

SPELEO SPIEL 381

November - December 2010



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Front Cover: Forbidden City
Gates, Kubla Khan. *Photo by M.
Cracknell*

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



Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated

PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7006

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

ABN: 73-381-060-862

ISSN 1832-6307

The views expressed in the *Speleo Spiel* are not necessarily the views of the Editor, or of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated.

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Editorial

In the last issue I expressed concern that I may be becoming a boring, mellowed, middle age twat? Since then my worst fears have been realised. The rate at which Janine has been alluding to me being quite nice deep down and having mellowed in her trip reports has been ringing preliminary alarm bells for some time now (she does it yet again in this issue). The big eye opener though came in recent weeks while reading back issues of the *Spiel*. From SS340 onwards (the beginning of my reign of terror) I was generally surprised, and occasionally shocked at some of the things I put into print – I was a bloody rude bastard. I mentioned this to Serena but she's so flipping vague that she can't remember that many years back but when I told Bunty how much I'd been enjoying reading my early *Spiels* (without any specific mention of how rude I was finding them) he instantly asked me "did you notice how bloody rude you were back then?" The implication was that I wasn't that rude any longer.

I've now finished reading right up to SS380 and I'm very worried to have identified a distinct trend from severe rudeness to only mild rudeness. Rest assured that I intend to remedy this terrible situation. I admit to having taken my eye off the ball but can assure you that I'll be trying my hardest to get back on track.

Here's wishing you a Merry Christmas and an insulting New Year.

Alan Jackson

Stuff 'n Stuff

BIOSPELEOLOGY BABBLE

Recently visiting biospeleologists, Danilo Harms and Michael Rix have begun sorting through the results of their Tasmanian collections. These results appear to have them excited (but what excites people interested in biospeleology can't always be described as 'mainstream'). Here is a bit of selected text from emails Bunty and I have received lately:

I'm finally back in the lab here in Perth and currently labeling and databasing all the pseudoscorpions we collected in Tasmania. Overall, Mike and I had a great trip (despite snow in Mole Creek!) and our caving trips were mostly successful, so I will be able to describe and name quite a few new cave pseudoscorpions from Tasmania. I just wanted to take the chance and thank you again for your wonderful help, and for taking a day to help us collecting tiny creatures which are notoriously hard to find! We could not have done it without you ...

There are also some interesting surprises: Due to the new material we have collected, I can almost certainly say that there are three new species in the Florentine Valley. The specimens from Beginners Luck differ substantially from those in JF-208, and the specimen Steve collected in Rift Cave on Sunday differs again! It appears that there is quite a bit of diversity out there and that the beasties are not as good in getting around underground as they are in other parts of the word. Maybe the different caves in the Florentine Valley are discrete and not interconnected, so it's all quite surprising and pretty exciting. And it's getting even more complicated because I have just received further cave specimens from Stefan Eberhard's cave collection and it appears that there is a forth species in

Frankcombe Cave (JF-7). It's a shame that I didn't know about this one before – I would kill for some additional specimens! [I thought they killed all their specimens! – Ed.]

Anyway, I will start working on our specimens soon and will let you know about the definitive outcome. I shall also send a copy of the final paper (once it has been published) and a short abstract for Speleo Spiel.

Best wishes

Danilo

AND ...

Further to Danilo's emails, thank you both again for your wonderful assistance during our time in the Florentine Valley. This was a real highlight of our Tasmanian trip, and an extremely successful start to our caving! Thanks also for the write-up in Speleo Spiel!

As promised, please see below a YouSendIt link to my recent monograph on tiny spiders in the family Micropholcommatidae. It's a very large (42 MB) PDF file, which is also freely available for download from the ZooKeys journal website. The information on Tasmanian trogs is quite hard to extract given the scope and content of the paper, but the map on page 308 summarises the known diversity of cave-dwelling taxa, and species descriptions and figures can then be found using the index. Two troglotic species have been recorded from Splash Pot and Cauldron Pot on the JF karst.

<http://pensofonline.net/zookeys/index.php/journal/article/view/306>

Thanks again for all of your help, and with my very best wishes.

Sincerely,

Mike

NO FAT BUNTONS

Regular readers of the *Spiel* will be familiar with the recurring theme of "Bunty didn't fit" in a number of trip reports. While digging in JF-492 (see report this issue) Gavin and I strongly concurred that the cave was a 'No Fat Buntons' cave (it was tight) and suggested that we should have a system for identifying non Bunton-friendly caves. Bunty has provided the following artwork which will



accompany all trip reports for caves or passages that fit (or is it "don't fit"?) the bill.

It looks a bit simian to me but I can only work with the material I'm provided with.

EXPEDITION CAVING

I'm off to Bulmer Cavern, NZ, over the Xmas-New Year period. Hopefully we'll find some exciting new extensions. Assuming I survive that then it looks like the next trip on the cards is to China. Imogen Furlong (a pommy caver who visited our shores a few years back) sent an email round recently advertising an expedition she's organising. Here's an extract:

I'm organising the Hong-Mei-Gui expedition to Tian Xing next year. Expedition dates will be 25 August 2011- 23 September 2011(approx).

It all looks like good deep, wet, sporting fun (up to 1000 m). Let me know if you're keen.

JANINE GETS SERIOUS ABOUT BEING SECRETARY

Those lucky enough to attend the December GBM witnessed a superb performance by our secretary. Janine seems to be taking the role very seriously and has perfected the fine art of wearing one's spectacles on the end of one's nose.



Dressed to kill and with spectacular spectacle-wearing to top it all off – Janine in action at the December GBM. Thanks to Guy for the photos (and the child-like giggling).

Trip Reports

JF-341

Stephen Bunton

5 September 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton, Chris Chad, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney.

The downstream end of Threefortyone is the closest currently known point to the inside of the June Resurgence and since I am unlikely to ever visit the inside of there by cave-diving, reaching this point had long been on the hit-list. I last visited Threefortyone 27 years ago, before it was extended by first TCC and then SCS. Both clubs kept their exploits a secret; TCC because they had used "bang" and SCS because they never published trip reports! The true extent of the cave was finally only revealed when Jeff Butt's coffin was draped with an impressive map of the cave. The cave contained some inspiring names like Enterprise Streamway, which sounded impressive until you realised it was just beyond Cling-on Way. This was an obvious reference to Star Trek which is in itself a bit of an allegory of life in general as Captain Kirk tries to balance the reason of Dr Spock with the emotion and human frailties of Lt Commander Scott.

For me this trip was a balance between reason and emotion. Emotion said "I would love to go there" but reason said "You're getting old and you haven't done a long caving trip for years." So when Chris Chad said that he wanted to go there for some rigging practice, I thought it was now or never!

I had only done the first two pitches on ladders; these days they are roped generously and the slimy free-climbable steps are done on rope. Nevertheless there was not much kit to carry amongst five of us. I sat back for a cruisey ride down whilst Chris rigged under Alan's watchful eye.

Eventually we were all down and dumping our SRT gear. I changed into an adjustable one-size-fits-all rockclimbing harness for the rest of the trip, just to keep the crotch of my trogsuit up. I was glad of this later, plus the 10 m of 7 mm push rope and the one hand ascender Alan carried.

We headed off to the dicky climb into the ceiling and along through the first squeeze, which was no drama, and then to the second one where I had to deflate my chest fully to get through. This opened into the TCC extension. Another dicky climb yields the SCS extension. Alan was quite happy to give the short-arses a boost from time to time so as to speed proceedings. He's not fussed about the inconvenience because in the long run it's better than adding hours to the trip. Finally we made it into Cling-on Way.

At various points Alan consulted the map to show us, disappointingly, how far we still had to go. Somewhere Ric decided that he had seen enough of this cave and he headed for the surface. We all trusted that he didn't get lost or do anything silly on the way out. Generally he hasn't stuffed up before and we hoped he would maintain his good track record.

Finally we intercepted the bottom of the cave in an oxbow above the main stream. To the left the passage narrows down to a squeeze that I could not negotiate – so near and



yet so far! Alan produced his map once again and determined that it was indeed an oxbow and we went off to scope this out. He shimmied down the muddy slopes to the streamway and I rigged the push rope off a loose rock in a crack in the floor. I stood on it, to stop it rotating, whilst he climbed back up. After this it was my turn to descend and follow the streamway to where I could rejoin the others and we all proceeded to the end of the cave. The Rasch-Jackson-Brett combination had done some fine track marking in this area to corral the inquisitive. We lunched, before exiting.

My return trip was not without incident or frigging around. I couldn't climb the now slimy rope and the ascender wouldn't either. I managed to tie a few loops in it and climb the loops - on about the third go! One of the loops was now tied to my harness and it was called upon to stop me lobbing off into the stream. Eventually with

superhuman determination (there was no alternative so it must really be considered desperation) I was able to ascend. Thanks to Alan for his assistance in this debacle.

