. I looked about for an alternative based in bedrock but couldn't find anything I was really happy with. I figured that the old anchor had worked in the past and that the rock had to weigh at least 40-50 tonne, so dangling an extra 200 kg shouldn't break the bank. I sang silly songs while drilling the new bolt placements to distract me from the void I was hanging over.

Two holes were also drilled at the start of the pitch, one to replace the single spit for the traverse/climb around the nose and a single bolt to replace the single spit on the previous ~25 m pitch. I would have liked to have placed two new bolts here but the only bolt I had left was an old-

style p-hanger which needed an 18 mm hole – the batteries died before the hole was deep enough. Using both the new bolt and the old spit will be good enough.

All the new bolts passed the test so we headed out – the old spit on the 190 was pulled out (by hand) and deposited in Bunty's collection of caving momentos. It was a nice slow but steady pace and we were back on the surface around 20:45 and back at the cars in the dark – about a 10 hr trip. Now for the big one!

Alan and Janine placing bolts at the head of the 190 m pitch. →



JF-237 Niggly Cave

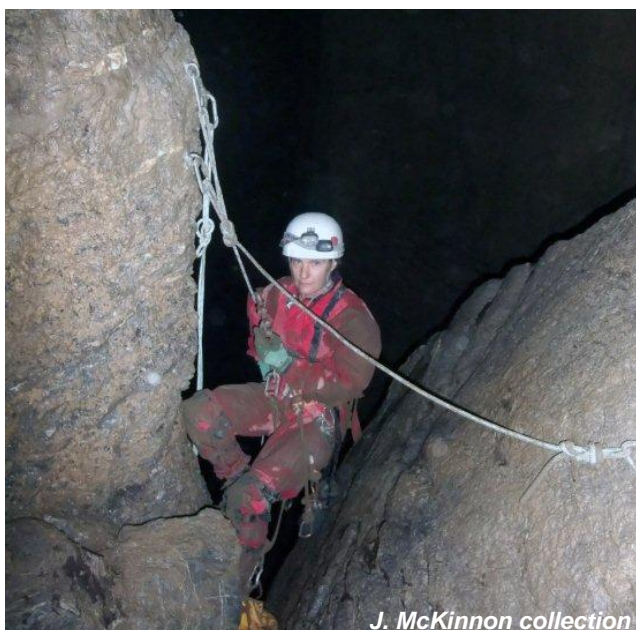
Alan Jackson

8 January 2010

Party: Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon

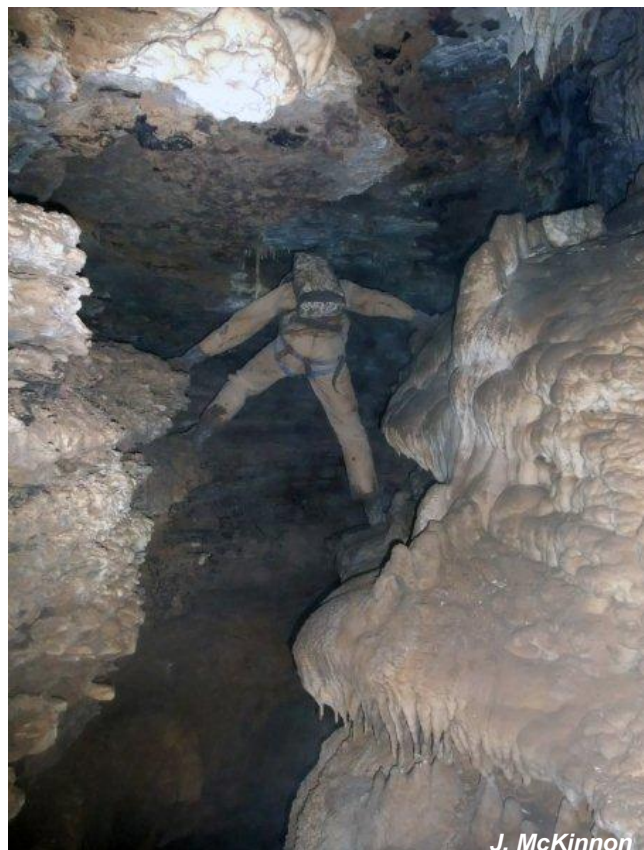
Matt almost came too but found he was double-booked. Damian baled at the last minute when he couldn't get out of a work-related court appearance. Serena initially seemed keen but proved to be totally uncontactable in the few days prior to the trip. Two was an ideal number anyway so Janine and I happily headed off together.

Light packs meant 45 minutes up the hill and relatively pain-free progress to the Black Supergiant. This pitch hadn't been rigged yet so I headed down to the rebelay and tied it all together. I used two krabs on each bolt here to eliminate any rope rub at the knot. To make things easier for Janine (who was worried she wouldn't be strong enough to lift the rope to thread through her descender) I tied up a loop of rope through the top anchors which I would lower down once she was threaded on and all ready to go. Unfortunately I created a tangle and Janine aborted her first attempt. She had a backup method (an ascender on a cord to hold the rope weight while she threaded) so while she had a quick rest I headed down the big pitch first instead.



Janine commencing attempt 1 on the Black Supergiant.

Wowee! There's no point trying to put the combination of sheer beauty, size and psychological terror into words. It's a truly tremendous pitch. I used a Petzl Stop (with a krab in the handle to lock it open) and completed the abseil in 10 minutes (with a few squirts of a water bottle to cool the system down). Janine used a rack and followed it with a safety ascender thingy. This meant she had to have one hand on the safety and only one to pull/feed the rope through the rack – there's quite a bit of rope weight for the first 100m or so! She took 20 minutes to get down.



Alan on the most committing section of the traverse over the 85 m pitch.

I hadn't looked at the survey beforehand but I figured it couldn't be that hard to navigate my way round down there. I wanted to look at all the big chambers and locate the streamway for the following trip. The Mt Niggly chamber and associated side canyon was utterly amazing. To see this back up in a flood would require a phenomenal quantity of water. There were few obvious footprints in the

vast mud banks. A couple of cairns and a roaring draft led us to believe we'd located the passage that heads to the streamway. After a good look round we failed to locate it but we remained suspicious. After 1.5 hours of touring at the bottom we headed back for the pitch.

I took first position and Janine took second. Either Janine is very light or I was just lucky, but I didn't experience the 'cutting in half' problem that previous first position people have written about. Janine, however, did experience the constant shower of mud and dust from me sitting above her. The ascent was much scarier than the descent for me. My mind continuously entertained thoughts of 'too much weight; too skinny rope; maybe there's a rub; fuck it's a long way to fall' etc. After about 60 m I regained my composure and started enjoying it. It was very social!

I had an advantage because I was a bit younger, fitter and got more bang for my buck on each stroke. At one stage I did exactly 20 strokes and then counted how many Janine did to cover the same distance. She took 34! Because she was also taking a little longer to do each 'section' it was allowing me a longer rest period than she was getting so after 190 m it was starting to add up. Our combined time was 55 minutes. The rest of the trip out was pretty easy with such small bags and despite ~45 minutes of stuffing around rigging the big pitch and 1.5 hours of touring at the bottom, we were back on the surface only 8.5 hours after heading in. We got back to Hobart in daylight! I checked the survey at home and the low, wide, muddy passage with the roaring draft was indeed the way to the streamway. Next time.

IB-41 Leech Pot

Amy Robertson

10 January 2010

Party: Sarah Gilbert, Norm Poulter, Amy Robertson, Adrian Slee

It was back to IB-41 Leech Pot for Sarah and I, after our 2007 descent that had confirmed a link with Hooks Hole and discovered a significant new extension, which was subsequently surveyed via the more spacious IB-26 entrance. We needed to tie up the loose end and survey from the connection back to the tag, and maybe confirm whether there was any other link to entrances further north along this side of the valley feature.

Norm and Adrian accompanied us for a 'leisurely' trip, and after rigging the entrance pitch we headed through the tight 'wombat hole' and down the pitch to the small chamber. A rebelay was set up and we proceeded into the main Hooks Hole aven, where it proved surprisingly easy to relocate our unmarked survey stations from the previous survey. Mustn't be too bad at it then I guess.

Norm headed back up – still excited about an 'in-cave' pitch (there's the obvious WA influence) – to play peekaboo at us from the two connections. Then the rest of us surveyed and drew up to the chamber. Sarah encouraged us into the narrow rift passage that headed off to the north, and cunningly manoeuvred Norm in front to ID the nasty survey points, while I shuffled along behind scribbling. Adrian could be heard back in the chamber calmly volunteering not to follow us in. At the end of the rift a little chamber with a 3 metre climb to an ascending passage looked inviting but the rock was very crumbly and

despite support I gave up halfway – surely it would be easier to come down from one of those more northern entrances.

Back at the pitch proper I was out first and witness to Adrian's dislike of spiders in close proximity. Weird how I've learned to patiently tolerate them with time; no swearing for me anymore. Then Norm and Sarah were up and we ran a quick couple of legs down to the valley floor just to get a location/depth relative to the cave.

A distracting suggestion and we were off for a surface bash up the hill to locate the Vogels Shaft/Bread Bag Cave entrance, so now nearly half the club knows where it is and it's still undescended and untagged. Not that inviting in Sarah's opinion. Still unfinished business in the area to try to connect an entrance further north to that ascending passage.

