

SPELEO SPIEL 380

September - October 2010

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Front Cover: JF-34 Rift Cave entrance. *Photo by K. Whiteside*



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

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Editorial

I can't remember the last time I managed a good diatribe in the Editorial and I'm struggling to find motivation for one now. Am I becoming a boring, mellowed, middle age twat? Let's hope not.

Maybe because I don't make it to many meetings any more I'm missing out on a rich source of inspiration. I get the sense that the number tag discussions at the October meeting would have provided sufficient fodder. There's nothing quite like 'decision by committee' to transform an otherwise simple process into a veritable farce. People are much better off when they're simply told what's going to happen rather than allowed to have any significant input. Actually, I think that is already the motto of the engineering fraternity. It's certainly mine.

Alan Jackson

Stuff 'n Stuff

HOW THE TIMES HAVE CHANGED

I came across the following in SS105:2 (September 1975). It's interesting to see what wasn't considered environmentally responsible, and what was, at the time:

ATTENTION ALL CAVERS!

During a recent attempt to penetrate Sesame Two Cave (JF 211), by a TCC/Maydena Branch party, a plastic bag containing carbide was found at the top of the first pitch below the entrance pitch. Can anyone give an explanation to why the bag was not removed from the cave and buried?

I guess I am echoing Rolan's sentiments in his TCC Woz Ere article in SS375:19. I get nervous when I find myself doing this.

WOLF HOLE MOVES UP THE LIST

At the September meeting, Matt Cracknell presented his completed map of H-8 Wolf Hole. This map gives the surveyed length of the cave as 4620 m. This means Wolf Hole moves from 11th (3030 m) to 5th place on the list of longest Tasmanian caves.

KING OF THE PSEUDOSCORPIONS



Chris Chad has made this 'Photoshop' contribution in celebration of biospeleological excellence. Life would be dull without the internet and Photoshop. [and yes, Chris, I know that you wouldn't have actually used Photoshop to create this image, as you're unmistakably one of society's

supreme upper echelon who insist that any mainstream software producer is inherently corrupt and that freeware alternatives like Inkscape and GIMP are the symbols of all that is true and just in this world, but the majority of our readers are simple folk who only recognise two companies, Adobe and Microsoft, and one must always cater for the lowest common denominator – hence all the trips to Exit.]

KEEPING UP WITH THE CHADS

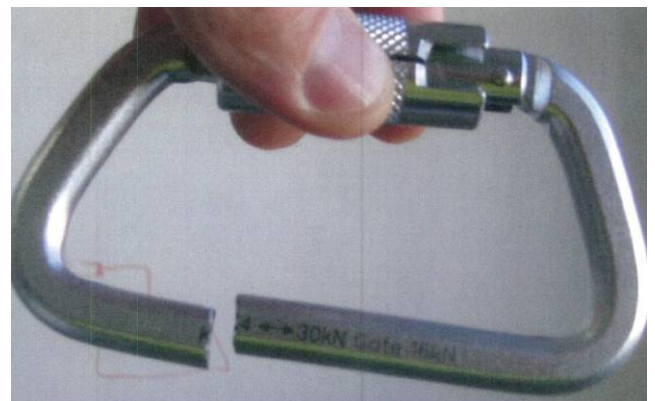
Chris has made it his goal in life to get an image of his son, Toby, into every *Spiel*. He has been successful in this endeavour since issue 374. As long as it is relevant, funny or both then I'm happy to appease him. Chris assures me that this photo is both relevant (he's wearing a hard hat) and funny (he's grabbing his old fella). I must concur on both counts.



C. Chad

SPANSET KARABINER RECALL

Al Warild sent notice of a safety recall for 'K4 triple action' SpanSet krabs around Ozcavers recently. Despite a rated SWL of 30 kN the krab photographed below failed under a static load of 150 kg. If you have any of these in your collection then I suggest you return them to their point of purchase immediately!



Trip Reports

Caving: Italian Style.

Part 1: Spluga Della Preta, Veneto, Northern Italy

Janine McKinnon

29 June 2010

Party: Marco Zucco, Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon, Mauro ?

5.30 pm. Sound like a good time to leave town to go caving? Then Italy is the place for you!

Actually, we were meant to leave at 3 pm, so Ric and I were dutifully waiting then. Silly us, this is Italy, not Southern Tasmania. Italian time is another beast, we soon learnt. Well, we had had a few lessons already but we can be slow learners sometimes.

Marco picked us up from his flat around 4 pm. We were finally off ... we thought ... but no, first to the gear store to get the rope and Marco's personal gear.

Then, well, you have a beer there whilst you get organised, in a non-hurried fashion. Wait for Mauro to arrive. Chat a bit ...

THEN we are off, at 5.30 pm. As we drive away, Marco mentions dinner at his parents when we get back to town. Hmm, mental calculations ... I know Italians eat late BUT ...?

The drive itself I will refrain from mentioning ... other than to say that those of you who think Ric and I drive dangerously haven't been out in the world enough. Or to Italy at least.

OK just a taster: Clapped out old car, 135 km/h on the Autostrada, weaving in and out of heavy traffic with inches to spare – one handed whilst doing various other things with the other (texting, changing music cassettes ...) and simultaneously turning around to look at the back seat passengers (us) he was chatting with.

Then we got onto the narrow, windy, mountain roads ...

So, one and a half hours after leaving Padova we arrived at the cave entrance in a National Park that has very limited access. You need a special permit with car number plates listed. We started gearing up whilst watching the farmer milk his cows in the shed nearby. Different rules for National Parks there, apparently.

The walk to the entrance was about 100 m, so that saved time, even though we had to dodge the cow pats. (It is a National Park after all, and we had to be careful to take nothing but photographs away with us.) We rigged the main belay to a winch tower nearby – very convenient. It was now 7.30 pm, so Marco decided it was too late for all of us to go down the entrance pitch, or to go further down the cave. This was disappointing for me (although not surprising) as I had hoped to go down at least several pitches in this cave. Maybe not to the bottom, as it is 890 m deep – all vertical – but at least half way down. The rest of the cave (after the entrance) was already rigged, making for an easy trip.



Preparing to descend Spluga entrance pitch.

Ric had planned to go part way down the 130 m entrance pitch, just for a look, but he changed his mind with the time issues. Marco decided to go and put in the re-belay at 10 m and then come back up. Only Mauro and I would go to the bottom of the pitch.

Re-belay in, Mauro went down first, heading off at 8 pm. I followed some 10 minutes later, passing Marco having a cigarette at the re-belay. Cautious boy (at least on a rope), he wasn't going to leave someone he had never caved with, to pass a re-belay 120 m above the deck, unsupervised! Having demonstrated that I could pass it without plummeting to my death, he headed back up.

This proved to be a beautiful pitch, and probably worth all the effort to get to it.

At the bottom, I followed the traverse line around the wall to join Mauro at the start of the next series of pitches. We read the plaques on the wall, commemorating a big clean up of literally tonnes of rubbish thrown down the hole over many years, and admired the view up the pitch. I thought we were in a hurry and asked Mauro if he wanted to head up first, or I was happy to go up. Apparently we weren't in that much of a hurry as he suggested we do the next three small pitches (5 m each) before turning around. Suited me!



Mauro and the plaques.

It was interesting to see the graffiti on the wall at the bottom of the second pitch. Some members of previous

trips, decades ago, had signed their names, and their club. None were more recent than 30, maybe 40 years I think? The old conundrum, when does it stop being damaging, antisocial graffiti and become history?

We had a look down the 4th pitch (80 m) before turning around to head back out. It would have been so nice to go down it ... ah well.

The trip up was quick and straightforward. Mauro came last and de-rigged the rebelay. We were pulling up the rope as the sun was setting at 9.30 pm.

Ric had been wandering across the paddocks, admiring the bovines, searching for forest and musing on the varying

natures of National Parks, whilst we had been underground.

As we started to drive away, around 10 pm, I was wondering how this dinner thing would work ...

Not surprisingly, dinner at the P's had been rethought and we headed straight for home. Marco dropped us at our door around midnight.

I will just add that the reason for the afternoon departure was that Marco had been at work from 6 am to 2 pm. The following morning he started again at 6 am.

Jokes aside, his generosity (and stamina!) in putting on this trip for us is truly appreciated.

Caving: Italian Style.

Part 2: Paradiso (Cave), Veneto, Northern Italy

Janine McKinnon

4 July 2010

Party 1: Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney (STC), Mauro ? (Gruppo Speleologico Padovano).

Party 2: Johnathon ?, two newbies who's names I forget (Gruppo Speleologico Padovano).

We WERE meant to be going to a complex, long, horizontal, streamway cave that was reputed to be beautiful. But we didn't. Mauro, our guide, was not particularly familiar with the cave and was concerned about being caught by flooding in heavy rain.

The weather forecast was thunderstorms in the afternoon, so it was decided to go somewhere else. This finally settled on joining a beginner's trip. Oh well, how slow could it be? There were only two of them plus their instructor after all.

The arranged meeting time at the gear store was 8 am, and we were amazed to see everyone actually there at the appointed time. A first in our experiences of Italy.

All gear was sorted out reasonably quickly and we headed off by 8.30 am.

We had agreed to meet at a town in the general area of the cave and we arrived first, and managed to find a place to park in the incredibly busy main street. It was 10 am on a Sunday morning and everyone from the cities within an hour's drive seemed to be here to have coffee. Surprisingly early for Italians.

The others arrived about 10 minutes later and we all went looking for somewhere with some spare chairs. We thought for a quick coffee, but no! We had forgotten we were in Italy. They do things differently there.

We found a café and Ric and I ordered coffee and a toasted sandwich.*

What wooses we Aussies are, the others ordered a carafe of red wine (to go with their toasties). Good way to get in the mood for two new cavers going on their first vertical trip underground you think? They did, anyway.

Some time later, we eventually drove the half hour to the parking area for the cave.

Getting organised took a while and we finally arrived at the cave entrance (after a 10 minute walk) around 12.30

pm. The plan was that Johnathon, and the newbies, would go first and we would saunter in behind on a tourist trip. Good plan. It was the execution that proved somewhat flawed.



GSP members. Mauro (sitting under tree) getting comfortable for the long wait. Ric showcasing his legs in the foreground.

We discovered that their idea of taking someone on their first vertical trip also involves training them in the rigging at the same time. The entrance of this cave has a sloping ramp with a couple of easy climbs. The club has put bolts in to turn this into two "pitches". Rigging this first "pitch" took something like an hour (I wasn't actually timing). FINALLY they disappeared into the cave. We sat and waited. And waited. We could still hear them and see their lights. Some indeterminate time later (but I think it was 1.5-2 hours) all was quiet and we decided it was time to follow.

It took me 5 minutes (literally) to do the entrance "series" of climbs and I found myself at the top of the first real pitch, a 30 m. There they were, still rigging it. So we sat and waited again. Luckily this time we were on our way in half an hour. When we arrived in the chamber at the bottom of this pitch they were just starting to rig the next 40 m pitch. We waited about 20 minutes and then someone in our group was bold enough to broach the subject of being VERY bored. We decided that we didn't want to spend our little remaining youth waiting to get down this, so far, somewhat ordinary cave. We started out. I went first and it took 10 minutes to get out of the cave, including going back down to the top of the 30 m pitch from the entrance when I discovered that I had grabbed the wrong bag we had left there.



Johnathon and newbies rigging.

So, to sum up the break up of trip timings:

Total time away from car: 5 hours; 1.5 hours underground; 20 minutes actually MOVING underground.

If anyone suggests that we start training our beginners in pitch rigging on their first trip underground, it will be over my dead body as training officer.

Was the day worthwhile? Not as a caving trip, but to see how other caving groups, or maybe cavers from other countries, do things, it was a fascinating experience. And they were all such a happy, friendly bunch that their company was really enjoyable.

Oh, by the way, two postscripts that beautifully highlight “the Italian style”.

1. When we got back to the gear store (around 9 pm) Mauro said he’d check with Johnathon later (that night) and give us a call if we were going to meet for drinks (later that night!!) We went to bed at 11 pm terrified that the phone would ring at 1 am to call us out to socialise. We had learnt through experience that this was very possible.

2. We learnt later that the beginner’s trip actually got out of the cave around 10 pm. So back to Padova around 12.30-1 am. A long first trip from our point of view but apparently normal from theirs.

We didn’t get the phone call, although we didn’t “stand down” from waiting for it until about 2 am. Not even Italians would be keen to go for drinks by then. Thank God.

It may not sound like it but we are grateful to Mauro for putting on a trip for us and to Johnathon for letting us tag along on his trip.

PS. It didn’t rain until late that night.

* This sounds like one of those mainland caving club trip reports, doesn’t it? You know, where they do such short, easy trips that there is not much to say about it. The report goes on for AGES about everything BUT the caving: the scenery on the drive there, who had the Danish on the coffee stops, how long the toilet breaks on the drive took, what songs they sang as they drove ...

Extra-Hairy Goating

Alan Jackson

22 August 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson

The drive up was a great opportunity to debrief on the previous day’s election results. The general consensus was that we were both very happy that there was a distinct possibility that Labor candidate for Denison, Jonathon Jackson (the offspring of Tasmania’s most hated state politician, Judy Jackson) was going to have the silver spoon wrenched from his mouth and firmly inserted in his arse by the independent candidate, Andrew Wilkie.

We had a long list of tidy up jobs to attempt (I even had a printed 17 point plan for the day!) We followed the KD track to the Dwarrowdelf turnoff and then headed left up the hill to JF-502 Raincoat Cave. Both this cave and nearby JF-501 Clip Joint had not been surveyed into the surface network – each one only required 2-3 legs to tie in. Next we located the (now obliterated) rock cairn not far from JF-21 and re-enacted Jeff Butt’s surface survey down to ‘Hole 27’. This small cave was tagged JF-528 (western side about 1 m down) (see map on page 28), sketched, photo-tagged, GPSed, surveyed in etc. Another one down! We then had a handful of caves that only needed photo-tagging, as we’d forgotten a camera on one of the earlier trips.

After taking some happy snaps at JF-474 Conspiracy we again re-enacted old survey data to located ‘Hole 28’. Hole 28 was actually a real cave (most of these ‘holes’ are pretty lame) with a 4 metre entrance pitch followed by a few

short down climbs amongst old stals and abundant moonmilk. Numerous bones lay in the squishy moonmilk plug at the bottom, including one superb pademelon (I think). It was fully articulated, with its tail laid out in a large curve. There was a wombat skull sticking out of the muck too. This cave received the usual treatment, scoring the number JF-529 on the western side of the entrance about 1-2 metres down from the lip. (See map on page 29).

We were now on the ridge that separates JF-17 from JF-19. We knew that JF-18 was located somewhere in between (it’s only a gap of ~60 m) but we’d failed to find it on previous attempts. We knew from SS56:2 that it was located between the roots of a large stringybark, so we wandered towards JF-17 zigzagging between all the large trees. When we found it we were disgusted to realise that the surface survey we’d run from JF-17 to JF-19 many months earlier passed within 4 metres of the tree! Admittedly we didn’t have the aforementioned trip report with us at the time (JF-17 had been an unexpected discovery). The number tag is allegedly located on a tree root but we were unable to locate it. There was a large root that hung over the entrance that would have seemed like the obvious root to tag almost 40 years ago when this cave was discovered and tagged but when I gave this a kick it was so rotten that it fell down the pitch. I descended the pitch to sift through the soil cone at the bottom to see if I could find the tag. I think a metal detector would be required! We’ll return to here with a new JF-18 tag which we’ll attach to ROCK. We sketched the cave. The bottom of the cave isn’t all that inspiring, but a little digging/removal of boulders would provide access to a narrow continuation that may yield results.

A few more missing photo-tags were completed before we assembled the surveying gear at JF-483. We then surveyed the 70 metres or so down the gully to JF-481 and JF-482. There were two more holes (30 and 31) very nearby that we'd failed to locate previously. These were quickly located (again with the help of recently located old survey data) and tagged etc. Hole 31 is now JF-530 – tag located on eastern side under the overhanging lip about 1 metre down. Hole 30 is now JF-531 – tag located on western side about 1 metre down. (See maps on pages 29 & 30).

The only things left on the list were either miles away or sufficiently unpleasant to warrant rampant excuse-making. We had ticked off 12 of our 17 point plan plus the bonus of JF-18 (JF-16 is still hiding over there somewhere, not to mention JF-15). We more-or-less straight-lined it to the Cauldron Pot turn off on the KD track but found no new holes – only some horrendous horizontal scrub. The list of things to do in this area is getting very short now.

JF-18 – the cave really is under the tree. →



Kath and Sarah's Misadventure Trip

Katherine Whiteside

29 August 2010

Party: Katherine Whiteside, Sarah Gilbert

Location: Breganti Area

Purpose: University research project survey trip - Day #1

This trip was one of those events you look back on and say: I probably should have stayed in bed this morning. If leaving my gumboots at home didn't serve as a warning, taking my Toyota Camry down a mossy 4WD road in the Florentine should have. Sarah and I got to know the University's Garmin 72 GPS fairly well as we set out to track through the scrub towards a cave that needed tagging. After walking around in a circle and ending up back on the road where we started we quickly realised the GPS did not have the ability to track through trees but managed to give us co-ordinates at least. So we set about writing co-ordinates on a scrap piece of paper and adjusting our footsteps to line up with the Northings and Eastings, a little to the left, a little to the right, we've gone too far west, that type of thing. Slow and tedious. But we did manage to find the cave this way at least and tagged it JF-532. JF-532 is an 8 m long tunnel open at both ends. It begins as a walkable entrance which turns into a crawl half-way in before leading up and out the other end.

We had a scout around for a cave I had identified on an earlier trip but couldn't find it (I later found it on a subsequent trip and deemed it too small to tag, located extremely close to JF-532 on the same contour).