The rest of the slog out was uneventful. Janine prusiked out first and promised to wait for her share of the rope. I was so slow that she got cold'n'bored and sensibly headed for home. Chris was next and he was slow enough for me to get really cold. I told him to keep heading out, I'd been cold before. Finally Alan came up and between us we derigged and the three of us wrestled the pigs to the surface.

We anticipated difficulty following the now poorly marked track uphill to the main Chairman track but encountered no real problems. Along the main track we encountered Ric. This was a good sign since the cave was now derigged. Finally we all got home, a bit later than we had told our spouses, after a ten-hour trip. Chris was really in the doghouse though. His poor wife had spent the day at the Emergency Dept of the hospital with a sick young baby. We wondered if he would ever be allowed to go caving again.

H-1 Newdegate Cave

Matt Cracknell

12 September 2010

Party: Guy Bannink, Matt Cracknell, Sarah Gilbert, Kath Whiteside

The permit had been organised and the troops rallied. We managed to pick up the key soon after 9 am and were at the cave gate by 10 am. Matt was the only one on the trip to have been to the "back" of Newdegate, so the aim was to have a bit of a touristy trip and make a start on the re-survey. The only half decent map that the club has of this cave is one of the first maps that the TCC produced, dated late 1940s and drawn up with an imperial scale.

We all marvelled at the abundant stals and helictites in Binneys Chamber. Then the ~10 m ramp/pitch was rigged IRT style with one of the old Blue Water 11 mm ropes that feels a little more like wire than rope. The rubs were not serious enough to warrant the use (and associated transport) of a ladder. Next time it would probably be a good idea to rig a temporary rope using other small bits of oldish rope from the gear store for tie backs to the anchors.

We made our way down the deep canyon-like passages to the junction of the main Mystery Creek (the one that flows through the bottom of the tourist section) intermittent stream with the permanent stream of Hells Half Acre. Following the latter upstream for about 200 m, we climbed

up 10-15 m to a fossil stream passage and junction of more passage. This seemed like a good place to survey back from. On the floor at the passage junction we found a leftover "Pea Soup with Ham" package, which seems to be a reasonable name for this part of the cave. The survey got off to a slow start but after a few legs we were into a rhythm. Most of the time we were able to stand up in the streamway, although there were one or two spots where we had to crawl.

Our 5:30 pm curfew was drawing close by the time we had surveyed back to the junction of Hells Half Acre and Mystery Creek streams. So we packed up and headed out. On the way out we were hoping to scare the last tourist trip of the day by sneaking up on them in the dark but alas they had finished by the time we got back.

Warning! Science content ... The "back end" of Newdegate Cave appears to be well below the unconformable contact with the overlying Permian mudstones, whereas much of Wolf Hole is within 20 - 30 m of this contact. The high vadose canyons and permanent water flow in this area of Newdegate Cave suggests that it is relatively "young" in comparison to the dry phreatic maze sections of Wolf Hole. It will be interesting to observe the relative morphologies and positions of these caves with respect to their relative ages as they represent the two largest known karst features in the Hastings area.

JF-436

Alan Jackson

17 October 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Alan Jackson

The plan was for a short and easy day as I had a big work day coming up the next day. We hadn't had a good dig for a while so we lined up JF-436. This cave was found by Serena on the same day we commenced operations in JF-382 Dissidence (referred to as "Serena's second hole" in SS362:12-13). It was relocated six months later and tagged

(SS365:10-11) – it was a ~5 m deep nothing hole with apparently minor potential for digging. A year later again we completed a dig trip which revealed an unexpected ~5+ m drop (SS370:17-18) and yet another constriction barring entrance to yet another ~5+ m pitch with a very healthy draft. This second dig was the day's target.

It had snowed to ~400 m a.s.l. overnight but it was warming up and raining a bit. This created woeful conditions for walking in as the snow on the ground made the track harder to follow and most obstacles more slippery. It also meant that large quantities of melting snow regularly plummeted from the foliage above and whacked

you like frozen cowpats from the sky. Finding the general area of JF-436 was easy enough but the snow made finding the entrance quite challenging (it was not GPS'd, but is now).

Finally we found it and we huddled at the base of the entrance climb to get changed out of the rain/snow-pats. We popped a ladder on the next drop and embraced the significantly warmer cave air. There were a few drips but it was mostly dry (this was to change). The dig looked worse than I remembered (which is always the way) but we set to it with great fervour.

It was one of those digs that start out looking ominous but the cards keep falling your way and rapid progress is made (the fact that Chris is a mining engineer was probably helping our strategy). By noon we had made a hole big enough to access the new pitch. We didn't have any gear to get down it though and the melting snow on the surface had transformed our dryish chamber into a freezing drip-fest. We exited.

Surface conditions hadn't changed much: cold enough to freeze your fingers, but not cold enough to stop the snow-pats falling. We headed back to the car (with a quick visit to the Growling Entrance) and we were back in Hobart by mid afternoon. Delightful.

I should mention two things of note that we saw on the way in. The first was a new warning sign that Parks have erected – the usual “you are entering a dangerous place and we want to cover our backsides by making sure we tell you it's dangerous” kind of sign. It is located on the McCullums Track 10 metres past the junction with the 8 Road track. They mis-spelled Growling Swallet by giving it two t's (i.e. Swallett). Chris noted that it will be handy for making a few new tags out of ...

The second thing of note was a patch of yellow snow. Geoff Wise has always highlighted the dangers of eating yellow snow to me in the past so thankfully I was prepared for this discovery. It would appear that possums just hang their arses out of their tree hollows when their bladders are full. We came across three patches of yellow snow located under large dead trees. Fascinating stuff.

Dodgy Dolerite at Dodges Ferry

Chris Chad

22 October 2010

Party: Chris & Toby Chad

The girls were in Melbourne, so the Chad boys were free to engage in more risky past-times that would otherwise raise a mother's ire. We were in the vicinity of Dodges Ferry and I recalled that there is a dolerite sea cave at Spectacle Head, so I thought we would have a bit of a look. This cave has even been assigned a number and an area code (DF-201) by SCS, clearly catching TCC snoozing (SC12.3-48). A couple of other minor holes were noted so I thought Toby and I could have a poke around and start filling in the 200 missing numbers.

The NPWS fun police effectively hamstrung us with their incessant dog banning, but we discovered they only place signs where they can easily drive their plush 4WDs and sip their mochas, and presumably watch a contractor do the work, whilst themselves being supervised by bureaucrats with environmental science degrees, so we found a less accessible access point and attempted to bumble our way in from there. You can't really access the rocks from the top of the head due to the cliffs (at least not with a 2 year old on your shoulders) so it is better to approach from one of the beaches either side. We soon came to the conclusion that rock hopping in would have been a touch irresponsible so didn't actually make it to the cave, but got close enough to hear the hoots and hollers of the teenagers mucking around in it and fishing off the rocks. We instead satisfied ourselves poking the “Sea Echidna” we found and mucking around on the rocks and sand.

You need Alan and Bunty's imagination to consider anything a “cave” in the area, but never-the-less I assigned a couple of dozen X numbers to various features along the way (I didn't bother recording their location because they should be obvious). A short swim across to Spectacle

Island would no doubt yield more lame caves. We had a lovely day of it.



C. Chad

Toby a fraction of a second before being engulfed by the sea.



C. Chad

DF-X17 (shown 4x actual size for clarity).

MC-4 Execution Pot

Janine McKinnon

22 October 2010

Party: Serena Benjamin, Sarah Gilbert, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Kath Whiteside

We were up at Mole Creek for the annual “Kubla” weekend and wanted something to occupy us for the Friday. We had first, and last, done this cave two (maybe three?) years ago, and put in some bolts at that time. A party from Sydney visited last summer and we were given conflicting reports about one of the bolts being loose. Some said “yes” some said “no”! Very perplexing. This was a good opportunity to check it out, and have a pleasant day’s caving that didn’t involve permits and did involve some ropes.

We got away at 8:30 am in two cars and left Sarah’s car at the start of the Urks Loop road, a 4WD track that saves us several kilometres of walking. The girls piled onto the tray of the truck and away we went with much jocularly. Just like travelling in the third world. [*Well, it is Mole Creek ... - Ed.*]



Ric and his harem at the start of Urks Loop Road

The drive up started well, pretty much as I remembered the track from the previous trip. There were recent tyre marks, which gave me confidence that people still drove up here.

After a couple of kilometres the vegetation along the track side started getting thicker, and thicker. We passed a few fallen trees that the previous car had chain sawed out of the way. Brilliant. Pity he hadn’t brush cut back the vegetation.

Then we came to a small tree across the road. We amused ourselves for 15 minutes cutting it away with the bow saw we carry, then it was off again. The bush was getting very thick by now. A few mud bogs, a creek crossing, a steep bank and much truck slapping branches later we arrived at our car park.