The revised Hooks Hole/Leech Pot map (originally published in SS362:19) is on the last page (29). An interesting thing is the obvious alignment of the Hooks entrance series rift and the Leech rift and this seems to also potentially align with the corner aven in Hooks extension, where the direction of that system changes abruptly. I remember Serena also talking about more passage along from the first pitch in Hooks, this would probably head in the direction of that corner aven ... another loose end to tie up! Also interesting was the descending streamway from the Hooks entrance aven, which appears to flow down under the valley outside ... this is in the opposite direction to the new extension, and has reinforced my interest in doing a dye trace to see if that water doubles back into the Hooks extension or continues more directly towards Exit. More questions than answers!

JF-206 – A Consolation Prize

Stephen Bunton

10 January 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton and Ken Hosking.

Nostalgia isn't what it used to be. Certainly Ken and I aren't what we used to be either, neither is the bush on Cave Hill and Chrisps Rd area. This area was logged in the late sixties and it was easy to find the caves. The caves in the area were often visited and their locations were handed down by word of mouth. This was in the days prior to the 1:25,000 map series and GPS. Positioning caves by dead

reckoning and then transferring the grid co-ordinates from the "inch to the mile" or 1:100,000 maps onto more modern maps have meant that not everything is precisely where it should be.

Our mission for the day was to re-find JF-207 Voltera Swallet. The plan of attack for the day was to find JF-203 Bone Pit and go from there. Ken had visited Bone Pit in 1985 and described it as a large entrance in a doline about 100 m from the cars and a pretty easy, open walk.

The location of Bone Pit was in the Club's GPS but it showed as being south west of the end of the road, not due north as marked on the map. Foolishly we followed the

GPS and traversed a loop out anticlockwise to the southwest, east and back to the car. We can confirm that the position of Bone Pit in the GPS was wrong. At least at this stage we could see about 20 m through the bush. Back at the car we decided to follow the map this time and headed north from the road. The vegetation was so dense we could not see more than 5 m in any direction.

After a short while we decided it would be better if we were to put the map co-ordinates into the GPS. This positioned the cave out to the northwest – roughly where Ken remembered it to be, so we headed that way and traced another loop anticlockwise and returned to the car.

At the car I had a second cup of tea and my brain finally clicked into gear. The Club GPS is in GDA 94 and the map is in AGD 66. I recalculated the co-ordinates and “Hey Presto!” the cave was in the right place.

We headed off to the north via a slightly different route, half looking for easier terrain and half so we might find something different. Two JF-X caves are located in this area somewhere. Eventually we found three red/orange tapes in a line heading north-south. Three, no more no less! Then the slope relented and the vegetation changed so we realised we were above the contact. At this point we headed west to the alleged position of Bone Pit. Before long we descended in a promising looking large gully. We encountered a cave and had our hopes up that this was JF-383, the eastern entrance of Bone Pit. The cave had two blue tapes on a thin eucalypt spar across the entrance but unfortunately there was no tag. I put on a helmet and light and descended into the cave down a low-roofed humic slope to where it closed down to less than a squeeze-sized hole between cobbles welded together with grey flowstone. There was no draft. By our notes it could have been JF-X16 (12 m long and 4 m deep) but the description and its position didn’t match well enough. We placed a red biodegradable tape on the entrance log with “JF-X16? KH + SB 13.1.10” which I now realise is not the correct date but there would only be confusion if some poor fool was to go there in the subsequent few days.



What the vegetation used to look like (foreground) and what it looks like now (background).

Around the hill to the left (west) were two more features; a small sloping slot under a 5 m high cliff and a small pit in a dark corner. Neither matched the description of JF-X17. We concluded they were “new” “caves”. We continued over the saddle into the next doline – the one that we hoped would contain Bone Pit – only to hear the sound of running water nearby. This had to be Voltera Swallet and meant that we had to be closer than we thought. The doline we were in had evidence of stream flow. Although the stream wasn’t flowing on this day it appears to sink in its bed only to emerge from under a boulder a few metres away and then to sink at the deepest point in the doline. The cave was on the south side of the doline.



Ken at one of the ‘new’ features (the 5 m high cliff one).

We stopped for lunch and Ken trogged up since the entrance looked a bit thin. I tried to climb up to the right, to what looked like a second entrance, in search of a tag. Ken and I met up inside the entrance and then I climbed out a third, more difficult, entrance further to the right southwest. I found the JF-206 tag on a block between these two less-user-friendly entrances. Ken pushed the cave to its terminus at a small pool. He thought it was a neat cave and given our adventures, he commented that it was the best thing he’d done all day.

A sketch map of JF-206 appears in *Southern Caver* Vol 7. N° 1. This doesn’t do justice to the cave nor does it indicate the three entrances. In the *Karst Index* (Matthews, 1985) the description mentions pitches of 6 m and 9 m. These are not shown on the map and Ken free-climbed them anyway.

From here we had the choice of going to Voltera following the very audible sound of water or finding Bone Pit with the hope that we could at least tape a track to it and progress from there in the future. Given the advanced hour and our slow progress we chose the Bone Pit option. We looked at the GPS and what with our meanderings and the perceived wanderings of the GPS, due to interrupted reception, we had coloured in a large chunk of the map surrounding Bone Pit. We then resorted to dead reckoning again before encountering even worse scrub. We followed the ridge above JF-206 back to the east. The map indicated that Bone Pit should be on our right but the GPS indicated that the cave was back down to the left, in the JF-206 doline. Eventually when we thought we were due north of the cars we gave up, made a beeline down the hill, half hoping to see it on the way. We saw nothing apart from three blue tapes in a line, leading directly uphill or downhill. Three, no more no less! The scrub was so nasty

that Ken thought he'd bring safety glasses next time. Several times we crossed our tracks from earlier in the day without noticing.



Ken at JF-206.

When we returned to the car we were burned and decided that perhaps a burn was probably the best strategy for finding caves in this area, in future.

In the end we failed to find:

JF-207 Voltera Swallet, although we heard water flowing in the vicinity of its supposed location.

JF-203 Bone Pit.

JF-383 Bone Pit's eastern entrance.

JF-204 just west of the end of the road.

JF-205 just east of JF-206.

JF-X16 just north of where we parked the car.

JF-X17 just near JF-X16.

On the way home Ken checked out whether or not his wife's Subaru would make it up to Tassy Pot. I'm not sure what we would have done if it didn't make it! Buoyed by this success we investigated Four Rd up until the point where a fallen black wattle barred further progress.

The final chapter in the day's proceedings was that when I washed my bushwalking shorts, I forgot to empty the pockets and managed to wash the roll of flagging tape and the map. The flagging tape ended up a jumbled mess and the cave locations were erased from the map. Somehow both of these things seemed quite appropriate!

The following day whilst downloading the waypoints from the GPS I discovered it was still set to the wrong datum. No wonder we were lost. Luckily we weren't lost! It also makes the conundrum even stranger. With the wrong datum Bone Pit should have been on our right coming home, not our left – and how can it be uphill from the highest point on the ridge? I vowed never to return except that there are three untagged caves out there to re-find. Wish us luck.

IB-10 Mystery Creek Cave

Bill Nicholson

13 January 2010

Party: Bill, Linda, Liam & Callum Nicholson, Meredith Reardon & Adrian Heard.

A visit to the twilight zone to view some glowworms, water level low, very pleasurable outing.

JF-90 Vandal Cave

Bill Nicholson

16 January 2010

Party: Bill, Liam & Callum Nicholson.

A grotty little hole that has some potential, reasonably close to the Junee Resurgence, and a good introduction to scrub bashing for the boys.

Didn't locate the cave, know where it is, in the bit we didn't look at. We had done enough scrub bashing & I didn't want to turn the experience for the boys into a "don't want to do that again", so came home. Will check it out another day soon.

JF-236 Bunyips Lair, JF-238 Casa-massima *et al.*

Stephen Bunton

17 January 2010

Party: Gavin Brett, Stephen Bunton, Ken Hosking and Geoff Wise.

Jai Ho! Too much Bollywood the night before nearly saw me fall off the log bridge over the JF-398 streamsink for

what would have been a third time. We bade farewell and good luck to Alan and Matt for their Niggly trip. It was the first time Ken and Gavin had been to this neck of the woods. Gavin became excited by the quality of the limestone in the area and then by fact that the tag on Niggly was at a height of two metres. In Gavin's estimation this meant Niggly Cave is two metres shallower than quoted.

Our plan for the day was to place some fluoroscein into Bunyips Lair (JF-236) such that Alan and Matt could see

where it comes into the Niggly streamway. We contoured around to Bunyips Lair following the occasional blue tape, not finding any caves, certainly neither of the two Z-caves reputed to be in this area. At Bunyips Lair, I managed to get most of the dye into the stream but enough onto my clothes to turn the washing water green later that night.



Bunty creates a green bunyip.

We photo-tagged the entrance and I trogged up to do the survey. I shouldn't have bothered too much. Bunyips Lair used to be 15 m deep but isn't anymore. The cave is about the size of a St Bernard's kennel (See map p.20). When it was first explored (SS260:9) a large rock overhung a short pitch. The rock was belayed whilst the pitch was bombed and 10 m of crawly passage explored. After pushing the cave the rock was dropped back into the hole and the cave is now much shorter and shallower.