Returning to the car, we had the joy of turning the Camry around on the now not so frozen mud. I thought now would be a good time to mention to Sarah that my tyres needed replacing but my wheels started spinning like

polished cheese wheels wrapped in gladwrap so I didn't have to. Standing out the front of the vehicle to assess the situation, cheesewheels at the front, a pile of mud wrapped around my tyres at the back, Sarah felt that then was a good time to mention that she didn't tell anyone she was out caving today, and I thought now was a good time to mention that my emergency contact was currently underground at present, so pretty much we were on our own with this one. Using a bundle of sticks and a surprisingly good digging tool in the form of the claw end of Alan's hammer we managed to dig out quite a bit of the mud and create some traction. I got in the car, crossed my fingers and hoped for the best. We moved about two inches. Second attempt going much better, I reversed a whole foot, and amazingly once in first gear the car roared into life and performed an uncontrolled mud-skating manoeuvre before making lift-off in the right direction, freeing us from a long walk home and the embarrassment of ruining our reputation as capable women of the bush, which thanks to our resourcefulness and survival skills is still safe and sound. Back on solid ground Sarah realised she had leapt into the car with such abandon earlier that she had left Alan's hammer sitting on the ground back where we got bogged. Sarah was happy enough to run back and retrieve it while I waited back at the car and then together we moved on up Frizon Road. Or at least, what we thought was Frizon Road. Turned out we were on an entirely different road altogether, and it was only when we returned to the cave we tagged earlier that day that we realised we were right back to where we first started.

It was now 2.30 pm and I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry, so I managed a bit of both. We sat down to furrow our brows over the 1988 map with its old roads, missing roads and no trust value whatsoever, which is why a brain and a compass can often be handy in conjunction. Well, we had the latter at our disposal at least. After a successful re-

section orientating the map for us, we finally got to the right road and the right study area at around a quarter past three, leaving us just enough time to survey half of JF-300 before the sun went down. (JF-300 and its neighbour JF-198 were GPS'd and photographed on the first field day of the project (20th August 2010). With Adrian Slee on a largely reconnaissance mission, these caves were duly noted but not explored).

On the way home my car made it all the way back to Hobart but not before running into a tree on the road and

unavoidably hitting a wallaby that head-butted the car so hard it was dead before it reached the ground. Just when I thought nothing else could go wrong, upon reaching Sarah's house my car decided to break down, blowing steam out of its bonnet. A call out from the RACT and replacement of a leaky heater hose later, I finally returned home at 9.30 pm where I spent about 5 minutes not wanting to touch anything for fear of it falling apart or bursting into flames. Thus concluding a highly productive day of errors I won't forget in a long time.

Super-Soaked Saturday

Katherine Whiteside

4 September 2010

Party: Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson, Kath Whiteside

Location: Breganti Area

Purpose: University research project survey trip - Day #2

This was one of those exceptionally rainy days where from the moment you looked out the window first thing in the morning you could see that the rain had settled itself in with a nice cup of tea and a good book and wasn't planning to budge until it had well and truly soaked everything in its path which, as it turned out – included the three of us.

Being 20 minutes late for my own 7 o' clock start made me wonder why I call these times knowing how much I like to sleep in. Now Ken and Alan know as well. It was my first time meeting Ken and thus provided a good first impression. I took extra care not to talk too much in the car on the way out, as an attempt to dispel my growing reputation for talking too much. This was assisted by the fact that I fell asleep somewhere between Maydena and Frizon Road, much to Ken and Alan's relief.

Having placed a large pink flag around the turn-off tree to the study area, there was no misplacing roads this time, and with three GPSs at our disposal and our powers combined there should be no chance of walking in circles today. Besides, Alan assured me he never gets lost in the Florentine. Comparing GPSs, it was clear that Ken had the best one – being brand new and full of colour with all the modern features and style of what an Apple iPhone would look like if it were a GPS. My Garmin 72 from uni looked like a medieval brick in comparison, and with the club GPS having an inbuilt topo, it was clear between the three of ours, my GPS was going to get the least amount of action.

The plan was to walk up to where a dry creek bed meets with Frizon Road and then head south-south-east on a bearing to section off a fifth of the study area to GPS, noting down any karst features that we saw along the way, including anything we could remotely call a cave in these parts.

Pretty soon into the survey Ken stumbled upon JF-199, a vertical entrance pitch of about 6 m, described in the December 1978 *Spiel* as having a vertical then horizontal passage containing a crawl and a squeeze with a further 3 m pitch into a series of large muddy sumps connected by squeezes. As this was an above-ground day where the main focus was to cover as much of the study area as possible, we had to exercise restraint and resist the urge to dive

down every cave we found, so this mission would have to be left for another day. JF-199 was photographed and GPS'd and then we continued on our traverse, detouring for a look at JF-198 and JF-300 where Alan prettied up the existing tags and re-photographed them. Determining the perimeter of this karren ridge and being satisfied with having covered its contents, we moved down to the southern edge of the study area and began zigzagging our way back north, spreading out as we did, as was my prescribed "systematic and thorough searching method". Intuitively, this would seem like a good enough radar but as this search method proved, karst can appear in the most unlikely places and if it weren't for this method we would have missed an entirely new cave that Alan discovered by kicking aside a few logs and branches; one that was otherwise invisible and in predominantly non-karst surroundings.

This cave was tagged JF-533 and consists of a ~3m vertical shaft that can be scrambled in and out of easily (if you are Alan, otherwise others may have trouble) and contains a tight muddy crawl that turns into a squeeze and keeps going (see map on page 30). Alan emerged with his suit a fair bit muddier than I have ever seen it before, making me feel a little guilty, as I know how much Alan dislikes getting dirty. A quick break and some warm sugary tea from my thermos and we were moving again, to remain stationary for more than five minutes in the pouring rain was too uncomfortable a concept. Besides, had it not been raining I doubt we would have stopped for more than five minutes anyway, as this is not in Alan's nature. [*Someone skinny and enthusiastic should check that lead (and take a hammer with them to check the other potential lead at the base of the entrance climb).* – Ed.]

This time we headed north-west to cover an area below and near the limestone hill perimeter, here we found and tagged JF-534, a walkable slot hole entrance that dips down 3 m into a low-roofed crawl, with two passages and some formations (see map on page 31). [*It was borderline whether we should tag it or not. In the end I was happy we did because I later decided it was almost certainly synonymous with the cave John Parker describes in his numbering reports in SS141:4 (very top of the page, just before JF-300 entry). He'd obviously struggled with whether to tag it or not as well.* – Ed.]

It was at this point that Alan suddenly dropped to the ground doing his best caterpillar impersonation by rubbing his belly on a mossy field in an attempt to get some of the mud off his suit, it worked. The only downside being that he didn't stay down long enough for me to get it all on video, but trust me, it was quite an entertaining scene.

With the rain easing a smidgen, the boys took the opportunity to strip and add an extra layer of clothing in

the hope that their arms and fingers might want to start waking up and defrosting. Funnelling east we found a small cave near the road, large enough for Ken to have a crack at pushing through. Turning around about as quickly as he had entered, he told me this cave wasn't going to go anywhere anytime soon. An estimated 3 m horizontal squeeze petering out very close to the entrance and not worth tagging.

At this point I realised I was still relatively clean and dry and both Ken and Alan had each had their turn at getting extremely muddy for my benefit. I felt a little guilty, but upon further consideration concluded that I was enjoying this form of free labour. I noticed then that they made an exceptionally productive team and so asked: "What would it take to get you guys back out here again?"

A long conversation ensued highlighting the costs incurred for this trip alone; the bad weather levy, the muddy suit levy, higher rates for extra distance travelled and the nature of the terrain, all adding up to one very expensive trip that if I believed I could afford a second trip with their help on my Austudy wages, then I was sorely mistaken.

We were going well for time and managed to cover another section and a half of my study area before the day was out. We traversed two hills that sadly did not contain much limestone and stopped for a drink by a billabong full of leeches, one of which decided to attach itself to my

temple. Before the other two could throw a match at me, I quickly educated them on the benefits of menthol salicilate, the active ingredient in "Deep Heat" style muscle cream, that leeches absolutely loath. It was told to me by word of mouth – you won't find it in any first aid handbooks – but I wholeheartedly recommend it as a fail-proof way to get rid of leeches.

Reaching a patch of limestone on our way back towards the car, I wanted to keep exploring but it was clear that the hired help had hit the 'over it' button and were now making a "B-line" for the car. Or an "O-line" in Alan's case as he wandered around in a complete circle back to not far from where we left off. Not quite willing to admit the "L" word, Alan did confess for the first time in his life to 'being geographically embarrassed' and this was the highlight of my day. In fact I'd go so far as saying it was one of the top ten most satisfying moments in my personal STC club career so far. I doubt I will ever witness this event again, so it's worth recording it here now.

I want to thank both Ken and Alan for accompanying me on a very wet day in the Florentine, overall covering a lot of ground and making up a lot of time from earlier trips, even getting ahead of schedule. A super-productive Saturday covering a fair few hectares, tagging two new caves and re-discovering JF-199.

Anxiety in the Breganti – JF-198, JF-199 and JF-300

Stephen Bunton

8 September 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton, Katherine Whiteside

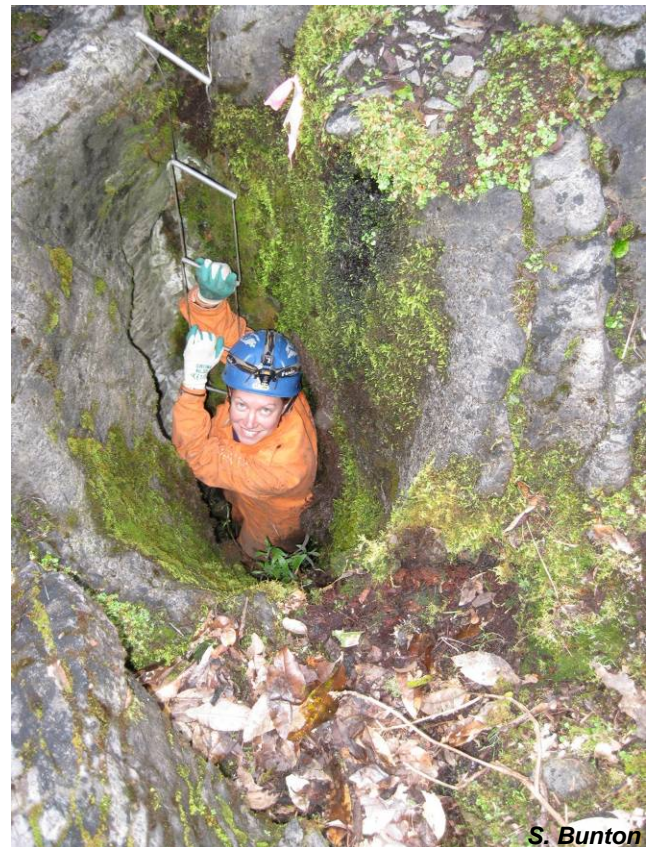
Location: Breganti Area

Purpose: University research project survey trip - Day #3

The caves of the Breganti area were discovered in 1978 after the Onceler went through, chopped down all the trees and burnt the place. Today it is regrown with dead dogwood of a lower density than Cave Hill, so travel is somewhat easier and the lack of caves easier to spot. It seems they were all spotted ages ago (SS141).

This day was another in the series of fieldwork for Kath's undergraduate geomorphology project. We parked way back on Frizon Rd so that I didn't risk bogging my van in the now mossy and on this day very icy, overgrown logging roads of the forgotten Florentine. We headed into the scrub north of JF-198 and headed west to the Florentine River. We were looking for more exposed karst like that which contains JF-198, JF-199 and JF-300 but did not find anything. We then bashed south just above the river before circling around to a likely looking knoll marked on the map – but again found nothing. This covered all of the western section of the logging coup that is the subject of Kath's study area.

After this the other objective for the day was to survey the caves in this coupe. We first came to JF-300 and Kath finished the survey that she started with Sarah a few weeks earlier (see map on page 26). The section we looked at was below a daylight hole that is the visible slot beside where we dumped our packs. The bottom of this section continues down an impenetrable 5 m solution tube.



Kath descends JF-199.

We then headed west and found JF-199 and rigged a ladder down the entrance. Kath descended first but the cave did not seem to match the description of yester-year. Kath was not convinced the cave continued beyond the base of the ladder but a closer look revealed "the crawl" was in fact a tight, descending tube that doglegged right into a sloping, bedding plane squeeze. Kath descended this with some

reticence, not sure whether to be on her front or back, feet or headfirst. The cave became more serious when the bottom dropped out of the squeeze to become the second 3 m pitch. It was with some luck that she didn't slip down this because she was not convinced she could down climb it or even back out again. She somehow hovered over the pitch and sketched the rest of the cave. Even getting back up into the squeeze was no easy feat without the prospect of slipping backwards and falling down the pitch. I was no help; I had already tried to get through the "crawl" and couldn't fit – let alone the squeeze. As Kath struggled in a rather serious predicament I was becoming more anxious. I ran a few rescue scenarios through my head but they did not bear thinking about. (I even thought about changing my views on the ASF Safety Guidelines' recommended minimum party size – the number of people, not the girth of the cavers!) I was glad when she struggled up and out of

this hellhole. This cave is certainly a lot gutsier than the rather benign description lead us to believe, either that or they were all a bit tougher then. (See map on page 24).

The final chapter of the day was a survey of JF-198. Luckily this cave did match the old description very well. We both descended the cave and followed the short passage past the bones cemented into flowstone. There was a higher level that connected through to the furthest extent of the cave but overall there was little of note in this cave either. (See map on page 23).

From my point of view I was happy to help Kath with her project and also see a few olden day caves relocated, revisited and surveyed. Kath was scheduled to be back in the area the next day, on the eastern side of the road, looking for JF-197.

Mini Fun-Size Caves

Katherine Whiteside

9 September 2010

Party: Katherine Whiteside, Kevin Kiernan

Location: Breganti Area

Purpose: University research project survey trip - Day #4

The final day of surveying in the Breganti area was accompanied by Kevin, who as my project supervisor, felt that he ought to come out and have a look at what I'd been doing these last few days just to be sure I wasn't out here having a holiday and making the whole thing up. This offer was also part of my plan to get Kevin out of caving retirement, which worked a treat.

As I had pretty much covered four-fifths of the study area, all that I had left to do was to explore the area to the east of Frizon Road, hopefully finding JF-197 in our travels.

First stop though was a walk through some of the main karst features found on the limestone ridge containing caves JF-198, JF-199 and JF-300. This was in an effort to discuss the condition of the area and the potential significance (if any) of the contents of the caves. Standing at JF-198 I explained that I wanted to re-visit this cave to take some photos for my report, which meant that we would need to rig up a ladder and get in. I possibly could have pre-warned Kevin that this was not merely going to be a surface day, as he had improper boots for scaling ladders, a technicality that slowed him down somewhat, but failed to deter his ability to get back at me by hiding from me inside the cave. This Houdini act was made all the more convincing by his brown caving suit allowing him to blend seamlessly with his surroundings, and, perched high up somewhere between the upper level passage and the ceiling I walked right under him without the slightest knowledge of his presence right above my head! It was so brilliant that when he finally spoke I was truly startled, and had to blink twice just to see that the red helmet sticking out from the wall was actually attached to a body and not just a protrusion of the rock surface itself.

We happily continued on to JF-300 and JF-199 for a quick look and, satisfied with this section being what it is, we headed over to the other side of Frizon Road to start zigzagging down the remaining section. Initially we searched for a couple of outflow caves I had been told by

Bunty were nearby. After around 40 minutes of this we gave up the search and focussed on finding a limestone outcrop directly to the east of JF-198. It took a while to actually stumble upon anything resembling limestone, but once we did it was a fairly obvious patch of exposed karren on a hillslope plateauing out around 80 m in from the road. The directions in the December 1978 *Spiel* suggest JF-197 is 100 ft from the road, directly opposite JF-198 which is also 100 ft from the road. As it turns out, JF-198 is 104.5 m from the road and so it wasn't surprising to find JF-197 also at about the same distance on the other side: at 80 m from the road.

Extremely difficult to find due to its tiny entrance and initial appearance being no more than a gap between two rocks, JF-197 was found, 80 m from the road, at the top of a small gentle contour, with an open mossy field directly on the surface surrounding it.



K. Whiteside collection

Kath fills the 'gap between two rocks' at the JF-197 entrance.

I tidied up the tag by straightening it and re-fastening it to the rock with Alan's electric drill. At this point Kevin marvelled at the modern technology and swiftness of it all – much more effective than the old traditional hand drill that takes hours to drill each hole and corresponding copious amounts of effort.

The entrance is facing north and the cave is oriented in a north-south fashion. The main passage described in 1978

as being a “small entrance followed by a walkable sloping passage” should now be changed to include: a small entrance with a slide in sloping crawl, best entered feet first, travelling for 6 m before opening out to a small chamber not much more than sitting height, with one small room off to the south guarded by a dense thicket of *Hickmania* webs complete with spiders, preventing me from wanting to go any further. Up to the east there is a small narrow crawl heading towards the surface. I could see the termination from where I was sitting and thus determined its approximate length to be a 6 m passage also. The original description: “walkable” has me thinking that perhaps it is possible that since 1978 the cave has ‘shrunk’ or more to the point ‘caved in’ a little. There are clear cracks in the ceiling that look very recent (i.e. less than 30 years old). Whilst it cannot be confirmed completely, it is possible that the land has moved since last exploration in such a way that the chamber may have in fact been taller in height than it is now. The more I looked at the cracks in the ceiling, the more worried I became. Kevin, who was responsible for initially pointing them out to me, had already bolted, leaving me alone to contemplate my fate should I sneeze or move too suddenly and upgrade the passage from a crawl to a squeeze, or even a ‘squash’. I took a few photos and made a small sketch and hastily left. (See map on page 23).

