Speleo Spiel 379

July - August 2010

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

Front Cover: *Hickmania troglodytes* in IB-135 Beetlemania (photo rotated 90° clockwise). *Photo by A. Clarke*

STC was formed in December 1996 by the amalgamation of three former southern Tasmanian clubs: the *Tasmanian Caverneering Club*, the *Southern Caving Society* and the *Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group*. ***STC*** is the modern variant of the oldest caving club in Australia.

Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the
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Editorial

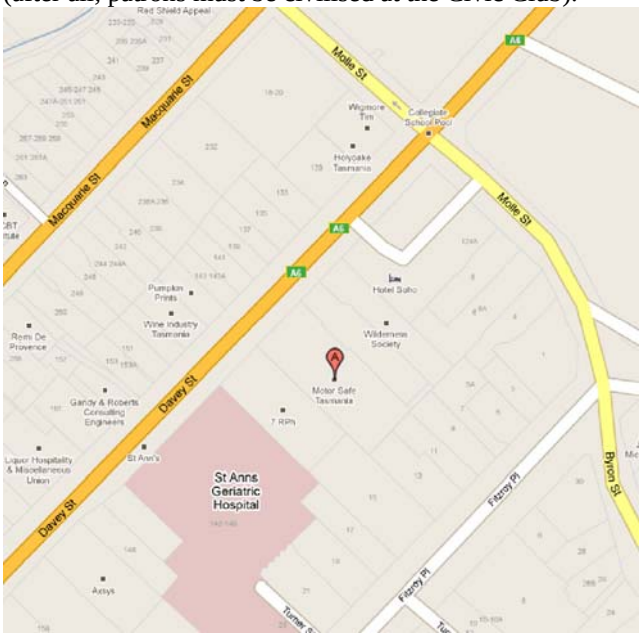
No doubt most of you saw my email round the listserver celebrating our recent efforts in KD. To have added 1.24 m of extra depth to the system is the highlight of my caving career so far and I can't see it being easy to top. But on a more serious note, this find has given me the kick up the bum that I needed to get out of my post Mystery Creek Cave survey drawing apathy and the enthusiasm to embark on another mega survey-drawing epic. Like Splash Pot and Mystery Creek Cave, Jeff Butt has done most of the leg work (a good pun, even if I do say so myself) and it's mostly a matter of poring over his notes and drawing it up. The only bits I know of that haven't been done are the Wet Way proper (linking in the end of JB's JF-5 survey on the way), the wet way down the last section of streamway (Kevin Kiernan is allegedly the only man to have attempted this pitch before the dry way from the Brew Room was found), and a small extension that I found off the Basal Chamber a couple of years ago with Andreas Klocker. So who's up for some trips to the sportiest sections of KD (read: hanging in waterfalls with survey instruments)?

Alan Jackson

Stuff 'n Stuff

New Meeting Venue

Few thought it possible but we've managed to pull it off. The temporary arrangement that saw meetings held at Alan's house (for 12 months ...) has come to an end. Meetings are now at the Civic Club, 134 Davey Street, Hobart. There is a large carpark at the rear of the building. Enter the building via the door on the eastern side (adjacent to the driveway) - the bar is on the right and the meeting room is on the left. Please note: hats off in the bar (after all, patrons must be civilised at the Civic Club).



The Civic Club is located where the 'A' in a balloon is located (incorrectly labelled 'Motor Safe Tasmania'). You will note its convenient proximity to St Anns Geriatric Hospital (the over 50s only have a short walk ahead of them in the event they find the rest of the membership too energetic for them).

Cave Tagging Clarification

It has been brought to my attention that Chris Chad's report regarding the tagging of JF-510, JF-511 and JF-512 (*SS*378:8-9) didn't make it clear which numbers were assigned to which 'Holes'. My apologies – he's only an amateur and I should have paid closer attention to his work. So, to clear it up:
Hole 9 is JF-510.
Hole 8 is JF-511.
Hole 7 is JF-512.

Forget About the Training Officer

To all members suffering from short term memory loss: A reminder that I am the training officer.
I will be returned from travels in mid August and available for private appointments. [*Sounds intriguing – does Ric know about this? – Ed.*]

Janine McKinnon

Popularity Poll

I note the editor's apparent rise in popularity in *SS*378:3. It would seem from the photo below that the good people of Mendooran, NSW are meeting every 2nd week to worship me!

Chris Chad

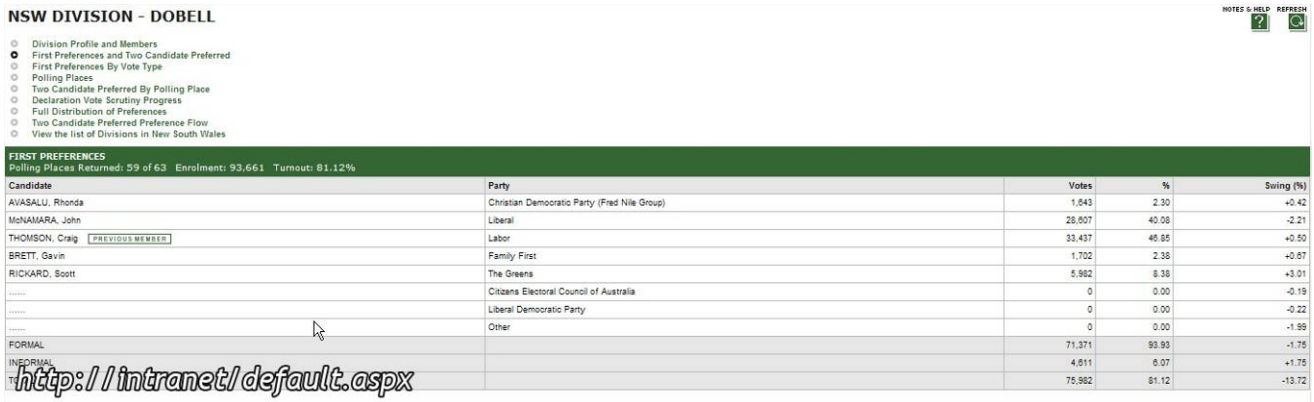
Misplaced Photos

In the last *Spiel* I admitted to deleting Ric and Janine's Serendipity photos. I was mistaken on two fronts – there was only one photo and I didn't lose it, I just misfiled it under D:\STC\spiels instead of D:\STC\spiels\378. Here it is. I hope it was worth the wait.

Janine half way up Diemos Pitch, Serendipity.

GAVIN BRETT THE POLITICAL ANIMAL

Geoff Wise noticed an interesting result in the NSW electorate of Dobell at the recent federal election. I'm sure Gavin will be happy with the positive swing he achieved but the political party he represents may come as a shock to most.



NSW DIVISION - DOBELL

NOTES & HELP REFRESH

- Division Profile and Members
- First Preferences and Two Candidate Preferred
- First Preferences By Vote Type
- Polling Places
- Two Candidate Preferred By Polling Place
- Declaration Vote Scrutiny Progress
- Full Distribution of Preferences
- Two Candidate Preferred Preference Flow
- View the list of Divisions in New South Wales

FIRST PREFERENCES
Polling Places Returned: 59 of 63 Enrolment: 93,661 Turnout: 81.12%

Candidate	Party	Votes	%	Swing (%)
AVASALU, Rhonda	Christian Democratic Party (Fred Nile Group)	1,643	2.30	+0.42
McNAMARA, John	Liberal	28,607	40.08	-2.21
THOMSON, Craig PREVIOUS MEMBER	Labor	33,437	46.85	+0.50
BRETT, Gavin	Family First	1,702	2.38	+0.67
RICKARD, Scott	The Greens	5,982	8.38	+3.01
.....	Citizens Electoral Council of Australia	0	0.00	-0.19
.....	Liberal Democratic Party	0	0.00	-0.22
.....	Other	0	0.00	-1.99
FORMAL		71,371	93.93	-1.75
INFORMAL		4,611	6.07	+1.75
TO		75,982	81.12	-13.72

http://intranet/default.aspx

Trip Reports

IB-120 Valley Entrance bounce trip

Matt Cracknell

11 April 2010

Party: Serena Benjamin, Matt Cracknell, Sarah Gilbert, Geoff Wise.

The last trip into Valley Entrance encountered some difficulties. Firstly, getting the IB-120 gate lock unlocked and secondly, locking it once it had been unlocked. It appeared that the difficulties in getting the lock locked again were insurmountable. Hence, this trip was organised to replace the gummy lock with a lovely reconditioned piece of hardware supplied by our good friends at PWS. While we were at it we were going to try to sort out the mess uncovered during the last trip with the Thun Junction (TJ) survey and fill in some of the cave detail around the TJ - Skeleton Creek area.

Well ... the lock was replaced without any dramas. The same could not be said for the descent into Exit Cave. After a few tense moments snagged in the tight rift above the ladder we arrived safely at the bottom. Within five minutes, Sarah "Debris Flow" Gilbert had established that the sheer, unconsolidated wall where the last TJ survey station had been linked into the Theodolite traverse was not a climb and that the survey could not possibly have ended up there. In fact, it didn't make any sense at all. This is not unusual as there are so many high level routes and passages that just don't exist on the survey that any one of them might link in.

We abandoned scratching our heads in favour of some good solid surveying and sketching. Geoff had managed to calibrate his DistoX and finally uncover its magical powers. So he and Serena set off up Skeleton Creek to get some more metres on the survey. Sarah and I went in the opposite direction to fill in cave detail along a couple of the numerous tributaries that link up with this area of the cave. Along the way we discovered a pack haul line submerged in a puddle below a ~ 12 m aven. As I was to find out later, this helped to constrain the link between TJ and Exit Cave. Worthy of note in this area are river bank deposits, some at current stream level (i.e. Skeleton Creek) and others ~ 10 m above this level. These deposits are composed of sub-angular to sub-rounded cobbles of Permian rocks overlain by bedded sands and gravels. In some cases they are topped by flowstone and stalagmites.

We regrouped after a few hours and began heading out. This was the first time any of us had attempted to go out/up Valley Entrance and we were not looking forward to the tight rift that on the way in gravity plays a significant role in helping you through. Luckily our fears were not confirmed. The rift was pleasant enough with a bit of coordinated pack passing and the rest of the ascent didn't cause any problems, except for the minor rockfall that brought out Geoff's special dancing moves.

Back at the desktop a couple of weeks later a quick comparison of the plotted TJ survey data and original survey sheets revealed that some of the data was missing from the plot. The plotted data had been derived from the first survey in 1990 conducted by the Morgans. This survey terminated at the top of a tight squeeze [*A typical trait of the Morgans – too soft to push the tight stuff! – Ed.*]. The missing data was from an additional survey conducted by V. Wong and D. Morgan two years later. The second trip surveyed from a blue tag opposite the Skeleton Creek junction up into TJ and through the squeeze (called "The Wong Way"). A quick update of the TJ survey in Compass and things started to look a lot better. Unfortunately, a small section of the TJ survey beneath the final pitches in (i.e. connecting passage to Exit Cave) is 8° out from a survey conducted earlier this year in the same passage. Fix one problem and find another ...

Cave Hill Progress

Stephen Bunton

14 June 2010

Party: Serena Benjamin, Stephen Bunton, Chris Chad, Ken Hosking.

It was a lovely day as heralded by frost and fog on the way up, although grovelling under the shade of the trees on the south side of Cave Hill you would never have known. The object of the day's exercise was to relocate and tag the couple of caves northeast of JF-206 that Ken and I found on 10th January this year.

We parked at the cable logging "maypole" at the top of Chrisps Rd and headed out along the numbered pink-taped track to Bone Pit and beyond. Chris and I quickly headed up to JF-383 and photographed the entrance. I yelled down it to again confirm the connection to Bone Pit JF-203. Last time Ken and I did this he was up top and I was at the Bone Pit entrance.

Our next stop was the JF-488 entrance to Platypus Pot, in order to photo-tag it and look for a tag from the olden days. After surveying the cave and drawing it up there was a vague chance that this cave was JF-204, which is in the same general area. The description of JF-204 indicates a 14 m pitch to a chamber with an aven (Moody, *Southern Caver* #62) and overall a 25 m deep cave (Eberhard's Forestry Report). Given this description hales from the early '70s there was a chance then that the tiny JF-487 entrance was not open at that time and has only appeared since. If we found the tag we could then claim to have relocated another cave but the dilemma of what do with a cave having two numbers was not a prospect I wished to face. There was no tag to be found and Chris descended the first part of the entrance to the ledge in order to see if there was a dislodged rock with a tag on it but he found nothing. JF-488 remains JF-488 and JF-204 remains lost.

Ken was keen to fan out and head over the ridge to the undocumented caves directly but given the nature of the scrub and the fact that we did not have them, or couldn't find them in the GPS, meant this strategy was fraught with potential disaster. We opted for the more secure method of proceeding to JF-206 and heading up the gully and stream to where we thought they were. At the saddle before the JF-206 doline Ken and Serena did traverse the slope towards the caves directly whilst Chris and I headed up the gully. I followed the stream gully up to where the water was sinking, and Chris followed the vague gully slightly to the south where he found the bio-degradable red tapes from our last visit.

We started with the furthest, most developed cave, tagged it JF-513 and photo-tagged it. Chris did the survey [*see page 24*] and sketching, whilst Serena and Ken bush-bashed around the vicinity finding nothing but hideous scrub. We then surveyed overland down to the next feature, a photo of which was published in *Speleo Spiel* 376:12. We assigned this JF-514 and the nearby hole JF-515 [*surveys on page 25*]. Whilst they were hardly caves and would require a lot of digging to turn them into caves

Ken in JF-208 **S. Bunton**

it was better to fully record them such that we never have to go there again. They were GPS'd and photo-tagged. Likewise we did an overland survey down to JF-206. Whilst JF-206 floats in space, it is a big feature, we do know where it is on the GPS and it will be revisited at some stage and an overland survey to it is imminent.

At JF-206 Chris was keen to get into it and he pronounced it a good cave. Ken was keen to investigate the streamsink and he reported that it was now more open than last time he looked inside. He trogged up and went in a metre or so and pronounced it dangerous but then told me that I definitely needed to see it. So doing as I am told I dutifully went in and had a look. Serena told me that I wouldn't need a trogsuit and again I let someone else do the thinking for me. This was a mistake. I got thoroughly dirty as I wrestled a log and a loose boulder out of the way before proceeding.