By the time I had surveyed Bunyips atrium, Ken had stuck his nose into a hole about 20 m to the west. He threw a ladder down the entrance climb and I scrambled down. Meanwhile Gavin was peering into a few holes slightly lower down, calling out and asking about the presence of a draft. At the bottom of the initial drop there was a *Hickmania* with a fantastic eggcase. I climbed back up in the direction of Gavin and into a small chamber where the passage descended again and the draft was definitely not due to the chimney effect. Ken and Gavin wasted no time in joining me. I descended to a tight squeeze that later Gavin was able to pass. His enthusiasm overrode the fact that he had no trogsuit. At the furthest point he reached he could peer down a narrow slot to a pool of water at the lip of a drop. Alas, Gavin could not hear the Bunyips Lair water but the cave was certainly headed in that direction.

This is a hot prospect! Ken was keen to name the cave but at this stage it is probably better to hold off on the naming until the true nature of the cave is revealed. Gavin retrieved a fragile sample of fossilised coral etched by solution of the surrounding rock. Perhaps if it does intersect Bunyips Lair it might be the "Coral Cave" entrance. It was tagged JF-484 and photographed. I have a rough sketch of the cave that can be upgraded when the cave goes and a proper survey is done.

On the way back towards Niggly we traversed lower than the blue taped track. This got us into horizontal scrub and not much else. Gavin found a cave full of "hideous crickets". We tagged it JF-485, photographed it and I surveyed something that was the size of a poodle's kennel although there was a left and a right wing to this miniscule void (See map p.20). I wanted to call it Daves Cave after

Dave the Cricket but only Geoff, who watches far too much TV, understood the reference to the Selley's advertisement. The name would be lost on future generations, let alone Greg Middleton who documents the derivation of such cave names.

We also found another non-event cave, tagged JF-486, GPS'd and photographed and surveyed (See map p.20).



Geoff and a pathetic excuse for a Richea pandanifolia in the background.

Before long we had returned to Niggly basecamp without seeing JF-Z34, the spacious 30 m shaft and JF-Z35, a 15 m deep vertical cave. Gavin was keen to scout around the top of the limestone cliffs to the east of Niggly whilst I got ready to go down Casamassima (JF-238). There were no details of this cave available and so it needed investigation.

The entrance to Casamassima is a jumble of inverted dead celery top pines and a huge eucalypt that has fallen and slid, crown first, straight down the cave. On the surface it is quite open and there was precious little convenient to belay off so I chose a few horizontal fallen logs to descend the doline. At the entrance of the cave I belayed off a branch of the gumtree's upturned roots. The rope then ran down through more filth and a total lack of trogprints. I had the distinct impression that this cave had not been descend previously [*or at least not since 1990! – Ed.*]. I used a rebelay on a flake at -12 m and a rope protector at -15 m before touching down at -20 m in a sloping chamber that funnelled down a second pitch. At this stage I had to break out Ken's push rope and without any belay points, I joined it to the end of the first 30 m rope. A further 5 m pitch got me to a slope down to a mud sump with large deep cracks and again no trogprints. A slope on the other side led up to a dolerite-rock strewn floor beneath a second aven. At this point I broke out the survey gear and started a solo survey that would allow me to calculate the depth of the cave.

Casamassima is a cave of impressive architecture but I felt I couldn't do it justice without spending more time on the survey. The troops were already calling down to see whether I'd been eaten by the cave monsters, or whether I had just stuffed up. The cave owes its name to Nick Hume, who whilst studying at uni wrote a list of interesting names of places or people he encountered in his reading, that would be interesting cave names. The only Google reference to this is an Italian village with lots of dolines. Casamassima is now more than just a doline beside the Niggly track! (See map p.21)

I got back to the surface to a very excited Gavin who had found what could be the spacious 30 m shaft, where it was supposed to be, above the cliffs (SS260:9). Gavin pronounced this as an even hotter prospect than JF-484 and he was very keen to return. Gavin and Geoff had also found and GPS'd six other caves but unfortunately they were not tagged, nor sketched. We therefore have at least another day's surface work in this area including a surface survey to compare levels between the caves.

JF-237 Niggly Cave

Alan Jackson

17 January 2010

Party: Matt Cracknell, Alan Jackson



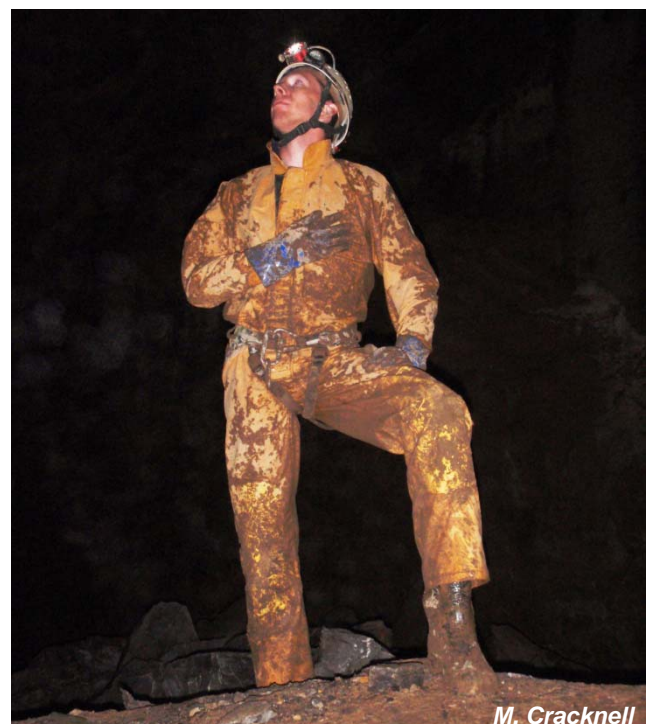
Alan and Matt pose at the entrance. ↑ Alan conquers Mt Niggly. →

The usual story – lots of people interested in the trip before they all start piking as the trip gets closer. Janine wasn't feeling 100% and Gavin ... well, Gavin's too lame for words. Matt was made of tougher stuff. It was quite a social walk in with the four surface-dwellers accompanying us. We bade farewell at the entrance and headed in.

The big pitch was a bit foggy this time (crystal clear the previous week). I guess it was residual 'huff and puff' still lingering from the previous week's ascent. The take home from this is that if plan to ever photograph the big pitch then you should do it on your first descent to optimise visibility. While Matt came down I did a quick check of the waterfall that enters not far from the base of the 190 (the one with an 8 m pitch to get to its bottom). It was not green (see Bunty's report on previous page), but I was expecting a longer flow-through time from Bunyips Lair anyway. Once Matt was down we headed straight for the downstream continuation to poke around. After some confusion we found our way through – several cairns survive the flooding and the climb up was spotted thanks to a small rope groove in the wall (Matt boosted me up here and I pulled the flood-swept handline back down). A

bit more rockfall and wetness followed and then BANG!, it was master cave time. Wow – really good stuff. We assessed how long it had taken us to get through and discussed whether we had enough time to get to the end and back out without making it an epic. Neither of us had watches so we took an educated guess, figured we didn't need to be home early and pushed on.

There are three or so avens with waterfalls that come in along the length of the streamway, none of which had gone green yet. Matt slipped on one of the big silt banks and gouged out all the steps I'd put in and then couldn't make it up. Between fits of laughter (mine) and numerous splashes (Matt's) I tied a 6 m tape I had to my harness and tangled it down for him. Matt strong-armed it up. The first rockfall you reach is of outrageous proportions and it feels like you've summited Everest before you slip back down through it on the other side. Soon after the second and supposedly final rockfall is reached – we had a quick poke around in here but nothing thorough.



On the way out we tried a bit of photography (multiple shots that Matt would later overlay with Photoshop).

There was still no sign of green water in the main stream or any of the waterfalls. Just before we ducked into the rockfall at the upstream end of the streamway I heard a waterfall in a side chamber. We scaled the mud banks and found ourselves in a vast upper level of the main stream passage. It was

magnificent. The waterfall was running clear so we headed back to the rockfall. I'd placed a few pink tapes on rocks to remind me of the route through this quite tricky section – I should have placed more! After a few false starts we found the way on and also found ourselves in a decidedly fluoro-green stream. After the next up and over through rockfall we descended back into a perfectly clear mainstream again though. It would appear that Bunyip water feeds into the middle of the rockfall via some obscured horizontal passage. We had a quick look from the top of Mt Niggly (Matt got very geologically excited) and then did one last check of the waterfall, which was still running clear.

Matt opted for bottom position for the prusik out and unfortunately this time (no doubt because he's a bit heavier than Janine) I didn't manage the bottom-weight rub as well as last time. About 40 m up I realised I'd worn through the seam in my crutch – a few carefully placed

karabiners diverted the rub for the remainder of the ascent. We were back on the surface before dark and at the cars before 9 pm – so about 9 or 10 hours underground.

It's a pity Niggly isn't the deepest cave in Australia any more, as it's infinitely more impressive and inspiring than Tachycardia could ever hope to be!

'Master Cave' – downstream Niggly streamway.↓



JF-237 Niggly Cave

Janine McKinnon

23 January 2010

Party: Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon.

Déjà vu: 7.30am at Alan's place. Just the two of us heading off to Niggly.