Having sufficiently covered what we could of the last section of the coup, we had time to head down to the Settlement/Breganti boundary area to look for Leos Lair (JF-169). At exactly 41 m west of JF-168, on the end of the same ridge, with a small entrance, I found a cave. This cave matched the description in the *Spiel* for Leos Lair perfectly, which led me to believe that it may be in fact Leos Lair. At time of discovery however, I was convinced it wasn’t, as I felt it was too small to be the mentioned cave, and so tagged it JF-535. The process of tagging caves is a novelty that hasn’t worn off yet and I would go so far as saying that I get physically excited at the prospect of,

and the actual act of tagging caves. The glee and earnest with which I set to tagging this cave was obvious to Kevin who mentioned that if I liked tagging caves so much he knew of a place in Laos where I could tag 400,000 of them, if I really like drilling holes in rocks so much. I’m not sure if Kevin shares this joy as much as I do, for a look of pain came across his face, and I sensed that he may be in fact feeling the rock’s pain, being a rock rights activist and all. Either that or I mistook his look of pain for one of nervousness at the sight of a woman with power tools. He was probably planning his next Houdini act, this time to sneak away from me and leave me there forever in an act of self preservation.

JF-535 will need to be explored properly at another date, as I could only make it feet first into the tight downward sloping hole to the point where only my fingertips were holding on to the surface (at around 2 m). This was where all I felt around my feet was open space, heading down in a very vertical fashion, for at least another metre, maybe three. I dared not go any further without a rope, or at least a rescue plan. A ladder may not have been much use in this particular circumstance; a rope would have been better but we didn’t have one and so the mission was abandoned.

One final favour to the club was to GPS Frankcombes Cave, as the existing waypoint in the club GPS appeared to be out by several metres, and it wasn’t too far a stretch from our current location. Fixing this up rather quickly, we headed back for Hobart in ample daylight, with satisfaction (on my behalf) at having found JF-197 and tagged one new cave (JF-535).

Footnote:

Distance from road to JF-197 = 80 m

Distance from road to JF-198 = 104.5 m

Distance from road to JF-300 = 141.5 m

Distance from road to JF-199 = 198.5 m

Between Tachy and Cave Hill – kind of.

Alan Jackson

11 September 2010

Party: Gavin Brett, Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson

A few options were considered for the day’s activities and eventually we settled on the Tachycardia area. I had a list of minor jobs in this area with a number of the caves we had found a few years back never being photo-tagged, GPSed or sketched and even a few that had not been explored. Parking at the end of the left branch of Chrisps Road with Gavin in the car brought back some terrible memories of Tachy exploration that I thought I’d managed to safely repress. The track up to JF-269 Toss Pot was still in good condition (well taped and few tree falls). I wanted to head west and complete my job list but Gavin wanted to head east to see if there was a typical contact zone east of the creek that flows into JF-274 Suck It and See Swallet – my reading of Nick Hume’s first exploration in this area (second day of SS260:5-7) had led me to believe there wasn’t going to be but now that I’ve re-read it I have a better handle on things. I agreed to a ‘quick look’ and off we went. The first thing we found was the series of contact features that we had found and taped on our initial

exploration in this area – the ‘several other holes’ that Gavin found in SS345:13-14 while I explored Toss Pot. The following trip report in SS345:14-15 lists which features were found, taped and labeled back in 2004. C8 later became JF-269 Toss Pot, C9 was a large rift feature east of Toss Pot and C10-12 where a series of small swallets immediately north-east of C9. It had been late November when we’d first found these swallets and conditions were dry. All three were now taking much more water, especially C12. Gavin had a good poke in C12 and declared it bloody loose and dangerous but possibly still going. We decided that the C10-C12 ‘complex’ was a karst feature worthy of tagging regardless of whether C12 proved to go anywhere or not. We tagged it JF-536 in the C12 feature (at the north-eastern end, closest to the much larger stream that flows down to JF-274). We then decided that the ~8 m deep and fairly impressive looking C9 entrance should be tagged too, so it received the JF-537 tag. Gavin then had a quick look 10 metres south of JF-537 and found a very small hole that dropped 2.5 metres into a 10 m long chamber following the north-south contact alignment. This was tagged JF-538 (tag down inside cave, just visible if squatting on the downhill side of the entrance). (See map of JF-536, JF-537 & JF-538 on page 31).

Heading (north of) east we crossed the JF-274 stream and stayed on the 760 m contour (as this is where the contact features are located on the western side). After a short blank spot we found a few minor karst depressions and then a slightly better one. Gavin spotted a ~6 metre diameter doline which had a ~5 m deep narrow cave heading down. It was choked. It was tagged JF-539 (on the left side when looking down the cave) (see map on page 32). I found the next feature, which was about 30 metres away and it appeared more exciting than the last. Two entrances led to a downclimb to ~7 m depth with a possibility of a mad dig. Another hole immediately beside the left entrance also dropped a couple of metres to a possible blockage but enthusiasm couldn't be mustered to slide into this one and check. We would have tagged this but we had run out – Gavin had decided that the banging associated with making new tags was likely to prove anti-social at his house at 7 am so he had brought the gear with him to my house (apparently the banging was going to be more acceptable at 7:30 am in Moonah – or maybe he planned to do it once we got to the JF). Unfortunately he forgot to grab the number punches so we only had blank tags ... doh! So, failing a tag, the feature was entered into the GPS as CV1, a pink tape hung in a nearby tree and a sketch done.

I had a quick look to the NE (as this was where the 760 m contour headed) and noted a continuation of the contact features but Gavin was calling from more south of east with stories of exposed limestone and cliffs. The cliff sat above the roaring of the same creek that eventually sinks at Z76 (way down the valley at the point where the Toss Pot track crosses). There are cliffs on the uphill side of the creek down there too (with JF-230 and JF-253 located at their base not far upstream of Z76). Up on top of the cliffs we found that we were on a narrow, flat-topped ridge flanked by cliffs on both sides – the creek runs south off the escarpment of Tyenna Peak and then turns to the west round the nose of our cliff line. Anyway, near the end of the cliff-lined ridge we encountered a narrow limestone canyon. At the northern end of the canyon (very close the northern cliff edge) Gavin found a small hole which went nowhere but just beside it was a narrow rift that accepted rocks for a fair distance. We hammered off the tight bit one metre in and threw down the ladder. I followed the ladder till it ran out and got a further 2-3 metres before a narrowing of the rift prevented access into the continuing pitch below – at least another 5-8 metres. It was typical Cave Hill kind of stuff – a liberal coating of squishy white moonmilk on every surface. A couple of hours with modern cave expansion tools and you'd get through quite easily. There was a very good draft but it oscillated with the wind gusts on the surface and after a further look around it seems pretty obvious that this rift/canyon feature runs right through the ridge and there would be a lot of other entrances into the cliff faces on both sides funneling the wind. This entrance was marked with a long pink tape and called CV2 in the GPS. From this spot one had a wonderful view of Tyenna Peak and the gully below. A number of creeks funnel into this gully and they have caused some spectacular landslips where the dolerite sits over the mudstone (which in turn sits over the limestone). Large horizontally-bedded mudstone cliffs stand proud below bowls of bright orange dolerite clay where massive swathes of vegetation and soil have slipped down and sealed the karst below.

Following the canyon to the south, Ken found another entrance ~40 metres away. It was a double entrance in fallen blocks. I slipped into the lower entrance and confirmed the upper entrance, that Gavin had his head in, was connected. I slid down to roomier quarters, shifted a few loose rocks and continued down some more, then back under through a squeeze to a smaller chamber. I then headed up and more northwards, round a tight corner and dropped down into the largest chamber yet (2 m high & ~5 m diameter). I headed up and over a big block and down the other side (still heading north) and then bridged down a ~3 m moonmilk-lined drop. This was the first section of the cave that had solid bedrock walls instead of loose, hideous rockfall. There was no way on so I attempted to reverse the 3 m drop (unsuccessfully for some time). Determined not to suffer the indignity of having to be rescued by Gavin I tried harder and managed to defy gravity. Being in this cave was possibly the least safe I've ever felt underground (memories of Gypsyland in Tachycardia come to mind) – don't go there. It was not marked with pink tape but was GPSed as CV3.

Immediately below CV3 the cliff gets really cliffy. Ken was waiting patiently for me but Gavin had found a way down the cliff to the west and was scouting about down below us. He had located JF-254 in the same line of weakness (canyon/rift) at the base of the cliffs. Ken and I joined him. I had a quick look in JF-254 but freaked out when the slippery climb I started on was actually a 10-15 m pitch. The ladder was up at CV2 so we simply GPSed and then aborted. We scoured the cliff base and rounded the 'nose'. There is another distinct gully/joint/fault in the cliff face here with a cave-like shadow about 15 metres up. I found a way up to it by going past it by 10 metres then climbing up, traversing back and scrambling up to it. It was almost a walk-in entrance that soon narrowed down, with the major continuation being a narrow rift at right angles on the right. The rift was quite deep but very narrow and unlikely to ever fit a human even with weeks of expansion technology. Probably worth a tag, so I sketched it and GPSed it CV4 (no pink tape). Some of the GPS coordinates for these cliff caves might be a bit out due to poor reception – cliffs blocking view of sky and signals bouncing off cliff faces giving false readings.

Further round Ken descended a rockfall cavern that was very well vegetated with moss to almost -6 metres (we may have discovered a species that can photosynthesise without the 'photo' bit). It was GPSed CV5. The others continued up the gully a bit while I scrambled up the cliffs behind CV5 – traversing a ~30° dry rock slab under an overhang and then climbing up through small trees. I found a small cliff feature with three entrances and about 10 metres of passage but it was a bit marginal – more of a gap in the cliff than a cave. We then returned to CV2 for lunch. A narrow but shallow rift out near the top of the 'nose' was found but not worthy of documenting and Gavin allegedly also found a nice solution tube on the northern side of the cliff that only went to a few metres. We headed back to CV1 territory.

Not far north-east of CV1 was a large sheer-sided doline/collapse (3 m deep, 8 m diameter) with a few small holes downhill of it and an active swallet further below again. The swallet went to about -6 m and was choked with loose rock, timber and clay. The large collapse had a small dripping slot in the back wall that was blocked and another

small hole on the downhill side. I excavated this and slid down into a horizontal tube which connected with one of the small holes between the collapse and the swallet. The underground passage turned hard right here and narrowed. All four features are almost certainly connected and consequently there was good air movement but probably only between the four features themselves and not to some grand development below. We GPSed this CV6 but would probably apply a tag to both of the two main features upon a return to the area. The feature was already marked with triple pink tapes (I think it's fair to guess that this is the swallet that Leigh Douglas 'found some weeks ago' and associated 'mega-doline' or the 'neighbouring doline' that Nick Hume refers to in the second day of SS260:5-7) Further north of here we immediately hit landslip territory and the karst was all sealed with dolerite and mudstone (up to and probably more than 10 metres thickness judging by one section that had been deeply incised by one of the many creeks).

We turned and headed back to JF-274 (as I wanted to photo-tag and sketch it) (see map on page 24). The small entrance to the left of the water sinking point (that I seem to remember Madphil and I digging out) seemed impossibly tight and I couldn't understand how Phil and I had got into it before. Perhaps we didn't fit and it's worth

some more effort. From here we continued south (short cutting to the main track down the hill) and I stumbled across a shaft in the bracken. Gavin descended it on the ladder to about 5 m to a blockage. It was pink taped and GPSed CV7. 50 m further south I found another entrance which was quite large but jammed full of rotten timber – about 3 m deep and 6 m long and barely arguably a cave. We GPSed it CV8 but left no pink tape (I think). We continued paralleling the track to the east but found nothing. Where the gully here starts getting really steep we pulled out onto the track (the cliff line kicks in just below there). Gavin and Ken stuck on the track, casting back and forth on either side looking for anything new while I headed to the west of the track and straight-lined it to Z76 (finding nothing).

So I basically didn't get any of my job list done but it was an interesting day nonetheless with some unexpected discoveries. We'll have to get back to tag the various CV caves, drop and survey JF-254, relocate JF-230 and JF-253 to survey them and presumably find the other low 250 caves that should be nearby. As is usually the case, there is absolutely no record of these caves in *Southern Caver* – I wonder at times if illiteracy was a pre-requisite for becoming a member of SCS.

JF-34 Rift Cave and friends

Chris Chad

19 September 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Kath Whiteside

My plan was to head into the Rift Cave area, partly for a jolly into Rift Cave and partly to locate and tag a couple of holes up the gully from JF-129 Washout Cave. I had people tagging along, so all was well and afforded the opportunity to cart heaps of stuff in. The morning was entertaining with Ric giving Kath a hurry up when we picked her up and then a lecture about timeliness even though by my reckoning Kath still had another 3 minutes to eat her breakfast until she was late. With that out of the way, Ric promptly realised he had forgotten his helmet, so back over to the eastern shore with Ric being uncharacteristically quiet. We then had another stop at New Norfolk so that sticklers for timeliness could buy some lunch while I sat in the car wondering why people don't just pack their lunch and make themselves a coffee before leaving home. It did give them an opportunity to rub shoulders with an equally disorganised Premier, which left some party members a bit star-struck. With Ric, Janine and Kath in the car, there was no shortage of conversation, but I like to think I managed to screw my own little contributions into tight little balls and lob them into the conversation from time to time. It became clear later that they all failed to absorb the reading material I provided for the trip.

We did some road and track maintenance on the way in. The 'World's Biggest Log' now has some short lengths of deformed bar hammered into the side to make the climb a little easier, but the World's Slipperiest Log remains slippery despite my best efforts. Even the most hapless entomologist should have no trouble navigating the track now.

When we arrived at the Washout Cave stream, I wandered down to see if I could find the JF-129 tag. Water was hammering down the gully, and I got a little wet as I wriggled in trying to find solid rock, but I failed to find a tag. Arthur had asked me to collect some cave critters on this trip, but had failed to provide ethanol or appropriate containers. Nevertheless with my unbounded enthusiasm I had robbed some jars from my wife's craft stash and had reasoned that metho was essentially ethanol and had bought some along, but after less than 30 seconds groveling in Washout Cave, I decided bug collecting wasn't for me. I sent Janine and Kath down to have a look for the tag with "girl eyes" and photo-tag the entrance. Kath was the designated model, being proclaimed the most attractive on this trip, possibly because the bum had been cut out of her trog suit. Girl eyes also failed to locate the tag.

I wanted to find two holes upstream, namely "Johns Blast Hole" and "Spittin Flouride Chips" (and yes I realise Fluoride is misspelt, but it has been published previously in the misspelt form so is now something for the nomenclature board to sort out). The first reference I can find of Johns Blast Hole is in SS303:5-6 where John Hawkins-Salt persuades a rock to move out of the way. Reportedly there is a roaring draft and signs of wood making it through into Rift Cave, but further persuasion is required to make it go. The cave appears on a surface survey in *Southern Caver* 55:11, and is almost certainly synonymous with JF-X54 and JF-Z13. Sure enough, it pops up again in SS327:20-21, where Jeff Butt once again does a surface survey down to Washout Cave, and where the first reference to Spittin Flouride Chips appears to arise. I dug this survey out of the archive, from which I was able to derive the locations of these caves along with some other vaguely referenced holes. Strangely it implied Johns Blast Hole was a good 250 m away from Washout Cave whereas all other published estimates suggested something in the order of 150 m, but it also implied that by

linking this cave to the Threefortyone system would add a whopping 70 m of depth, shifting the system up to the top five ... certainly worth a look. Nomenclature enthusiasts will be interested in the explanation of the Spittin Flouride Chips name provide to Alan by Dave Rasch: “I tried to move some rocks in there using a crowbar and it slipped, one end wacking [sic] me hard in the face, so the cave got the (tentative) name: “Spittin’ Fluoride Chips” which I most certainly did end up doing.” There is also mention of “Spittin Fission Chips” at another point on the survey, so goodness knows what those guys were on about on that trip!

So armed with infallible information, I marched up the Washout gully to where my calculations put “Hole 42” or Spittin Flouride Chips. Sure enough, there was a cave with an unexpectedly impressive entrance. This entrance is about 30 m to the east of the main Washout gully (which is impressive in its own right), and was fed on this day by two minor streams. The others didn’t share my enthusiasm or confidence but eventually trudged up the hill and were apparently surprised I could find a hole in the ground. Inexplicably, they hadn’t brought their bags, so had to head back down and get them for the tagging gear. Kath and I inspected the entrance where the water sunk underground and decided the initial down-climb was a bit dodgy and was worthy of a handline or rope. Of course, Kath then had to go and get her bag.

While I waited, I had a poke around nearby looking for a hole described as “Dig” on the survey. I didn’t find anything that wouldn’t require creating a whole new cave, but presently the others had started to arrive, so I set to work GPSing and sketching while Ric tagged the cave JF-540. Janine, with a clearly less cautious attitude than Kath and me, plunged into the cave and disappeared. Happily she had a pretty hard time getting back out but described a series of down climbs that led to an inclined rift that got too tight. She made no mention of a draft. She added a memory sketch to mine, and just as Kath arrived we marched uphill with me promising an even better cave and an almost certain breakthrough into Threefortyone resulting in glory that would make Alan blush. I also implied I knew exactly where the entrance was.

We wandered around for a bit finding nothing. We were well above the contact and I was a bit perplexed. The troops quickly got sick of me and we abandoned the search and made our way back down the hill. As we wandered back I came across a dirty great big hole in the ground. Everything fell into place as it became clear that this hole was actually Spittin Flouride Chips, and the cave we had tagged JF-540 was Johns Blast Hole. Clearly there appeared to be something wrong with the survey, with the only plausible theory I can think of being the tape used was missing about 10 m off the end, and no correction was applied to the survey (or mentioned). Helpfully Ric pointed out he had come across this hole on the way up, but didn’t bother mentioning it because he assumed I knew about it. We tagged it JF-541, and I had a poke around inside, but it was rather muddy, uninspiring and didn’t go far. The entrance was photo-tagged and the others nicked off for lunch while I went back up to JF-540 to photo-tag it and inspect the other holes in between the entrances a little more closely. I found the “Dig” but you would need an awful lot of enthusiasm and I deemed it unworthy of a tag.