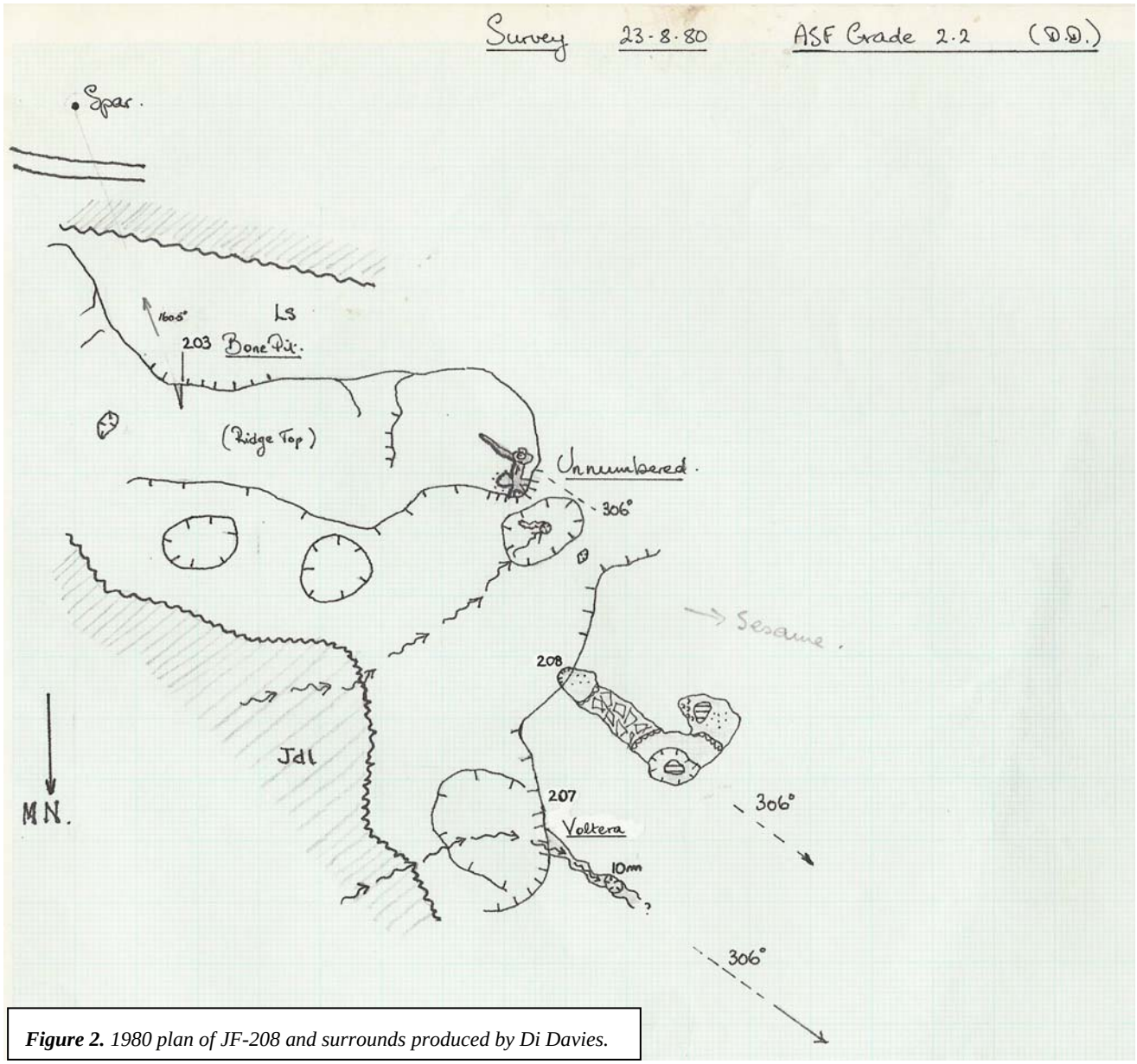


Figure 2. *1980 plan of JF-208 and surrounds produced by Di Davies.*

The JF-206 streamsink consists of a right wall of dipping bedrock, as seen in the cliff-face at JF-206. The left wall is a log, some large loose limestone boulders and a lot of dolerite cobbles, which also cover the floor. The "cave" extends as a sloping passage for about 6 m to a terminal mini-chamber that is covered with leaf litter and other flotsam from various flood events. The cave ends in a small solution hole that extends around a corner. It was decided that we would not tag it, even though we have tagged lesser things in the past, since it was a feature that was likely to change its morphology and in any case it is easily re-locatable.

From here we proceeded to JF-208 to complete a survey of this cave. Although we have not got a map, the cave has been "surveyed" before because there is an ASF Grade 2.2 plan sketch of the cave in relation to JF-206 and Voltera JF-207 – see Figure 2. [*And read* SS*160:8 – Ed.*]

On the way Serena located another hole just below JF-208. She looked into it but when Chris arrived he dived into it, dislodging a 10 cm diameter spar about a couple of metres long, which stabbed him in the back – Chris later named the cave The Impaler. [*Should have called it Rudd Pot – Ed.*] Eventually Chris got right into the cave and Ken followed. Serena and I tagged it JF-516. Ken was keen to revisit the cave to push it and Chris agreed to do an interim memory sketch [*survey on page 25*].

JF-208 is a small hole at the top right hand end of a large overhanging cliff / verandah. Inside it opens up to a large sloping passage that finally becomes a large L-shaped chamber. The cave is quite old and well decorated with

cave coral, flowstone and some large stalactites. The cave must have been full of water at some stage because the bottoms of the stals are horizontal at the same level and then they have regrown smaller extensions. All the formations, except the cave coral, are softening and decaying.

We proceeded to survey the cave and Serena volunteered to draw up the map. [*Serena has failed to produce the map but assures me it's on her list of priorities following her return from overseas … - Ed.*] I took a few lousy happy-snap photos and then returned to the surface to get a handline such that we could get down to the lowest level of the cave. When I arrived down the bottom of this bit, I found that it had already been visited since there were very distinctive footprints in the mud sump.

We finished the survey and exited the cave as the light faded and traversed the numbered pink-taped track, by torchlight, back to the car counting down from #73 to zero.

IB-14 Exit Cave – Hammer Passage 1

Matt Cracknell

19 June 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Matt Cracknell, Adrian Slee.

Hammer Passage is a high level fossil stream(?) passage heading west from the Main River Passage downstream of The Rock Pile in Exit Cave. An outline of this part of the cave exists on the "old" Exit Cave map that everybody appears to have a copy of. The only record of any survey in the area that STC has access to is a line plot (without scale bar or north arrow) drawn up by B. Collins(?) many years ago (see figure 1). Given the sketchy nature of the survey in this part of Exit Cave I thought it would be a good idea to a) have a look and b) survey it while we were there. And just for fun I thought it would be a good idea to survey each leg twice (forward and back shots). This, as it turned out, was a reasonable idea because Chris appears to have a magnet on his helmet that skews his compass bearings.

The day went smoothly. We collected ~450 m of survey data (twice as I mentioned before), which is likely to be a little under half of the length of the "main" routes in this area. Adrian and I had a great time discussing geo-nerdy things to each other, Chris attempted to tune out whenever possible, and we didn't do too much damage to the cave that hadn't already been done before.

As it was the middle of winter, the walk out was conducted in the dark, which shouldn't be a problem for cavers although I hate walking in the forest at night (must be a Blair Witch thing?). And we arrived at Francistown before the rest of the merry makers were considering rousing themselves for a rescue mission.

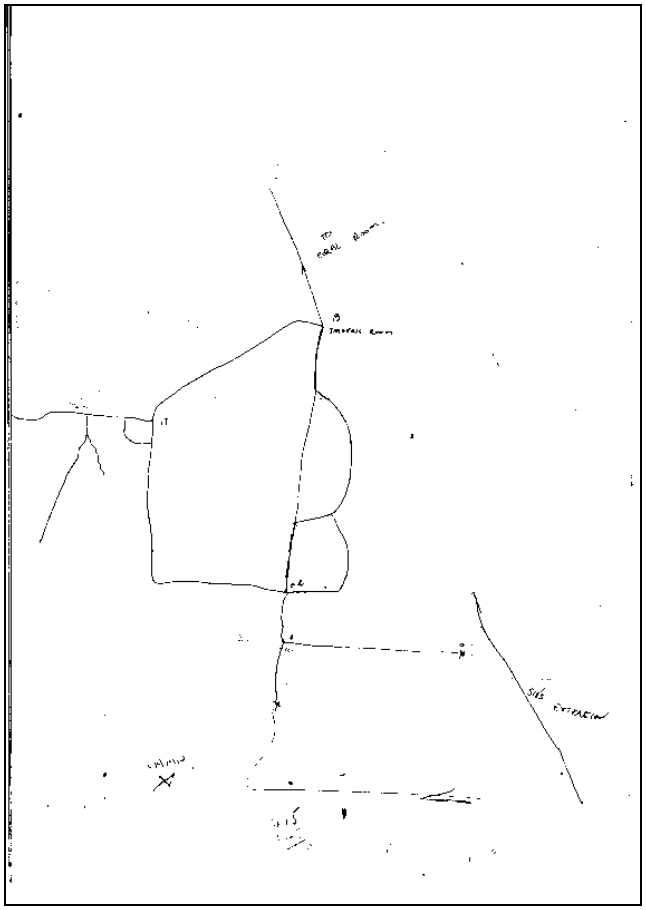


Figure 1. Current "map" of Hammer Passage in the STC Archive, approximate north is to the right whereas the small arrow to the bottom of the plot appears to indicate river flow direction.

Ida Bay Nonsense

Stephen Bunton

19 June 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton, Ken Hosking.

What is it about Ida Bay? Is it that the maximum depth of the caves is about 200 m, that the master cave has already been found, that the rock is crap and it weathers to yukky mud? Is it that everything you find has already been found by Arthur and even though he has never written a trip report, he always has the time to write you a long email to correct your mistakes? Is it that the ghost of Madphil hovers over the area, like a pall of flagging tape that extends in all directions so you assume everything is well documented? It must be the fact that I don't go there often enough and consequently I'm not very familiar with it. But how could all this result in the number tags getting lost and turning up at my house 5 minutes after I left home?? No, the place is cursed!

The idea of this trip was to explore, tag and fully document Bread Bag Cave (Vogelshaft) which has been a loose end to tie up and has sat on my "things to do" list for 14 years now. It didn't happen!

Ken knew roughly where it was and reckoned he could take me there [*I've heard that one before – Ed.*]. Unfortunately in the homogenous maze of horizontal-infested dolines to the west of Blaineys Quarry, we never found what we were looking for. We left the Southern Ranges Track and followed tapes out to Mudraker (IB-42) then up to Leech Pot (IB-41) but never quite found Hooks Hole (IB-26) and that meant that we didn't end up in the right gully to find Revelation Cave (IB-1). Bread Bag Cave is near Revelation Cave (Amy guarantees that she can relocate it anytime!). We followed up the eastern side of an ever-steepening gully and ended up in terra-incognita or terra-unrecognisabilia.

We found IB-70 and IB-71, which were caves Ken wanted to look at on the way home. At this stage we gave up dead reckoning and Ken switched on the GPS. It indicated that despite the fact that Ken thought we should be one gully further west, Revelation was shown to be 65 m to the east. We foolishly trusted the GPS and went east following the contour.

The first cave we found consisted of two parts which don't quite join; a slope down to low silted-up passage and a 4 m pit with a silt floor. I rigged a ladder and descended. A continuation of the passage was blocked with a mound of leaf litter and a nice crop of fungi growing on it. There had been a few neat-looking fungi of a different variety in the first cave. In fact there were cool fungi everywhere and whilst I was down the cave Ken went on a photography tour. Given we did not have the tags I named it Fungus Cave, wrote this on a piece of flagging tape with our initials and the date then tied it to a small stalactite in the walk-in entrance.

As we continued to traverse back towards the direction of Mystery Creek Cave, the next cave we found was a small hole that needed the excavation of some leaf litter. As I pulled it out I realised it was the remains of a rotten log which was now just a mass of fungal hyphae. Eventually I could squeeze down into it to where it became horizontal and choked with a silt floor and a bit of a small cave coral bridge. I called it Hyphae Hole and again wrote this on flagging tape and hung it from a little stal inside the cave.

The next cave in this series was under the crown of a huge tree. It was Ken's turn this time to get into his trogsuit and get down 'n' dirty. Again the cave was superficially promising but a let down just beyond the point which can be seen from the surface. Without number tags we again named the cave, this time Crown Cave and identified it with a piece of flagging tape around a chockstone "cairn" in the entrance. Nearby was another promising-looking cave, which now has the name Tiara because it was smaller than a crown.

We GPS'd all these caves so that they can be relocated and tagged properly one day. I guess I am compelled to return, possibly for next year's mid-winter extravaganza. This year's event looked like being the highlight of the day; certainly the Socceroos were not going to beat Ghana, which was my sports plan from midnight onwards.

It wasn't long before we hit the Southern Ranges Track and because of the early hour we were at a loss of what to do. I suggested that we do the overland survey from a fixed point and that way we have them properly located. In an attempt to find a fixed datum point Ken found IB-69 and discovered that it was a considerable distance from where the GPS had it located. This aroused my suspicion that when Ken entered the co-ordinates "old caves" into the GPS, he had not allowed for the fact that these old caves were in AGD 66 and the GPS now runs on GDA 94. I was worried that he had made the same mistake twice but Ken later discovered that it was just one incorrectly keyed digit that put us a long way out. Looking at the map he discovered that we were above the Conference Concourse section of Exit Cave so that provides some potential for future discoveries.

It was a bit of a disappointing day, in that instead of cleaning up one loose end, we created four more. Then again if we hadn't made a mistake we would not have discovered anything. I would much rather have discovered Penicillin or the cure for cancer but four grotty holes at Ida Bay will have to do someone of my lowly status.

Ken GPSing Crown Cave.

Bolt Testing and IB-135 Beetlemania

Alan Jackson

19 June 2010

Party: Alan Jackson, Geoff Wise and cameos by the Robertson family and Arthur Clarke.

After something like six years of placing my life in their hands, I decided that I should place the 8 mm Hilti expansion bolts through some kind of test. Geoff and I carted our gear to the top of the lowest bench/face in Benders Quarry and selected as large a rock as we could move (it wasn't quite 80 kg, I'm sure, but was at least 60 kg). We banged two bolts into the rock, banged another single bolt into the quarry wall just over the edge, tied them all together with a short length of 11 mm static rope (with figure 8 knots). Then we kicked the rock off!

Nothing very exciting happened (i.e. the whole thing didn't fail) so we dragged the bastard rock back up and did it again. Still nothing. We did this another one or two times (I can't remember now) including at least one where we started the rock from well above the bolt placement (i.e. approaching a fall factor 1.6+ scenario, had the weight been 80 kg). Still nothing.

We cut the weight free (which generated the most gratifying bang we'd heard all morning) and dismantled the system. The single bolt that had been copping the load was still perfectly straight; the rock surrounding the bolt was sound (no fractures evident); and the bolt hanger (a

fairly old Petzl alloy jobbie) looked the same has it had before the tests. The only evidence of strain was where the hanger sits on the bolt stub – the thread of the bolt had left its mark on the internal face of the bolt hole.

Was this a thorough, robust scientific analysis of the strength of these bolts? Quite simply, no. Was it a sufficient test to allay any nagging doubts in the back of my mind that these bolts are up to the job of supporting our lives in the caves? Yes. 8 mm of steel is plenty strong.

The rock, bolt and rope after a 'test'.

The test bolt after a few tests – looks good to me!

Our next move was to survey Beetlemania with Geoff's hotted up Disto A3 (Disto X) and Palm PDA [*survey on page 29*]. It was a delightful little cave with plenty of pretties and some of the biggest *Hickmania* I've seen. Arthur joined us half way through the exercise and played the role of chief photographer.

I tried in vain to squeeze through the drafting hole at the back of the cave – my shoulders proved ~20 mm too broad. We need a finely-boned female for this one. We also found a new upper level bit of passage just inside the entrance. An interesting cave and an interesting exercise.

An intriguing silhouette of the Beetlemania entrance.

Alan and Geoff with their nerdy survey instruments in Beetlemania.