This was to be the third, and final, trip to the bottom of the cave, plus a partial derig. Actually, there were only meant

to have been two bottoming trips (presuming nothing new and exciting was found) but I had missed out on the previous week's trip due to temporary decrepitude. Unfortunately Alan had reported back to me that the streamway passage that he and Matt had visited on that trip was awesome, not to be missed, and other glowing endorsements. Alan kindly (it's his old age; passing 30; Alan's not the same anymore) offered to take me there if I wished. Bugger. How could I pass up my only opportunity to see this stuff? So, another trip to the bottom.

After another 45 min. trip to the entrance from the car, we headed underground at 10am. A smooth trip down (as smooth as I can do with a rack; boy, I dislike those things) saw us at the top of the Black Supergiant 1.5 hours from the entrance.

Isn't it wonderful when the cave is all rigged?

We had an enormous wad of tape that Rolan had prepared (by tying numerous old 30 and 50 m tapes together) to measure the exact length of the pitch. It had been previously measured using topofil and again with two calibrated altimeters. Alan fed the tape down the pitch and then I descended first. The height was measured at 192m from the top P-hangers and 185m freehang from the rebelay.

I was quicker with the abseil this time. I took about 12 minutes and the rope showed no signs of overheating. As I had to double hand-feed it through the rack for all but the last 40-50 m, it's easy to see why it didn't get too hot. I did though! It was almost as hard work as going back up. Well, almost almost. I didn't find the pitch scary this time either (I was quite nervous on the first descent!) Familiarity ... and all that.

Alan took a similar time for the descent but found the friction provided by his "Stop" somewhat less than I experienced. He needed to use his (or Ric's borrowed one, actually) Raumer 'Handy' breaking krab.

We headed off through the rockpile, leaving many cairns along the way, and arrived out into the main stream passage after a half hour of interesting manoeuvring. There is certainly no way that "little miss short-arse" could have got through on her own. I think I counted four times that I needed Alan's help getting up or down climbs beyond my reach. The extremely slippery mud everywhere didn't help at all.

The streamway turned out to be every bit as impressive as I had been led to believe (would Alan exaggerate?) Something over a kilometre of BIG passage (à la-Exit beyond the rockpile). We followed it to the second rock pile and then turned around to look at the higher passage back along our inward route. Climbing up into the upper levels was equally impressive. It feels like a higher chamber but is really just the top levels of the streamway passage that has been filled in by about 30 m depth of mud. We looked around downstream for a short distance and then headed to the upstream end. We climbed up and up, another 20 m higher, to the top of the piles of mud and rock, and we were still 20-30 m from the ceiling. This stuff is seriously big.

After a lunch break back at water level we started back to the bottom of the Supergiant. It was now very obvious why

we had needed to mark the way as we came in. It is amazing how quickly you forget obscure or unpleasant turn offs after you have been in bigger parts of a cave for a while. Even with the cairns there were a couple of turns we had to think about. Alan repeated the aide to the height (and climbing skill) challenged, that he had given on the way in. I think he probably still has some of the footprints in the middle of his back ... and on his knees ... and shoulders ... and head (no, just joking there).

We had taken 2.5 hours for the scenic diversion and neither of us was looking forward to the trip out from the bottom. We were planning to de-rig the cave back to the top of the third pitch. Personally, I would have been happy just to head out but we had time problems for the de-rig. There only seemed to be three people in the club prepared to go to the top of the Supergiant, and none of our timetables aligned for the next several months. So we had to get the ropes back to a place from which Alan, and a few helpers, could get them out of the cave.

We were slightly faster on the prusik this trip (50 minutes, from first on, to last off), with Alan giving regular updates on our progress (the tape was right beside us, and was actually a nuisance as it kept wrapping around the rope, and the person not prusiking spent their time trying to hold it away). I'm not sure if I really wanted to know how far we had to go as we slogged away! I slogged, Alan cruised.

It took us an hour, or more, to pull and pack the rope, tape and rigging gear. We cut the rope at a gestimate of 80 m and 120 m. It will be interesting to see how accurately we guessed. And no, we were not going to measure it out against 200 m of tape, there in the cave.

With two big, and one small, packs between us (and we all know who had the 120 m rope and small pack to carry) we started out from the top of the Supergiant. I headed up the pitches first, with Alan de-rigging behind (including removing the old spits and marking the new bolts) and arranging the ropes for an easy pull-up. We didn't have any more packs for the other pitch ropes so we hauled them out behind us.

The whole lot made it to the top of the 3rd pitch, which we also de-rigged. This was as far as we had planned to haul out the gear today and we were very happy to leave it all there.

The trip out from this drop point was fast (except I'm not that fast on the nasty traverse) and smooth. What a joy to cave without packs, and what a pity I get to do it so rarely.

We got out to the surface in daylight, at 8.30pm, after an enjoyable 10.5 hour trip.

Australia Daze – JF-207 Voltera Swallet et al.

Stephen Bunton

26 January 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton and Ken Hosking

After our previous week's pathetic performance in this neck of the sticks (they used to be woods, but they were logged 40 years ago and only regrew as sticks!), we thought we needed to redeem ourselves. A bit of research

in the interim, a better surface map, the GPS on the right setting and the good old Hansel and Gretel track taping technique ensured some success.

This time we decided to contour around from the end of Chrisps Rd. After 10 minutes, again we hit the mysterious blue tapes leading directly uphill and followed them to a small limestone knoll which had the right Mabo ("the right vibe" – a Gavin Brett term derived from its use in the film *The Castle*). Sure enough we located JF-383, the upper entrance to Bone Pit. Not 5 m from the entrance was a row of fallen logs that was quite familiar in appearance – last

week we had approached this jumble from the other side and missed this cave by a whisker by not looking over our right shoulder. We therefore knew where we were and we could easily locate Bone Pit (JF-203) from here. I broke out the pink flagging tape and we started to number back down to Bone Pit and then back to the end of the road or the start of our route. We GPS'd and photographed both entrances.

We then continued our contour around the hill taping and numbering the route as we went to expedite an overland survey. By quite some fluke we stumbled on a small pit beside a little knoll of exposed limestone. This was in the right place to be JF-Z21 and it fitted the description. The only drama was that it had a tape on it marked STC 27/11/01, so we had some research to do! Jeff Butt and Dave Rasch had visited this area in the past and they too reported difficulty in finding first Bone Pit (SS327:12) and Voltera (SS328:22-23). This gave me a chuckle. We stopped for lunch and in the meantime tagged this cave JF-487 and photographed it. Even though we had a ladder the rocks bounced down a second pitch and we knew we had insufficient gear. Apparently the cave descends beyond the length of a 23 m rope but the last bit can be downclimbed until it pinches out. Nevertheless we will be back, if for no other reason than to do a survey!

We then contoured down a bit and up a bit depending upon the scrub, and around a bit further looking for JF-206. First we found a few dolines in an obvious gully but alas no caves. We continued in the right direction and over a little saddle to JF-206. At this stage we hoped that we could hear the water flowing into Voltera Swallet (JF-207) amongst the sound of wind in the trees. Once we were up on the north saddle of the JF-206 doline we could hear the Voltera water very close by. Soon we were at this very impressive feature. We GPS'd and photographed the entrance and got out our caving gear. The talus (not a term we use much these days) slope down the entrance was quite mobile. The belay for the 7 m ladder pitch was a rock on the floor backed up to a thread on the side of a bigger rock 10 m back from the lip. We both dropped the pitch and went around the corner to view the disappointing end at a narrow drafting rift. New fangled digging techniques would be rather tedious and possibly ineffective in this situation. The stream cannot be heard at this point. (See map in *Southern Caver* Vol. 7 No. 1)

Before Ken got out of his trogsuit he investigated the place where the water flows underground. This entrance has been recorded as unenterable. He returned to the surface to report that he had gone quite a distance under the main entrance, and that it could be pushed. The stream flows down a flattener that is full of loose cobbles. Work here would be cold, wet and uncomfortable but the digging would be "easy". If the cave goes then it will need a

different name and a separate number because it is a distinct feature.

We then packed up and headed home, which despite the hideous scrub, only took about half an hour. Voltera is obviously closer to civilisation than previous maps indicate, this is what seemed to have fooled Jeff Butt and Dave Rasch. It is not at the top of the valley, which eventually sinks into the Sesame Caves and it always seemed strange that there was another swallet at the top of this valley. Jeff Butt comments on the fact that JF-206 is not in the correct place in Rolan's Forestry report (SS327:12) but I wished he'd researched JF-Z21, in the same volume, as well as surveyed it, since this would have reduced some of the entropy in the June-Florentine.

We didn't visit JF-208, which is nearby, just down the gully under an obvious cliff on the west side. Also reading these reports of earlier visits there are other caves we did not find; a reputed 40 m pitch from an earlier Dean Morgan and Stefan Eberhard visit, for which I could find no record; a Dave Rasch 20 m pitch; and another cave which goes down a 6 m climb followed by a further 2 m, recorded in their GPS as JFX4 but probably JF-X17 (SS327:12). Another cave which used a full 23 m rope was recorded as JFX1 in their GPS and this may well now be JF-487. There is also a large shelter cave they report as JFX5, probably JF-209 and a small "Serendipity like swallet" GPS'd as JFX6 probably Ring Hole JFX-44 (SS328:22-23).

The problem with the untagged caves that they report, is that they were recorded with a lack of the hyphens as opposed to the "official" numbers, which should have hyphens. JF-X4, JF-X5 and JF-X6 all refer to previously known caves. I also noted in the trip reports from this era that the official numbers for some caves have also been published without hyphens, which can be very misleading. If Jeff had done bit more research and edited the names of his GPS waypoints before he published his trip reports, there would be a lot less confusion.