There were also a couple of small blind dolines on the way.

So in summary: Hole 41 is JF-540 Johns Blast Hole (see map on page 32) and was previously both JF-X54 and JF-Z13. It is a little closer to JF-129 than previously estimated and is fed by a small stream running parallel on the eastern side of the Washout Gully. It only has the potential to add 30 m to the Threefortyone system, and rather than requiring offending rocks to be moved to make progress, it would seem the structure of the cave would need to be altered. Hole 42 is now JF-541 Spittin Flouride Chips (see map on page 33). I don’t believe this cave has either an X or Z number assigned to it.

After lunch, it was then onto the main event. Given the quantity of water pouring into Washout Cave, we had all decided that the Silver Lining pitch in Rift Cave might not be a good idea, and we would stick to the Railway Tunnel. I had lied and secretly conspired with Kath to head down into the Silver Lining extension even if we had to throw Ric and Janine’s corpses down the pitch ahead of us. I skipped down the entrance ramp having learnt from Janine earlier in the day you can simply slide into a cave and assume someone will come along behind and put in handlines where necessary. I ended going up and down a couple of times as I wondered what had happened to the rest of the party.



Janine descends into JF-34 Rift Cave.

Water was thundering in rather impressively and hammering down the main passageway. I didn’t give Ric or Janine a chance to veto my plans and slithered down the Silver Lining rift to the pitch. We concluded the bolts (spits without hangers, but with bolt markers) were far enough out and away from the waterfall to make the pitch safe. I then proceeded to get ready to rig it, but to my abject horror, as I donned my SRT kit, my central maillon jammed up half closed and wouldn’t budge. I fiddled

around for ages as unhelpful comments came from the peanut gallery, but it was no good and we abandoned our plans (because if the others had dropped the pitch without me, I would have driven home without them). We tootled down the railway tunnel instead, and I contributed to the dig at the end by removing four small stones, but failed to coerce Kath into pushing it any harder. There was water (and plenty of it) pretty much all the way down, even where it sinks into the gravel, but it wasn't backing up at the end.

We made our way out, and I found I didn't need the handline, however I can see the merit of one on some of the trickier climbs. We should drop a rope in from the top of the rift and turn the entrance into a pitch. We were underground for 2 hours including my endless stuffing around at the Silver Lining pitch.

The walk out was more pleasant than the walk in and back at the ute I found that even a large shifter wouldn't budge my stuck maillon, so I had to wriggle out of my harness which I had been wearing around to this point. At that point it occurred to me I should have done that in the cave and simply stolen Ric's SRT kit. All in all it was a good day and my contempt for surface surveys remains intact.

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JF-34 Rift Cave – Silver Lining Extension

Chris Chad

9 October 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

It was back to Rift Cave, this time with a very well greased steel central maillon, and the intention to head into the Silver Lining extension. We were away rather efficiently this time, with the aim to meet Bunty and Alan and the WA bug nerds in Maydena to grab the key and a tag or two. Unfortunately, they got there a bit earlier than planned and Alan was chafing at the bit [*sounds painful – Ed.*] to find pseudoscorpions and couldn't wait 5 minutes, so as we passed through Maydena at the agreed time, I wondered if Alan would remember to pass on a couple of cave tags as discussed. We found the key at the gate where it had apparently been lobbed by an excited Alan as he numbed entomologist minds with talk about fern collections, confirmed the absence of tags, and proceeded up the road. [*I guess the fact that I made it possible at all for him to acquire the key to the gate has been overlooked – I received a pathetic phonecall the night before from a dishevelled caver who had discovered the gear store officer and family were not home to unlock the store for him – Ed.*]

I had a couple of odd jobs in the way of old untagged caves to locate but this was a bit pointless without tags, but it soon became clear that Ric and Janine's main goal for the day was to clear the road above the Chairman car park up to KD so they wouldn't scratch their precious Subaru when they do Dwarrowdelf in November. I demonstrated how one could drive up the road quite easily simply by hardening up a bit, but regardless, they pulled out their pathetic pruning equipment and I relented and started cutting a swath wide enough to take four lanes of caving traffic with my saw. Proper tools made short work of the job, but three quarters of the way down, the clutch failed on my saw so I retreated to tinker with it while Ric and Janine's standards suddenly became more relaxed. Thanks to Ric's eagle eyes that located the circlip that escaped me while putting the clutch back together. Assuming no further bad weather or tree falls, car-proud cavers can now get up to the KD car park with confidence.

We then made our way into Rift Cave. Ric whinged about the Worlds' Slipperiest Log so I spent some time providing Ric and Janine with advice on how they could do their own

flamin' trackwork. Trees have already been coming down over the track partially undoing the good work from a few weeks back, but the walk in was short and efficient.

As we went down the entrance slope, Ric set about making it wheelchair accessible with the 10 mm rods he had bought along on the previous trip (but were trumped by my superior 12 mm deformed bar on that occasion). I found it interesting that assistance was placed on the bits I had little trouble with, but not the bit I find tricky. It all has to do with the different reach of individuals it would seem.

With central maillons performing as they should I ventured out and rigged the pitch. Novice riggers should note the excellent natural anchor right at the pitch head that avoids tying back around the corner a bit further. The tight rifty pitch head is a bit awkward, and despite Jeff Butt claiming it keeps the rope out of the waterfall, it really doesn't, with the last several metres smack bang in the middle of it. This could be remedied by taking the anchors even further out, or with a deviation, but it's a short pitch, the water encourages spirited prusiking, and you tend to get wet in the tight streamway above it anyway.

We poked around in the cave never truly knowing exactly where we were, but wandered down to the bottom. I had built the cave up in my mind and was expecting it to be bigger, Janine was only vaguely recalling the cave, and Ric had never been in it before. On the way out, Ric managed to get off route, but in doing so he found the large ascending passage that heads off to the north-east. Apathy prevented us pushing the difficult climb at the end of this or spending any time in the tight bits at the bottom.

The large passages are really just big joint controlled block collapses with very little evidence of solutional formation (except presumably under all the rubble somewhere). In some places in the ascending side passage there were large regular cracks with openings of just a few centimetres extending several metres into the hanging wall within which little helictites are almost outpacing the rate of settlement. The higher up we got the greater the apparent level of shattering, so it would appear material is being drawn away from the bottom a bit like a small sub-level stoping mine in addition to the constant undercutting of the solutional process.

We made our way back out having enjoyed a rather leisurely jaunt in the cave. I came out last derigging to find Janine giving the tight rifty bit a verbal barrage that would

make a sailor blush. It also tore my knees apart and reminded me I'm not a particularly good caver, so I thought her sentiments were entirely justified as I made my way through. I tested Ric's climbing aids on the way out only to demonstrate that an 80 kg caver (regulation weight I might add!) will simply bend 10 mm rod. Could the next person please bend them back up a bit?

We had spent a touch over 4 hours in the cave and had a good time. The walk back to the ute only took 15 minutes with the new improved track. We were all a bit wet, so I pulled the pin on any attempts to find more caves and thus were back to Hobart early, well and truly beating the others home (they were presumably weeping shamelessly in horrible scrub somewhere).

Biospeleology for Beginners – Part 1

JF-79 Beginners Luck & JF-208

Alan Jackson

9 October 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson & Danilo Harms and Michael Rix (the cave bug nerds)

We met up with the invertebrate enthusiasts at Maydena. We were 15 minutes early and they were already there – hence they passed the first test of Alan Jackson's *Are you fit to be a member of society?* test. I rang Chris to see how far away they were (we had a key swap arranged) but his phone didn't ring. I tried the consolation prize – Janine answered. They were between Westerway and National Park so I told them I'd dump the key at the gate for them.

We headed to Settlement Road first for a jaunt in JF-79 (80, 81, 82) Beginners Luck. We tried locating a waypoint of dubious origins first but didn't have much luck so we tried dead reckoning instead and found the main (JF-80) entrance a minute later. The vegetation wasn't delightful but wasn't hideous either. Bunty commented that the first time he'd been here the whole place had been bald – I suggested the tables had turned on him and it was now he who was suffering that affliction. Michael searched on the surface and immediately in the entrance for pseudoscorpions while we guided Danilo further into the cave. Danilo got to work in the chamber where the JF-81 entrance comes in, leaving no stone unturned. I climbed out the JF-81 entrance to see if I could find the tag, which was fairly easily located on the face above the entrance. I then decided to cross country to the JF-80 entrance to get the GPS and return to the JF-81 entrance. I found a 'new' cave on the way – a clean-washed walking passage with plenty of puddles in the floor that terminated in a deeper 'sump' pool under a rift daylight hole. I could find no tag but couldn't believe that it hadn't been found before. A crawl near the horizontal entrance joined into another largish entrance with a bird's nest on a high ledge. I came out this entrance and had a quick scout about for JF-80. I couldn't find it and became mindful of getting lost without a GPS or compass (the 'find the sun then head south till you hit the road' option was available to me but was too shameful to consider at this early stage). I returned to JF-81 (getting only marginally geographically embarrassed on the way) and informed Bunty that I thought it best if he headed out to the JF-80 entrance via the cave and then gave a shout.

Bunty's shouts came from roughly the direction I'd expected, so I wasn't totally disheartened by my earlier navigational display. He joined me, we GPSed JF-81 (Jeff Butt's old fix was about 20 m away) and then we returned to JF-80 via the 'new' find. Not having done any background reading on the immediate area we decided not to tag this cave yet as it may have already been done. [I

haven't been able to find any specific reference to this cave in the archive since the trip but it is possible that it is one of the many caves that John Parker describes in SS141. Judging by his comment at the start of his reports on page 2 it is possible that some of the caves never received a proper tag – just a temporary plastic tag held in place with a nail ...] Back at JF-80, Michael was having success, with two trog pseudoscorpions collected and three epigeal ones. I headed in to check Danilo was OK while Bunty walked the 50 m back to the road to get the tagging gear. Danilo was fine and had found one specimen so far and wanted another 30 minutes.

The JF-80 tag has gone missing (Jeff Butt couldn't find it in 2003 – SS336:28). We had a good look too but failed, so we made up a new JF-80 tag and affixed it down inside the entrance, on the left face at the start of the narrow 'canyon' that you traverse for a couple of metres before climbing up in the upper level continuation. We then directed Michael to the 'new' cave so he could do some bug searching and then we headed to JF-81 to place pink tape on the tag and photograph the entrance. JF-79 didn't look far away on the map so we thought we'd head overland to it and photograph it too. We only made about 5 metres when I spotted a small entrance. I slithered down and it soon opened into a long rift with a ~5 m drop to the floor. I traversed along the top of the rift and then downclimbed a rubble slope to the floor of the chamber. I soon found footprints and headed in the direction that I assumed Danilo to be in. I traversed the "5 m pit" described on the map, popped through The Keyhole and found Danilo packing up (he'd found a second bug and was happy to call it quits). He headed out while I popped back up to Bunty via the JF-81 entrance. The drill and tags were back at JF-80 so we put some pink tapes up and added this new entrance to the 'some other day' list for tagging.



S. Bunton

Alan and the new tag in the JF-80 entrance.

Getting to the JF-80 entrance: the taped route to the cave starts at almost exactly 900 m from the junction of Settlement and Florentine roads. There is a small road

widening (about three cars long) 30 metres past the track start that is good for parking. There is a small rock cairn (and now some pink tape) at the track start (and this spot was GPSed and called JF80trackstart). The track wiggles a little bit between clearings and then follows the deep wheel ruts of a snig track (marked with old dark blue tapes). Where the snig track starts to become less obvious the JF-80 entrance is on the left, about 10 metres from the track.

Next stop was Chrisps Road and JF-208. The ‘track’ to the cave was as hideous as Bunty had warned. JF-208 itself was quite pleasant and interesting. I got bored looking under rocks after 20 minutes and headed out. I looked at the dry fossil route of JF-207 Voltera – the slot at the bottom was drafting very well and could be worth a dig if you’ve got a spare couple of days (it’s not in the impossible realm, just the very keen realm). I stuck my head in the wet way too but it was a raging torrent and I only had my old girly trog suit on. Chris had suggested I check out JF-516 The Impaler. I couldn’t find it so I removed Bunty from JF-208 and put him into ‘goto JF-516 mode’. The thick forest was interfering with his satellite reception but after a brief circling motion he spotted it. At Chris’s lead I squeezed through the tight bit only to be presented with a more serious constriction. Luckily it was mostly fill and smoochy kack deposits (you’ll have to check your karst text glossary for that phrase) so I soon reamed my way through. A further 10 or so metres of low-roofed passage continued trending down to a final choke (the roof was a flat piece of solid roof while the floor and wall were all mud and slop and fill. It was trending in the same direction as JF-208. Suitably coated in vile shit, I exited the cave. The nerds had scored well in JF-208 with two adults and one nymph of the relatively large, blind pseudoscorpion previously known from a single specimen collected by Stefan many years ago. Another 30 years should see the population recover sufficiently for another round of bugocide.



S. Bunton



S. Bunton

‘Search and Destroy’ team members sampling in JF-208 – Michael Rix (top) and Danilo Harms (bottom).

Biospeleology for Beginners – Part 2

JF-34 Rift Cave & JF-6 Cashions Creek Cave

Stephen Bunton

10 October 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton, Danilo Harms and Michael Rix (WA Museum).

After yesterday’s success with finding pseudoscorpions of the genus *Pseudotyrranochthonius*, I was all psyched for another day of bug hunting. It was a lovely day and our West Australian visitors were awed by the gallery rainforest as we headed out to Rift Cave. We benefited from the track-work done by the forest trolls recently and even that bit which extended into the cave. Michael sampled in the forest at the entrance and Danilo and I descended. Danilo sampled as he went and I bottomed the cave looking for the most likely habitat. I spotted the place that Dave Rasch told me about, where fine sediments block the continuation of the big passage just above and to the left of the terminus.

I returned to Danilo and we sampled around some flowstone areas and then some drier mudbanks away from the stream. You don’t realise how many rocks there are in

a cave until you turn them over one by one! It was a bit like scratch and win quick-picks – you know what you are looking for but you never seem to get one. I did get some unpigmented isopods (slaters), a symphylan, a spider and a few beetle wing-covers (elytra) proving that there was some biota in the cave.

Given the number of rocks I turned over (and Harry Butler says “Put it Back”!) I changed my ideas about life in caves. Initially I used to think caves were almost devoid of life. Then when I looked at the number of recorded species I began to think that cave beasts must be everywhere and so I would then feel guilty about trampling down scree slopes. Now I know how few and far between these animals really are.

In the end I was the lucky one to spot the only specimen of the day and it was quite cute until it was condemned to death by ethanol, as well as an afterlife in a blender and a DNA sequencing machine. Michael had caught another one on the surface. (Unfortunately I left my short red 7 mm “push rope” at the entrance of the cave. If someone wants to return it to me, I would be very pleased. It is the last piece of rope from my KD solo in March 1988.) [And while you’re in the area, pop down to the JF-341 entrance and grab my forgotten blue glove – Ed.]

We headed back to the car for lunch before heading to the least important cave of those on their JF list, Cashions Creek Cave (JF-6). On the way we took advantage of the great weather and we drove up Tim Shea for the view. Danilo and Michael were pleased with this little detour.

We found Cashions Creek Cave with minimal mucking around, although, there are a few little bits of loose ends to clear up here. There are really two caves called Cashion (no S!) Creek Caves (sic) marked on the one map. A short narrow one from which the stream emerges and the longer one which has a dry crawly section which intersects the streamway at right angles. There is also another small cave to the right, facing into the scrub, which is often encountered first. I placed a piece of orange tape above the entrance of the real Cashions Creek Cave. I could not find a tag for this cave but it may be on the smaller of the “two caves”. As well as this there is a back entrance to the longer cave. We will have to sort all this out in the future.

Inside the cave we all started sampling but all of the species encountered were epigean (“surface”) forms. It was obvious to Danilo that, from the short length of the cave,

the high water flow through the cave, and the existence of a back entrance to the cave, that the biota was derived from the surface and that the climate was possibly not stable enough for troglobitic species to be present. Having said this Cashions Creek Cave is the site locality for the troglobitic carabid beetle *Goedtrechus parallelus*. I was aware of this but despite our best efforts we found no specimens.

Cashions Creek Cave is a very impressive little stream cave and worthy of a visit at least once in a caving career. We signed the visitor survey booklet before heading out.

Danilo and Michael were very impressed with their weekend’s efforts and couldn’t thank us (Alan and me) enough for our help. As for me I enjoyed being a biology nerd for a weekend rather than just a biology teacher during the week in order to pay for my caving habit at the weekends. I wished these two delightful biospeleologists all the best for the remainder of the trip and their project in general.

What I did learn from the two days was that the next time I go bug hunting I should wear knee-pads!

Other Exciting Stuff

Gear Review – Aluminium Half Round Maillon

Chris Chad

I noticed some of the club SRT kits had aluminium half round maillons for the central attachment point. “What a good idea” I thought, and bought one for myself. On its fifth outing, it seized up while I was doing it up in the cave, and I eventually had to destroy it to remove it. On inspection, it wasn’t clear what caused the problem. The threads were clean, there was no corrosion, and after the previous trip I had given it a thorough clean with a nail brush and it was operating smoothly. Presumably some grit found its way into the thread and caused deformation. Alarming I was able to render it too tight to undo by finger tightness alone and attempting to use my Stop as a wrench only made it worse. As can be seen, the thread was quickly destroyed. This was a nuisance at the top of a pitch. It would have been a real hassle had it happened at the bottom of a cave.