Before heading home we continued up hill following the cliffline that sits above Beetlemania. At the top we found another large 'shelter-type' entrance cave. It was all very old with mostly dried up and decaying decoration. You'd probably say it had about 20 m of 'passage'. Looking over the edge of the cliff we realised we were located almost immediately above the upper entrance to Mystery Creek Cave (IB-243). With the tags sitting in Bunty's driveway there wasn't much we could do with this one. It goes on the list.

Looking back out towards the entrance of the 'new' cave up the cliff line from IB-135. →

Stan Murray Area

Chris Chad

10 July 2010

Party: Chris Chad and a companion who shall remain un-named for he can neither read nor write.

I had the opportunity to get out of the house and so decided to explore one of the less-visited areas of the Florentine. My aim was to visit a number of small horizontal caves in the Stan Murray area on the Western side of the Florentine River. These were discovered in the seventies when the area was initially logged. In particular, were two caves; JF-103 Quick Visit Cave and the un-named JF-107. Both of these caves were reported to contain reasonable-sized rooms with good decoration, with JF-107 apparently the best example in the Western Florentine. There is also a relatively small number of caves recorded so plenty of opportunity to find new caves. JF-103 is located in between Tiger Road and the Florentine River on a low limestone hillock. I was pretty confident I could track this down relatively easily from old map grid coordinates in the archive and the fairly obvious nature of the hill from aerial photos and maps. The location of the other caves in the number range of JF-104 through to JF-107 are reputedly several hundred metres on the other side of Tiger Road. Whilst I had a vague indication of where these would be I suspected they would be trickier to track down.

I received no interest in my trip so found myself departing early on Saturday morning with only my most faithful companion. As a result I arrived at my destination in good time and was delighted to find the weather was holding up and there wasn't a frost. On the trip in I took the Eleven Road to get a bit of an idea of the road network and the locations of some of the other caves in the area. Tiger Road is in good condition and there is active logging in various coups, so the trip in was pretty straightforward. I parked about half-way between Tiger Spur 7 and Tiger Spur 9 (marked Kens Road on the maps) and traipsed into the bush. I was pleasantly surprised by the walk in as it was very easy. All the horizontal nasty regrowth has died off and is satisfyingly rotten and brittle and I amused myself sending showers of splinters everywhere. About a hundred metres in, right where I had supposed the cave ought to be on the southern side of the hill, sure enough there was a cave with a rift like entrance. I had a concerted look for a tag but failed to find one so had a quick wander around to see if there was another entrance nearby. I didn't find one but kept to the southern side of the hill only.

Convinced I had the right cave, and that I'm simply rubbish at spotting tags, I got down to the task of surveying, assuming it would be a bit of a doddle. The cave is home to wombats and that is pretty indicative of the passage dimensions. As I was using my feet against a rock to hammer my chest through the first squeeze I was wondering why this apparent tightness wasn't mentioned in the original reports. A lot more wriggling and cursing I found a maze of small passages and the occasional deposit of wombat poo. After I passed a second very squeezy bend I was starting to wonder if this was indeed the right cave and whether I was going to have the opportunity to turn around. When I had the chance to get off my belly, I realised I could hear my companion blundering around in the dark, obviously concerned for my wellbeing. I was sharing his concern, so at the next passage intersection I turned around and made my way out, losing my pencil and crushing my spare pencil in the process, all the while with my companion's bum in my face whilst he engaged in a growling competition with the resident Wombat. I found another passage that was more spacious below and to the left of the rift entrance, but has a flattener which I didn't push due to extensive bruising and a lack of pencils. In all I explored some fifty-odd meters of passage without getting far from sunlight or the surface, and certainly didn't find any good-sized rooms with decoration of any type.

In retrospect I suspect this was not JF-103. It is possible that it is another cave that was described as being too tight (*SS*118:5) or simply a new cave not looked at previously. Of course it could be a case that I'm just too lame or I

missed the obvious way on. I'll be back to give that little limestone hillock a more thorough going over and try to resolve that little mystery soon, preferably with someone more finely-chested and with shorter femurs than me.

I had spent a lot more time than planned in that wombat burrow so I returned to the ute to try out the spur roads I hoped would get me close to the other caves and found Tiger Spur 7 blocked a short way in. I managed to bash my way up Tiger Spur 9 OK, simply driving over the top of all obstacles. These roads are overgrown and I don't recommend using the wife's car, but I didn't need 4WD and my plastic bumper was plenty to plow my way through the tea tree regrowth. I parked on a sweeping corner with an abandoned cable and had lunch before heading in to find JF-107.

This time there was no cave where it was supposed to be, but I soon found a dry gully with limestone along one side, in which I found a hole full of decomposing logging trash. Rolan in his Forestry report mentioned a stream sink with sloping passage leading to a 10 m pitch and siphon. This could possibly be this hole as I revealed what appeared to be a decent drop with a bit of digging but it was too tight for me to persist. As Rolan's hole is apparently close to JF-107 I had a bit of a look around, mainly upstream but found nothing except an appalling tight and snaggy little cave about 40 m upstream. I didn't venture up onto the limestone outcrop because the scrub was particularly hideous. Having tagged the upstream cave JF-517 and the other hole JF-518, I had run out of time and headed home. JF-518 isn't really where Rolan places his stream sink, so I suspect the two numbered caves are new and I don't recommend them for a visit! I would look further around the hill towards the Tiger Spur 7 next time. [*JF-517 & 518 surveys appear on page 26, including additional passage added to JF-518 in a subsequent trip report on pages 15-16.*]

In all, I failed to find any of the Western Florentine "classics", but it's not a bad area to have a bash and I did manage to tag and explore two unpleasant grovels so that now you don't have to!

References:

GOODE A. (1976), *Speleo Spiel* 118:5

MOODY L. (2006), *Southern Caver* 62:67

EBERHARD R. (1996), *Inventory and Management of Karst in the Florentine Valley, Tasmania – A report to Forestry Tasmania*, pp 58-59

JF-221 Owl Pot

Alan Jackson

18 July 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Jess Davis, Sarah Gilbert, Michael Helman, Alan Jackson, Claudio Trefny, Kath Whiteside.

An Owl Pot trip to give Chris some rigging practise was hijacked at the last minute by Michael Helman and friends. Michael has been an 'on again – off again' STC member over the last five or so years. He'd seen my email on the list server and rustled up some tag alongs.

Chris, Sarah and I headed for the bottom while Michael rallied his troops for a partial explore. All three of the new bods had good rope skills, mainly from a rock climbing background. The advanced party made quick progress to the terminal sump and turned for the surface. We met the other four about half way back up the long horizontal passage between the third and final pitches. They were feeling good and continued down to the top of the last pitch while we three continued out. Sarah hung around the vicinity of the second and third pitches to assist with the others while Chris and I headed right out. Once out we relocated a small hole Gavin and I had found a way back in 2006 (*SS*356:4-6). I shifted a rock at the entrance and groveled in over a nice rock covered in lampenflora. It didn't go far before getting too tight. We tagged it JF-519 and Chris committed it to memory for a survey/sketch [*see page 26*]. We then headed over to have a gander at Three Falls Cave – a superb vista. Chris then went touristing in the Tassy Pot area while I headed back into Owl Pot. Jess was out of the cave by this point and I found the rest coming up the second pitch. I relieved Sarah of her cold duties and brought up the rear derigging.

Hopefully we'll see some of the new prospectives again – they seemed to enjoy themselves. Kath is doing undergrad research in the karst geomorphology field with Kevin Keirnan, so we should see her again at least.

Tagging more of Jeff Butt's JF-X caves.

24 July 2010

Party: Alan Jackson, Amy Robertson, Kath Whiteside.

Not only had Kath survived her first STC trip the previous weekend in Owl Pot, but she was keen to come again the following – on a mostly surface-oriented day at that! At this rate she'll burn out in a couple of months.

The plan for the day was to refind and tag/GPS/photo-tag Holes 3-7 from two trips in June 1999 that Jeff Butt recorded in *SS*314:16. These holes are located on the contact between JF-14 Dwarrowdelf and JF-4 Khazad Dum. Jeff (and Damian Bidgood) had surface surveyed them into the network, mostly explored and sketched them (original map published in *SS*314:15). They'd never been tagged and were all assigned JF-X numbers by Arthur in *SS*315:15-16. As a reward for enduring the surface work, Kath was then to be taken for a quick jaunt into KD. All six caves have now been tagged and an amended version of Jeff's original map created [*see page 27*.]

We started at Dwarrowdelf (which we photo-tagged) and followed the survey data to Hole 3 (Oxhole, f or p) – JF-X66. This is where we first discovered that, despite Jeff assuring us in his trip report that "we left a labeled pink tape there", the pink tape at each cave was not actually labeled. The availability of a good sketch, however, assisted greatly in confirming that the hole we found, with a pink tape nearby, was indeed Hole 3. We tagged it JF-520 – tag is at the western end of the entrance, about 1 m down from the lip. We surveyed from the pink tape to the new tag (we also did this for all the following caves).

Directly uphill from JF-520 is a very large doline with a small stream sinking at its deepest point – an interesting feature, but not worth tagging considering the wealth of real caves in the general vicinity. A bit further along the contact we located Hole 4 (Stonefish) – JF-X67 – again with an unlabeled pink tape nearby, contrary to what Jeff would have us believe in his trip report. It was tagged JF-521 – tag placed on the northern wall at the left hand end (when facing north).

Hole 5 (Runny Right Nostril) – JF-X68 – is only 10 metres from JF-521. We discovered an error in JB and DB's surface survey here. The leg from S10 (pink tape on tree at JF-521) to S11 (end of log over top of Hole 5) should actually be at a bearing of 310°, not 290°. I guess they read 10° the wrong side of the 300° gradation. Anyway, Hole 5 was tagged JF-522. When standing below the contact looking uphill (more or less north) this cave has a small sloping cave that descends to the left, while the main part of the cave (12 m pitch) heads off on the right. We placed the tag above the left hand side, sloping entrance.

Hole 5a (Left Nostril) – JF-X69 – is a spacious 6 m shaft beside JF-13 Dribblespit Swallet. We placed the JF-523 tag on the south-western wall about 0.5 m below the lip (under a section of manfern roots). We also photo-tagged JF-13.

Alan tagging JF-523 Left Nostril.

Hole 6 (Peanut Paste) – JF-X70 – was next on the list – a short walk away. On the way I got partly excited about a contact feature. It had an interesting curtain of manfern roots hanging in it and I felt like I was fighting my way through the baleen of a large krill-eating whale. A two metre drop had me intrigued so I climbed down through the baleen and the drips to investigate. I couldn't get rocks to fall any great distance beyond the apparent choke but all noises echoed very nicely so there's obviously a medium-sized chamber hiding immediately out of view there. Perhaps a dig prospect for the year 2076 when all other prospects have dried up. Back to Hole 6 – we located it (well hidden) and tagged it JF-524. The tag is a couple of metres down the entrance mud-slope, on the right wall (when facing the contact - looking north). This cave has not been fully descended and needs a return visit one day.

We soon found what had to be JF-12 Log-feed and started looking for the tag. Jeff's map sent us in the right direction – a nearby tree! I hate tree tags – I've never forgiven Ric and Janine for their Wolf Hole effort. The tag was still quite visible (i.e. hadn't been eaten by the tree) but the sassafras was in the usual JF rainforest state of decay and sometime within 30 years the whole lot was inevitably going to fall over. We removed the tag from the tree and placed it about 0.5 m down from the lip on the left hand side (when facing up hill, below the cave).

Our last target for the day was Hole 7 (Bethin) – JF-X71. Jeff and Damian hadn't explored this hole. We tagged it JF-525, one metre down inside the entrance on the downhill side of the entrance – the entrance is a narrow rift running parallel to the contact. The tag is placed into the mudstone overlying the limestone – a good limestone spot couldn't be found till 2-3 metres down the slot, which would be inconvenient for future visitors to view easily and quickly. I noticed a good draft while tagging it (drill dust rising) so Amy and I encouraged Kath to get her gear on and take the opportunity to explore it. A relentless barrage of virgin-related double entendre ensued. Kath descended the ~6 m sloping rift and reported that it kept going, but she'd have to duck under a rock, and asked if she should keep going. I suggested that if she fitted then go – only stop for pitches and humanly impassable obstacles. She disappeared out of site and I decided I'd better go to supervise her. The cave continued more or less horizontally through a series of little ups and downs over fallen and rotten rock, but became wider than the initial 0.35 m entrance rift. Kath reported a drop in front of her so I crawled up beside her. I could clearly hear running water (i.e. KD). The climb was horrid and loose and the last 2 m didn't look reversible. I cast my mind back and decided the passage below me looked like JF-5. I jumped down and told Kath to head back out – if I wasn't there at the entrance to meet her then she would have to return with a rope and Amy to rig my escape! All went to plan and I emerged from JF-5, which resulted in a somewhat surprised Amy. Kath was frothing at the mouth with the excitement of pushing new cave and joining it to another cave. Amy and I were pretty chuffed too, even if was only 30 m long.

Kath starts into JF-525 Bethin – tag is the pink tape opposite Kath's right hand.

We linked JB's pink tape to the tag and then decided to run the two legs to the JF-5 tag also. JB and DB's surface survey ran from the Hole 7 pink tape to the JF-4 tag, and JF-5 was then linked in with a different survey (date unknown, but probably 1970s) from the JF-4 tag. We figured a two leg survey would be more accurate than the existing ~12 leg one. As far as I can tell the depth of KD is based on the JF-5 tag as the zero point (whether that's accurate or not is another argument – Rolan's soon-to-be-published report in *Caves Australia* 182 will no doubt

confuse – but ultimately clarify? – the issue further!) In JB's report "Khazad-Dum: Setting the Depth Records Straight, Twenty-Seven Years On" published in *SS*314:9, KD is listed as being 275 m deep from the JF-5 tag to the Sump II surface, to which a further 10 m is added to account for Phil Hill's 1987 sump dive. Since then Sump II was dived again by Stefan Eberhard (*SS*352:5-8) which extended the sump to a depth of 17 m – thus making the system 292 m deep. I am EXTREMELY happy to announce that we further increased the depth of KD by connecting JF-525 to JF-5 and I advise you to sit down before you read on.

According to our survey data the JF-5 tag is located 0.2 m lower than the JF-525 tag, however the JF-525 tag is located 1 m lower than what I determine to be the 'top' of the cave. Thus KD is now 1.2 m deeper than we thought it was – KD is 293 m deep. Ha, what a joke. As far as I'm aware the JF-5 survey has never been linked into the JF-4 entrance other than via the surface. We'll need to go back and survey the underground portion of JF-525 and also tie JF-5 into the main JF-4 passage too. Bunty loves KD and excitedly exclaimed that "Australia's best cave just got better!" when it was p-hangered. Now he can exclaim that Australia's best cave just got deeper! I'd rather be sitting here reporting that we'd connected KD to Cauldron and made it significantly deeper by taking the Australian depth record.

To round off the day we popped into the JF-4 entrance and descended to the top of the 9 m pitch (i.e. did the 'dry 90 foot' pitch) as a jolly.

Kath makes a start on the 'dry 90 foot' pitch in KD (no, she never stops smiling, or talking).