As a result of our trip this day, there are a few things that we still need to do, including;

A surface traverse linking the caves in this area.

Descending JF-383 and surveying it into Bone Pit.

Exploration and surveying of JF-487 to see if it matches the description of needing more than a 23 m rope etc. It also apparently has a larger daylight hole nearby.

The dig of Voltera II??

Also we have not relocated JF-204, JF-205, 208, 209, JF-X16 and JF-X17. We need to see whether JF-X17 matches the description as having a 6 m downclimb and another 2m before it pinched off, not to mention investigating the three mystery holes from our previous trip.

JF-203/383 Bone Pit and JF-487/488 Platypus Pot

Stephen Bunton

30 January 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton, Ken Hosking

It's good to go somewhere that nobody else has been but if you can't manage that then it is good to see something no-

one else has seen. So it was with our exploration of JF-487 ... and who would have thought that we would find a platypus skull in a cave high on the top of a hill hundreds of metres from any known stream.

Ken was keen to continue our work at the top of Chrisps Rd and I was almost keen to join him. I was less keen to carry all the paraphernalia through the scrub to enable this to happen. Despite labouring under very heavy packs it wasn't very long before we reached Bone Pit JF-203. Here

we rigged a ladder down the entrance and Ken lightened his load a little. We then ascended to JF-383 with the aim of confirming its connection to Bone Pit. I rigged the entrance with a handline whilst Ken trogged up. I couldn't fit in the entrance [*how many does that make now, Bunty?* – Ed.] and after 5 m Ken could descend no further either. The rope was 30 m long so he tried to poke it down the hole and then we went back down into Bone Pit to see where it came out. We surveyed overland to determine the relative positions of the two entrances.

In Bone Pit we descended the impressive entrance but there was no sign of the rope. We continued to where it got to be a nasty climb that we piked on. Ken then ascended the ladder and returned to JF-383 to try for a voice connection. He could hear my voice coming out of JF-383 but his voice was coming over the surface and down the entrance. (A week before this Gavin gave us a lesson on the physics of sound behaviour for different sized apertures.) I was unable to tell which of the holes in the ceiling was the connection until he rolled a rock down that I heard thumping in one particular aven. I then took a sighting on that particular aven but reduction of the overland survey showed that the connection point in JF-383 is actually up a hole closer to the entrance. Nevertheless we achieved our aims: we have a photograph of each entrance, a GPS position, an overland survey between them and we located a map of Bone Pit in *Southern Caver* Vol.7 No. 1. We don't think we will lose these two caves in the future.

We then headed off to JF-487 (formerly JF-Z21) to confirm that it was indeed the cave that Dave Rasch descended in 2001. We rigged a Y-hang from a number of pathetically thin saplings and Ken descended. He confirmed the presence of the larger daylight hole (see *Speleo Spiel* 328:22-23) and a shot with the disto confirmed that it was a 20 m pitch. I tried to get into the very tight entrance but could not descend with SRT gear on. I went to locate the daylight hole whilst Ken returned to the surface. Ken described it as a very impressive cave, worthy of a name. At this stage we stopped for a bite of lunch, during which time the marchflies drove us nuts but we weren't going to name it Marchfly Pot!

We then moved around to the other entrance, tagged it JF-488 and set up anchors on another set of saplings. This pitch was only 13 m before it sloped down into a nice-looking cavern, as Ken reported. The cave was old and the formation on the walls was degrading to moonmilk. The floor was covered with newer looking flowstone but as much as I tried to avoid the crunching sound I couldn't.

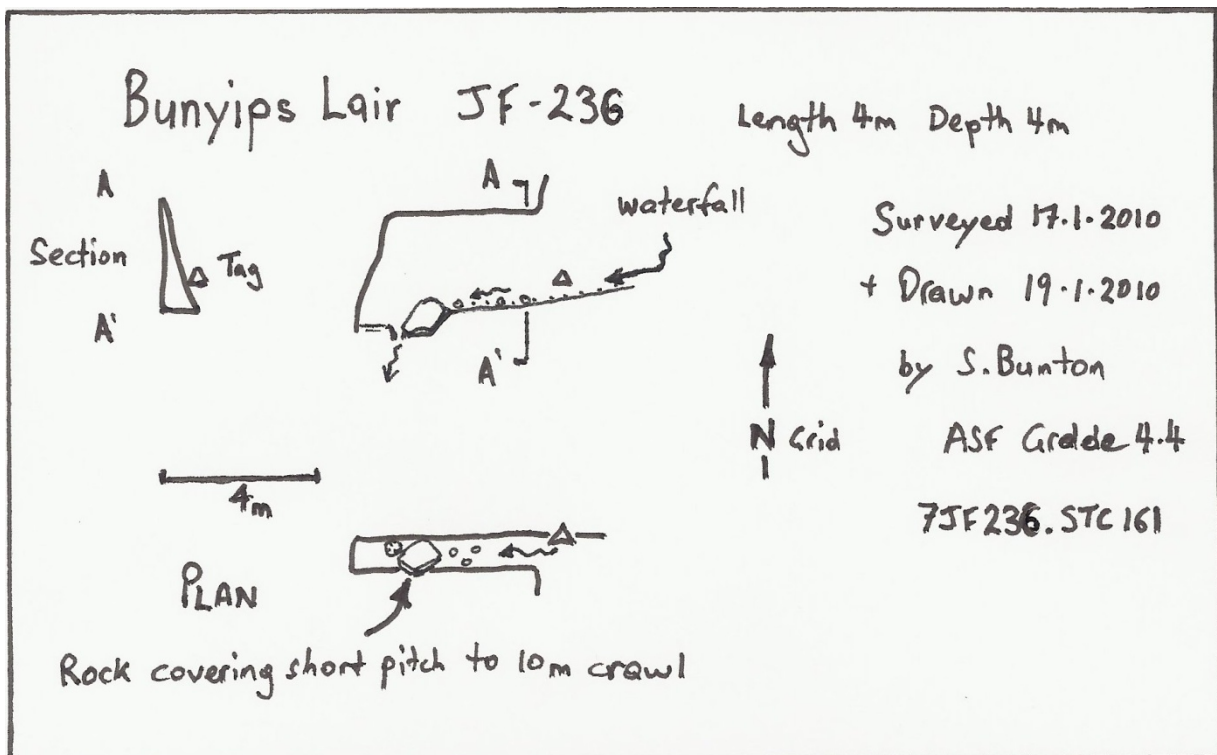
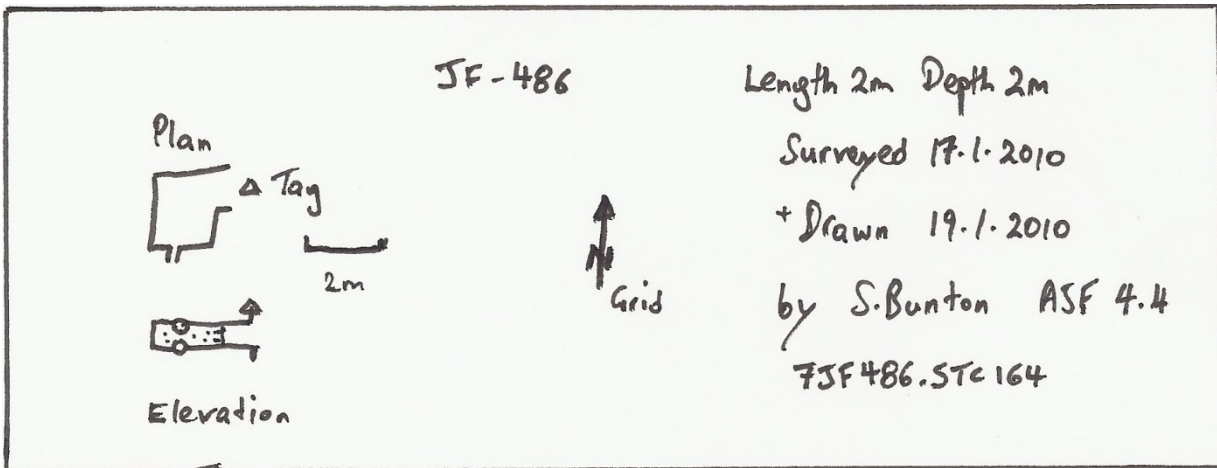
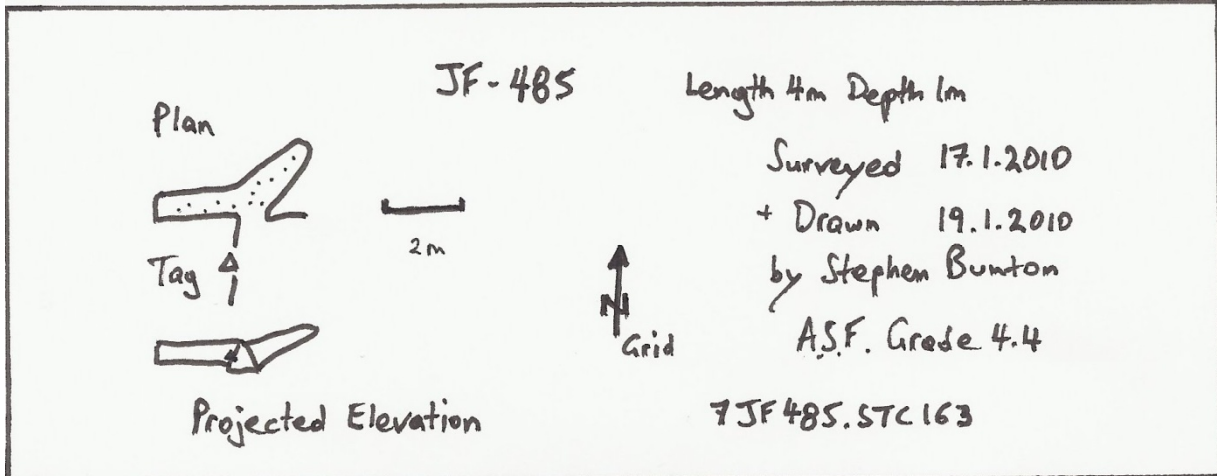
When I put my glasses on to start surveying I could see that it was a wonderful pebblecrete of snailshells but I wasn't going to call it Snail Pot! Amongst the snailshells were the skulls of numerous possums and the odd wallaby, gradually being encrusted. There were so many that when I began to count them, I noticed that one of them was a platypus skull ... that's it – Platypus Pot! I moved the skull and placed it on a small cairn under a flowstone canopy at the bottom of the JF-487 pitch. The cairn was our bottom survey point, so that we two bumbly old men didn't squash it inadvertently whilst putting on our SRT gear. We then surveyed around the bottom of the cave and headed out. We surveyed between the two entrances but we forgot to GPS the JF-488 entrance.