The girls descended from the tray brushing varying sized pieces of tree from themselves. They didn’t seem quite as amused by the mode of transport as at the start.

We only took a few minutes to organise ourselves and headed off for the half hour walk to the cave. We had taped the route last time so getting there was straightforward.

Last time, we rigged the entrance pot from a large gum tree on the up-hill slope but this was fiddly and we now decided that by going for a rebelay-free free-hang by crawling/prusiking 5 m up dirt and vegetation was silly. We moved to a side entry with a rebelay at a lip. I went down first and put in the bolt. I waited at the small chamber at the bottom of this first pitch, which in old trip reports was called a ledge on the first pitch but it is quite safe to get off on and thus make two pitches here.

The bolt on the top of the next section was the one that was suspect but it was rock solid for me. I am wondering if the Sydney party had not had their hanger tightened up enough and some of the party mistook a loose hanger for the bolt itself.

Anyway, down I went, followed by Serena with the next rope. I scrambled down the small slot to the top of the next pitch. There was a gale blowing out of here and the water from the stream at the bottom was very loud.

The two bolts at the top of this pitch give a lovely free hang but are a little awkward to reach. I got the hangers on but was getting cramped and came back out to get the rope organised in more comfort. Also, a safety line from the main room to the top of the pitch was a good idea and I wanted to put one in (and be attached) before climbing down the start of the pitch to put in the rope.

Serena was getting bored by now, so after we got the back-up line in place she headed in to set the rope up.

The others were arriving by now and they all went down the pitch ahead of me.

I had forgotten what a fine pitch this one was. Cylindrical on three sides [*Now there’s an interesting concept – Ed.*], nicely fluted walls. Noice. Very Noice.

It was damp at the bottom and the sound of the waterfall, from the stream joining into the final bit of the cave, was very loud.

Ric had already disappeared on the final climb to the sump and called up suggesting a hand line would be useful. Lucky we had brought a rope for that then, just in case. I climbed down after Ric, using the rope as a hand line cum classic abseil. The others followed using their conventional “Stops”.

We took it in turns having a look at the sump (except Serena who couldn’t be bothered). It is very unimpressive really. A fine waterfall comes crashing in over a 6 m drop from a side passage, runs around a corner, after flowing for 5 metres, and then disappears into a very small hole. Somewhat anti-climactic really.

Then we started out. Ric at the top, Kath somewhere in the middle, and Serena and I de-rigging. I even managed to get all the hangers removed without dropping a single nut or washer or tag.

The drive back along the track didn’t seem any less vegetated than the trip in. In fact, I hated it more as I was now the passenger. No control over what was happening, and getting thrown about more. It was quicker though, as Ric knew what to expect and so drove a bit faster than I had on the way in.

When the girls crawled off the tray at the end, the amount of foliage they were wearing was very impressive. Kath

had managed to collect some wildlife along the way too, in the form of a couple of caterpillars.

We were back at camp by 5 pm, just as Katherine and Craig arrived to introduce themselves (see Genghis Khan trip report for Sunday). Then there was time for a clean up, gear sort for Kubla tomorrow, a beer, and off to the pub for dinner. A beautifully timed day!

MC-4 Execution Pot rigging notes.

(Amended Oct 2010)

P1 – 31 m. 37 m rope.

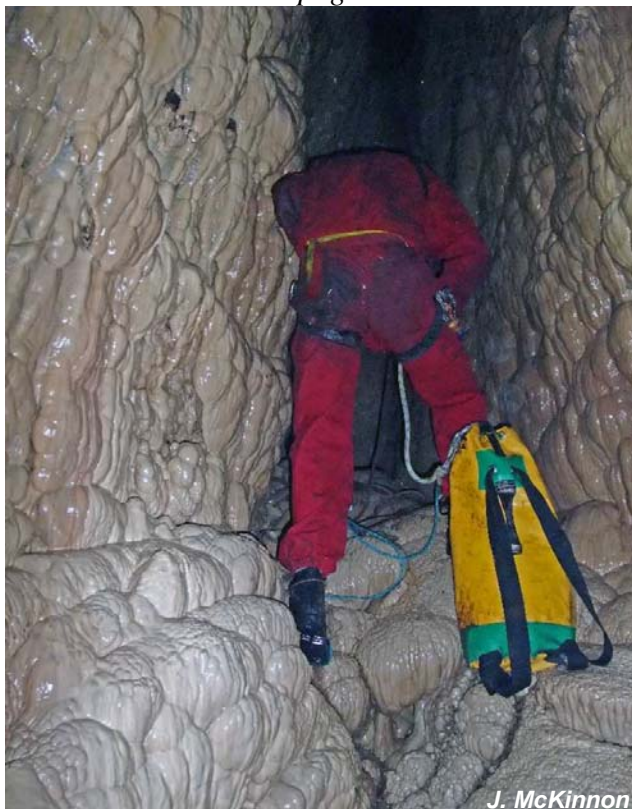
Belay from dogwood on LHS with back-up to dogwood 4 m further away. 5 m tape around back-up tree. 1 m tape around belay tree. Rebelay on bolt at -4 m. Rope then misses small ledge at -10 m. Rebelay from bolt on LHS at big ledge at -15 m. This pitch can be broken into two 15 m pitches at the big ledge, at second rebelay.

P2 – 31 m. 40 m rope. Belay from two bolts on RHS, with back-up to stals LHS 5 m back. 3 m tape around stals.

A 14 m rope, belayed to obvious rock spike LHS, could be handy for 9 m rift at bottom of cave.

Notes: All directions facing down.

Bolts are 8 mm x 90 mm stainless steel Throughbolts. Hangers have been removed.



Ric's bottom at the bottom of the second pitch.

MC-1/MC-29 Kubla Khan thru trip

Janine McKinnon

23 October 2010

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

We had thought we would have to do a bounce trip to the Khan only, as Parks had closed the lower entrance when the “rigging tree” fell over a couple of months ago. They needed to assess the damage and fix the damaged steps at the bottom of the doline, where lots of bits of tree had fallen down. Early in the week, however, we got an email from Rob Buck (ranger at Mole Creek) saying we could do the through trip. We are grateful to him for being so accommodating.

All except Kath had done this trip before, and likewise, we have all caved a lot together, except Kath. This made for a smooth and relaxed trip. Well, that's what I remember anyway, and I'm writing this.

We rigged the bottom entrance on the day of the trip, so we weren't starting in to the top entrance until 10.30 am. We found a new gate at the top entrance. Very solid, fancy lock, clever system for locking the gate behind you as you go in but being able to unlock the gate from the inside.

For some reason we couldn't fathom, the temporary chain lock was still in place too. This is situated about 1 m further along the entrance crawl than the new gate. We thought about taking it out but decided that Parks must have some reason for leaving it *in situ*. We relocked it too.

The trip through the cave went easily with some photography by Matt and Kath, but not long periods spent on it. David Wools-Cobb had placed some stepping stones

on the muddiest sections of Sallys Folly and these reduced the mud we picked up significantly.

When we got to Cairn Hall we found the River Alph at lower levels than we have seen for several trips. There was recent foam up high on the walls in the streamway though, so it has probably flooded/sumped recently. From my observations over the last few years it seems to me that the river rises and falls rapidly with rain. This implies that pull through trips are fine as long as the rain has stopped before entering at the top, and it doesn't rain significantly whilst underground.

The Pleasure Dome was a wonder, as always. Some of the pools along the outside wall had water in them, although none were full. The well-trafficked areas near the column in the middle have some light scuff marks, so I am guessing there has not been water cascading down the whole area for some time. Probably not during this past winter.

We spent an hour in the Pleasure Dome and then headed out.

The trip along the streamway was quicker than the last couple of trips, partly due to the river not being in flood!

I was up the pitch first, and reached the ledge at 5.30 pm. I waited there to help derig, and Matt and I were heading down the hill at 6:45 pm.

Note: The large rigging tree for the bottom entrance (MC-1) has fallen back down the track. The base is still where the tree stood and it can be used as the main belay for the top part of the pitch. The route down to the ledge now has a lot of loose debris (although less than before six of us went up it!), and is much slipperier than previously. There are also some large rocks that have always been there but were apparently held firmly by the tree roots. They used to be solid but now can be moved.



M. Cracknell

The Forbidden City, Kubla Khan.

JF-492 & JF-542

Alan Jackson

23 October 2010

Party: Gavin Brett, Alan Jackson

Buoyed by the digging efforts of the previous weekend we decided to continue the theme. Gavin had been keen on returning to JF-492 since I had the first rudimentary look into the cave back in January (this is a pretty clear indicator of how much Gavin has caved this year). We had a ladder for the entrance pitch this time, which improved things dramatically – i.e. the human foot rope redirect wasn't required at the top! Unfortunately we also had two bags full of heavy equipment which didn't improve things through the tight parts of this cave.