The problem comes from this type of connector relying on the thread to give it strength, thus the threads need to be higher tolerance than the loose threads you find on locking karabiners for example. The threads on the two sides need

to line up as well which doesn’t allow much tolerance for flexing either (not the issue on this occasion). Aluminium, while strong, is quite soft, and these threads can easily be distorted. I doubt I would have been able to do the same damage to a steel version. In short I wouldn’t recommend the aluminium version. I doubt the weight saving is worth the reliability issue.



Length of Black Supergiant pitch, Niggly Cave

Rolan Eberhard

I originally measured the length of the Black Supergiant pitch in Niggly Cave as 190.6 m. This was back in the early 1990s and done using a topofil (hipchain), a distance-measuring device that works by reeling out cotton thread over a mechanical counter. The method wasn’t ideal, because the amount of stretch in almost 200 m cotton thread is considerable, making it hard to be sure of the accuracy of the reading. On the other hand, alternative

methods that came to mind at the time, such as measuring the length of the rope used to descend the pitch (while ignoring rope stretch), were no better and perhaps worse. The pitch is well and truly free-hanging, so it wasn’t possible to survey the shaft in sections using stations against the wall partway down. On a later trip I checked the height difference between the top and base of the pitch using a digital watch/altimeter. This supported the topofil result, give or take a metre.

Recent trips to Niggly Cave by STC provided an opportunity to measure the pitch using a different method again. This involved the use of a super long fibreglass tape

made up specially for the job by joining together sundry bits of old tape. Janine McKinnon held one end of the ‘mother of all tapes’ at the bottom of Black Supergiant, while Alan Jackson tied a knot at the other end level with one of the two new bolts at the top (probably the slightly higher bolt on the right – AJ pers. comm.). It wasn’t possible to read the length directly off the tape. The tape then sat in a box for a few months until I remembered to measure it, which I did by carefully hand-over-handing it against a near-new 50 m fibreglass tape. The result was 191.4 m, tolerably close to the original result. The earlier measurement was made from the edge of the shaft about a

metre lower down than the bolt used by Alan as the reference point. This presumably accounts for some of the difference.

This result doesn’t affect the surveyed depth of Niggly Cave, which is based on a traverse down a parallel shaft series. As a single vertical leg accounting for about 50% of the depth of the cave, the new measurement has potential to significantly improve the accuracy of the survey. Although not presently tied in to the existing survey, it will be incorporated in the [covert] Niggly resurvey underway.

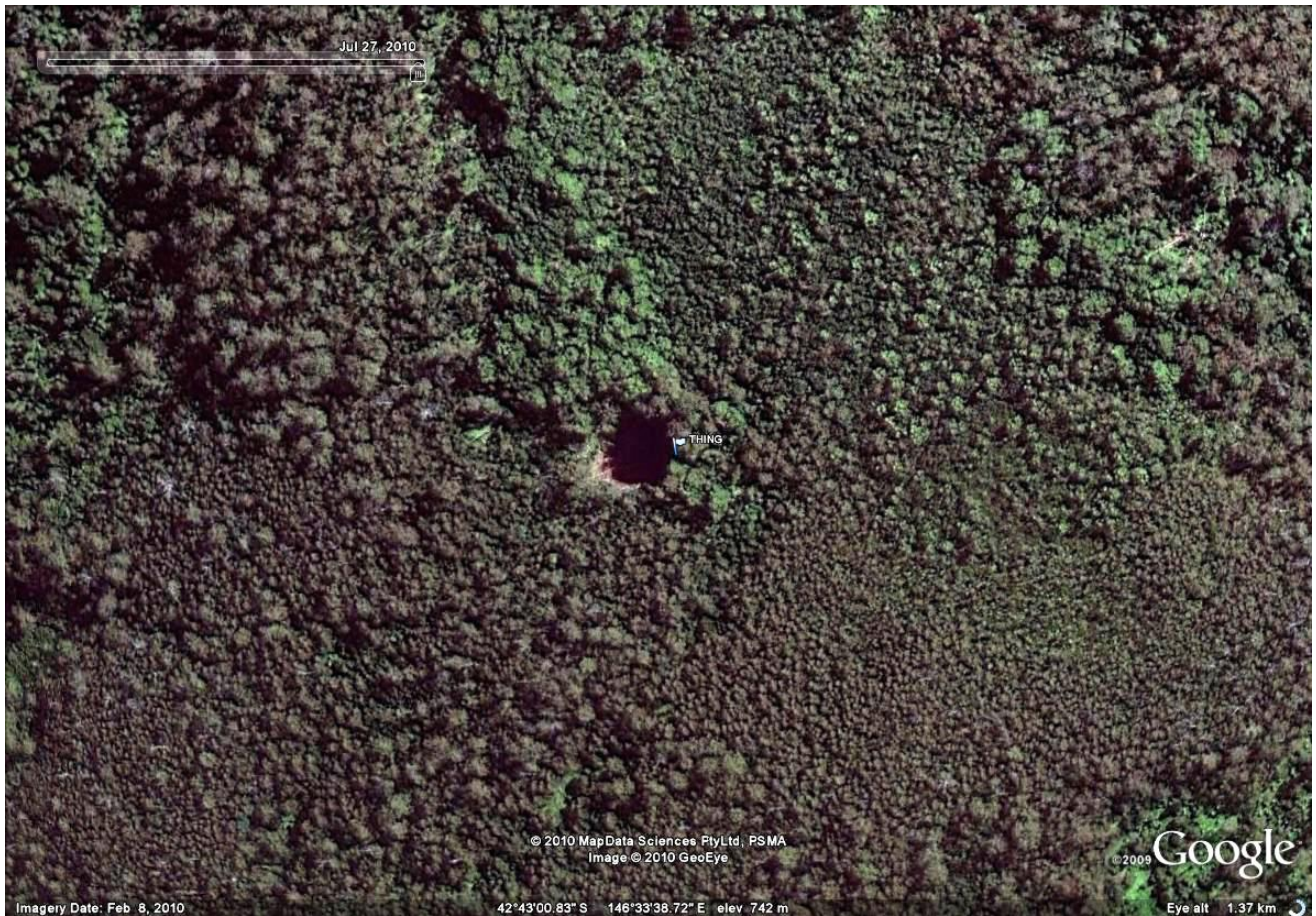
KD Thing

Chris Chad

Having been inflamed by Alan, I found myself reading through an old trip report by Jeff Butt to support my argument (SS314:16). In doing so I discovered a reference to a feature known as "THING". This "THING" is in the club GPS and is something I've wondered about for a while. Thanks to the wonder of spy satellites, we can see that the "THING" appears to be a gaping hole in the ground well above the contact in the vicinity of KD. Judging by the picture, this hole is a good 40 m in diameter and at least 200 m deep, possibly more!

So Jeff Butt and Dave Rasch had a look, but it would seem they failed to get there, instead declaring "THING" to stand for Thick Hindering Impossible Nuisance Growth, and were turned back by the scrub. There is the possibility that someone else paid this feature a visit but I haven't found a reference.

So what is it? A plane crash, meteor crater, lost tribe? I propose the club hires a helicopter to fly in (save prusiking back out) and investigate. I'm sure airline pilots have been wondering for years. For reference there is no other karst feature in the JF that shows up like this.



Tunnels of the Italian Dolomites

Janine McKinnon

One of the main aims of our holiday in Europe was to “do” some “Via Ferrata” in the Italian Dolomites. This is obviously an Italian word but, as with many things (think

“Croissants”) English has just stolen the word from the language that first described it. The literal translation is “iron way” and it refers to an aided route up a climb, using fixed ladders and/or steel cabling.

It originated during World War 1 when the Italians and the Austrians were fighting each other along the border of their

two countries. Unfortunately the border, like in many places, was along the crest line of a mountain range – The Dolomites.

To give themselves a fighting advantage, each side started putting in aides to allow themselves to (somewhat) safely move about in locations that were too dangerous to free climb – like cliffs. They put wooden ladders and iron cables throughout the range.

Today, traversing these routes has become a sport in itself. The number of routes has increased and Alpine clubs maintain the infrastructure.

Along with the external cabling, the soldiers also dug trenches and tunnels to protect themselves from enemy fire, provide some protection from the weather and help them move around the mountains. Some of the Via Ferrata routes are a combination of both.

We did several routes that took us through these hand-hewn tunnels. Two, in particular, stand out:

Misurina: This was a route in a popular hiking area. There is a dirt road (closed to traffic and used only for re-supply) leading to a Refugio at about 2000 m. It is possible to walk the road to the Refugio and this is an extremely popular day walk. You can then climb about 200 m up the mountainside (far less popular) on a path that puts you amongst abandoned trenches from WW1. You can easily identify the machine gun placements and there are still piles of rusting barbed wire lying around from the war. Amazing.



Ric at the top entrance to the tunnel.

In the peaks above the road though, there is a protected route that follows ledges and climbs and tunnels to reach there, and this is the access we used. More fun that way! Also, lucky for us anti-social types, very few of the visitors to the area go this way. [*Some would suggest lucky for them – Ed.*]

As we walked through the short sections of tunnel (up to about 30 m length) along the ridge line, we encountered periodic viewing portals to the outside world. Partly these were put in for the diggers to get bearings on where they were, and partly as machine gun firing positions against any enemy in the valley below.

I should digress briefly here, to point out that all the tunnels we visited were standing height (for Ric!) high, usually 2 m wide, with alcoves at intervals. Thousands of soldiers literally lived (and died, but that's another story ...) in these tunnels for four years.

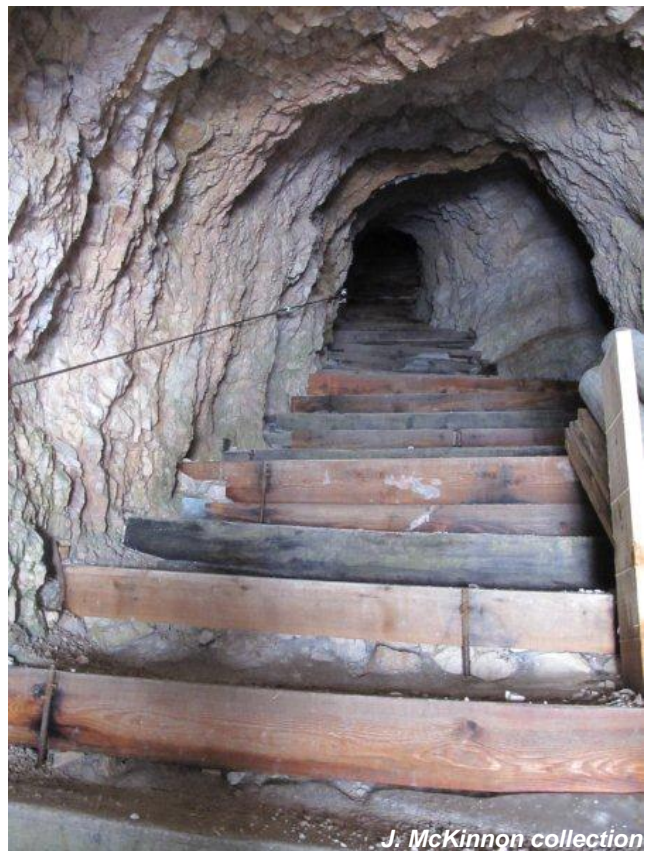
At the end of the ridgeline you come to the entrance to a much longer tunnel. This tunnel was incredible (well, they all are really!). Maybe 200 m long, climbing something like 100 m vertically. Cut up through the mountain, to emerge on a cliff side in an adjoining valley.

All hand dug, remember.



The view from a machine gun position in a tunnel.

Climbing up through this tunnel was very interesting. It was late June when we were there and snow was still around the high levels (above 2200 m). The floor of the first 50 m of the tunnel was covered in ice (cold, falling air). I can only try to imagine what living in these tunnels must have been like in winter, with the clothing and equipment of 1914. And no food supplies coming through. No wonder so many died.



Hand-hewn tunnel – the cable and wooden steps are most likely a modern safety addition.

We emerged at the other end to find snow up the route we planned to take to the top of the mountain (Torre Toblino), a south facing slope, not good for thawing.



J. McKinnon collection

We had a go at it ... but that's a non-caving story, so not for here.

Ultimately, we were forced to descend, so back through the tunnel we went. This was a small compensation. We got another look at this amazing tunnel, no less impressive on the second viewing.

Passo Falzego: Lagazuoi Tunnels.

This series of tunnels we did with about 12 members of Gruppo Speleologico Padovano. We had been in the area on Saturday with four of them, doing a Via Ferrata near Cortina, and the others arrived for the Sunday outing to visit the mountain, and tunnels, of Falzego.

This was more a fun day out than a serious trip so there was no rush. We took our time getting organised in the car park and then we all took the cable car to the top of the mountain, to allow more time to be spent going through the tunnels on the descent.

At the top we ambled over to the nearby mountain peak (with BIG obligatory cross) for a look at the view and lengthy lunch stop. Then it was back to the Refugio (read hotel) for a coffee (beer for some) before we finally started down the mountain and into the tunnels.

These tunnels are FAMOUS and extensive. This area was the site of protracted and very intense fighting from 1915-1917. The mountain is a veritable maze of tunnels. Reading an account of the activities of both sides is fascinating and remarkable. The tunnels were dug by the Italians for a variety of purposes but initially to gain the prime military position, then they were extended after the Austrians tried (unsuccessfully) to blow them up from the

outside. They went on a frenetic tunnel digging exercise and used them to store supplies, munitions, provide accommodation, reach good machine-gun portal and observation sites, and make routes to locations on the outside and within the expanding network. Some were tunnels leading to detonation chambers (yes, to set off explosives to try to blow away the Austrians above them), counter-mine tunnels and escape tunnels. A labyrinth resulted. What a way to spend a war.



J. McKinnon collection

Ruins of underground workshops.

They even changed the mountain permanently with one particularly good underground detonation that blew a large piece out of the side of the mountain.

So, we all started in the entrance to this maze near the top of the mountain, armed with good torches and helmets.

Very quickly we broke into smaller groups as we explored different side passages and alcoves. It really was a labyrinth. Luckily the way to the bottom is signed, otherwise getting lost is a real possibility. Yes, going down is the way but you can lose a lot of time trying to pick the correct route down. There are a lot of blind passages.

We explored tunnels of varying size, some not quite high enough even for me to stand upright. We saw chambers used to collect water, store munitions, live, run machinery. There are a few old living quarters preserved as they were last used, with tables, bunks, cutlery etc. This was a well done display by the responsible managers.

We eventually emerged onto the “Martini Shelf”, named for the officer in charge of the original assault, not the drink (then again, maybe he invented the drink too). This was a wide ledge that ran several hundred metres around the mountain, about half way down from the top. Very famous. Very important, militarily speaking.

After traversing the length of this ledge we found the exit closed due to tunnel collapse, so we retraced our steps back to the main route down through the mountain to the exit from the tunnels.

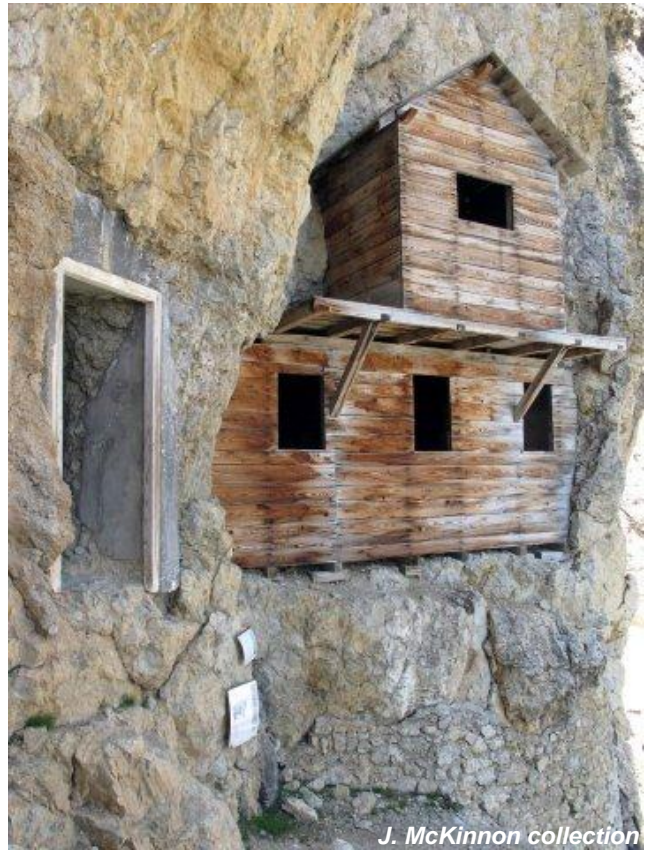
Along the way back from Martini we (Ric, me and two other Padovans) found Marco waiting for us. Mother hen was getting a little nervous as we had been away from all the others for some time. He said he wasn’t worried, or waiting, but his acting skills weren’t up to the lie.

The four of us finally exited from inside the mountain and had an enjoyable scree run to the bottom, about 100 vertical metres below.

We found the others enjoying the sun, drinking bitters (that spirit you usually add to Tonic Water) from a shared bottle, relaxing and making lots of happy noise. There were more than two Italians in the one place, after all, which always resulted in lots of loud “being happy and socialisingness”, our experience so far had discovered.

Then it was a beer at the restaurant at the bottom, long drive with traffic jam back to Padova, a proper three course dinner (for all 12 of us) at the parents of one of the party (starting around 11 pm?) and finally home around 1.30 am. What a great day.