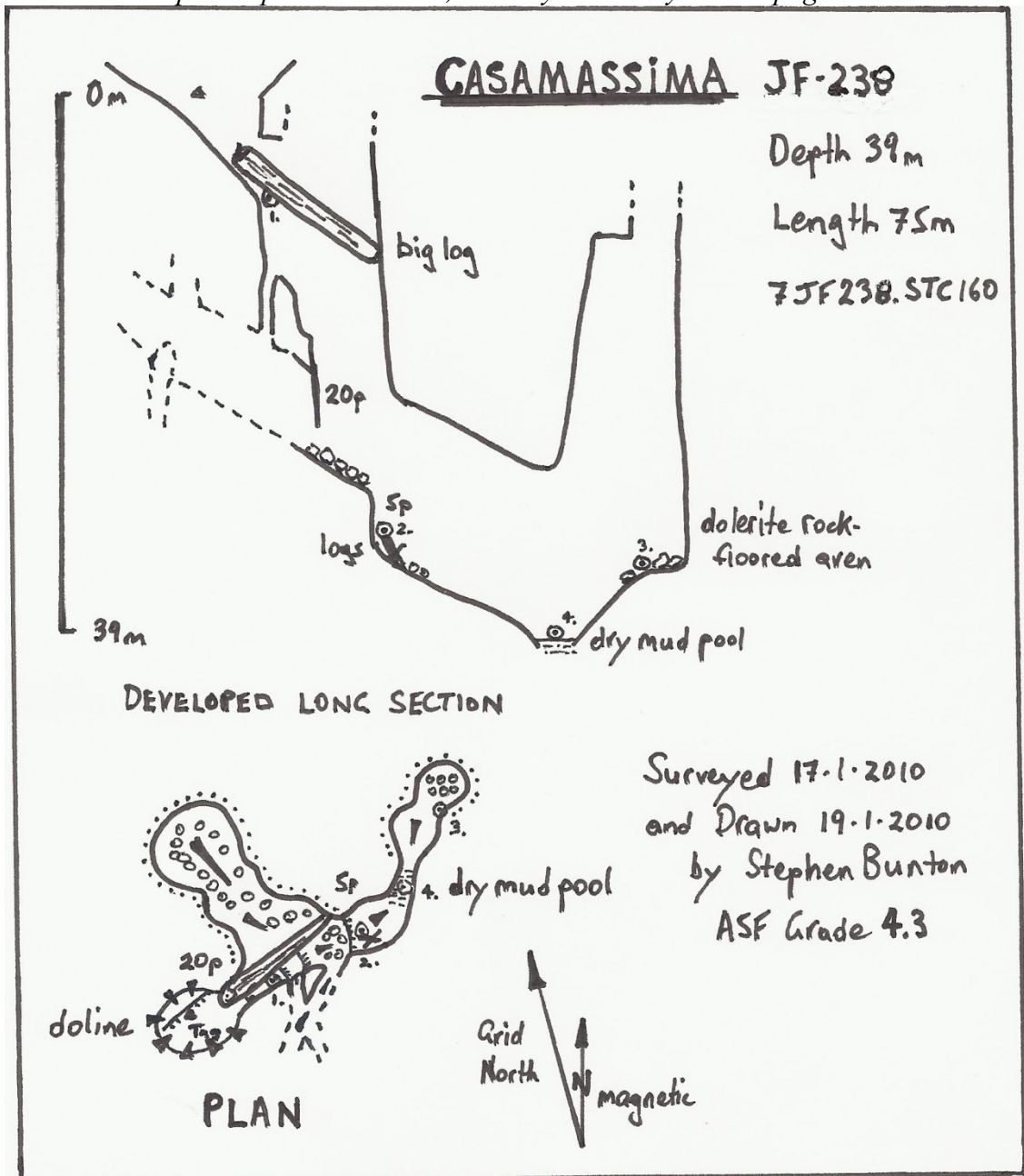


Ken extracts himself from the JF-487 entrance.

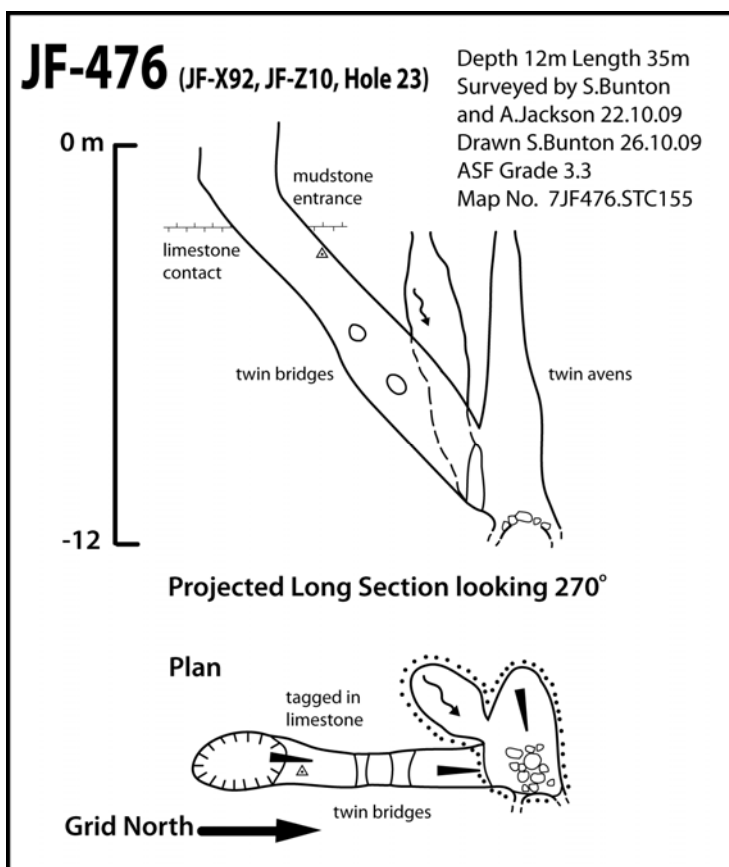
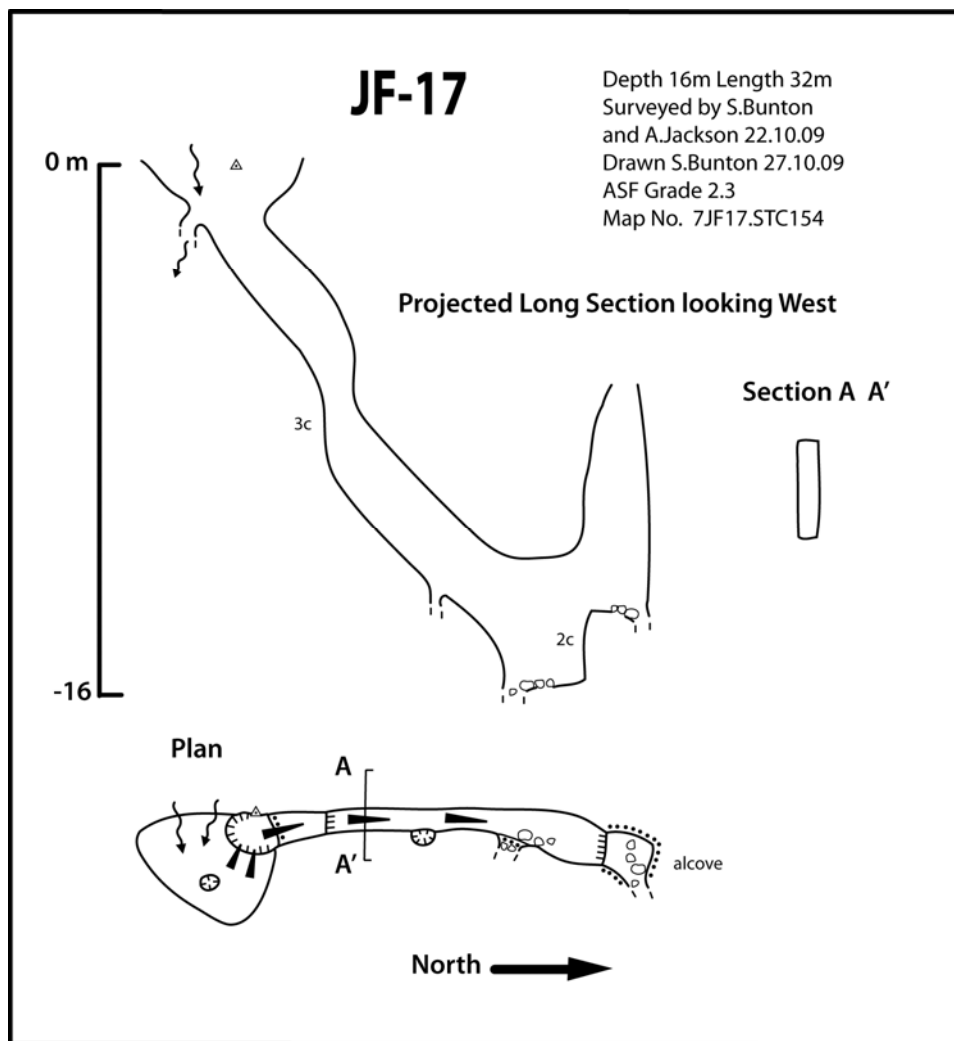
By the time we detrogged and derigged, it was home time. We trudged out in the heat under our heavy loads in twenty minutes, satisfied with our efforts. We had taken an undescended 20 m shaft known as JF-Z21, as well as a decade-old description of just a pitch with a larger daylight hole, and turned them into a nice cave, with tagged entrances, a map and a lovely name. All that is left to do is complete an overland survey of these caves back to Bone Pit and the end of Chrisps Rd.