Once down the pitch and through the tight climb I directed Gavin to the 'up' part of the cave so that he could gain a full appreciation of the situation. This small chamber had been of little interest to me during initial exploration as there was a drafting down lead in the other direction waiting for me. Gavin had a quick look and asked me if I'd been down the long crawl that he could see. I vaguely recalled the passage but couldn't remember following it for any length. Gavin grunted out of sight and shouted back that he had found a stick (a great cause for celebration, apparently). He then reported that he could see daylight but that it was too tight. By the time I'd joined him he had taken a tight passage to the left and was in the process of trying to pull a large wobbly chockstone down onto his head. There was another entrance beyond and we suddenly found ourselves standing in the canyon about 20 m down



from the Niggly Cave entrance. How interesting! We noted that Rolan still had the entrance pitch rigged for his ongoing Niggly resurvey – this man will do anything to get Niggly back at the top of the list again.

I popped back in the new entrance and confirmed that the other tight entrance we could see came out into the Niggly canyon too and then we proceeded to the dig site. Gavin was impressed with the structure of the cave – it is perfectly clean washed solid rock forming a mini canyon (~1 metre wide and ~5 metres high) with more or less no running water in it. Clean and dry meant not getting shitty and cold at the dig face. We soon removed the offending obstacle and I did some feet-first gymnastics round the corner along some very tight serpentine. The passage then widened, but only in the top of the passage. The lower development was too narrow to fit but one could see a wide point at the very base. The upper level wide stuff pinched down to nothing after a few metres so we headed back a bit and recommenced digging our way the ~2m down to the bottom. Again, in perfect clean rock this was a breeze.

The bottom was pretty tight but quite doable and we accessed a small standing-room-only spot where the widest part of the passage moved from the bottom to the middle. A few more metres of very awkward passage preceded the next impassable obstacle – a right angle bend followed by another such bend a metre on. The corners would have to come off to fit through – unless you're a four foot high contortionist. Around the second corner was a very good echo that suggested a reasonable-sized chamber and the breeze was flashing past still. The frequency at which I

was making analogies to Splash Pot's Close to the Bone was disturbing. We'd had enough by this point and agreed to return in a further 10 months. Heading out, we found the filthy vertical entrance was awful and we'll try the new horizontal entrance next time (tight, but clean).

On the way past the end of the Niggly canyon we popped up and tagged the new passable entrance JF-542. We didn't, and don't plan to, tag the other too-tight entrance.

MC-38 Ghengis Khan

Janine McKinnon

24 October 2010

Party: Craig Johnson, Katherine Johnson, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

Katherine is a novelist. She contacted the club some months ago requesting a trip into Kubla Khan, to give her personal experience of the setting for her current novel. Not having vertical skills, or being a caver at all, this wasn't possible. After much discussion, centering on what sort of underground experience she wanted, it was determined that Ghengis would be a good cave to visit. It is really part of Kubla, after all, and the location is the same.

Katherine's husband, Craig, decided he would come along too, so they both dutifully joined the club.

The trip was planned for the Sunday of our Mole Creek weekend. Craig and Katherine arranged to drop by the hut on the Friday evening, after our Execution Pot trip, to meet us, and make the arrangements. Sarah, Kath and Serena were sorting out their gear after the day's caving when they arrived.

And what did we discover?

I'll make it easier for you.

This is TASMANIA.

A few seconds thinking time ...

Got it?

All three of them knew Craig. He works down the corridor from Sarah, and was a lecturer for the other two, at UTAS. Gotta love this island. We big city blow-ins have trouble with how the "small world theory" is reality in a place this size. 30 years here and it still surprises me.

You can tell it was a short trip by all the pre-waffle, can't you? So, on to the actual caving trip. I was supposed to be running a Lynds Cave trip on this morning but everyone else had decided to go home. The girls had already left and Matt was having a leisurely breakfast, before his planned, leisurely, getaway, when Craig and Katherine arrived at 8.30 am. Lynds on my own seemed a bit pointless, so I jumped onto Ric's trip.

We got into the main chamber with no dramas. Both Craig and Katherine moved well and had no difficulties with the climbs at the entrance. We spent a while admiring the pretties, had a good look around the whole chamber, took ourselves down to the low point in the cave and the Johnsons took photos. After about an hour we came out. We went up to the Kubla entrance for a look at it on our way back to the car.

They both seemed to really enjoy the trip.

We got back to the hut around 12.30 pm, and promptly had another example of "small world" Tasmania. We had barely got our packs out of their car when Nick Hume and Andrew Davey (Hobart Walking Club) sauntered in from the gate. They had been in the area walking for the weekend and decided to stop by to see how the hut looked now. Nick hadn't been there for 20 years or so.

Yep. Gotta love Tassie.

Actually, I'm surprised that neither of them knew Craig or Katherine.

Note: For those that don't get the connection: Nick Hume is an old [*go easy on him – he's not that old – Ed.*], now retired, caver from our TCC days. He is still a friend and we saw him recently.

We hadn't known he was in the area, or he, that we were going to be up there.

Andrew we have walked with, but not seen for some time.

JF-99 The Chairman

Alan Jackson

30 October 2010

Party: Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson

Saturday was ladies' choice day and Serena chose The Chairman. We scoured the archive for rigging notes and the best we could do was circa 1980. Matt, Ric and Janine had failed entirely to record any notes on how they'd rigged the cave during their couple of visits two years ago (which included installing new bolts, if the various allusions to drills were to be believed) – these three reports appear in *Spiel* 370. We packed a few hangers and decided that Al Warild's notes from 1977 were probably going to be more useful than anything Ric and Janine could come up with anyway.

The track in is ridiculous. Once past the 341/Rift area the track inexplicably heads uphill, well above the contact and continues doing so until directly above JF-99, at which

point it turns hard right and plummets down to the cave. A sensibly placed contour track would remove the unnecessary gain and subsequent loss of about 60 m of elevation. That doesn't sound like much but with very heavy packs it makes for a very unpleasant walk. Had Gavin been on the trip he would have turned around and gone home in protest at this point (via an 'optimised' route).

The convenient tree is still there for the entrance pitch. Upon intersecting the large slope about 30 m down I started looking for Matt's bolt. It was in an obvious spot almost immediately in line with the rope above and had a large plastic core-flute marker on it (without any retro-reflective surface though). It appeared to be a nice stainless steel jobby (8 mm) and it was soon rigged. Once the prospect of a rope rub begins to present itself about another 30 m down there is a second bolt on the right (as abseiling, facing the wall) – again 8 mm stainless steel with plastic marker. This bolt gets you to the floor with only a few minor rubs while descending the last few metres. In

hindsight the first bolt probably could have been placed about 20 m lower at the end of the long ramp, negating the need for the second bolt but having a couple of rebelay on a long pitch speeds up ascending (multiple people on the pitch), as it's a pretty clean pitch with little risk of knocking crap down. We had a 97 m rope and could have got away with a 90. This is a magnificent pitch; nobody quite does cave illumination like the sun.

I waited for Serena to arrive with the map before I decided between the large inviting descending mudslope and the tight rift on the opposite side. Tight rift it was. The notes said handline; I said 'bah'. It's so tight you couldn't possibly fall. I commenced rigging at the array of chocked stones and other oddities where the passage widens. This made for an exposed pitch head but once again I said 'bah'. It was a ~5 m drop to the next floor. Rigging for the ensuing drop was scant so I got Serena to throw a very long (6 m?) trace on a lovely projection on the left wall (when abseiling) about 3 m up from the platform I was standing on. This provided a nice rebelay. One could also just continue down off the chockstone stuff above but the rebelay was much nicer. Down the ramp and the pitch falls away properly round a slight corner. To my dismay there was a spit with a large plastic marker bolt in it in an ideal place to rig a rebelay. Bummer, I only had plates and no short 8 mm bolts – I guess I could have used the plastic bolt ... I used a nearby natural spike which was very sharp (I placed a rope protector on the tape!) and also had a lovely bedding plane fracture through it. It looked just like the 'danger, don't use an anchor like this' pictures in SRT guidebooks.

Staring danger in the face, and then in the arse as I abseiled below it, I encountered a sloping ledge and the realisation that the rope was going to be 8 m short of the floor. We'd got ourselves confused with the ropes because I hadn't used the handline earlier. I tied in the next rope on the ledge (rather than have the knot crossing 3 m off the floor without the convenience of a ledge to stand on) and continued down. We then continued down on the same rope with a tie off at the start of the slope to the last pitch, then another tie off at the corner before the climb to the top of the last pitch, a third one at the pitch head proper and then a redirect placed in the ceiling a few metres down/out to avoid the rub half way down the pitch were the wall disappears/undercuts (we were on 9.5 mm by this stage). In all we'd used about 60-70 m of rope to get down this series. If one rigged the handline then you'd need to add another 15 (plus a bit more if you wanted to back it up properly). If you wanted to be really skint then you could probably just get away with a 50+ (chockstone to bottom of second pitch) and a 13+ (don't join the pitches, do the climb the tough way and just rig from the top of the last pitch proper). You can get off the last pitch early if you swing across to a higher ledge in the chamber.