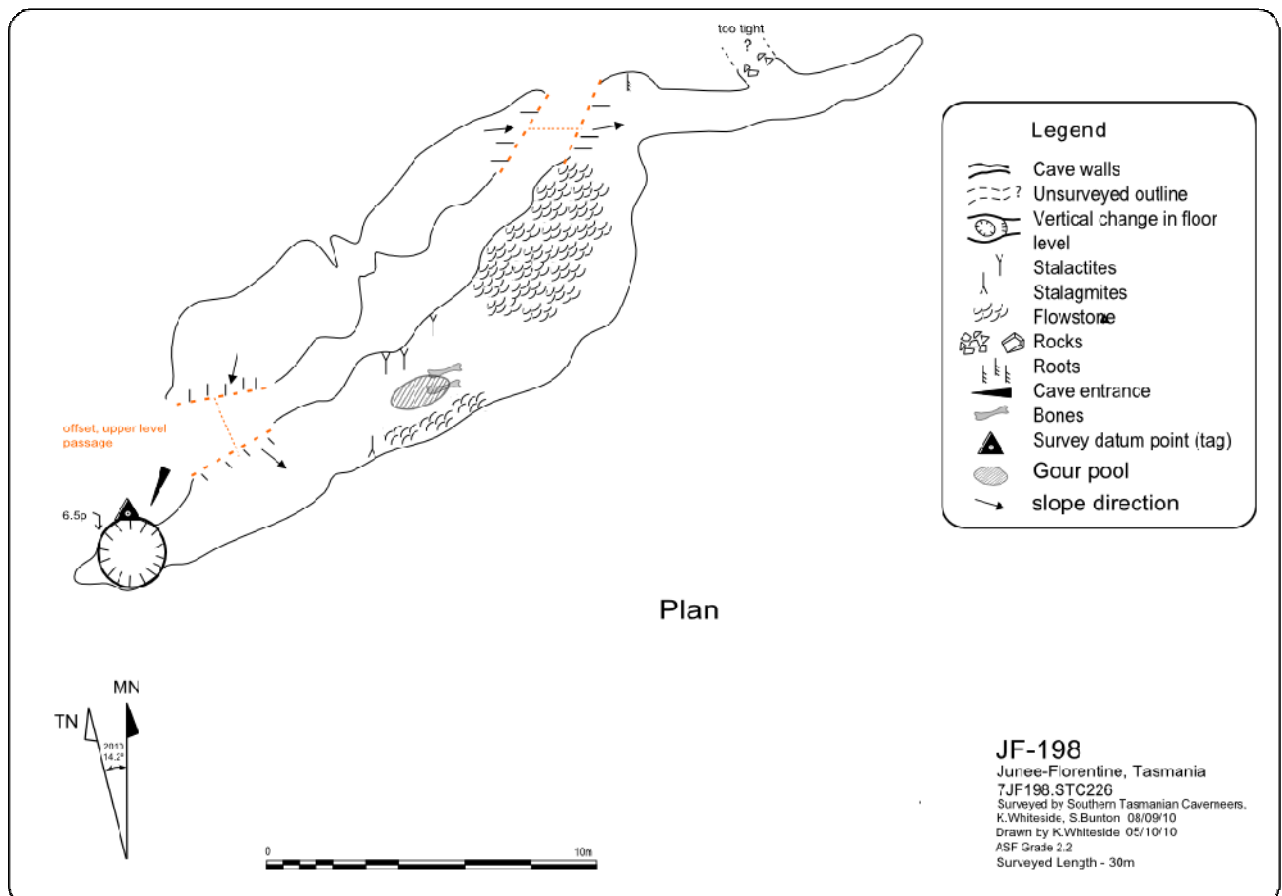
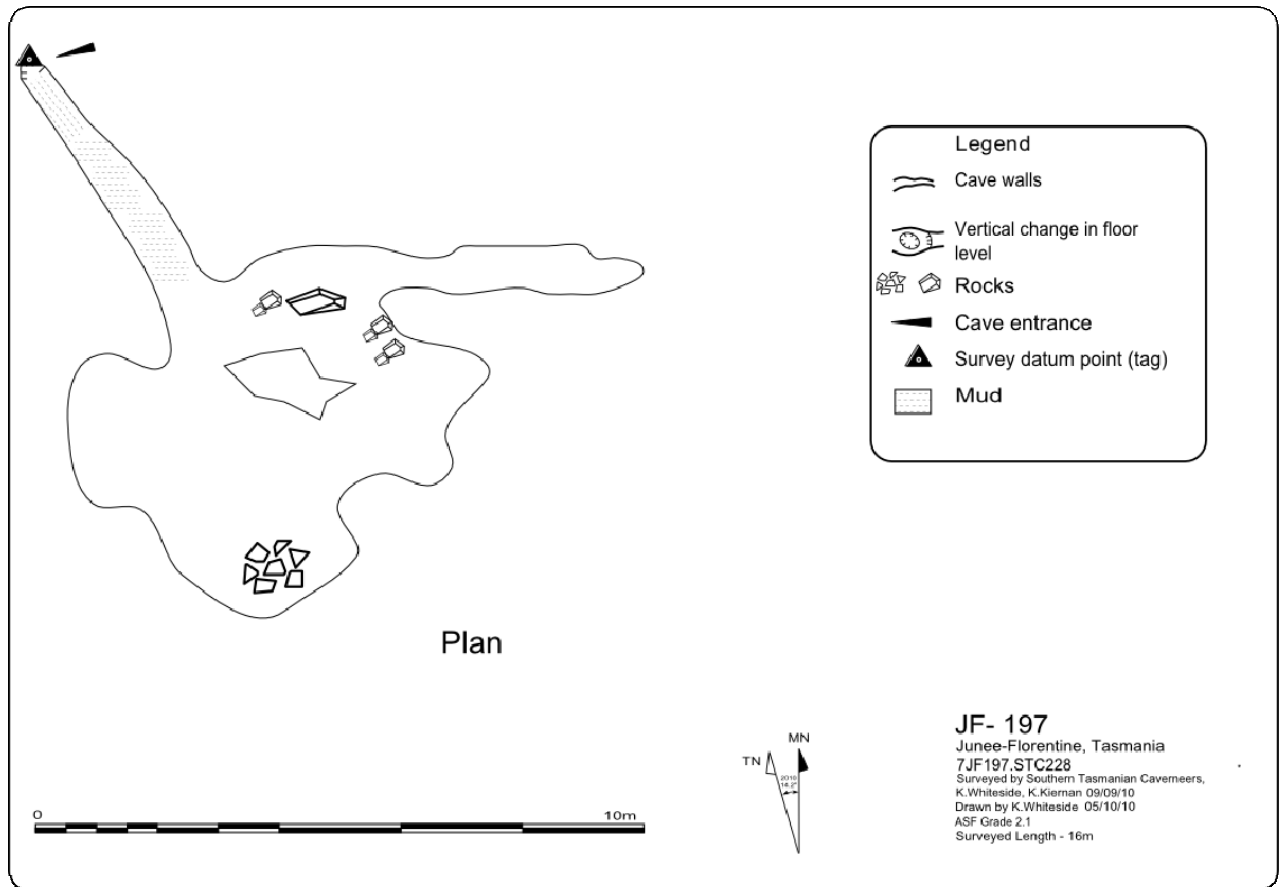
We were glad we weren’t going to work in the morning.

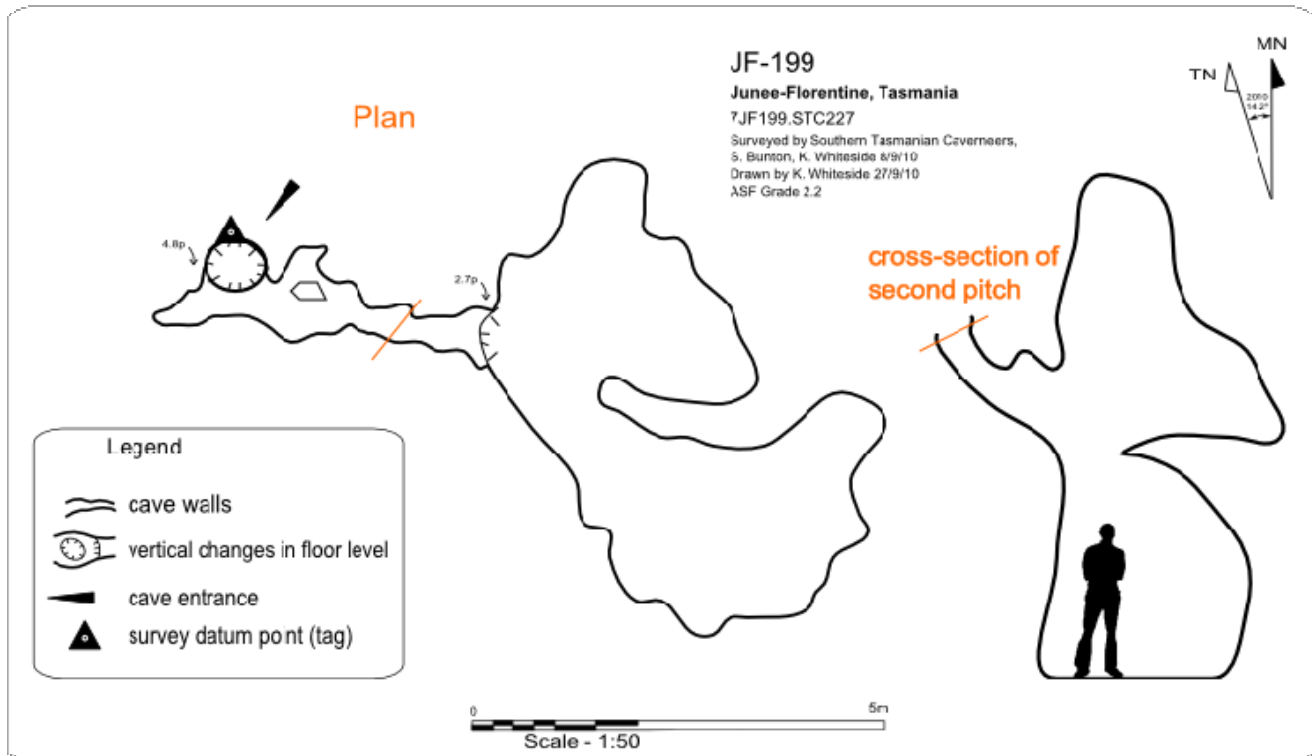


Home sweet home. Exterior timber façade to living quarters, Martini Ledge.



Surveys





JF-274 Suck It and See Swallet (was Z77)

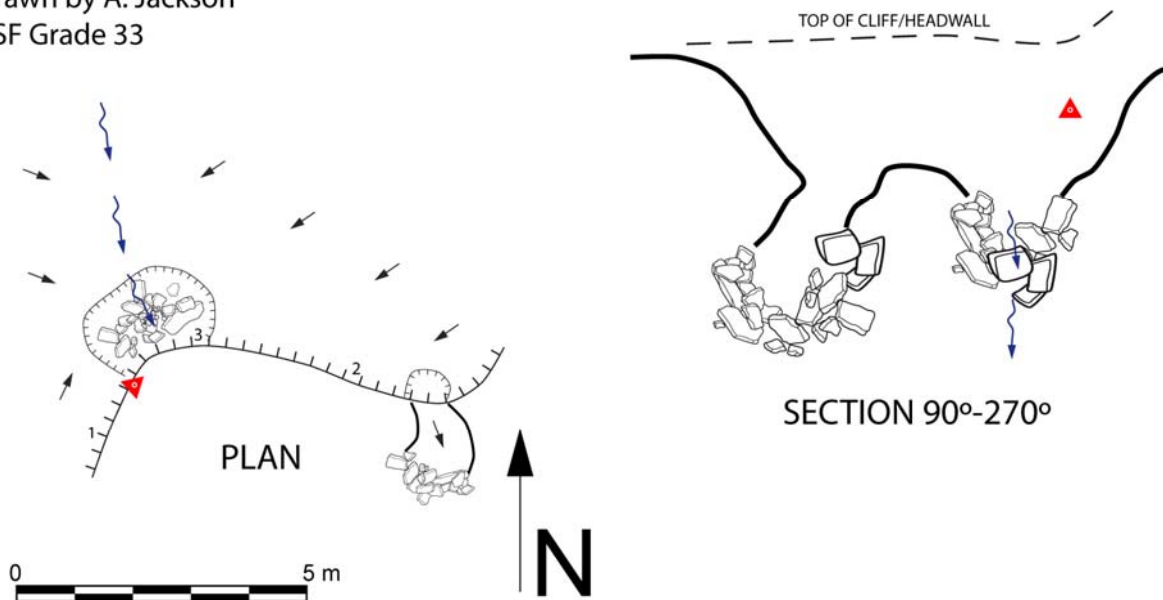
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF274.STC219

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
 11-09-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33



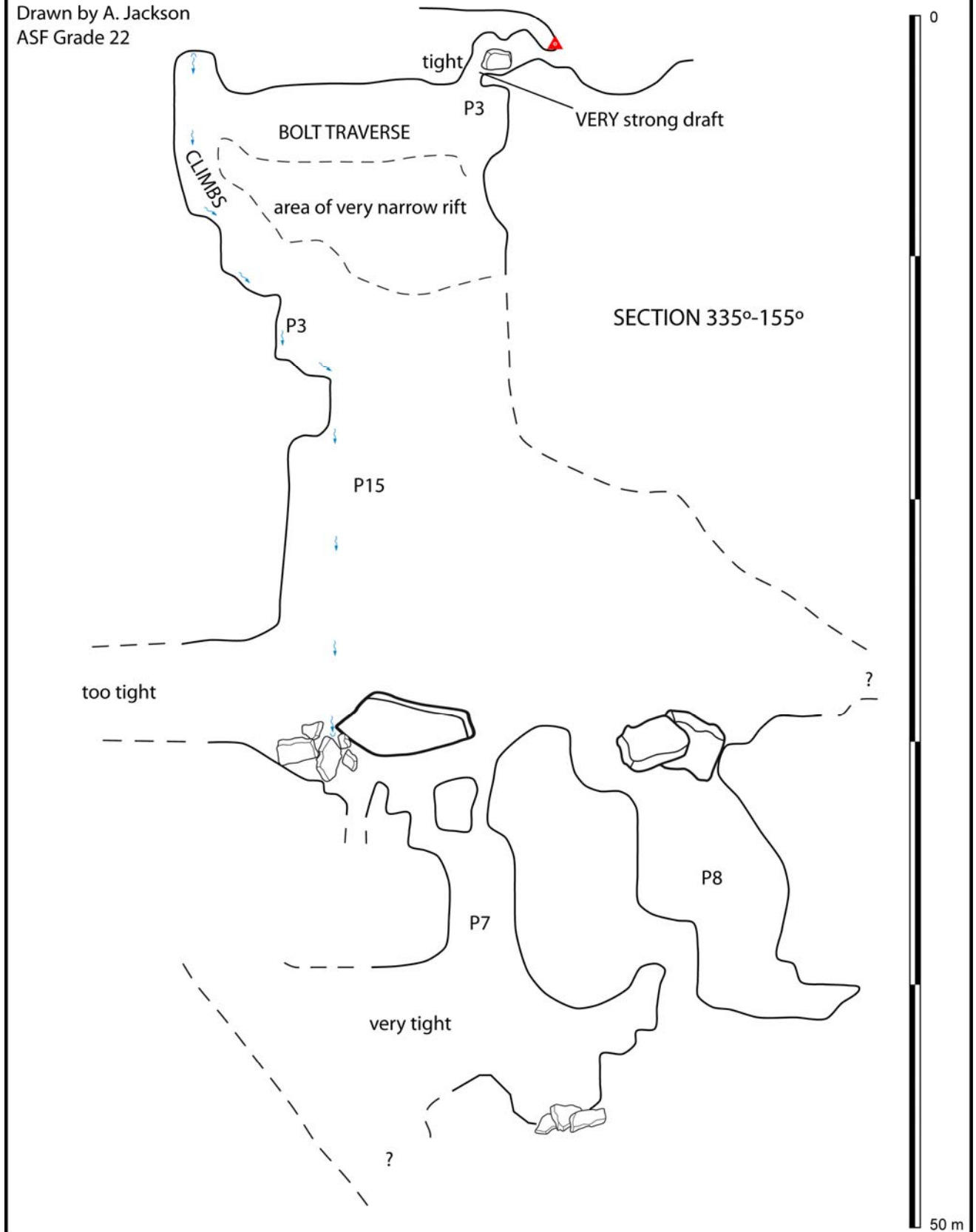
JF-293 Whistler

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

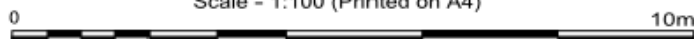
7JF293.STC223

Explored by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
December 2008

Drawn by A. Jackson
ASF Grade 22



This is a more formal version of an unpublished memory sketch made during the last visit to the cave (SS369:12)