Surveys from trip report on pages 13-15.





Surveys from trip report (SS375:5-6)



Other Exciting Stuff

More Unsubstantiated Anti-Forestry Sentiment

Stephen Bunton

The reason why I am sceptical about forestry operations in Tasmania is not because I am an innate tree-hugger who is influenced by Green propaganda but because I have witnessed first-hand the mindless devastation, waste and violation of any sensible codes of practice. Take for example this little gem for which I have photographic evidence.

This is a streamside reserve in the Florentine Valley. Streamside reserves are designed to retain vegetation, a prescribed distance from watercourses, so as to preserve the quality of water, which in this case flows into some sinkholes. As you can see it's a bit of an Ooopsie!

As an ASF affiliated club we have as one of our stated aims the conservation of caves and if that involves publication of material that might offend the guilty, then so be it. Perhaps I could do more than just whinge in a caving club magazine. I have in the past, written letters which have seemed to be of little influence. I certainly don't have the resources to take the culprits to court and win –nobody does. Perhaps I should have been involved in the protests in the Upper Florentine. Really we all should have been involved in this because the impact of these activities will be the siltation of a number of caves lower down the valley.

Now here is the unsubstantiated bit. My guess is that there are at least one hundred known caves, possibly two hundred caves in the Florentine which have been recently affected by forestry operations. They are now no doubt full of sediment or slash and may not ever be relocated. My mission, after I have sorted out the caves that make up the Junee River drainage system is to fully document this disgrace.

I once took a Swiss friend to Welcome Stranger and on the way he asked;

“What is this?”

“This is forestry.”

“This is not forestry, this is war!”

He's right, at any one time much of our beautiful state looks like Flanders and the mud isn't just in the trenches, it flows into the caves.



September 2007



April 2008

Vale Brontosaurus and the Frogs

Stephen Bunton

For those of you brought up on a diet of Bronto-burgers courtesy of the TV series *The Flintstones* it was a shame when Brontosaurus was no more. The Stephen Jay Gould book *Bully for Brontosaurus* chronicles the demise of the name, not the species. Unfortunately the species was first described and named as *Apatosaurus*. Later another specimen was described by a different scientist and named *Brontosaurus*. The convention is that the original name is the name that sticks.

This is different to the case with cave names. Official cave names tend to be those in common or modern usage. Often the original name is superseded, forgotten or recorded as aka. So unfortunately Frog Pot (JF-X36) has met its

demise [*Frog Pot (IB-56) on the other hand, is alive and kicking! – Ed.*]. This cave was first listed as a new cave in *Southern Caver* Vol. 1. No. 2. Page3 with the enlightening location description as “between Rift Cave and Satans Lair”. Most of you will realise that this does not narrow it down much at all but at the time these were about the only two known caves in the area.

In our quest to tag and GPS all the Junee-Florentine caves and thereby eliminate the JF-X numbers, the Z numbers and all the Hole 1's etc, I was happy to conjecture from the *Karst Index* description of Frog Pot – a 27 m pitch leading to a short passage and a 9 m pitch - that this is indeed Pitfall Pot (JF-447). No doubt, when the cave was found, a frog was a victim of the pitfall.

Pitfall Pot was found by Stefan Eberhard in his search for Hairygoat Hole during 1986 and was already marked with

blue tapes (SS222:4). The cave was then allocated the number JF-Z8 by Rolan Eberhard in his 1994 Forestry study. It was then rediscovered, surveyed and named by Jeff Butt and company in 2000 and given the number JF-X98. It was finally tagged in 2009. What a colourful past!

Of course the only way to eliminate such confusion in future is for people to fully research the caves they are

tagging before naming them. The STC Archive has proved and will continue to prove invaluable for this. Having accurate GPS locations entrances surveyed into a grid and photo-tagged, will also help in future. Then if people put this stuff into the Archive there will be less confusion for future cave documentors and no more boring pedantic articles like this one.

2009 STC Awards

Alan Jackson

These are probably more an arbitrary opportunity to poke fun at people than genuine ‘awards’. Hopefully some of you find them funny and just maybe I’ll be lucky enough to offend one or two of you too.

Nerd Alert Award

Nominees:

Adrian Slee – for attempting to turn all conversations into a geology related discussion.

Matt Cracknell – for expanding the membership’s geology and geomorphology vocabulary through his enlightening and educational trip reports in the *Spiel*.

Sarah Gilbert – she works at the uni looking at rocks with the ‘Centre for Ore Deposit Research’, which sounds pretty nerdy to me!

Winner – Matt Cracknell (by a geological age)

Back from the Dark Side Award

Almost Nominees:

Gavin Brett – turns out it was just wishful thinking on my part and that he has still failed to make a return from his self-imposed caving exile. **DISQUALIFIED**

Phil (Jacko) Jackson – seemed to be making a comeback and has been saying all the right things, but ultimately it looks like he’s still stuck in the SCS ways of old and there is little hope of re-educating him. **DISQUALIFIED**

Matt Cracknell – having now finished his Honours Thesis it would be fair to assume that he’ll come good again, but it’s too early to tell. **DISQUALIFIED**

Nominee (only one and hence WINNER!):

Geoff Wise – for managing to break free of the comforts and trappings of home-cooked meals and cuddles from his mum, moving back to Hobart and getting active again.

Crazy Nut-Job Freak Award

Nominees:

Serena Benjamin – have you read any of her trip reports?

Guy Bannink – chirruping, balcony sex ... need I say any more?

Winner – Guy Bannink (he makes Serena seem normal!)

Hard Yards Award

Nominees:

Chris Chad – Enthusiastically tagged along on more surface bashing and track clearing days than real caving trips since he joined. He has earned the few actual caving trips he’s been on so far.

Janine McKinnon – for putting up with Ric for another year.

Ric Tunney – for putting up with Janine for another year.

STC Membership – for putting up with Ric and Janine for another year.

Winner – Chris Chad (with STC Membership a close second.

Plagiarism Award

Honourable mentions go to Matt Cracknell and Tony Veness – they completed their Theses, which, let’s face it, is all about authorised plagiarism.

Nominee (and Winner) – Stephen Bunton – for his long line of edited, modified and stolen comics for inclusion in the *Spiel* (Hagar the Horrible, Insanity Streak, Wizard of ID, Polly, etc etc)

Twisted Knickers Award

Nominees:

Grace Bunton – for erroneously believing she’d been labeled a ‘child’ in the Car Rally report.

Amy Robertson – for feeling the need to defend Forestry Tasmania against all of Bunty’s anti-forestry rhetoric in the *Spiel*.

Stefan Eberhard – for taking offence to AJ’s trip report for a Mystery Creek Cave trip – words used by Stefan describing the report included: fallacious, unnecessarily personalized, offensive, condescending and puerile ... amongst others.

Winner – Stefan Eberhard – it was priceless!

Dwarfism Award

Nominees:

Janine McKinnon – Do I really need to spell it out?

Kate Edney – new ‘kid’ on the block. She’s a short arse too.

Honourable mention to Steve Bunton – although he looks more like a gnome or a leprechaun in his thermals, gumboots and shorts, rather than a dwarf.

Winner – Kate Edney, mainly so Janine can have a year off.

Most Improved

Nominees:

Arthur Clarke – there has been a distinct reduction in the number of unnecessarily long, pointless and infuriating emails sent at 3 am this year. Perhaps Siobhan should receive the accolades for keeping him otherwise distracted ...