We were down. We dumped all our gear - I only took a

spare thermal shoved down my suit and a packet of lollies. The downstream route was liberally marked with blue tapes which took most of the heartache out of route-finding. Large chambers, long straws and numerous side passages abounded. The passage varied dramatically along its length. It soon started to get more annoying with lots of crawls, squeezes and shitty slots. The stream sank fairly early on and the route followed was really just an overflow channel. It obviously still took water on a frequent basis but it was reduced to puddles and piles of froth in most places. Finally, after quite some time, we came to the end of the blue tapes (in the last big chamber on the survey). The survey ends here but the cave does not. Probably another ~150 m or more of really horrible passage continues on through narrow stream canyon with a plethora of fallen rocks blocking the way. Up, over, under, round and through, it is a full body work out. In this passage, in a clay-lined section of overflow passage, was a lonely looking trechine beetle - wrong place, wrong time little fella. Remembering Stefan Eberhard's obsession with these beasties, I set about catching it. Neither of us had anything appropriate to contain it so I used my (now empty) lolly bag, folded the top over like a dry bag and sat a rock on it while we continued on, hoping the little blighter wasn't a Houdini. We only saw one beetle but we did see at least 40 symphlans (little white millipede-like critters) – in some places at a rate of one per 0.5 m of passage! I still find it difficult to fathom that Stefan thinks I'm anti-biospeleology – I like killing small defenseless invertebrates as much as the next man – though it is comforting to know that Arthur isn't the only one who doesn't correctly interpret my sarcasm 90% of the time.

There were a couple of very well spaced blue tapes along this section and several rock cairns. Finally we reached a spot that I couldn't fit through; there was passage on the other side but the draft had left us long ago. We had a look around at higher levels in the overlying rockfall but nothing obvious jumped out at us. We then proceeded to get temporarily lost. The absence of a flowing stream (or a compass) made it quite hard to tell which way was which. It was a 50/50 chance and we got lucky. The trip out was long and tiring and I did my best to give my pocket hitch hiker as smooth a ride as possible.

Back at the bottom of the pitches we were pretty tired and dehydrated. We took the opportunity to eat and drink and started out (the upstream passages and myriad side passages can wait). In all we spent somewhere around 8 hours underground. The joys of the track were savoured once again and we were back at the car around 8:30 pm in the last of the fading light.

This cave deserves a handful of follow up trips to have a proper poke around in. It is a very pleasant trip (provided you're smart enough to not go further downstream than the large Formation Chamber!)

Lots of caves in the Junee Ridge area – some new, some old.

Alan Jackson

31 October 2010

Party: Serena Benjamin, Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson

I was a bachelor for the weekend so I took the opportunity

to get two days in a row under my belt. Following the previous day's trip something a little easier was planned. Bunty had spent the previous day clothes shopping with Kathy and doing his homework on known caves in the Rift/341/Chairman area in preparation for the following day.

The rain was threatening so we devised many cunning ways to avoid getting out of the car. We entered the area

via Junee Road for a scenic tour (this delayed the inevitable by a good five minutes). Then we toyed with the idea of heading to The Chairman from the Junee Quarry but I took one look at the dry vegetation above the quarry and refused to commit to walking uphill through it in the rain (even though it was actually quite pleasant at this stage with patches of blue sky developing). Eventually we pulled up at the start of the 341 track and sorted out gear. It was here I discovered I'd forgotten my socks and that we'd have to go home, but bloody Bunty generously donated his lovely white sneaker socks (with bonus tinea) and even as the rain started to fall I couldn't manage to mount an effective argument as to why we should just go back to National Park and drink hot chocolates all day (which was Serena's suggestion).

First job was to find the JF-129 Washout Cave tag - Chris and Kath had failed to locate it on a recent trip to the area (SS380:13-15) and I was keen to prove that they were hapless amateurs without the required skills to be tag-finding professionals. I also wanted to explore this cave as I'd never been in it. I couldn't find the tag so I settled for a spot of water torture and cave cricket massage therapy. Small, wet and crawling with life would be a suitable summation of what this cave has to offer. About 10 metres in the cave drops down a 4 m climb (very wet) before heading a few more metres horizontally and then dropping down again via a very wet and tight slot. One could try to go further in drier conditions but it looked pretty nasty to me.

On the way out I spotted the tag, much to my elation (and, no doubt, Chris's deflation). It is located on the right hand side (when looking into the cave from the outside world) down very low (at stream level) on the first available piece of bedrock. It is a ridiculous location but I can only surmise that when John Parker tagged it the streambed was lower and has since filled up with cobbles and crap washed down from upstream. In the process of trying to bend up a corner to place some orange tape under it I pulled the heavily corroded fastener right out. It was now a flapping tag perfectly designed to get ripped off in the next flood, so I drilled a couple of new holes and reattached it with new fasteners. I put it back in its original place as no doubt it is a relocatable station in a number of overland surveys.

While I was mucking around at JF-129 the others had gone to Rift Cave to retrieve Bunty's rope he'd left there with the biospeleologists earlier in the month. We then got out our list of targets for the day and compared it with what waypoints we had in the GPS. JF-147 and JF-128 were close by so we headed there. At the JF-128 waypoint there was a large doline but only a small cave in it not really worthy of tagging (with a very fresh dead pademelon, possibly only a day or two old, in it). Immediately east of this feature were a couple more large dolines with more significant caves in them (three holes in total). Bunty's notes on the likely candidates were all along the lines of "18 m pitch" and we only had a ladder so we ignored these after being unable to find any tags (later research suggests the larger of these was JF-128). We then tried the JF-147 waypoint (Peanut Brittle) and found the doline immediately uphill from the other dolines. The tag was clear and obvious down inside the cave entrance on the left hand wall. We taped the tag.

Immediately west of here (towards Rift Cave) was another large doline. This cave had two tagged entrances in it – JF-

142 at the base of the doline and JF-146 higher up. Both were taped and GPSed. We then settled down for a bite to eat and had a wonderful teddy bear's picnic with the box of Tiny Teddies I'd stolen from my daughter's section of the pantry. Tiny Teddies have come a long way since I was a kid and they now have numerous personalities. I identified most closely with the 'grumpy' teddy. There was another called 'hungry' on the box but we figured 'Fat Bunton' was a better description and Serena was doing a fabulous job of emulating the 'sleepy' teddy – she was tired and sore from the previous day's exploits. There was also a 'silly' personality that we decided was synonymous with Toby Chad – it appeared to have its hand on its penis, much like Toby in SS380.



S. Bunton

Toby, Grumpy and Fat Bunton Tiny Teddies.

30 metres east of Peanut Brittle along the contact was JF-148. This one was enterable without a ladder so I popped in to get out of the rain that had started to ramp up its efforts. The water sinks immediately after dropping over the small headwall/cliff but the going passage is on the opposite side and heads down slope to a right hand corner (adopting the ~340-160 degree orientation of all the caves in this area) and descends steeply to an easy 3 m climb. A more difficult 6 metre climb follows to the top of a ~6 m very difficult climb (i.e. pitch). I left it there. The tag was taped and GPSed.

We followed the contact east until we hit the Chairman track, finding only a few choked dolines. Knowing from the previous day the track goes way too high and gets well above the contact, I suggested we contour to The Chairman; it paid immediate results. Not far along I located a large entrance with an estimated 15 m+ pitch and 15 metres away was another small entrance. The small one sounded less than one ladder length deep so we dragged the various stumps and other crap out of the tiny entrance and made it negotiable. By now the rain was torrential and a nearby large eucalypt suddenly had a seething river of foaming water streaming down the trunk. Again, I headed to ground to find drier climes. The cave opened out immediately into a rift on a familiar alignment. The ladder was just the right length, as I was able to just reach the last rung when standing on the sloping floor (i.e. a pitch of ~10 m). The rift continued down a steep slope for about 5 m before choking off. Back on the surface it was still pissing down and Serena and Bunty were huddled under a large fallen tree nearby enjoying partial respite from the downpour. Serena and I had been listening to various Rolling Stones 'best of' albums on the way home the night

before and the name Gimme Shelter sprang to mind for the cave. I placed a tag on a small limestone projection on the SW face (the only side with limestone in the entrance) just down over the lip, above the pitch. It was tagged JF-543.