JF-416 Hicky Hole

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

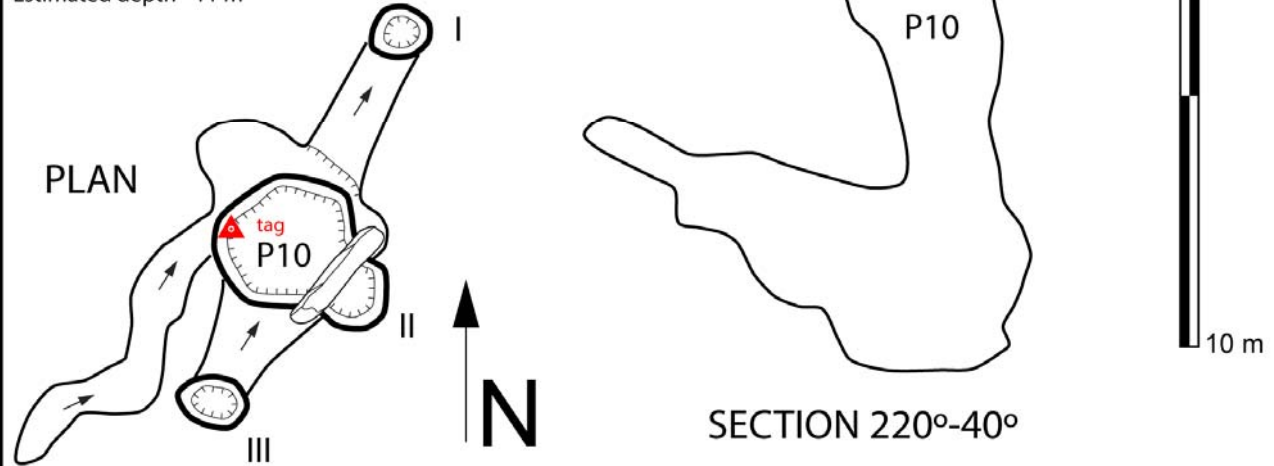
7JF416.STC216

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
24-03-2007

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33

Estimated depth - 11 m



From discovery and sketch described in SS359:5

JF-429

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF429.STC222

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
12-10-2009

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 44



From survey trip in SS369:6

JF-438

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

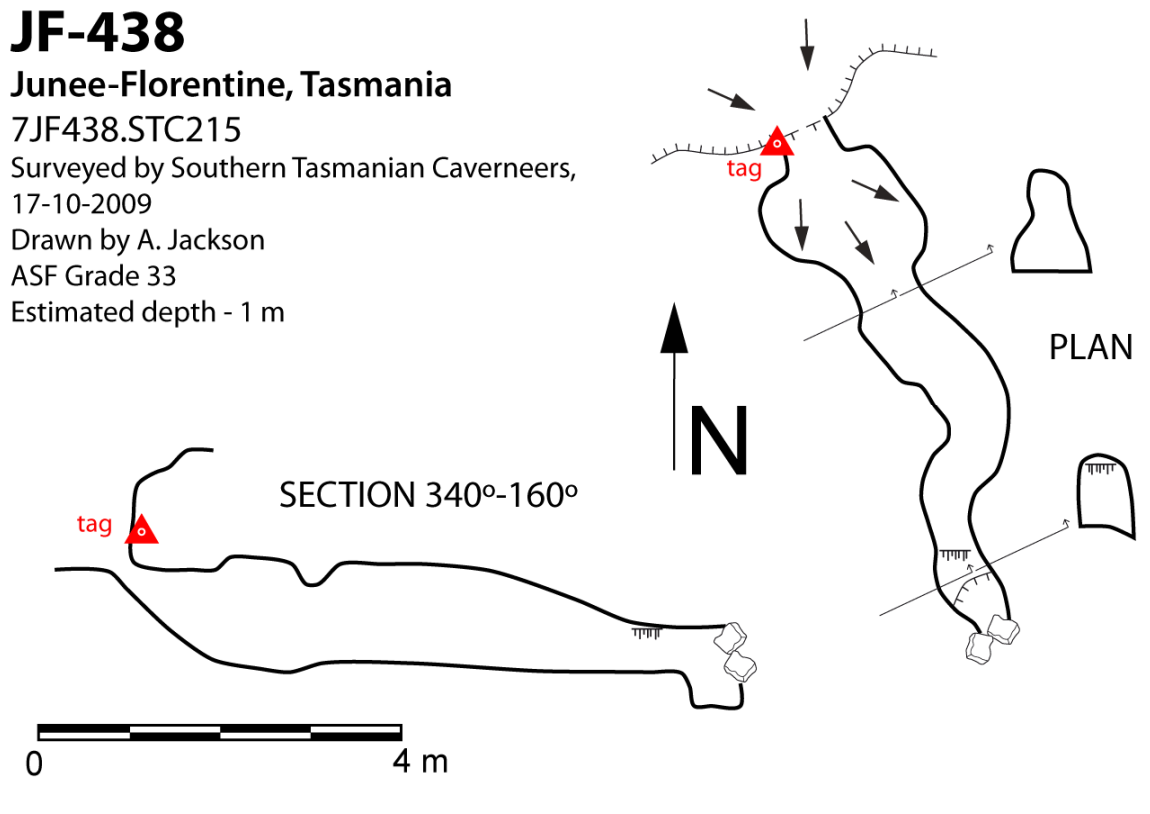
7JF438.STC215

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
17-10-2009

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33

Estimated depth - 1 m



Cave found in SS370:17-18 and tagged in SS371: 7-9

JF-528 (was Hole 27, JF-X96)

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

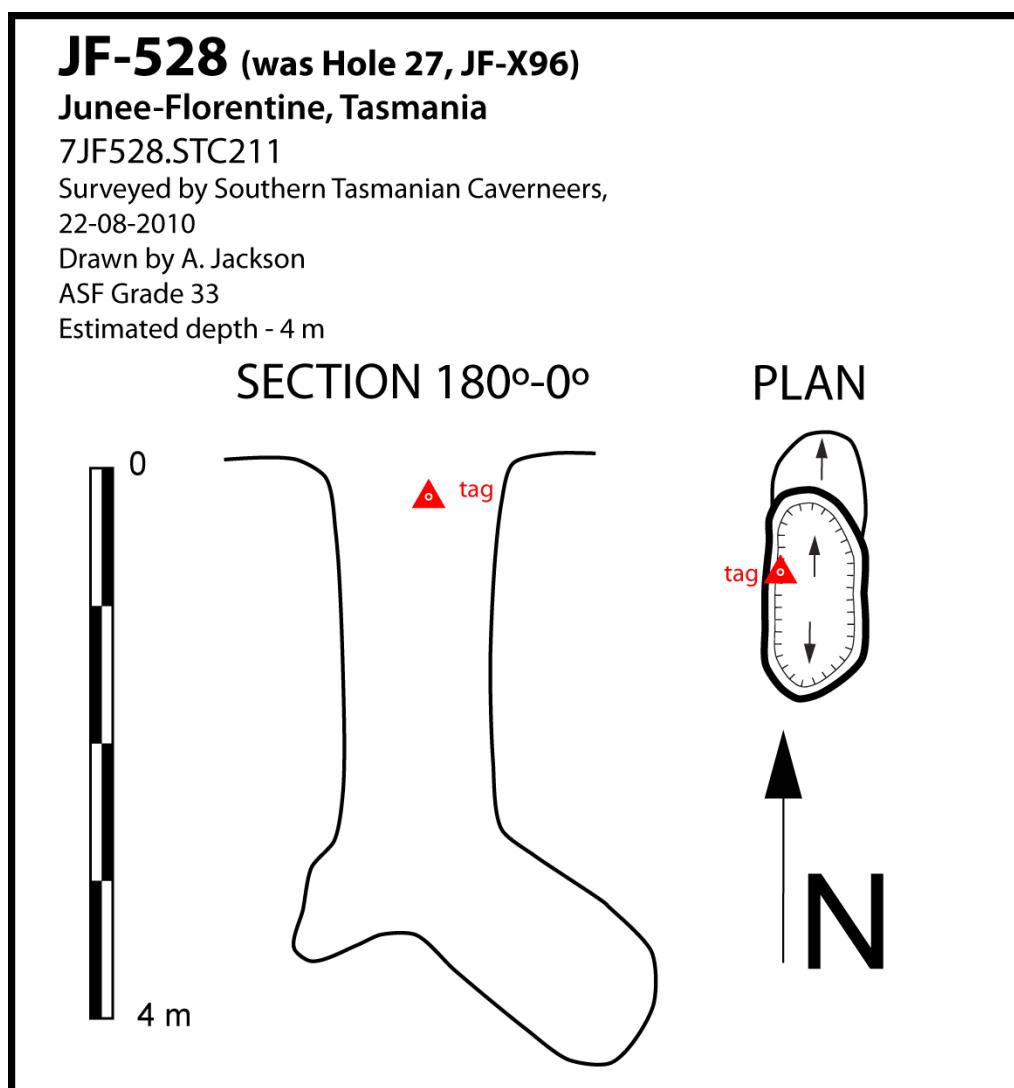
7JF528.STC211

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
22-08-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33

Estimated depth - 4 m



JF-529 (was Hole 28, JF-X97)

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

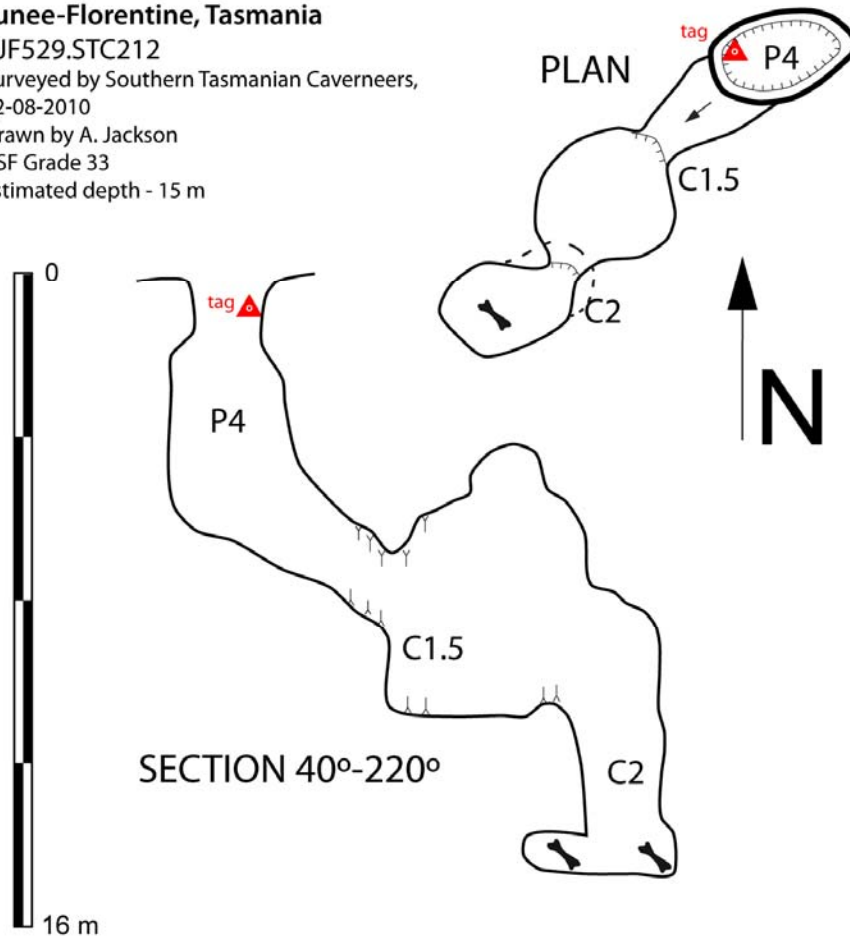
7JF529.STC212

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
22-08-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33

Estimated depth - 15 m



JF-530 Nettle Trap (was Hole 31, JF-X100)

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

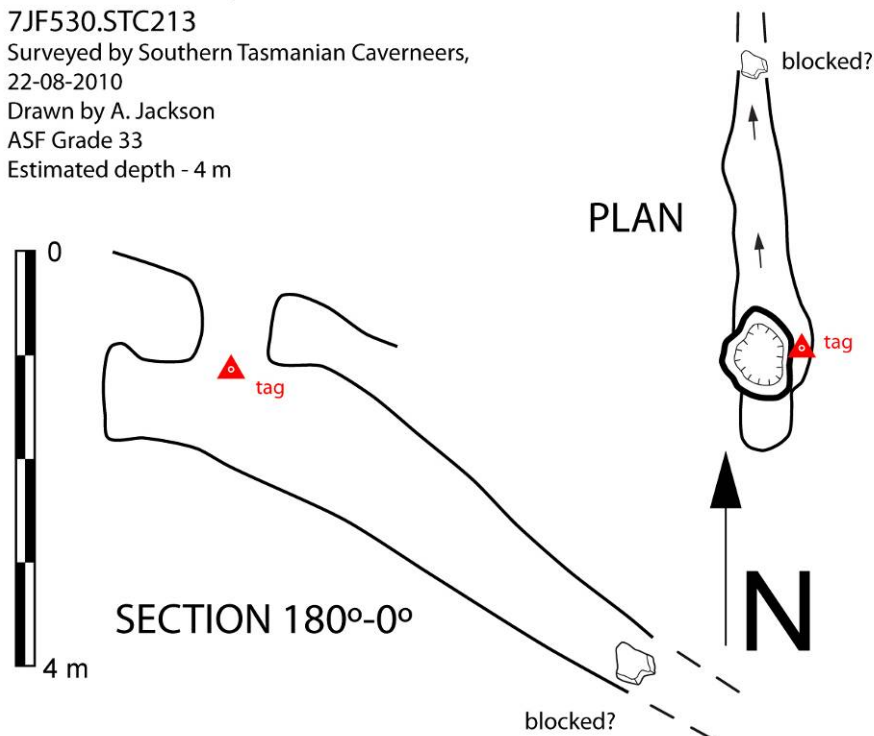
7JF530.STC213

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
22-08-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33

Estimated depth - 4 m



JF-531 (was Hole 30, JF-X99)

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

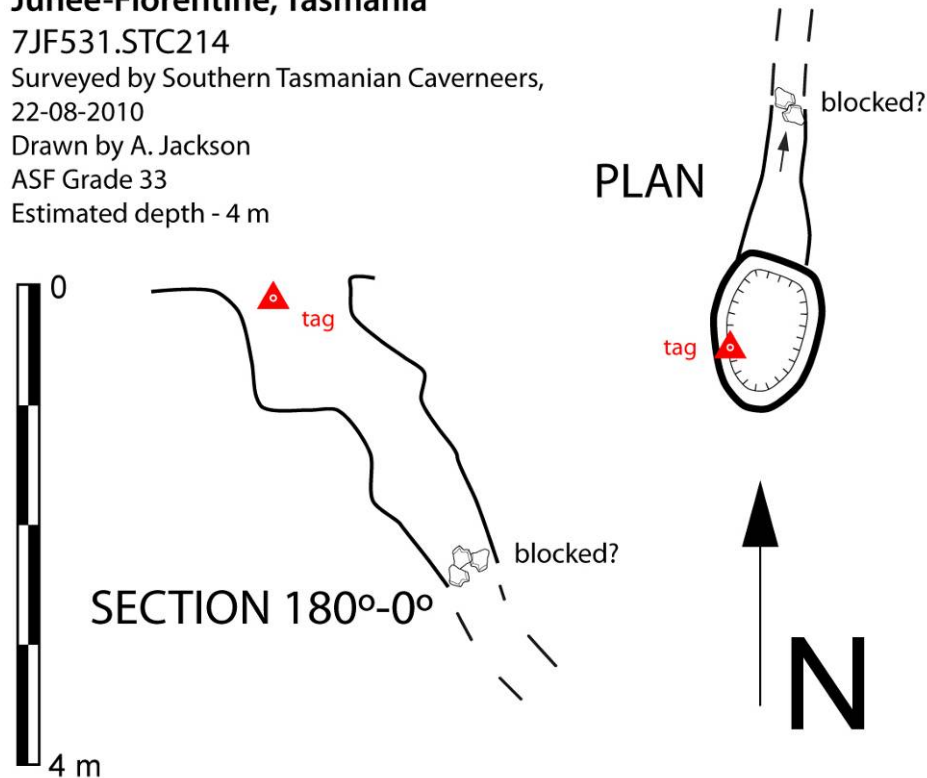
7JF531.STC214

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
22-08-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33

Estimated depth - 4 m



JF-533

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

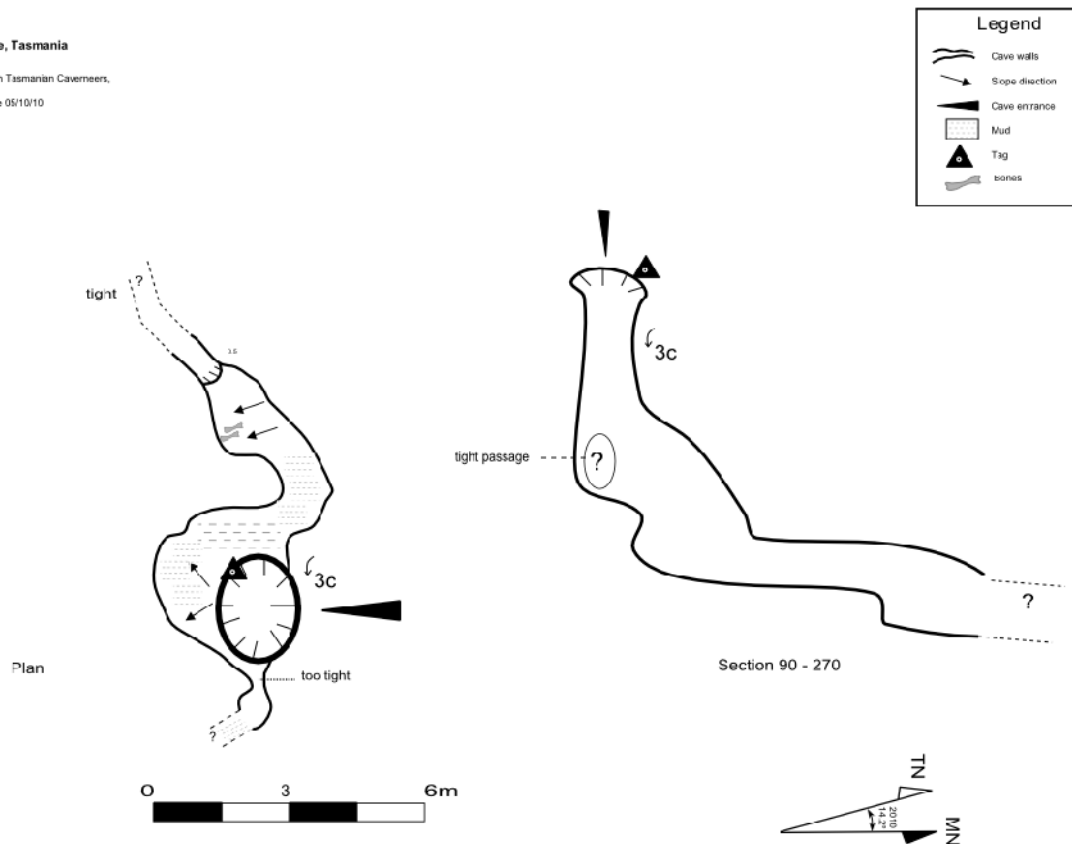
7JF533.STC230

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,

A. Jackson 04/09/10

Drawn by K. Whiteside 05/10/10

ASF Grade 3.3



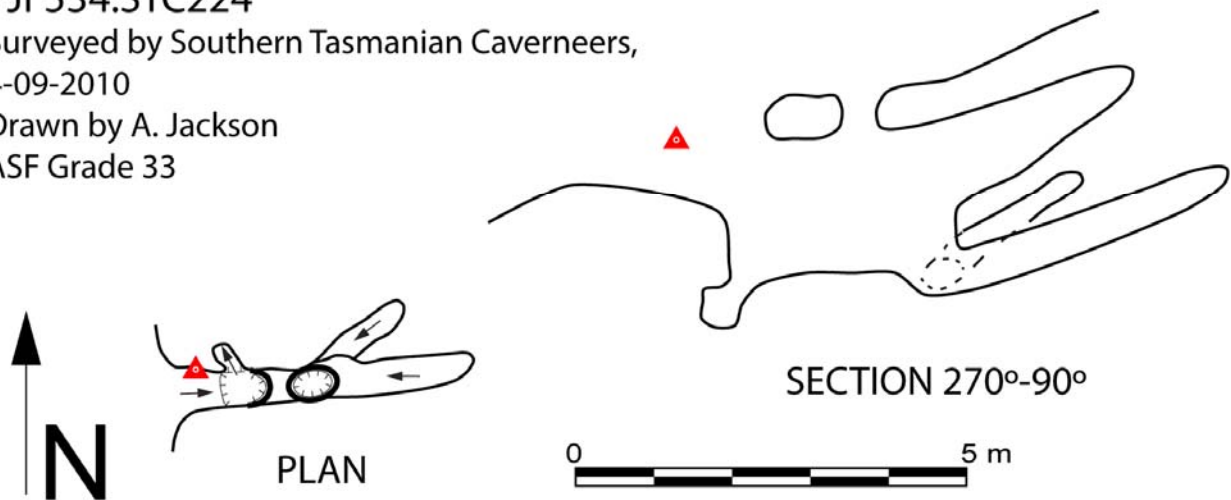
JF-534

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF534.STC224

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
4-09-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson
ASF Grade 33