JF-103 A lengthy look at Quick Visit Cave

Chris Chad

3 August 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Kath Whiteside.

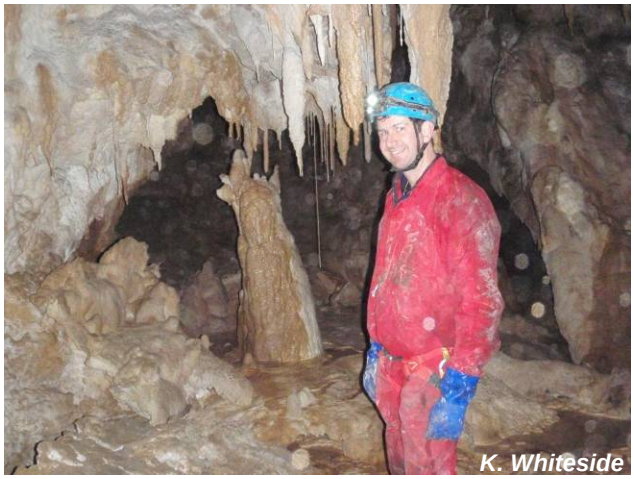
Following my earlier and largely fruitless foray into the Stan Murray area in search of the handful of tagged caves in this area, I was keen to head back for another look. Thankfully, this time I had a helper.

We started off with the aim to perform a thorough search of the hillock in which I found the tight maze of a cave on my previous trip [*see pages 10-11 of this issue*]. Parking in the same spot, we made off and quickly refound the cave I had explored last time. I urged Kath in, but she quickly came to the conclusion it was a stupid idea and turned around before reaching the limit of my exploration. In the meantime I checked the lower passage I didn't push last time to discover the passage dimensions had become somewhat more generous in my mind than was the physical actuality and no more progress was made. Somewhat relieved it was as tight for someone else as it was for me, I retrieved a broken pencil (which I managed to lose somewhere else on that cursed pencil-swallowing hill), and we continued our search.

We more-or-less headed over the top of the hill as the limestone appears to be covered on the eastern side of the hill. On the northern side, a doline and some insignificant holes were observed and then Kath and I split up, with Kath continuing the search on the northern extent of the limestone and me circling around back to where we started, looking for JF-340, which should be near the road on the western side of the hill somewhere. After poking my head down a few impenetrable holes I came across a series of blue tapes near the road. I followed these and sure enough they led straight to JF-103 Quick Visit Cave.

Kath in the wombat turd maze cave (JF-526) – still smiling and undoubtedly talking.

I yelled to Kath to let her know I had found it, received a faint yell in reply, and then busied myself in the entrance. After a while I was wondering what had happened to Kath, but she eventually turned up to say she had found some caves on the opposite side of the hill and was stubbornly waiting for me to come to her instead. After she conceded my entrance was more impressive than hers, we went in for a look and confirmed that which has been described by previous visits. It really is a nice little cave and aside from the heavily-decorated room, there is a squeeze through to an interesting passage half filled with dark black mud with fine red layers within it. The cave was quite dry during our visit.



Chris and some erect decoration in JF-103.

We explored the cave and decided to have lunch, then head over to check out Kath's discovery. In the meantime I headed over to my discovery from the previous visit and tagged it JF-526 with the tag on the upper right of the more obvious entrance. JF-526 was about 70 m from the JF-103 entrance, which turns out to be very close to the road and is clearly marked by blue tapes. [*Survey appears on page 27*]

After lunch we wandered up Tiger Road and had a bit more of a look for JF-340 which is apparently a few metres off the road and a hundred metres south of Kens Road. There is a depression with some obvious looking limestone outcroppings roughly where described, but a search failed to reveal a cave or a tag. We continued up the hill to Kath's discoveries to find three very tight (impenetrable in two cases) rift-like holes in the limestone rubble. The only penetrable entrance appeared to join with one of the other entrances, but was little more than a fissure covered in rocks that required no light due to being peppered with daylight holes. I deemed it too insignificant to tag along with all the other minor holes we stuck our heads down. Kath tells me Alan has been tagging somewhat less inspiring entrances, but I reasoned that he has been pursuing previously referenced holes that have accumulated X numbers. [*Kath's attempted undermining has been duly noted – Ed.*]

We headed back around to JF-103 searching for JF-340 on the way, pushing a couple of tight but untagged entrances to no avail. We surveyed JF-103 [*see page 23*] and then decided we had enough time to head over and have another look for JF-107. This time we headed upstream from where I had been last time and came across a very impressive hole with a stream running into it that is clearly the un-numbered swallet Rolan refers to in his Forestry Report. We had a look at the pitch but lacked the time and confidence to retrieve the gear from the ute and rig it. It requires either a ladder or some bolts to rig. We numbered this cave JF-527 on the left hand wall of the entrance. Beware of the logs and trash in the entrance as they can be a bit treacherous.

Apparently JF-107 is "near" this cave. Once again a search proved fruitless and only got me lost in the difficult scrub. A bit of hollering found me back to Kath who had just extracted herself from the log jumble and we headed back to the vehicle in the dark. In the end I was pleased with what we achieved and Kath's help and enthusiasm was welcomed.

References:

DAVIES C. (1979), *Speleo Spiel* 148:3

GOODE A. (1976), *Speleo Spiel* 118:5

MOODY L. (2006), *Southern Caver* 62:67

EBERHARD R. (1996), *Inventory and Management of Karst in the Florentine Valley, Tasmania - A report to Forestry Tasmania*, pp 58-59

IB-14 Exit Cave – Hammer Passage 2

Matt Cracknell

8 August 2010

Party: Sarah Gilbert, Matt Cracknell, Kath Whiteside, Adrian Slee, Geoff Wise.

The aims for the day were to continue the survey in Hammer Passage and if possible sketch the passages surveyed on the last trip into this area. We made reasonable time to the cave entrance and then to where the last survey had finished. On the way we checked the thermometer located at Camp 1 and found that the cave was a balmy 7.4°C. This was a degree or two less than a couple of months ago. I suspect that the temperature of the water flowing in the cave river may have an influence over the 2-3 degree difference between summer and winter.

The surveying got off to a slow start with new people using instruments and recording measurements but the pace quickly increased. We passed through some spectacular helictites and areas of mud/flowstone with very squat but thick (in diameter) columns. At the furthest point west we found typical Exit-type passage – large rooms with ~ 20 m high ceilings and vast amounts of flowstone topped with stalagmites.

We made our way eastward back toward the Main River passage and closed the loop with the previous survey. The area marked as the "Smoking Room" (no guesses there as to what went on in this spot) contains an immaculately preserved, laminated moonmilk/flowstone(?) mud bank ~ 2-3 m thick. I reckon there would be some good palaeoclimate information stored in these if someone cared to look. Once again there were side passages large and small heading off in all directions. I guess these will have to be surveyed another day.

On the way out we met up with Geoff who had been sketching in passage walls and floor detail. He still had a little way to go so we went for a jolly to The Ballroom so Kath could have a look. To be honest, the stuff in Hammer

Passage is as good if not better in some places, so she appeared to be a little disinterested. After a bit of geo-nerdy sightseeing of the fine black and magnetic sands at the beach (that's what you get with three! geos on the trip) and a bite to eat we headed back to the entrance for a lovely walk out in the dark.

Hammer Passage, Exit Cave.

Breganti and Stan Murray Areas

Chris Chad

15 August 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Kath Whitehouse, Rita Silver, John Springer.

I was hoping to get on a trip somewhere interesting this weekend, but alas no real interest was shown, and I found myself organising another trip. I initially planned a trip to the Rift Cave area but at the last moment a number of prospective members had decided to tag along, so I decided that would not be appropriate and floated some horizontal upper-Florentine options instead. Kath had been to the Breganti area with Adrian Slee a few days prior, and knew where at least a couple of caves were, so that became the plan.

I started the day in a bad mood, still suffering from the flu, and disappointed a better trip wasn't on. John being late didn't improve my mood but Kath plied me with a cup of tea and we eventually set off and found our way in to Frizons Road. Drains have been cut clean across this road in places and these would be very damaging if hit at speed.

We soon found our target limestone ridge which was characterised by a number of very narrow rift entrances. Some way in we found JF-168 Ultimate which had a clear tag placement and an orange tag hanging from a tree over the entrance. Kath and Adrian had been to the entrance but not entered the cave. A ladder was thrown down, though the entrance is just 3 m (but quite squeezy). We entered the cave to find a small but well-decorated cave which was sediment-filled, with some nice formation, and an exciting squeeze which led to further visual (and fragile) delights. The bone collectors have been in this cave and there is a neatly stacked pile of bones next to an excavation, another dig site past the squeeze, and plenty of bones throughout the cave. All in all, a rather pleasant but small cave.

I sketched the cave and we headed out [*survey is on page 24*]. John needed a couple of goes at the entrance pitch which proved to be quite awkward, Rita cruised through, Kath's bum was a bottleneck, and I managed to force my way up after a bit of grunting [*The entrance, or Kath's bum? – Ed.*]. I didn't use the ladder on the way in, but it was welcome on the way out as the hand and foot holds seem to disappear just as your body becomes contorted in the tight bit.

Back on the surface I offended Kath by declaring Rita the most attractive, we photo-tagged the entrance and then we bumbled around on the ridge looking for a couple of caves known to be nearby. We didn't find any other tagged caves, but I happened on a little phreatic tube leading into the hill. As I bent over and shined my light in, I was startled as a pair of shining blue eyes rushed out at me. After soiling my pants I realised it was my dog Rouge who had enthusiastically entered through another entrance some 8 or so metres away. Kath had found this nifty little cave on her previous visit, has sketched it and has promised to tag it in the coming weeks.

As Rouge discussed karst care principles with the resident wombat, we sat down and read the appropriate literature to see if we could figure out why we couldn't find anything else. Despite having a very tight search area we failed to turn up anything. My theory is that as the caves are characterised by tight entrances, they were discovered after a fire, and the area is now fairly well covered by organic litter, therefore the entrances are now hidden under regrowth. Unfortunately the orange tape over JF-168 seems to be the exception to the rule.

We headed back to the ute and the others seemed to have lost enthusiasm. I got excited when I found some blue tapes, but that turned out to be the boundary of the pine plantation. A limestone ridge runs through the pine forest, but the covering of ferns effectively obscures all features. Kath was now proposing a trip to JF-7 Frankcombes Cave. It wasn't exactly on my list of caving feats to achieve, but it was in the club GPS and Kath had been there in the preceding months with the uni. After having to kick John out of my ute three times in a row because he was still wearing his dirty caving gear, I was back in a bad mood, but we headed up the Florentine Road to where the club GPS suggested the track to the cave should be. At this point, no track was apparent, so I sent the others out to search for it while I sulked and ate my lunch.

They found nothing and Kath wasn't seeing anything familiar, but I eventually resolved to march through the scrub straight to the cave's waypoint. The scrub was terrible, but there was plenty of limestone and I was mildly surprised we didn't bumble across anything. Arriving at the waypoint, it became clear this was not the right place. The obvious answer was some complete douche had plugged an AGD66 coordinate into a GPS set up with WGS84. A bit of fiddling and it became clear that not only was this the case, but the coordinates were suspiciously rounded to the nearest 100 m indicating not only a datum issue, but the waypoint had been derived from a grid reference … shoddy at best. I snorted derisively at those who continue to use AGD66 instead of the geocentric GDA94, which has been in place for sixteen years, and cobbled together a fix. The rest of the party was restless and wanted to head back to the road, but I forced them to bash through even worse scrub to a corrected waypoint where there was still no sign of the cave. Everyone was sick of me and weren't going to tolerate scouting around further so we bashed out to the road covered in leeches, having wasted a couple of hours in unpleasant squalor. Whoever put those waypoints in the club GPS can expect a lengthy lecture from me about datums, projections and the idiocy of leaving a waypoint in a club GPS that hasn't been captured at the actual cave entrance. This lecture will probably conclude with the club GPS being shoved up the offender's arse.

Kath, possibly sensing the boiling fury under my otherwise calm exterior, suggested we head over to the Stan Murray area and finish a little job of mine. We headed to JF-527 to drop the pitch and survey the cave [*see page 28*]. As soon as I was underground I was suddenly happy again. Rouge wasn't, and had a bit of an anxiety attack at the entrance after we disappeared into the cave.

I rigged a ladder using an incorrectly sized hex and a dubious but solid boulder, and then backed it up with a rope to the first bombproof boulder tie back we could find which was practically way back at the entrance. The descent went smoothly but rather than finding a horizontal passage leading to a sump as expected, we found a streamway descending down a small passage that quickly became too tight to follow. Perhaps this is not the streamsink Rolan talks about after all? We surveyed out, and despite me firmly telling enthusiastic party members we were not going to name this cave, I later called it Distressed Dog Swallet when drawing it up to commemorate my dog's anxiety issues that bubbled up on the trip.

It was raining and getting dark but we popped around to JF-518 and I poked Kath through the hole I was too frightened to go into when I found it. The cave didn't go and proved to be little more than a collapsed mess, but we doubled the known extent of the cave! Happily, Kath was able to get back out too!

We headed back to the ute, pointedly removed all muddy clothes, and headed home. Kens Road is starting to need 4WD. On the trip back I developed a theory that Kath's larynx is not actually connected to her lungs but instead some constant pressure impeller style pump that allows her to talk continuously without stopping for a breath. It would be an interesting experiment to put Bunty and Kath in the same vehicle and observe the outcome.

References:

PARKER J. (1978), *Speleo Spiel* 140:4

GOODE A. (1978), *Speleo Spiel* 140:6

EBERHARD R. (1996), *Inventory and Management of Karst in the Florentine Valley, Tasmania - A report to Forestry Tasmania*, pp 58-59

Other Exciting Stuff

Where Limestone Comes From – Holiday Science for Troglodytes

Stephen Bunton

On our recent family holiday to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) I was privileged to see the formation of limestone first-hand. The GBR has formed on the summits of mountains along a submerged mountain range parallel to the Great Dividing Range. It is not a continuous reef but a series of individual reefs. At some places there is sufficient sand deposition to form small islands called coral cays. One of these islands, Green Island, is where we spent a few nights.

Green Island shows a succession that demonstrates the stages of a reef formation and limestone production. The reefs of the GBR are aligned in a SE-NW direction due to the influence of the SE Trade Winds. The reefs are eroding on the SE side and growing in the lee, on their NW side. Green Island has a maximum relief of 3 m above high tide but this is sufficient for it to support a rainforest. Beneath the rainforest there is a lens of freshwater, in the sand that is topped up by rainfall. This freshwater percolates through the sand, which is mostly broken down coral and shells, and out to the seawater. The freshwater interferes with the carbonate equilibrium and this leads to precipitation and the lithification of the carbonate sands, to form limestone. Green Island is therefore surrounded by a rocky ridge, which is exposed by erosion on the eastern and southern windward sides. This ridge has been karstified by the elements and contains interesting examples of solution pockets, little (fist-sized) tubes, karren and even fossils. It was not what I expected to see on an idyllic "desert island".

Limestone solution features exposed at low tide on Green Island.

Kathy Bunton views the exposed limestone on the south side of Green Island, QLD. Cairns is just visible in the background to the right of the proximal headland on the left.

The succession across Green Island from north-west to south-east can be summarised as; the coral reef growing in the lee of the island, eroded corals becoming sandflats, these sandflats begin to grow seagrasses that are food for turtles (Green Island is a good place to snorkel with turtles), sandy beach, rainforest, sandy beach on the south of the island, limestone rocky ridge, sandflats and then reef again – this time being eroded by the prevailing south-easterlies.