The nearby larger and deeper hole was investigated next. I waited till Serena and Bunty had almost finished rolling up the ladder before I told them I wanted to use it at this next hole – they weren't doing a very good job of it and should have appreciated the practise. The rain picked it up another notch or two. Serena was looking wet but clearly still needed to improve on her 'miserable'. The ladder wasn't going to be long enough to get down the pitch but it would allow access to look for a tag and install one if necessary. No tag was found so it was tagged JF-544 - tag placed a couple of metres down on the eastern side of the entrance (closest to JF-543). Photos, GPS etc. While rigging this we had to extend the back up anchor to reach the primary anchor; this involved linking four krabs in a chain. This resulted in a few Cat Stevens 'Peace (Krab) Train' jokes and a play on H-5 Chain of Ponds – Chain of Krabs. It may be a name one day if the cave fails to provide further inspiration when we come back to it with more gear.

Immediately east of these new caves was a large choked doline with a line of miserable contact soaks above it. Shortly after a large gully was entered. A healthy stream sank at the top of the gully in a ~3 m deep horror show. Just to the west of this, on the same contour, was a nice looking entrance with a 2 m high clean limestone face above it. A small rift in the bottom only went a few metres down before choking. I didn't think it was worth tagging but someone else obviously did - by chance I noticed the JF-255 tag. It only had one fastener with only 2 mm of the second hole drilled, so we later drilled a proper second hole and fixed it securely (plus a bit of pink tape). The tag was of the same style as we currently use and we initially assumed that it must have been a Butt-Rasch cave. The fact that it only had one hole drilled had us imagining a scenario where Dave Rasch was about to drill the second hole when Jeff would have intervened, explaining that a second hole would use more battery power and that would only cost him more money for the extra electricity required to recharge the battery back at the gearstore. It turns out our (my) cruel jokes were off the mark as later research indicated that Rolan tagged JF-255 during his 1994 Forestry study. This research also indicated that the shitty swallet nearby is JF-Z71.

Bunty was beckoning from well down the gully so I popped down to investigate. He had reamed out an entrance in the mud which revealed a pitch of maybe 10 metres. Serena had the ladder so we headed back up the gully. Only 5 metres above Bunty's hole was a nice triangular cross-section cave that was spacious but choked out about 4 m in.

At the head of the gully, about 20 m east of the shitty swallet, Serena had found another cave. I jumped down the initial 2 m drop and searched for a tag but found nothing. The passage barrelled down at ~30° for ~10 m before turning at right angle right for a metre and then right angle left and continuing for a further 5 metres or so to a choke. It was around 10 metres deep in total. The cave was tagged JF-545 (on the back – uphill – wall down inside the entrance pit). I had formulated a potential name for the cave but first I had to check its validity by asking Bunty the exact definition of strike and dip. A few "imagine you've got a sandwich ..." analogies later I determined that the cave followed the dip of the limestone, not the strike. This was a pity, because I'd built it up in my mind that the cave was 'on strike' and that meant the cave had to be called French Pensioner (due to the ongoing strike action in France over the government's plan to lift the retirement age from 60 to 62). Everyone agreed that this was clearly such a fabulous name that despite the fact the cave was actually 'on dip', not 'on strike', that it must take the name. It is so.

With only two fasteners left we headed to Bunty's hole down the gully for a last hurrah. The rain was sapping us of enthusiasm slowly but surely. The ladder was rigged, a tag placed (JF-546) on the NW side, and the pitch descended. It started as a muddy ramp but turned vertical around the corner. Again, the ladder was just the right length and I disembarked at the top of a long, steep and slippery mud slope. At its base the passage tightened and choked off down low but a very tight window at chest height allowed a way on. This led to a low crawl on a flat mud floor into a medium-sized chamber adorned with straws, flowstone and other pretties. At the far end of this chamber the cave headed down again via a narrow flowstone-lined rift, complete with gour pool. About 5 metres down this the side opened up to reveal a ~6 m drop. I bridged the wide rift with reckless abandon and turned the pitch into a climb to reveal a few grotty chokes and the end of the cave. Somehow I reversed the stupid free-climb and struggled out through all the tight bits and up the filthy pitch to find Bunty setting his rescue timetable for when he would trog up and come in to see if I was still alive - I'd been some time.

In the end I have settled on a name for this cave - Two Straws Left Cave. This is a play on the alternate name for JF-147 Peanut Brittle – Two Straws Cave. The cartoon published in SS218:8 should give you an idea.

By now the rain had cleared and magnificent sunlight poured into the lush and dripping forest from perfect blue sky. What a joke. With no fasteners left and the majority of our clothing at field capacity we headed for home. We'll have to come back for JF-454 and to continue following the contact around to The Chairman *et al*.

JF-14 Dwarrowdelf – Geriatrics Day Out

Janine McKinnon

6 November 2010

Party #1 (to the bottom): Ric Tunney (birthday boy), Serena Benjamin (birthday cake supplier), Janine McKinnon (accessories supplier)

Party #2 (half way crowd): Steve Bunton (party #1 deserter), Ken Hosking (quality booze supplier), Amy

Robinson (show-winning cake supplier), Chris Chad (multi-tasking).

After the very successful KD bottoming trip for Bunty's 50th birthday, Ric decided this was a good idea for landmark birthdays, and promptly told me that he wanted to bottom Dwarrowdelf for his 60th birthday. He said this a couple of years ago and I doubted, to be honest, that he would still be keen, come the appointed time. Well, I was proved wrong, and as the time approached, and his

enthusiasm never waned, I expected that I would be getting him to the bottom and back by myself, given the lack of keen caving bods over the last few months.

Luckily Alan came to my rescue and said he'd come along. He is kind-hearted. Really. I was saved from an epic.

But wait ... I spoke too soon. He couldn't come, he was going to be rafting the Franklin.

Back to an Epic again. Then Serena came home. Thank God. We could manage it together. Then Alan's trip was postponed. He was back on again. It was going to be a breeze ... no wait ... he's off again. A wedding this time apparently ...

Meanwhile, other members were getting keen about a partway visit down the cave. So, as we finally headed out of Hobart on Ric's 60th birthday (conveniently a Saturday), the bottoming party was Ric, Bunty, Serena and I. The plan was that I would rig, Serena would come next with the remainder of the rope, Bunty and Ric would cruise down behind, we four would have a party at the bottom, Ric and Bunty cruise back up, and Serena and I would de-rig.

The others would come in at the back of the group, turn around when they had had enough, have a separate party before starting up, and probably go home before we got out.

It was a beautiful warm, sunny day and so the walk in and gear up at the entrance was very enjoyable. I had already distributed the party hats, forks, plates, napkins, cylume necklaces and port to the half way mob back at the car, and Serena now gave them their share of cake. Amy also had some fruit cake, part of her (will be!) local-show-award-winning entry.

Much chatting ensued whilst I endeavored to reach the p-hangers at the entrance. Luckily, no-one seemed to be in a tearing hurry and my efforts seemed to provide amusement to the taller members of the group.

Finally I was away and I made my way fairly quickly to the top of the second pitch, where I waited for Serena with the next rope. I was carrying a 97 m rope for the bottom pitch and had no room left in my pack as it was a fairly bulky rope. Serena bought the lovely, soft, 9.5 mm, 120 m rope we were using for the next three pitches (pity about the scary noises it makes as you abseil).

At the bottom of pitch two I made my blunder of the day. I headed off down the obvious climb to the right. I knew there was a tight keyhole to the top of pitch 3, and even that it was on the LHS, but I couldn't remember if there was a short climb before it. After stuffing around, with Serena joining me, looking at various possibilities (see *Southern Caver* 58 for description of this area), and trying to squeeze along a nasty, tight, unremembered but heavily-trogged passage on the LHS, I had just about decided that I had made a wrong turn when a call came from above. All the others had arrived and one bright spark had found the (obvious) way on, by observing the obvious P-hanger.

The thing that had thrown me a bit was that the area I was looking in was heavily trogged. Interestingly (to me), I have not made this mistake before. Which is probably why it didn't look familiar!

This navigational error was quite good, in hindsight, as it gives Alan an excellent opportunity to insert some damning witticism here.

[Insert damning witticism here.] [Well, actually, I think you may be mistaken, Janine. Have a little read of SS191:4-5. Whoa, déjà vu! – Ed.]

Anyway, back I went to start rigging the correct pitch. Tight little bastard that it is.

The next adjustment to our plan occurred as I started to rig the following pitch. Bunty arrived and declared that his light was failing and that he would be abandoning the bottoming group in favor of the partway group. I was touched by his clever historical re-enactment. What better time to revisit the old "TCC light failure on trip" scenario than a 60th birthday trip with four old(er) cavers along. What a pity I hadn't thought of it and we could REALLY have got it right, i.e. more than one person's light failing. And true, Ken hadn't been TCC, and I'm sure SCS were more light-aware than TCC, but three of us had a lovely moment of nostalgia.

It was here we left the other party, complete with sudden addition, to enjoy their party whilst we lonely three continued on down the cave.