Alan Jackson – nah, only joking. I’ve got worse if anything (although Janine did mention recently that she thought I’d mellowed – but I think that was just because I was being nice to her so she’d help me out with Niggly).

Winner – Arthur Clarke.

Certified Legend and All Round Good Bloke

Nominees:

Monsieur X – Whoever the person was that dropped the fencing staple that punctured Ric and Janine's tyre at the Car Rally.

Stephen Bunton – for being an invaluable supporter of the 'clean up the JF' project, accompanying me in my bush-bashing locating X and Z caves. In fact, it's kind of become his cause rather than mine now!

Winner – Monsieur X.

TCC Woz (Also) Ere (Again) – Precipitous Bluff

Greg Middleton saw the various graffiti photos in the last *Spiel* and felt he had something to offer too. It looks like the standard TCC method for 'tagging' caves in remote areas was an old-fashioned tin of paint and brush (or equivalent). These photos are of graffiti done in the early days at PB (summer 1960-61); taken January 1973.



PB-1 Damper Cave.

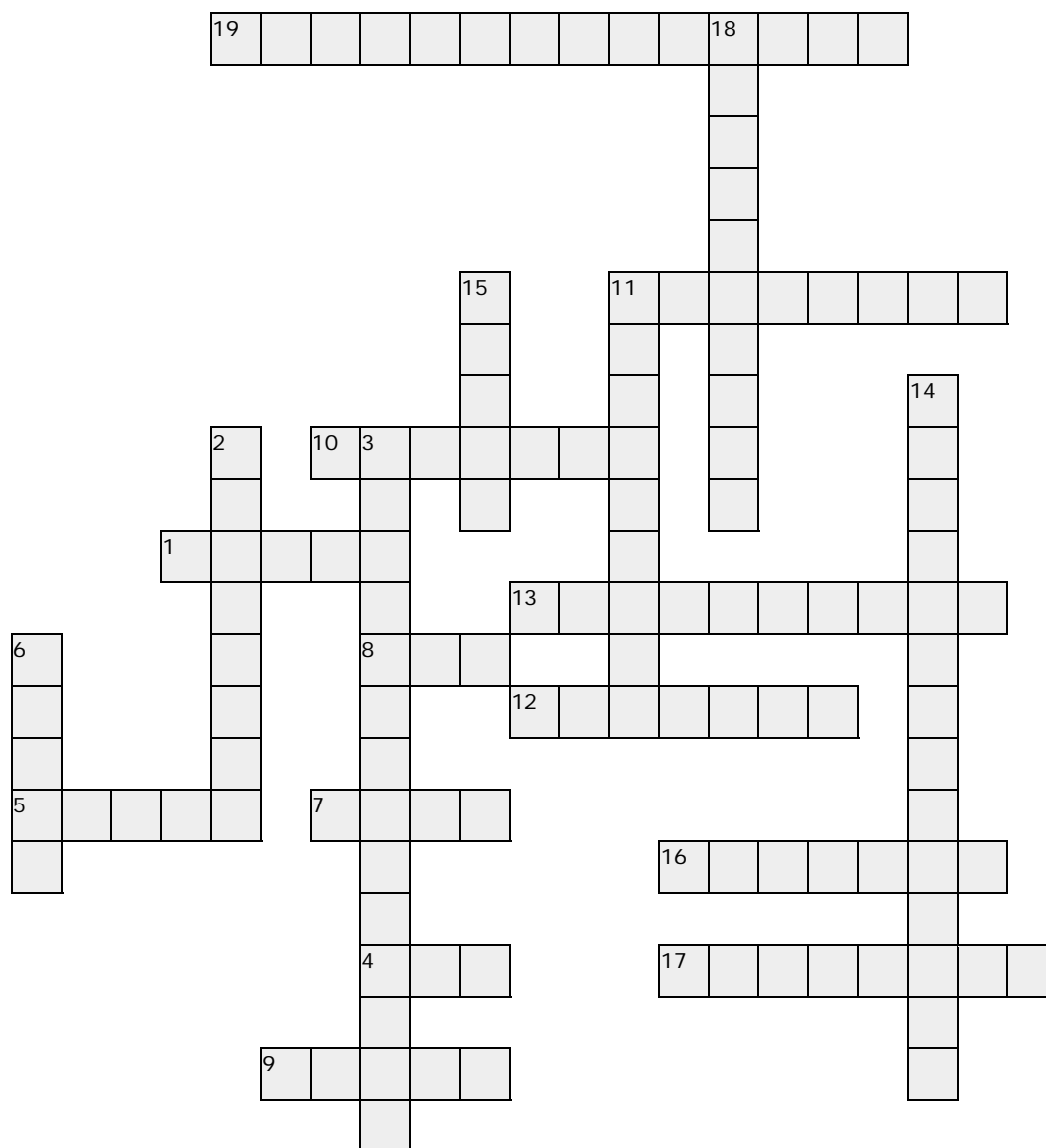


PB-3 Quetzalcoatl Conduit.

Caving Crossword

Serena Benjamin

[Possibly a cryptic crossword but it is always hard to tell with Serena. – Ed.]



Across:

1. It sounds appealingly overseas
4. An expression of excitement
5. TCC, SCS & _____
7. A trusty caving companion
8. Useful type of splint
9. A big low
10. Pertaining to caves
12. A national park and a person?
13. The seeds of change may sometimes be seen
11. Pink Floyds drink of choice perhaps
16. There is more to explore is my motto
17. One of the first to cave dive using scuba in 1946
19. Reputed to be found outside cave entrances

Down:

2. Noise sometimes heard when alone in a squeeze
3. Antibiotics may be useful for this congregation
6. Number of caves on STC trips this year
11. One of the carbs
14. Only a muppet on drugs would grovel through such crap
15. Evaluate inside. Tee off
18. A 'cave guest'

The Chad-Vine

Chris and Toby Chad

In the interest of seeing my boy in print some more I've managed to come up with some more cave-related photos. Being a proud Dad I'm obviously expecting these to be on the front page of sequential issues of the *Spiel*. [*Proud and clearly naïve. Chris clearly isn't aware that unless I'm in the photo it can't appear on the cover – Ed.*]

The first set of photos relate to the Wellington tourist caves in NSW. I went there with the family early last year for a bit of lame tourist caving.

Cathedral Cave WE-1 is a tourist cave near Wellington, a couple of hours from where I grew up. I remember going there on a school excursion as a kid ... it doesn't seem so big and impressive now. The cave is so named as it was used in the early days for sermons and a calcified bible still sits on the pulpit on the big stalagmite (touted as being the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere). The cave has been the subject of a number of archaeological digs, and the mega-fauna bones found apparently were very early examples and influenced Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution. Of interest to me were the many examples of cave tagging in the form of initials and dates formed by carbide flames or chiselled into the rock that now have historical significance, and have become a significant feature of the cave and the tour.

The other photo is Toby standing in the entrance of Junee Cave. We popped in for a look on the way

back from Strathgordon. We originally attempted the trip on New Year's Day, but an enormous spew from Toby just before Plenty forced our retreat. A week later we tried again and were rewarded with perfect weather to the extent we had to seek shade for lunch at Strathgordon. After marvelling at the engineering feats of my employer we came back via the big tree reserve (the big trees in which don't seem any bigger than half of those lying over the various tracks in JF) and the cave where we all stood around being suitably impressed.

More contrived photos to follow soon ...



C. Chad

WE-1 Cathedral Cave (right)
Chris and Toby in Cathedral Cave (bottom left)
Toby (sans dive kit) at Junee Cave (bottom right)



L. Chad



C. Chad

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
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@iinet.com.au
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@dpipwe.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@internode.on.net
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
Rien	De Vries	45A Mill Road, Collinsvale 7012	6239 0497			
Rolan	Eberhard	18 Fergusson Ave, Tinderbox 7054		6233 6455		Rolan.Eberhard@dpipwe.tas.gov.au
Stefan	Eberhard	PO Box 280, North Beach WA 6020		08 9203 9551	0401 436 968	stefan@subterraneanecology.com.au
Kate	Edney	66 Wellesley St, South Hobart 7004				kate.edney@gmail.com
Hugh	Fitzgerald	124 Wenworth St, South Hobart 7004				corky@internode.on.net
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@iinet.net.au
Michael	Helman	118 Strickland Avenue, South Hobart 7004				mphman@gmail.com
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@dpipwe.tas.gov.au
Alan	Jackson	45 Gormanston Road, Moonah 7009		6231 5474	0419 245 418	alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au
Max	Jeffries	c/o Helen Maddox, PO Box 618, New Norfolk				
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
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@iinet.net.au
Dean	Morgan	44 Forest Oak Dve, Upper Coomera, QLD 4209		07 5526 2244	0407 738 777	DeanM@resco.com.au
Bill	Nicholson	21 Saladin Circle, Clarendon Vale 7019				billnick@iprimus.com.au
Steve	Phipps	5/460 Como Parade West, Mordialloc VIC	03 9580 6959	03 9239 4532	0422 460 695	sjhipps@csiro.au
Tom	Porritt	PO Box 60, Millaa Millaa, QLD	07 4056 5921	07 4056 5921		
Norm	Poulter	PO Box 399, Kingston 7051				normal@iinet.net.au
Jane	Pulford	405 Liverpool St, Hobart 7000	6231 1921		0437 662 599	jpulford@yahoo.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
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