Whilst snorkelling, I was able to identify numerous species of fish, including five species of anemone fish. The most famous of these is the clown anemone fish (Nemo). There were plenty of coral species and other invertebrates. The most spectacular of these were the giant clams. Many of the larger ones of these sit on the sandy bottom. There were some clams that had settled on large coral heads and these were gradually being overgrown by the coral. These clams appeared partly closed up because they couldn't completely open and eventually they die.

A giant clam, almost big enough for a cave diving through trip. The white inlet siphon is clearly visible.

Not so giant clams being overgrown by coral.

Fossil Clam

One of the most interesting finds on the island was a piece of limestone that showed a fossil of a closed up clam. I was amazed at the colour and diversity of corals on the GBR. I was impressed to see so many soft corals. Other interesting creatures like crinoids also provide just as much of a thrill in the real life as they do when you stumble across them as fossils in cave walls.

All in all Green Island was a good place to visit, a place where you can see the Principle of Uniformitarianism demonstrated, with both the process and result happening in close proximity.

It's the Sediments, Stupid!

Greg Middleton

The latest issue of *Australasian Science* (Vol. 31, No. 6, pp. 14-17) carries an interesting article by Roberts & Brook ('The Biggest Losers') on the likely causes of the extinction of Australia's megafauna 40,000 to 50,000 years ago. Although eminent British comparative anatomist, Richard Owen, as early as 1877, believed the cause was most likely "the hostile agency of man", the actual evidence for this has been a long time coming. This has been partly due to the difficulty of obtaining accurate dates and the shortage of direct evidence (like cut marks on bones or stone tools associated with megafaunal bone deposits). Only recently have scientists from ANU directly dated the youngest megafauna fossils from one of the best sites, Cuddie Springs in western NSW. What they have found is that none of these bones are younger than 50,000 years. The oldest reliably dated archaeological sites in southern Australia are Devils Lair (WI61) in SW Western Australia and Lake Mungo, NSW, where stone tools have been dated to as early as 50,000 to 45,000 years ago. The similarity of the dates seems to be more than coincidental: the giant animals vanished within a few millennia of people first entering this continent.

If the relationship is pretty well established, the mechanism is still the subject of debate. The megafauna might have been killed off directly by human predation (this has been shown to be possible within a few millennia) or the effect might have been indirect, like increased fires changing the vegetation. Roberts & Brook suggest that to move forward into the detail it will be necessary to shift the focus from the macroscopic (i.e. fossil bones and teeth) to the microscopic (fungal spores) and molecular (ancient DNA). Work on spores of a dung fungus and mammoth DNA from ancient sediments has been productive in the Northern Hemisphere. Australian sediments have been less productive because warmer climates are not so conducive to preservation of biological material. So what do these guys from Wollongong and Adelaide suggest? "The best options for finding ancient DNA may be caves in cool temperate regions such as Tasmania, where humans arrived – and the megafauna survived – relatively late ..." Perhaps we need to prepare for an influx of spade-wielding mainland palaeoecologists. Meanwhile, we should protect our cave sediments.

ACKMA AGM – Mulu

Serena Benjamin

Engage cruise mode now! Six hours between flights in two different airports is a great way to adopt the slow and deliberate pace befitting of holidays. Sunset in Melbourne, followed by the day filtering in to greet me in Kuala Lumpur before been dazzled by the sparkling blue on the way to Kota Kinabalu. My plans to climb Gunung Kinabalu never came to fruition but no worries, I explored KK and surrounds whilst getting used to being in a tropical steam oven.

"We have chicken and cheese or ham and cheese" was the reply for my request of a vegetarian breakfast at the airport when my flight to Miri was delayed. Ah, I'd forgotten the Asian interpretation of vegetarian. But soon, with a cheese sandwich in the belly, I was transported from the budget hostel backpacker lifestyle to the five star Miri Marriott seaside spa and resort. Such luxury! And I thought taking a taxi was a step up. So with my things safely ensconced in my nicely refrigerated room I ignored the aghast looks of a few ("it's hot out you know") and declined the 'share a taxi' idea, venturing into town to pick up some food supplies and explore. How else can you spot interesting critters like dead snakes and butterflies, experience the joys of fruit and veggie shopping to dance music or stumble across seemingly abandoned canal estate developments? The death of my 50c tip shop umbrella was a tragic outcome of this escapade leaving me in for a bit of a

roasting when it happened several kilometres from town. However, I made it back safely and that night new friends and old were greeted at the poolside ACKMA BBQ.

The next day, my birthday, dawned fresh from the night's tropical downpour and its accompanying loud thunderclaps. After a substantial buffet breakfast ninety or so delegates piled onto two buses for our trip to Niah Caves further south. On the bus, off the bus, on the bus, off the bus, on a boat, off the boat and then finally like ants we marched along a boardwalk to the cave itself. Its sheer size dwarfed us as we gaped and gawked at the bird nesters' infrastructure left within. The athleticism required to free climb these boggles the mind. All too soon it was time to get back on the bus and proceed back through the palm oil plantations aplenty – an experience made more pleasant by a cursory stop for beer. So back at the resort and after a paddle in the pool I indulged in a buffet dinner with a surprise serenade by five of the staff singing happy birthday. Aw shucks, and they brought mango cheesecake too.

From big (hotel lobby) to bigger (Niah Cave) to biggest (Deer Cave). A morning flight on the 23rd to Mulu and the ACKMA AGM 'week' truly began. And here my slim grasp on reality begins to get a little more blurred and takes on a dream-like quality. Was I really there? Did I really see and do these things? To describe it is near impossible - you have to **experience** it!!! The abundance of chattering noises hints that the whole experience may indeed not have been reality.

Mulu as much as anything is about sweat – how much you do, how fast you replace it, and how many sacrificial items of clothing you have. Some coped well, others not. And if it isn't about sweat it's about water – how much you are carrying, how much is falling out of the sky and how water levels will affect your plans. Transport on the long boats to some of the caves varies hugely according to the river levels. And access to some caves is also dependent on water levels. Add to this the spectacularly high attrition rate (through injury and the like) during the week and you get some idea of the conditions. From the outset we knew it would be hot. Niah Cave had been the first test for most. Our first steps out of the air-conditioned comfort of the aircraft at Mulu put paid to any idea that the inland would be any cooler than the coast. Those of us who had made it onto the morning flight proceeded to an afternoon tour of Deer and Langs Cave followed by a viewing of the bat exodus from the former. A thunderstorm started as we left for the hour long walk back along the slippery boardwalk. Absolutely magic – deafening cicadas, fireflies and lightning and of course the wonderful cooling effect of rain.

On the 24th of April I went on a morning tour of Racer Cave, surprisingly named for its racer snakes. So much more wildlife in there including various bat species, crickets, millipedes, swiftlets, amblypygids. A nice 'little' cave with some fun little climbs assisted by in situ ropes. The obligatory AGM (really this was the highlight of the whole week) in the afternoon was at the Royal Mulu Resort followed by a buffet dinner accompanied by a huge rainstorm.

Anzac Day for me was a full day tour to the Garden of Eden. This started off by going through Deer Cave, jumping off the tourist path and walking up the river, whilst dodging tiger leeches, through to a delightful little pool at the end. The threat of rain was a concern as if it rose too high we may be trapped on this side of the cave (it had happened before). Ominous clouds could be seen through the canopy and while there, I saw the river come up an inch and when the storm hit us it was time to go. So all up we probably had 20 minutes there.

Attempt #1 for Sarawak chamber never really got off the ground as due to the previous days' rain and already high water levels (determined by another group's unsuccessful attempts) the trip was cancelled. With a quick change of plans I jumped in a longboat and headed up river to Lagangs Cave in the morning. The majority of this trip was spent on the tourist boardwalk throughout the cave and some off track stuff up to some very nice formation and passage. We then exited the cave via the Fast Lane section before getting back in the longboat to go back to headquarters for lunch. That afternoon I got myself onto a trip to Stonehorse Cave which wasn't in my original schedule. I'd heard other people commenting about the scary traverses over huge pits and was kind of curious. It turned out to be a brilliant cave with the ubiquitous bats in residence and some interesting passage development. The traverses were not as huge as described and not terribly daunting. Afterwards I went for a second viewing of the bat exodus.

Will we? Won't we? A second attempt for Sarawak chamber started at 7 am on the 27th with a 3 hour walk to 'just have a look' at the water levels. When we got to the entrance Jenny, our guide, said that it was still very high and therefore highly unlikely that we'd make it through. After some confusion it was decided that we would see if we could make it to the plunge pool. So, abandoning all gear (including a 4.5 kg 2000 lumen borrowed light and my camera) four of us plus Jenny went upstream 'just to have a look'. Free from the encumbrances of all the additional gear we'd normally take in we travelled fast and well. I realised pretty early that I wouldn't be going back for my gear. It gradually dawned on the others too. The streamway was fantastic. Kinda like Growling – except that you could see your feet, feel your feet and see much better due to the light colour of the limestone. Leaving the river behind we climbed up a seemingly interminable boulder pile and ascended into a layer of fog at the edge of Sarawak chamber. The walls and ceiling disappeared out of sight and any rocks dislodged spookily echoed around us. Perched in this strange underworld we listened to the swiftlets and bats chattering as they circled high above our heads. It was here that on our descent a baby swiftlet perched briefly on my shoulder. Is this a sign of good luck in Good Luck Cave?

The next day, after an exciting morning walk (just staying on the path) through Moonmilk Cave I spent the rest of the day in Clearwater Connection tootling along in a small section of the >129 km of passage. Later on, I convinced some others to do our own night walk to spot critters.

Another early start on the 29th, this time to go to the tree top tower, didn't yield many results in the wildlife watching department. Went to Fruit Bat Cave in the morning which had some spectacular passage development followed by the canopy walk in the afternoon which was interesting from an engineering point of view. As in – do you really trust a five year old rope contraption in a tropical climate? The final bbq to cap off the week was

held that night with those that hadn't already departed attending.

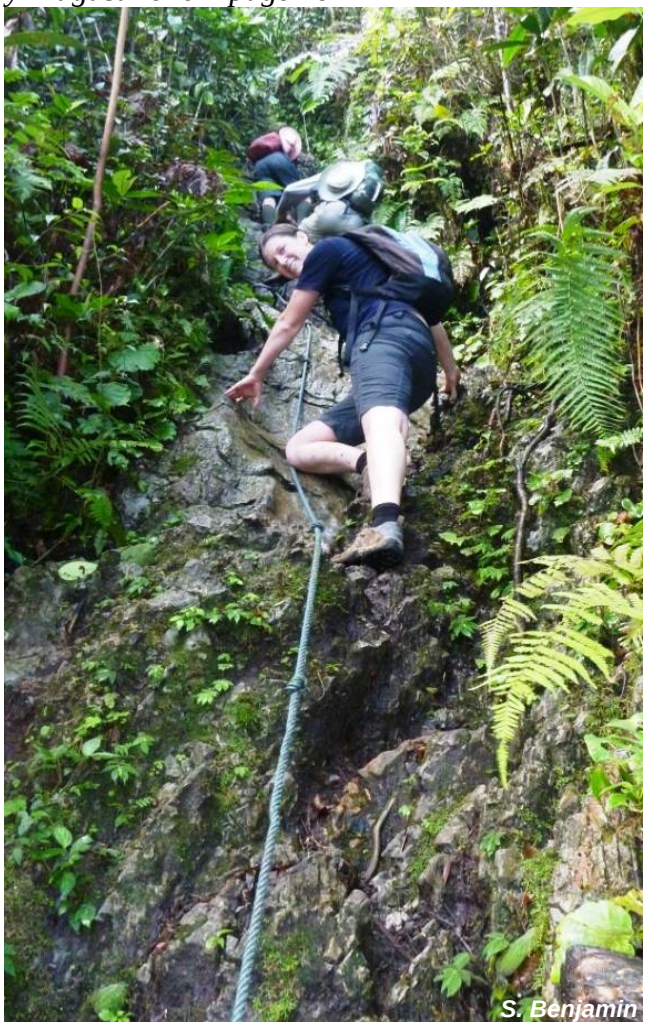
'Alice in Wonderland' bug.

All good things must come to an end – or morph into another form. On the 30th of April I got up super early to pack my stuff for the pinnacles. The boys making an attempt at Sarawak that day looked like they'd had one rice wine too many the night before but they eventually got underway. That began the series of farewells as people started drifting off. In dribs and drabs the people destined for upriver and the pinnacles arrived and soon enough we also continued our adventure. Long boats and long houses, more caves and the pinnacles. The whirlwind continued till I came full circle and flew out of KK.

So here I am writing this back in Hobart as contrary to the doubt of some I survived Mulu. A light dusting of snow has coated the mountain and the chill in the air is brisk enough to remind me that exposed flesh on a morning ride is actually acutely painful. A brief interlude before my next adventure …

A short person (Janine) in a Long House.

Ric mixing with like-minded people.



Ascent of the pinnacles [*Note she isn't using the handline – hard woman! – Ed.*]

The Pinnacles.

Rope Testing

Alan Jackson

On Saturday July 17th we subjected a selection of our finest ropes to drop testing. Josh Peach and Paul Steane were kind enough to allow us to use the facilities at the Police search and rescue headquarters at 76 Federal St, North Hobart.

Things went largely as expected with only a few notable exceptions. Table 1 below summarises the ropes and the number of falls they were subjected to. In general we didn't continue testing an individual rope if it survived four consecutive falls.

Table 1. Summary of testing results.

Rope Name	Diameter (mm)	Number of falls	Passed/failed?
B111	10.5	4	Passed
B76	10.5	Failed on 3rd fall	Failed
B81	10.5	4	Passed
C4	10.5	4	Passed
C9	10.5	5	Passed
CAD	10.5	Failed on 4th fall	Passed
Chris Chad private rope	9	5	Passed
Cowstails (A. Jackson)	10.5	5	Not relevant
Cowstails (G. Wise – Petzl Spelegyca)	~	~	Interesting/scary
Cowstails (K. Hosking – Petzl Spelegyca)	~	~	Interesting/scary
Cowstails (retired STC)	10.5	4	Not relevant
D1	10.5	4	Passed
D5	10.5	4	Passed
E2	11	4	Passed
K?	9.5	Failed on 2nd fall	Jury still out
K3	9.5	Failed on 4th fall	Passed
N2	59.5	5	Passed
R22 (old Blue Water)	11	3	Passed

As expected, 11 mm rope is indestructible and hardly worth testing – E2 is fairly new and hardly used, but R22 is approaching 30 years old and nearly doesn't even bend anymore!

10.5 mm ropes are nearly as bomb-proof as 11 mm. B76 was an interesting result, failing on the third drop. This rope was particularly nasty looking, with a moth-eaten appearance to almost the entire length of the sheath. The precise history of this rope is unknown but it has the look of a rope that has sat in a highly abrasive situation underground for an extended period. It was almost retired on the day we inspected and re-measured all our ropes a couple of months ago based purely on its appearance. The testing confirmed our concerns. It has been retired. CAD was the only other 10.5 to fail (on the 4th test). We'll need to keep an eye on our ageing fleet of 10.5 mm (6-10 years old).