We gathered together again at the top of the final pitch, when Ric caught up with Serena and me as I put in the spits on the approach line. Now that Ric had caught up with me that "always to be depended upon but not always wanted" husbandly advice started. Where to stand, my bunny ears weren't long enough yet (I know!!!!!!) etc... but, dear reader, I kept my temper (sort of), it WAS his birthday, after all.

At the bottom of the pitch we made our way to the shelf overlooking the large chamber where KD joins in. This would be a good place for our celebrations (yes Alan, it isn't quite the bottom). The view was stunning. Or it would have been if the mist hadn't been so thick. The "cave blaster" light we had bought along helped a bit.

So, out came the cake and ...where were the party hats and other aids? Ric and I did one of those "but I thought YOU had them?" things. I hadn't had room, he hadn't thought of them, bummer. Still in the car. He DID have the cylume necklaces though, so all was not lost in the festivities department.



Party time (sans hats etc.)

After our quiet little party for three, Ric started out and I went for a wander to try for the REAL bottom whilst I waited for him and Serena to prusik up. Alas, the recommended handline to the bottom (which we didn't have) looked pretty essential to me. The dirt bank down was very steep, and very loose dirt, and I didn't want to find myself rapidly at the bottom, alone, and unable to get back up. Prudence or wimpishness? I shan't know until I try again (with an emergency handline available).

The trip out went smoothly. Ric kept finding party hats and cylume neclaces at the pitch heads, decorations for the theme of day we were told later. I think they just didn't want to carry all that weight uphill. But as they were the only party hats we saw for the day, it worked for us.

I hadn't prusiked multiple pitches with 100 m of rope hanging below me for quite a while, so that was a less than pleasant reminder. De-rigging the P-hangers I found quick and easy, with the notable exception of the first rebelay on the 55 m pitch. The carabiner was absolutely jammed shut and only after more than 5 minutes of effort did I finally free it with my Stop. I had just called for "guy fingers"

when I (unexpectedly) got it to open. As Ric owned the closest set of these, and he was two pitches away, this was fortunate.

I was (last) out at 6 pm, 8 hours after starting down, and, to our surprise, the others were all waiting at the entrance. They had, apparently, been doing various surface-related tasks since they had got out 3 hours earlier. But that tale I leave to Chris.

We all walked back to the cars together and had another little party of Champagne and red wine (thanks Ken) before heading home.

Halfway and Half-Arsed – JF-3 to JF-14

Chris Chad

6 November 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton (sort of), Chris Chad, Ken Hosking, Amy Ware

The "part way" group of the JF-14 geriatric expedition settled at the base of the third pitch for the obligatory cake, whilst huddling around birthday candles for warmth before making our way back to the surface, with the first out at 2 pm and the last out at 2:45. Bunty had unexpectedly joined this team after re-enacting the good old days with a clapped out light that might not make the distance, but he soon disappeared on yet another fruitless search for Hairy Goat Hole. I on the other hand, had plans to take care of a few loose ends between JF-14 and JF-3.

Whilst the others basked in the sun and drank their port, I went for a wander to find JF-233 Troll Hole. I hadn't got far before I came across an untagged hole I wasn't expecting. A cursory exploration using the light I pinched off my wife's keyring revealed a cave worth tagging so I shouted to the others to bring the tagging gear. It didn't sound like they were in a hurry so I wandered over to Troll Hole (which happily this time was exactly where I had calculated it to be from Jeff Butt's survey), and I poked my head in the entrance and rubbed the moss off the tag. There was a lot of cold air coming out of the cave, to the point where it was obvious as soon as I stepped into the entrance doline.

I was pleased to find my starting point so easily, and the forest is quite lovely in the area. I wandered back to JF-14 to pick up the drill and sundry, and Ken followed me and had a look in my new hole with a more substantive light while I tagged it JF-547 on the JF-14 (northern) side. Ken reported a continuation/easy dig I hadn't noticed, then wandered off into the scrub while I did a quick survey/sketch. I had a look at the dig and it would indeed be a fairly simple matter of moving a bit of clay. There was a vague draft and a drop of a few metres on the other side. I could have pushed it if I had of been egged on. [Survey on page 24] As I got out, Ken returned enthusing about the draft coming from Troll Hole. We photo-tagged JF-547 then wandered over and photo-tagged Troll Hole, and peered down the entrance shaft with our lights. Amy then turned up and we wandered over towards JF-3.

On the way, we started coming across holes. The literature suggested we should expect this, but I was really only expecting three holes (the number of tags I bought along). Instead there were probably a good dozen, and I was at a bit of a loss what to do, particularly as my rope was lying

uselessly on a log at the JF-14 entrance. We found the JF-42 tag with what was obviously JF-41 beside it but with no apparent tag despite a bleedingly obvious spot to put it. Amy soon found JF-3 as well which is more or less part of a closely spaced row of pots. This is an area of tree fall with tantalising holes poking out from underneath the unsettlingly springy debris. The JF-3 tag is placed on a tree at about head height. I had bought along a claw hammer to remedy this, but I would have needed a rope to fix the tag to rock, so it is still there but with some flagging tape to help find it. In the end we didn't do anything as it would be a bit of job to sort out this patch of holes and draw it up, so we are at least the fourth documented group to come through, find a bunch of holes and not do much about it! Something to come back to, and as some of these haven't been descended for a very long time, and considering their location between the end of KD and Cauldron Pot, these are worthwhile investigating to see if the old ones might yield to modern techniques, and to push all the other bits 'n' pieces properly to see if a way through can be found.

We made our way back to JF-14 and lounged around in the sun. Bunty returned, and Ken and my tales of the draft issuing from Troll Hole had soon reached the point where it was strong enough to blow the clothes off a beautiful woman. It would be worthwhile having another crack at following the draft at the bottom of that cave as Jeff Butt has shown it goes awfully close to JF-14.

Everything was GPS'd but it wasn't a good day for it so the accuracy wasn't flash. I had hoped to set up a survey datum point near JF-14, but I simply couldn't get the signal. The surface traverse tied to the JF-2 GPS position (mind you the club GPS was placing JF-2 up on Cave Hill with Index Pot ... someone, apparently a bit inept with a GPS has been naughty! I've replaced it with the correct coordinates) seems suitably accurate for now.

Further reading:

COLIN, B. 1969 Junee Area: Sunday 21-12-'69. *Speleo Spiel*, 43: 2

KEIRNAN, K. 1971 Junee-Florentine. *Southern Caver*, 3(1): 20-26 [Long rambling article spanning multiple days, and multiple areas. Relevant information to this trip report is found on page 24.]

ROBINSON, P. 1972 Junee – JF 14 – 3/6/72. *Speleo Spiel*, 69: 3

MORGAN, D. 1990 Bush bashing up Junee Quarry Road. *Speleo Spiel*, 264: 5-6

BUTT, J. 1999 Surface exploration near Khazad Dum: 20-21/6/99. *Speleo Spiel*, 314: 16

BUTT, J. 2001 Surface work between Troll Hole and Caulron Pot: 12/2/2001 and some revelations on the computer! *Speleo Spiel*, 324: 4

RASCH, D. 2001 Peanut Paste and a Troll infestation-1/4/2001 *Speleo Spiel*, 324: 12-13

Dwarrowdelf abort surface bash

Stephen Bunton

6 November 2010

Party: Stephen Bunton (mostly)

My light had a small hiccup as a result of my incompetence and I headed out with the lame party instead of heading to the bottom with the birthday boy and the other party animals. On the surface Chris Chad took the cave documentation well and truly between his teeth and refound JF-3, Troll Hole (JF-233), JF-41 and JF-42. He also found a plethora of other caves and tagged one other cave but he stopped when he knew he would have to do more research. Meanwhile after our study the other night and convincing ourselves that we really did know the vicinity of Hairygoat Hole (JF-15), I was determined to make use of my spare time and have another look.

I returned almost to the Dwarrowdelf turnoff from the KD track and traversed towards KD within sight of the track and also the gully, meaning I was about halfway up the hill. The gully eventually became the Splash Pot gully and that forced me to intersect the KD track. I followed up the

Splash Pot dry valley slightly on the left (west). In the past we have headed up the Splash Pot track on the ridge on the right (east). I looked at a few promising looking changes of slope and found a sloping, un-enterable, wombat-sized hole which sloped down around to the right. I put flagging tape on it with my initials and the date. I continued up this slope just out of the gully until I hit JF-494. I then retreated via JF-9 and retraced the gully close to the bottom on the east side. I soon found another much more promising looking hole beneath the debris of a large fallen sassafras tree. I believe this to be JF-Z6. I taped it with my initials and the date plus the number 2. I then taped an orange route back to the KD track and marked the turnoff with orange around a dry fallen log.