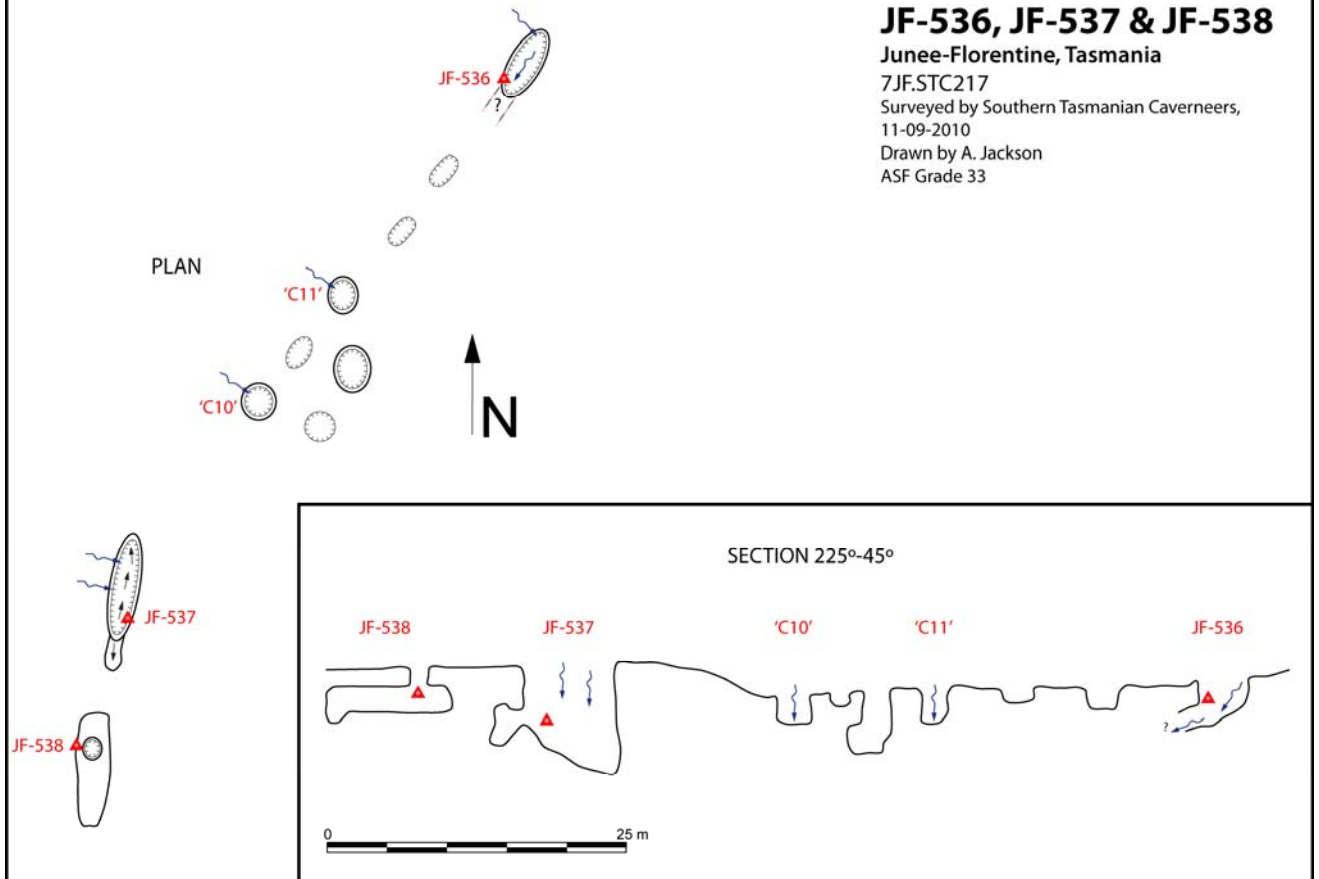
JF-536, JF-537 & JF-538

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF.STC217

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
11-09-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson
ASF Grade 33



JF-539

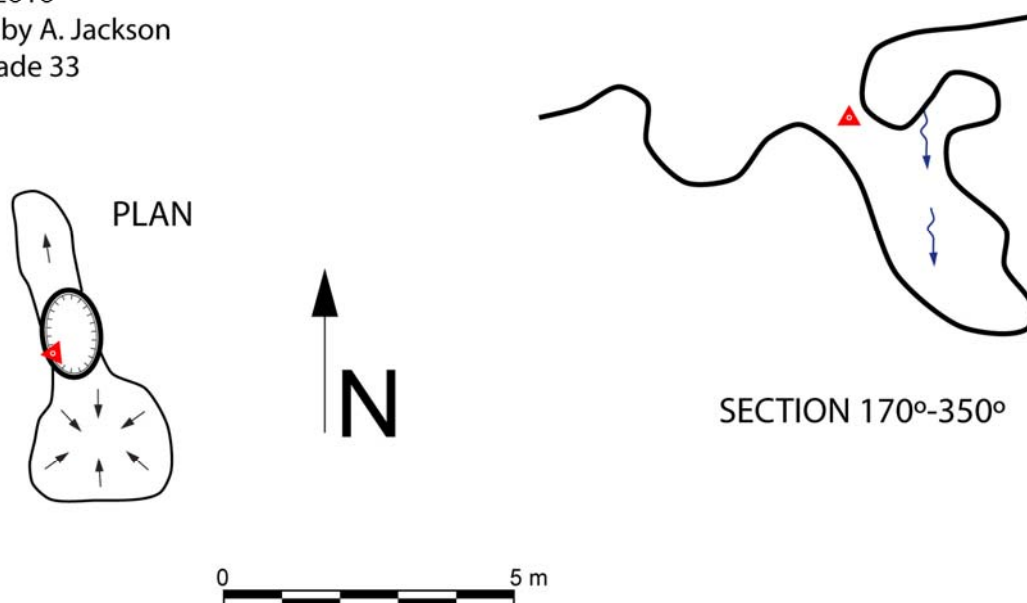
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF539.STC218

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
11-09-2010

Drawn by A. Jackson

ASF Grade 33

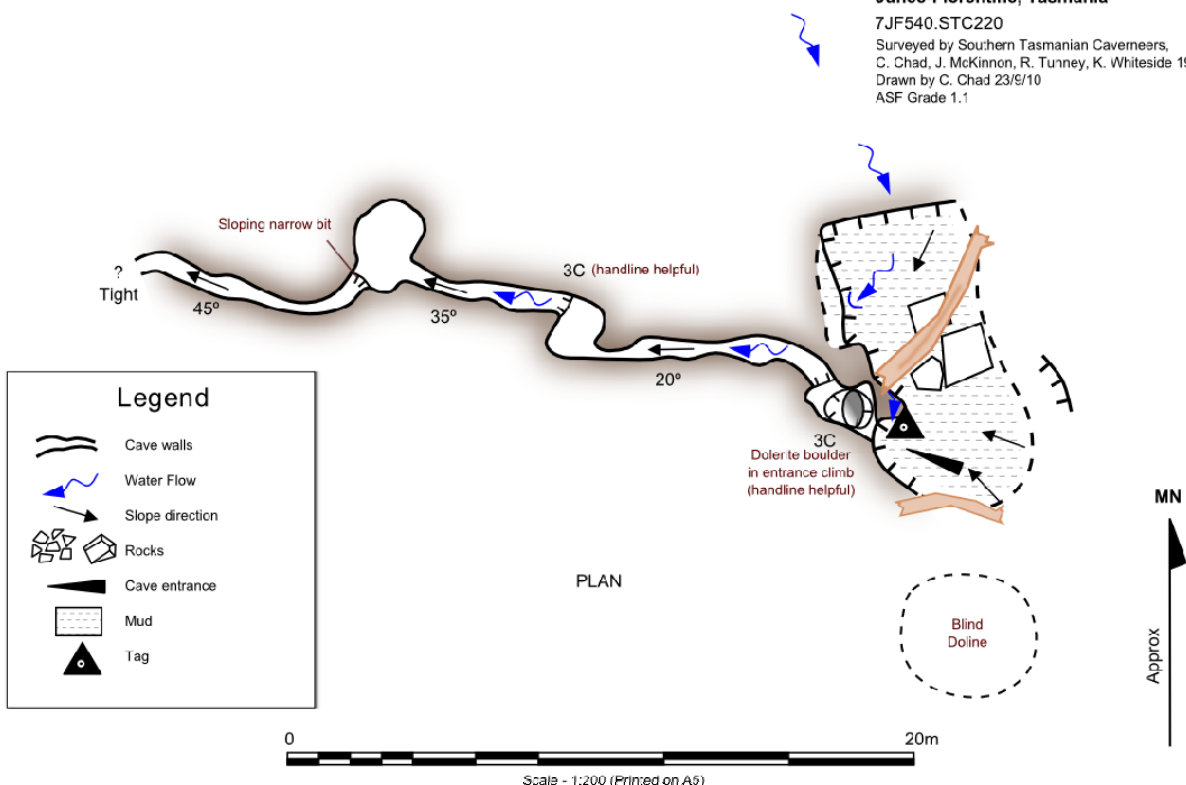


JF-540 Johns Blast Hole

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF540.STC220

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad, J. McKinnon, R. Tunney, K. Whiteside 19/9/10
Drawn by C. Chad 23/9/10
ASF Grade 1.1

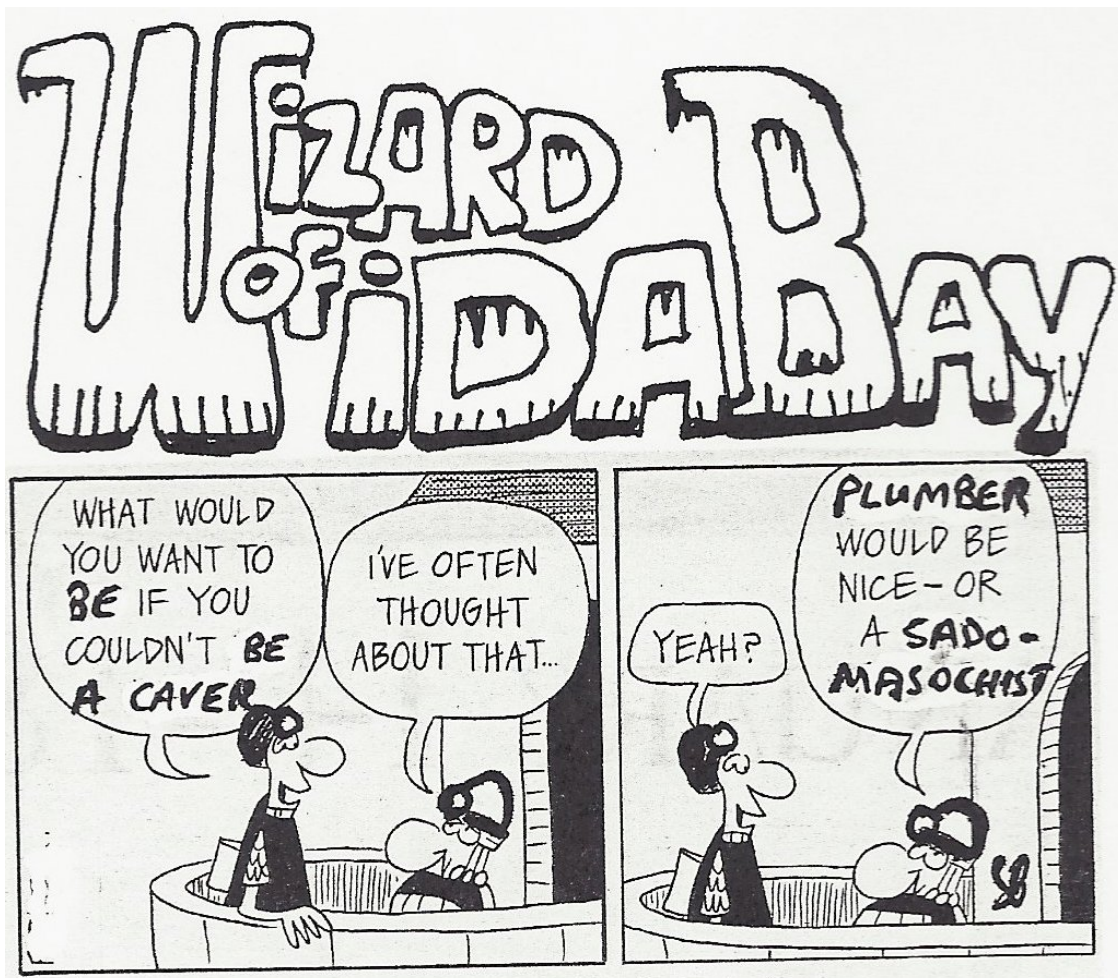
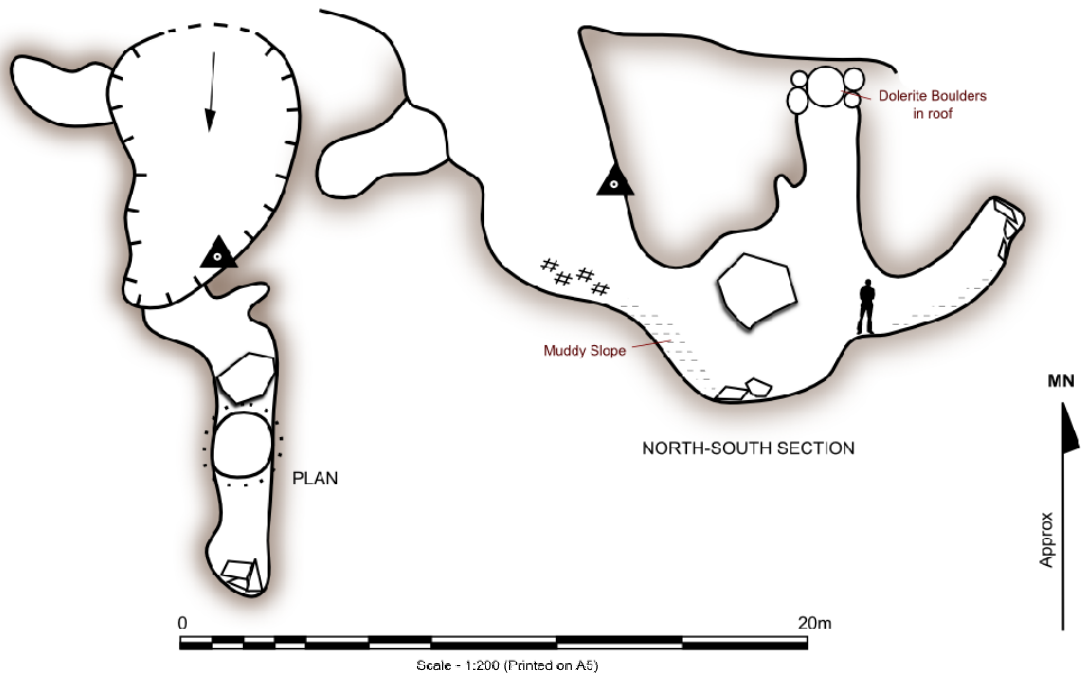


JF-541 Spittin Flouride Chips

Junea-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF541 STC221

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chied, J. McKinnon, R. Turney, K. Whiteside 19/9/10
Drawn by C. Chad 23/9/10
ASF Grade 2.2



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