The 9.5 mm ropes provided arguably the most excitement of the day. The first one we pulled out was not labelled but the second one we found was a K rope. This led us to assume that the unlabelled rope was our N sample. The N rope is the 200 m roll we purchased in November 2009 for use in Niggly – it has had six abseils and three (tandem, i.e. six) ascents only. When it broke on the second fall our jaws experienced a fall factor 2! Memories of tandem prusiking on this rope came flooding back and I had to go change my underwear. However, the next (unexpected) 9.5 mm rope that appeared in the water-filled bucket of ropes was an N rope, so we realised that the really bad performance was a second K rope sample. This allayed our concerns a fraction but even the K rope is only ~3 years old and should have done better. K3 failed on the fourth drop (an expected and acceptable outcome) so we need to check Jane's notes from the rope measuring/cutting day to confirm just which K rope the dodgy sample came from and do some further tests. In the interim we probably should take all the K ropes off the shelf until we have confirmed that they're safe. So the jury's still out on the K rope situation.

A few other bits and pieces were tested. Chris Chad brought along a piece of 9 mm rope (purchased November 2009) which appeared to have hardly been used (certainly not flogged underground). It performed admirably. Two sets of retired cowstails made in the traditional method of ~10 mm dynamic rope with hand-tied knots performed well. My set had a figure 9 at the main attachment point and 'barrel' knots at either end. We tested the 'long' section (i.e. barrel knot to figure 9). The cowstails had been retired as I had worn through the sheath on the barrel knots, exposing the internal core.

Geoff and Ken brought along retired Petzl Spelegycas. These are a sewn, flat tape cowstail equivalent mass-produced by Petzl. They didn't receive a glowing report in a highly technical review performed by the French a few years back (*Series of tests on Cow's Tails used for progression on semi-static ropes, Chamonix, June 2006*) – I referred to this in *SS*365:3 and the full report is available as a pdf in the club electronic archive. Our testing method is nowhere near as controlled or analytical as the French method, but we all went home with a bad gut feeling about the Spelegyca after our tests. Neither of them ultimately failed even after 5+ tests, but none of the tests (even the

first one) had a good 'vibe'. Normally the first drop (be it dynamic or static rope) is a fairly gentle affair – there is lots of rope stretch, knot tightening etc and it all seems rather serene. The Spelegyca produced an abrupt bang which just didn't look or sound nice. The sacrificial stitching in the device (the energy absorbing feature engineered by Petzl) did fail progressively with each drop but none of it was very pretty. I certainly won't ever use one and wouldn't recommend them to anyone else (even if I didn't like the individual!) It looks like they won't break in the webbing and send you plummeting to your death, but there's every chance you'll break your pelvis …

So in summary:

Our 11 mm is bombproof, our 10.5 mm should be good for a few more years yet, our older 9.5 mm is a potential concern and requires more testing, and you'd be a damn fool to use a Petzl Spelegyca.

Thanks very much to those that attended and helped out and a very big thank you to Josh and Paul (Police Search and Rescue) for their help and providing the venue.

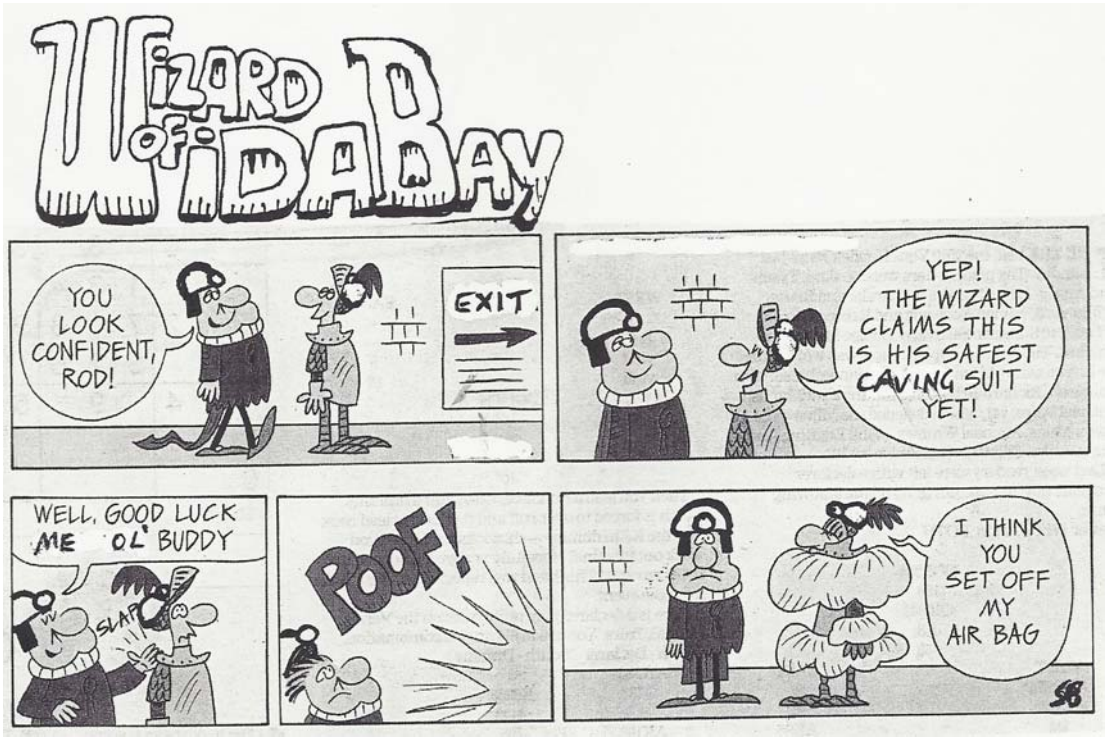
NW Coast Attractions

Chris Chad

The family and I were recently up north for the weekend and took the opportunity to take a bit of a drive up to Rocky Cape for a look around. While we were there we wandered up the short track to South Cave for a bit of a sticky beak and a photo to commemorate the event was duly taken. [*This cave needs a tag … - Ed.*]

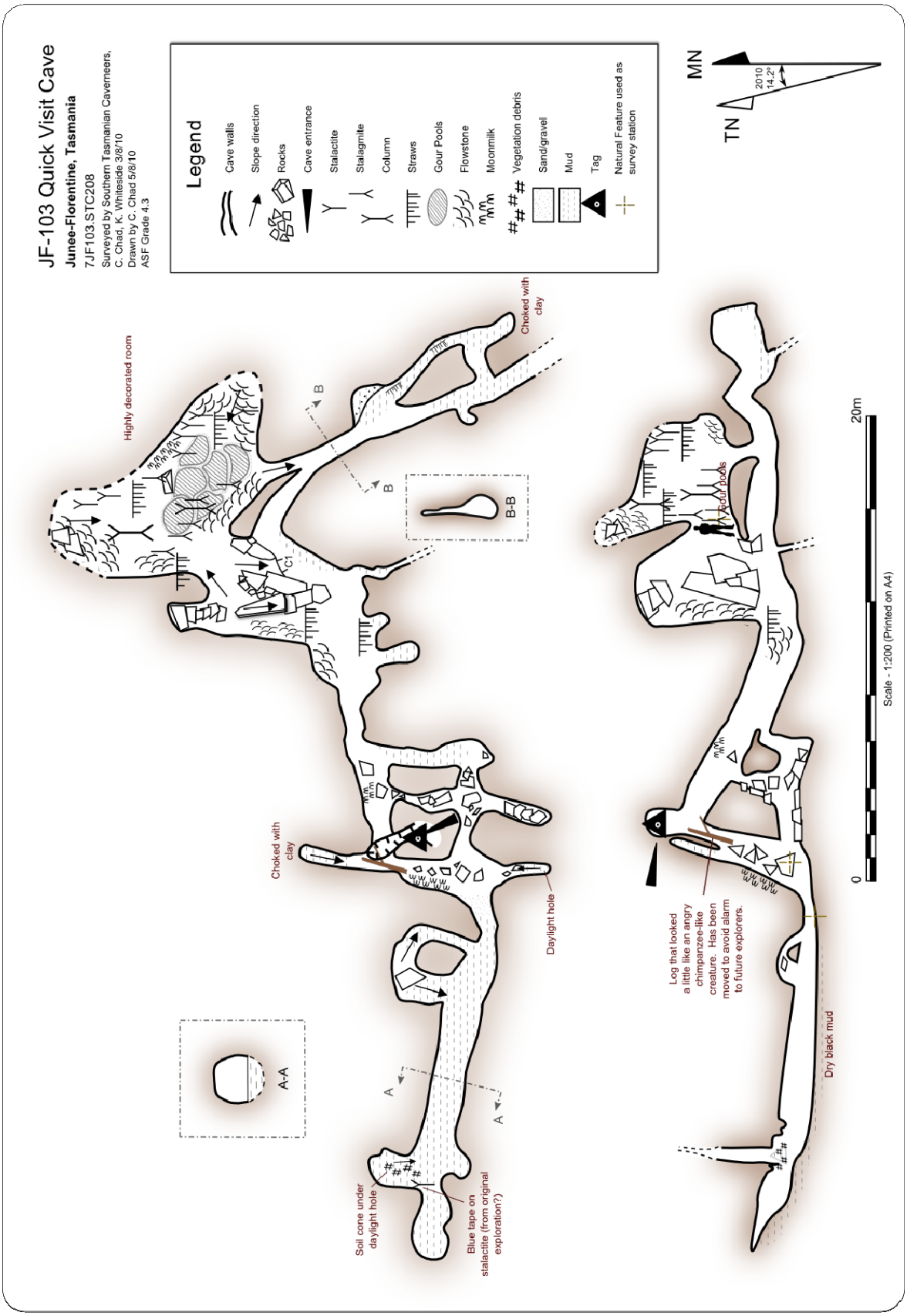
Following this we attempted to visit the Milkshake Hills area, which my wife has been wanting to take me to for several years. After navigating an unusually convoluted route through rural back-roads, with me threatening to buy every farm we passed, we arrived at the Tayatea Bridge to discover it had been washed away (in 2007). Toby and I amused ourselves by trying to fill the river up with rocks and I discovered a lode of copper ore that I hope will one day make me rich. The Milkshake Hills will have to wait for another day. It would seem that we missed a bit of a karst feature in the Trowutta Arch … a potential contrived photo for another edition.

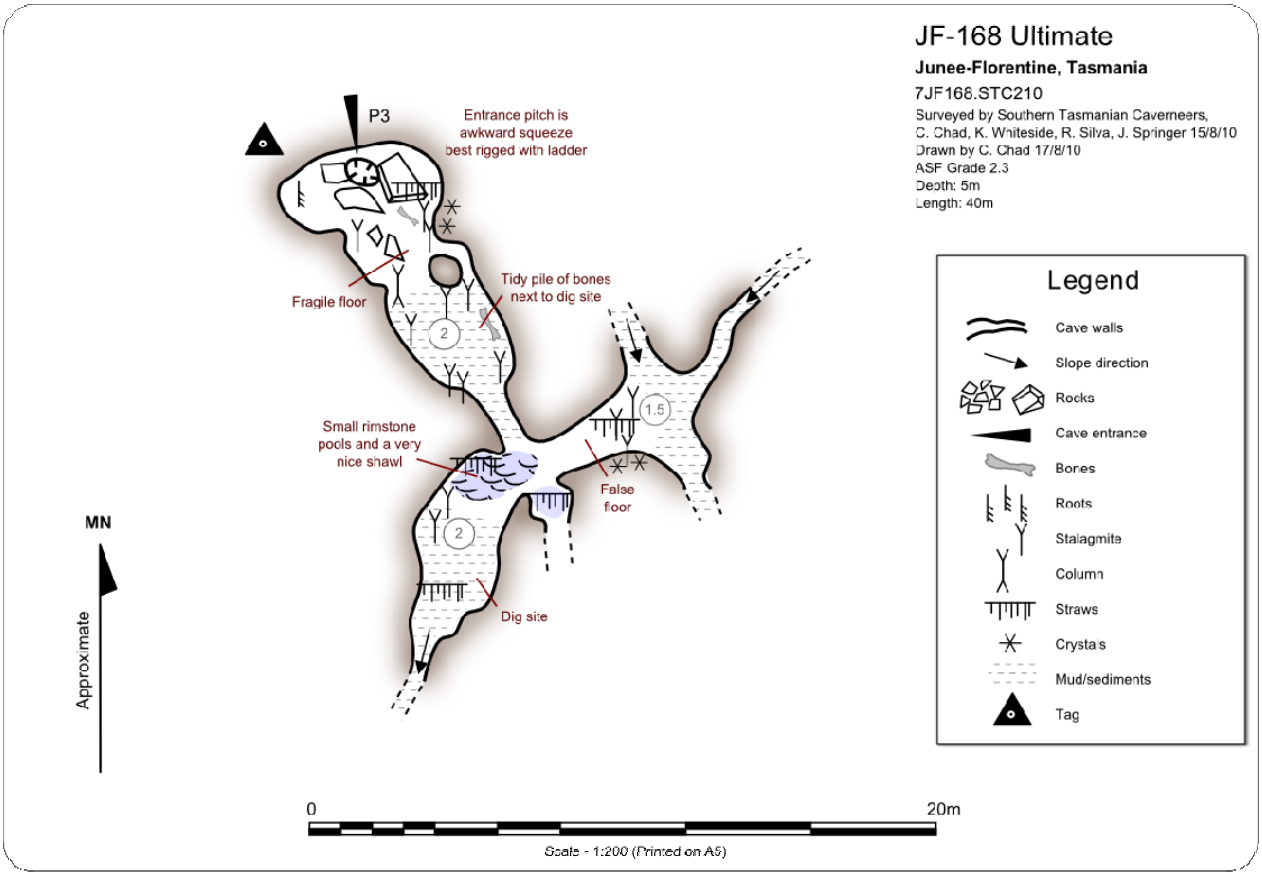
South Cave, Rocky Cape National Park. The odd looking pink thing is Sophie. →

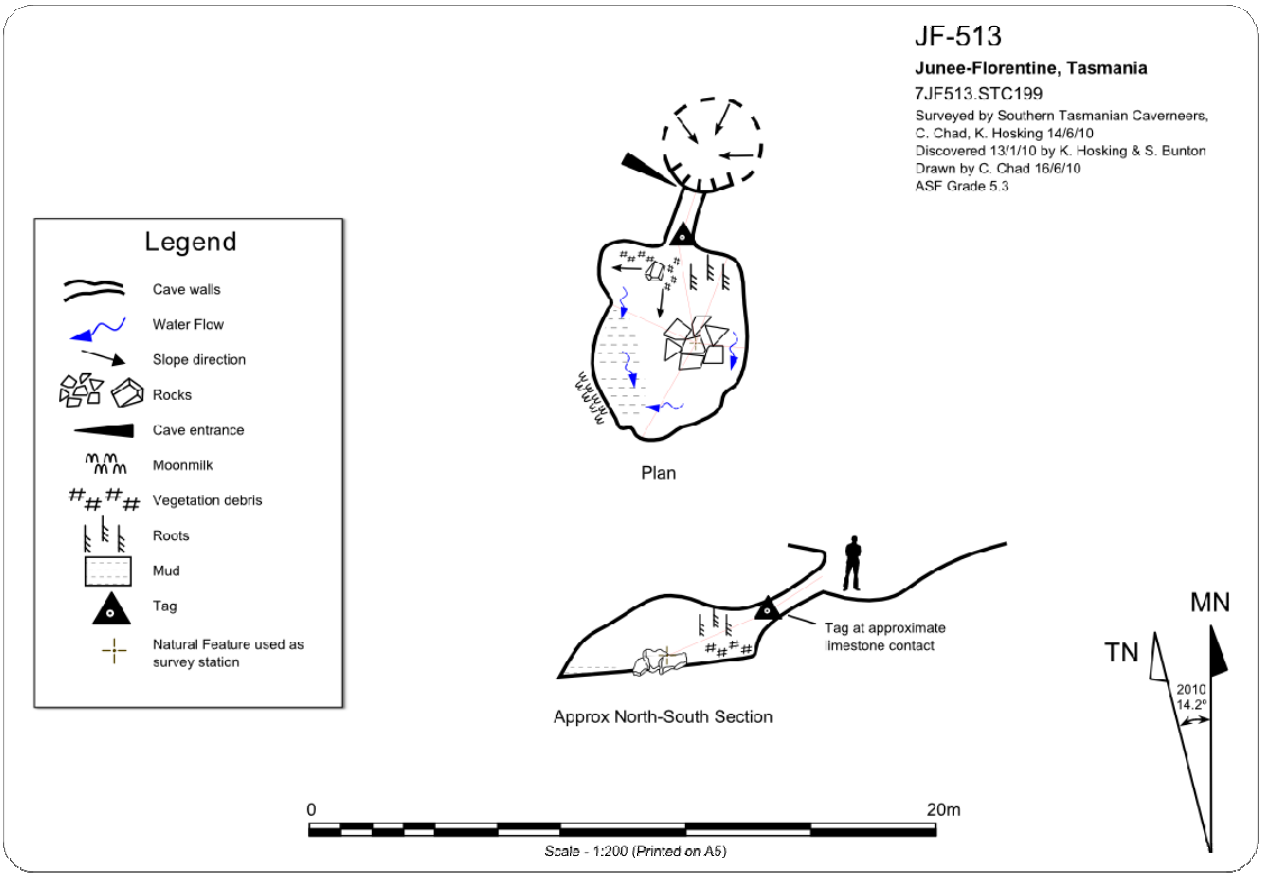


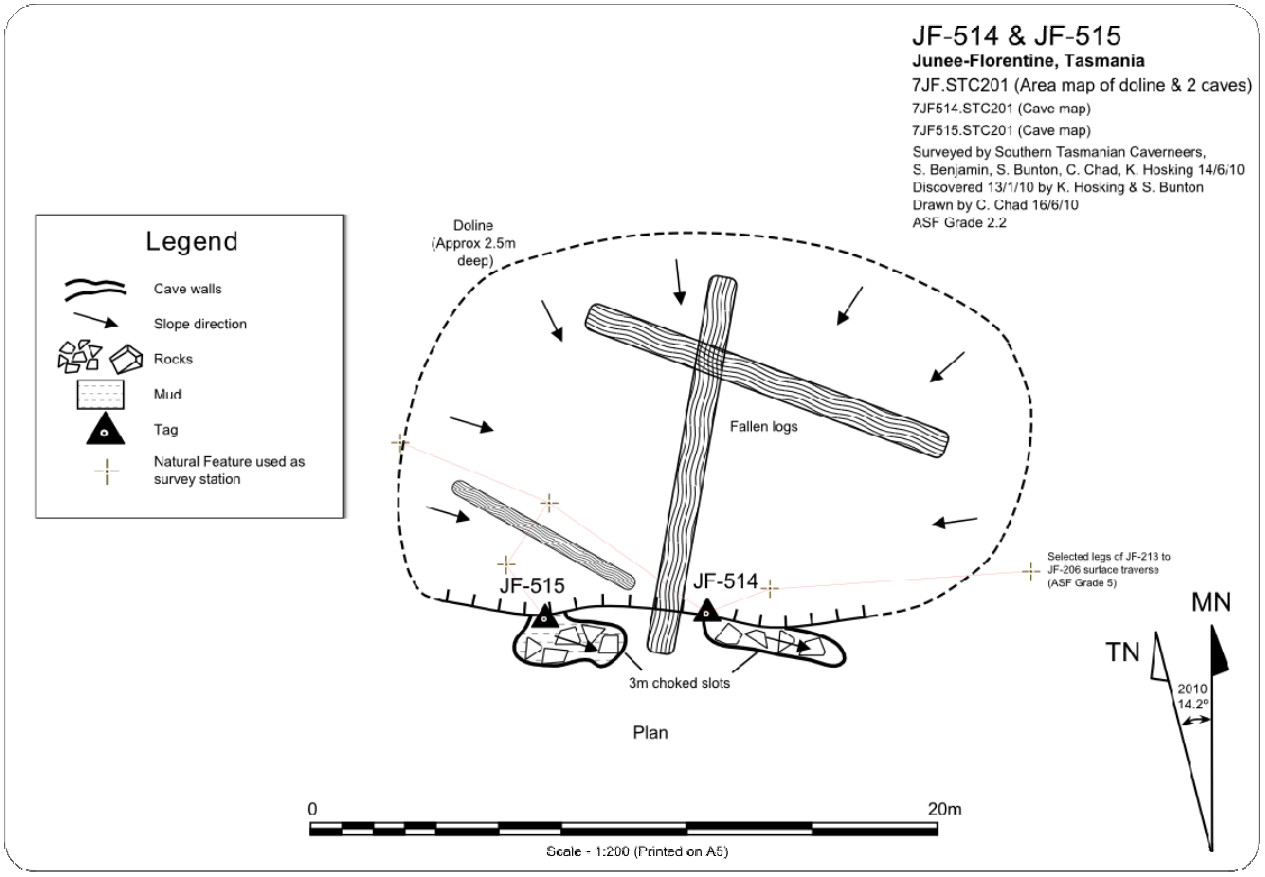
Surveys

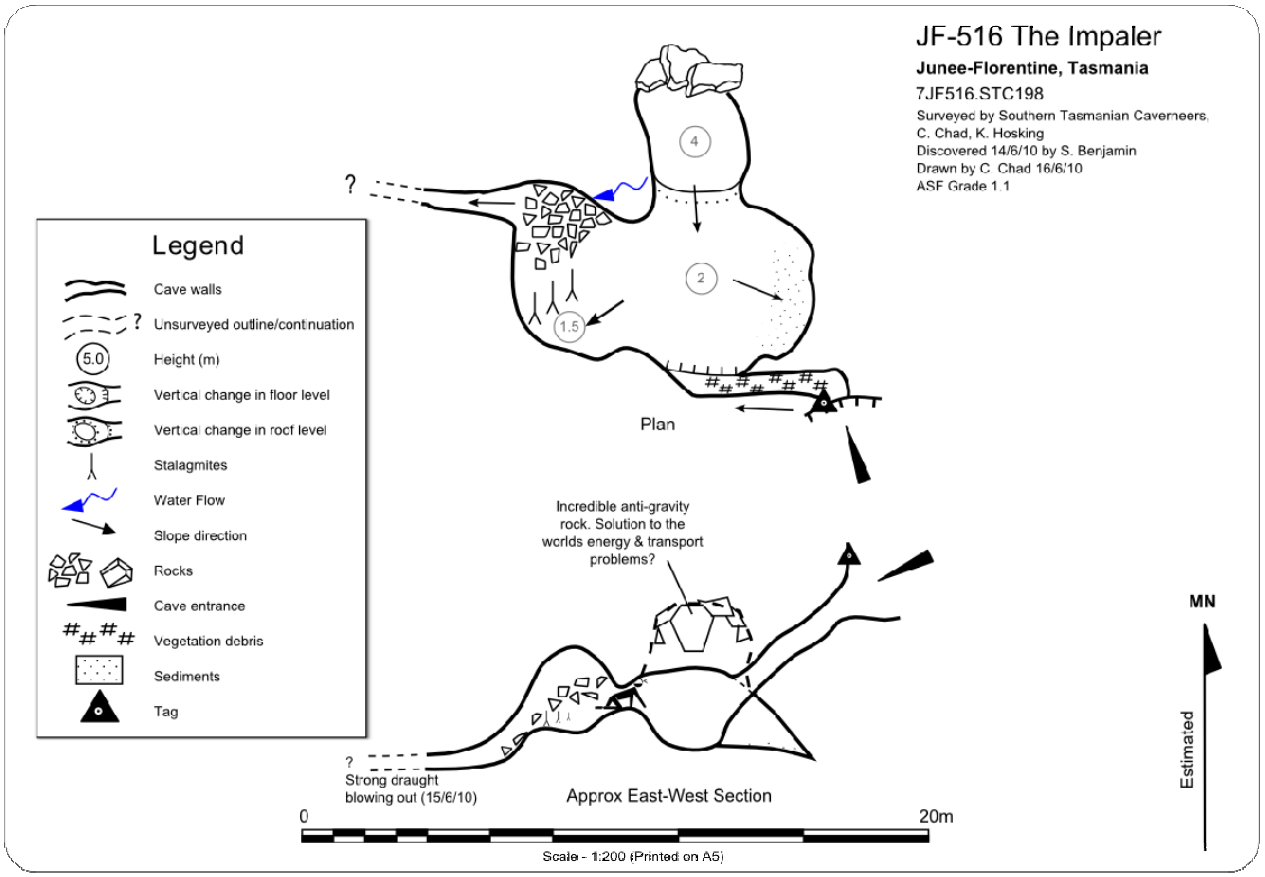
Another glut of surveys from various trip reports contained in this issue.




JF-168 Ultimate
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF168.STC210
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad, K. Whiteside, R. Silva, J. Springer 15/8/10
Drawn by C. Chad 17/8/10
ASF Grade 2.3
Depth: 5m
Length: 40m
P3
Entrance pitch is awkward squeeze best rigged with ladder
Fragile floor
Tidy pile of bones next to dig site
Small rimstone pools and a very nice shawl
False floor
Dig site
2
1.5
2
MN
Approximate
Legend
Cave walls
Slope direction
Rocks
Cave entrance
Bones
Roots
Stalagmite
Column
Straws
Crystals
Mud/sediments
Tag
0
20m
Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A5)


JF-513
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF513.STC199
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad, K. Hosking 14/6/10
Discovered 13/1/10 by K. Hosking & S. Eunton
Drawn by C. Chad 16/6/10
ASF Grade 5.3
Legend
Cave walls
Water Flow
Slope direction
Rocks
Cave entrance
Moonmilk
Vegetation debris
Roots
Mud
Tag
Natural Feature used as survey station
Plan
Tag at approximate limestone contact
Approx North-South Section
MN
TN
2010
14.2°
0
20m
Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A5)


JF-514 & JF-515
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF.STC201 (Area map of doline & 2 caves)
7JF514.STC201 (Cave map)
7JF515.STC201 (Cave map)
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
S. Benjamin, S. Bunton, C. Chad, K. Hosking 14/6/10
Discovered 13/1/10 by K. Hosking & S. Bunton
Drawn by C. Chad 16/6/10
ASF Grade 2.2
Legend
Cave walls
Slope direction
Rocks
Mud
Tag
Natural Feature used as survey station
Doline (Approx 2.5m deep)
Fallen logs
JF-515
JF-514
Selected legs of JF-213 to JF-206 surface traverse (ASF Grade 5)
3m choked slots
Plan
MN
TN
2010
14.2°
0
20m
Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A5)

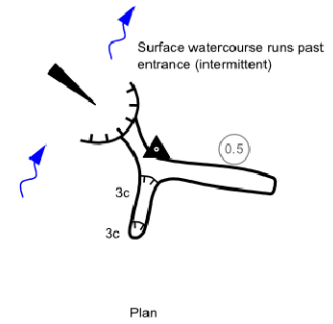

JF-516 The Impaler
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF516.STC198
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad, K. Hosking
Discovered 14/6/10 by S. Benjamin
Drawn by C. Chad 16/6/10
ASF Grade 1.1
Legend
Cave walls
Unsurveyed outline/continuation
Height (m)
Vertical change in floor level
Vertical change in roof level
Stalagmites
Water Flow
Slope direction
Rocks
Cave entrance
Vegetation debris
Sediments
Tag
4
2
1.5
Plan
Incredible anti-gravity rock. Solution to the worlds energy & transport problems?
Strong draught blowing out (15/6/10)
Approx East-West Section
MN
Estimated
0
20m
Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A5)

JF-517

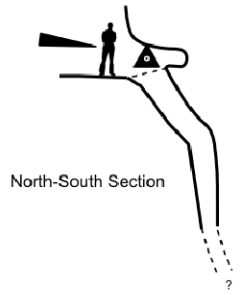
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

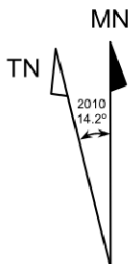
7JF517.STC204

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad 10/7/10
Drawn by C. Chad 11/7/10
ASF Grade 3.3



Plan



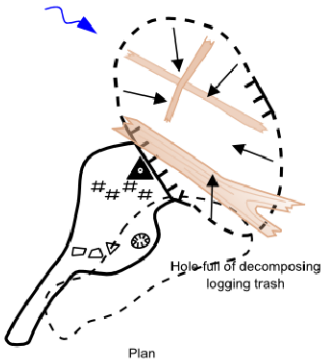


JF-518

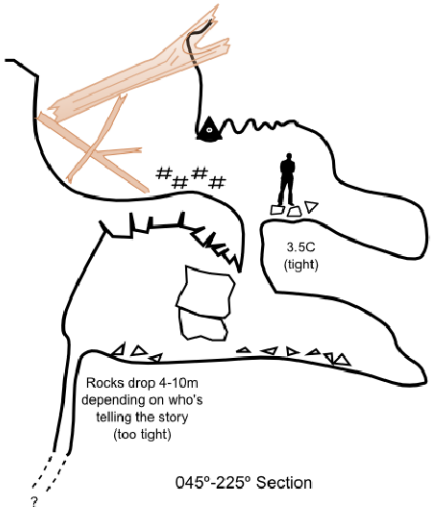
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF518.STC205

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad 10/7/10
Drawn by C. Chad 11/7/10
ASF Grade 3.3



Plan



045°-225° Section

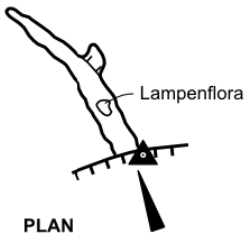
Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A5)

JF-519

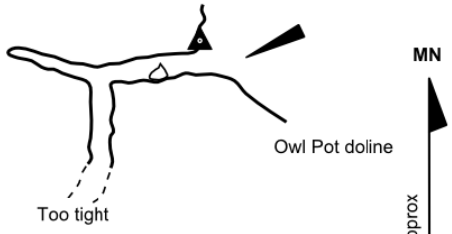
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF519.STC206

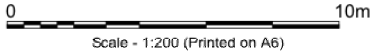
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad, A. Jackson 18/7/10
Discovered A. Jackson, G. Brett
Drawn by C. Chad 19/7/10
ASF Grade 1.1



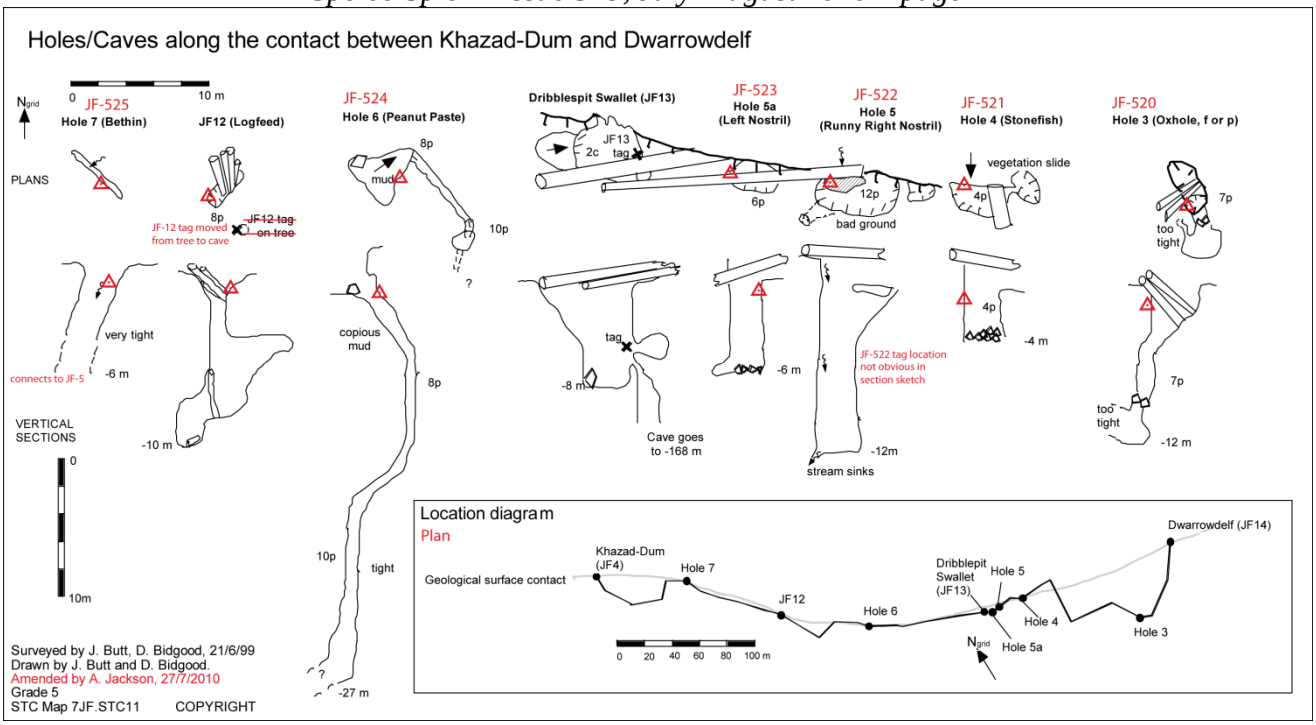
PLAN



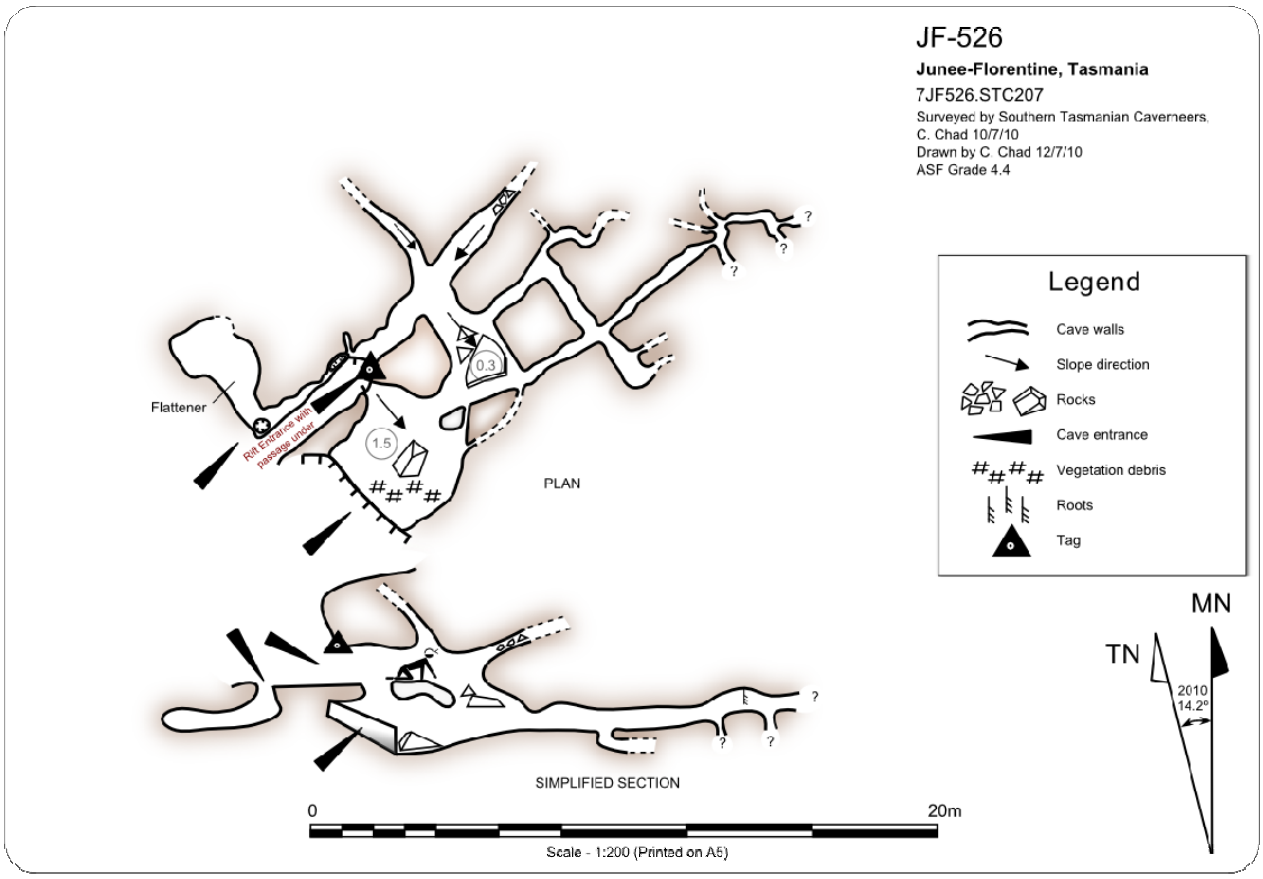
DEVELOPED SECTION

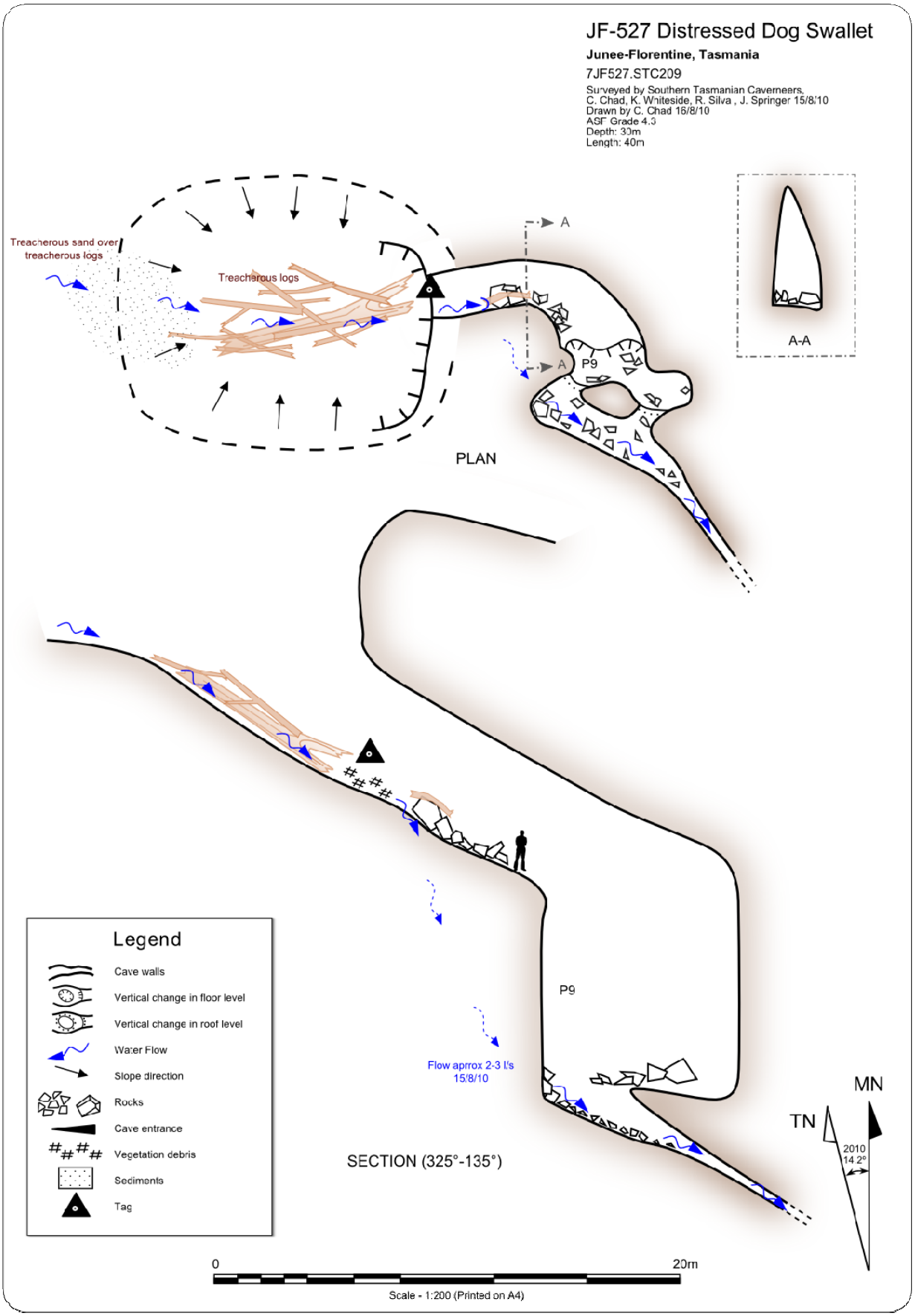


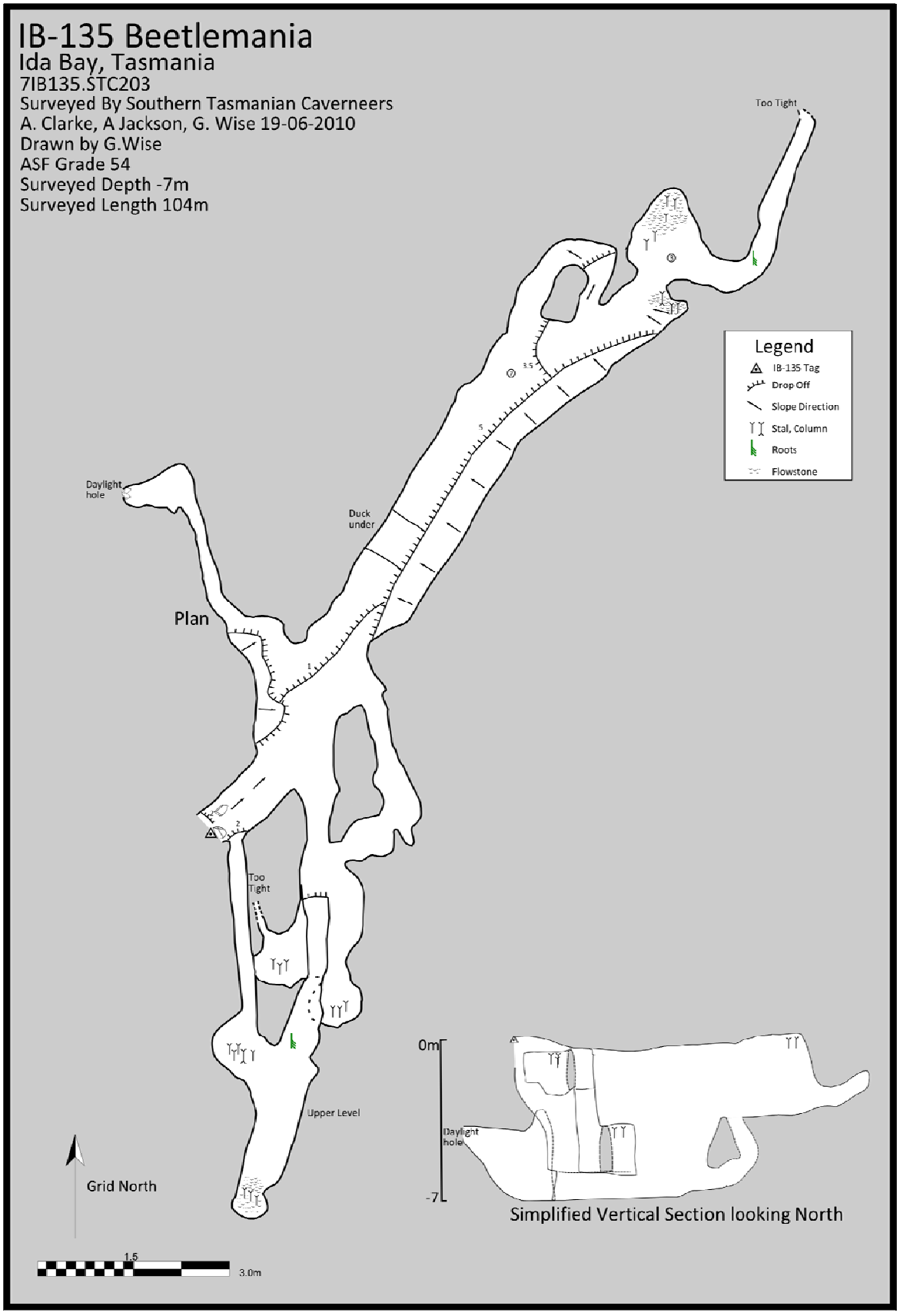
Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A6)



The above map was originally printed in SS316:15. The map has been amended (additional information in red text) to indicate new cave numbers, tag locations and other information.




JF-527 Distressed Dog Swallet
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF527.STC209
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers.
C. Chad, K. Whiteside, R. Silva , J. Springer 15/8/10
Drawn by C. Chad 15/8/10
AGT Grade 4.3
Depth: 30m
Length: 40m
Treacherous sand over treacherous logs
Treacherous logs
A
A
P9
PLAN
A-A
P9
Flow aprrox 2-3 l/s
15/8/10
SECTION (325°-135°)
Legend
Cave walls
Vertical change in floor level
Vertical change in roof level
Water Flow
Slope direction
Rocks
Cave entrance
Vegetation debris
Sediments
Tag
MN
TN
2010
14.2°
0
20m
Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A4)


IB-135 Beetlemania
Ida Bay, Tasmania
7IB135.STC203
Surveyed By Southern Tasmanian Caverneers
A. Clarke, A Jackson, G. Wise 19-06-2010
Drawn by G.Wise
ASF Grade 54
Surveyed Depth -7m
Surveyed Length 104m
Too Tight
Legend
IB-135 Tag
Drop Off
Slope Direction
Stal, Column
Roots
Flowstone
Daylight hole
Duck under
Plan
Too Tight
Upper Level
Grid North
1.5
3.0m
0m
Daylight hole
-7
Simplified Vertical Section looking North

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