I then followed the KD track back to the Dwarrowdelf turnoff. I was amazed at the number of fallen sassafras trees. The track really needs a lot of maintenance and the number of different coloured flagging tapes is getting ridiculous. We really need to go into this area for, yet another, track-work day and re-tape the track properly, mark the junctions clearly and get rid of the old rotting multi-coloured flagging tapes ... and find Hairygoat Hole!

A day out west of Cave Hill

Alan Jackson

14 November 2010

Party: Serena Benjamin, Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson, Adrian Slee, Kath Whiteside

It was pissing down in Hobart (it had been doing so all night) and morale amongst the troops was low, despite my clearly non-infectious enthusiasm. Ric and Janine sent an SMS advising of their decision to pike. Bunty was doing everything he could to talk himself into going home and spending the day on the couch instead. Adrian and Kath were clearly sceptical of my evaluation of the easterly weather system we were experiencing, which I suggested meant it would be nicer at Mt Field than in Hobart. Serena was the only one vaguely keen about the day, as she had already ridden her bike from Tarooma and could not have possibly achieved a greater state of wetness and hence had nothing to lose. I badgered them all into the car before any further mutiny could unfurl.

Despite Adrian's running commentary on every raindrop that smashed into the windscreen on the drive up, attempting to undermine my argument that the weather would get better the further inland we headed, by the time we reached Maydena there was only intermittent light drizzle. After parking at the end of Chrisps Road, we got changed in similar precipitation. It stopped drizzling altogether within an hour.

First stop was the large streamsink on the Tachycardia track – JF-Z76. When Gavin, Ken and I had walked past this a few weeks earlier we'd noticed a large eucalypt had fallen right across the sinking point and that things looked different. It had been a sunny day so we were all wearing minimal clothing in preparation for the slog up to the

contact and we hadn't mustered the enthusiasm to grovel under the ferns to check the 'entrance'. This time I was already clad in my PVC suit (to counter the wet foliage, not because I lacked confidence in my weather forecast) so I took a closer look. The tree has dammed the stream, which now sinks in a new spot about 4 m upstream of where it used to, in a deep pool. The old sink point is now a dry crawlway. Both the floor and ceiling of this low passage were comprised of dolerite cobbles and clay and it continued in the direction of the gully for about 10 m before turning hard left a couple of metres and then hard right, opening into a round squatting chamber. In the back corner about half a square metre of limestone bedrock was visible with a 150 mm wide crack in it (down which the water flows when this passage takes water – it would appear to still be an active passage when the flow exceeds the capacity of the new sinking point). There was no discernable draft but it was a fascinating change to get this far into what has traditionally been an impenetrable enigma. It would be good to tag this feature (if only to get rid of its Z-cave nature) but with only dolerite clay and cobbles about it makes it difficult.

Next we headed up the creek to try to locate the tagged SCS caves in the limestone cliffs on the left (as ascending). I'd entered JF-253 previously and Ken and Gavin had also found JF-230 during the Tachycardia period. A hundred metres or so up the gully I found JF-252 half way up the cliffs (in a spot where the cliffs aren't quite so sheer). This was a good find, as we'd not found this one previously. It was a 1 m diameter vertical entrance with an 18 m pitch. I descended this, checked the two leads off the basal chamber: a side chamber covered in crunchy and squishy white stuff – and heaps of dead marsupials; and an ascending tight rift covered in crunchy and squishy white stuff. It was a typical cave for this area – not as deep as it

should be, liberally coated with moonmilk and quite pretty. I pinged a few dimensions with the Disto and sketched it before heading back up.

Next was JF-253, which the others had located while I was underground. It is a further 60+ metres up the gully at the base of a sheer cliff face. It consists of a low entrance sloping down into a medium-sized chamber (mostly stooping height, but some standing room) with plenty of nice moonmilk and stals/columns. At the back end of the chamber is a low and wet crawl/squeeze into potentially more passage, but it doesn't look that promising. If it had been dry I'd have leaped in but it was too early in the day to lie flat out in puddles. Besides, question marks on maps are always good incentives for future generations.

A few more hundred metres up the gully, about 80 metres short of the junction with the dry gully that comes in from the left (this gully is the one below JF-274 Suck It and See Swallet), I spotted JF-230. It was a real non-event – a few metres of sloping passage to a choke. I doubt I would have tagged it had I been the first to find it.

About 30 m later my cave sensor perked up and I climbed the hill a bit to a large canyon-like doline with a tight slot at the back end. There were two pink tapes on a tree outside the doline and triple pink tapes on a small branch a few metres from the slot. The condition of the tapes and the number of them (triples) suggested the work of Nick Hume (and or Leigh Douglas) from the early '90s. The slot looked pretty committing (as it had a small vertical drop below it) but after an initial abort I pressed on – with four people, 40 m of rope and a ladder on the surface I figured they'd work out some way of getting me out again. A ~6 m climb followed into a rock-filled rift. Down was choked but a scramble up (with a good draft) accessed a slightly roomier rift with many drips and plenty of loose blocks. I theorised that the draft was simply circulating back to the surface via the loose blocks in the ceiling. I huffed and puffed back out the entrance squeeze with the aid of a knotted handline and Bunty tagged the cave JF-548 (tag on left above tight slot). The drill sounded funny and seemed to take a very long time to drill the holes. Bunty christened the cave Hume Hole in honour of its presumed discoverer.

Serena had found an entrance immediately downslope from JF-548 so we headed there next. It is 10 m down from the previous cave and only 4-5 m up and away from the creek. It was a triangular entrance in large stacked blocks which sloped down over more large blocks till intersecting bedrock about 7 metres in. Here the cave drops a couple of metres sharply in a narrow rift to an impossibly small hole. There was a good draft. No real prospects though. Kath, always keen to tag caves, begged to have the honours. More funny sounds and slow drilling later I started to express my concern about her technique. Bunty suggested the rock was very hard and contained lots of silica. I inspected the drill and suggested that the holes are easier to drill when the bit is rotating the correct way ... It was tagged JF-549 – on the right, overhanging wall just inside the entrance.

Not much further along we hit the intersection with the aforementioned dry gully. In the junction is an impressive filled doline (30 m diameter and ~6 m deep). We had spotted this the day we found Tachycardia. On that day we had more or less followed the dry gully up to JF-274 but today our target was JF-254, further up the wet gully.

Several hundred metres of broad-based gully ensued but all the limestone was sealed by dolerite and shite. The creek bed was quite interesting here, often just a 1 m wide, 2 metre deep flume-like channel carved into the dolerite and clay regolith. I had plenty of time to admire the channel while I waited for Kath to dawdle up the hill. We then hit exposed limestone again and rounded the sharp point of a limestone ridge. Here the landscape changed significantly with a fabulous (up to ~30 m high) limestone cliff on the left and a broad, flat valley floor with the creek meandering quietly. The odd pink tape was spotted through this area but none were associated with karst features and they seemed too far apart and haphazard to suggest a walking route. In one spot the cliff line formed a sharp corner with several cave-like features at its base but nothing worthy of enthusiasm. Up high in the corner was an overhanging section which seemed to have once been a cave but someone had stolen the other 50%. We were all very happy with this little gem in the forest. Further upstream the limestone slopes on the left looked appealing. Serena and Adrian headed up (Serena finding one ~4 m long rift) while the rest of us stayed down near the creek. A ~6 m ladder climb into a 2 m wide, ~10 m long rift was investigated with the usual results. I expected to find a tag on this feature but failed to locate one. The fact that JF-253 was below us and JF-254 was above us suggested that there was nothing tagged in between, but that logic doesn't explain what JF-230 is doing in the gap. We tagged it JF-550, on the left just before the pitch.



The 'half a cave' in the cliff.

Adrian then appeared around the corner and reported another cave 15 metres away. It was a descending passage (~8 m long) that terminated in a ~6 m high 'aven'. There looked like a potential continuation in the ceiling so I climbed the sediment-laden walls and found a solid blockage. Adrian observed a daylight hole above (at a similar height to the top of my climb) but it only dropped

back in with no scope for extension. It was tagged JF-551 on the left wall a metre into the cave.

Just up from here one was forced to drop into the creek. The creek cascaded in from the right at this point, striking the base of the limestone scarp and turning a right angle left. A small branch of the cascade headed off to the right and appeared to flow in under the cliff. A bit of stick poking and gumboot probing only served to increase excitement and stream diversion works swung into full action. We stemmed the flow and the cliff pool promptly drained away to reveal a silt-filled ‘nano-cave’ under the cliff. As our upstream engineering began to fail the leaking water was observed hitting the wall and then turning hard left and sinking into the silt. It seemed pretty obvious that it just flowed through and under the wall and back into the main stream a few metres downstream. Oh well, it was fun while it lasted.



Digging in the creek.

We followed a limestone gully that left the creek at this point and, deciding that I surely knew where JF-254 was by this stage, charged off without consulting the GPS. Not long after I recognised the limestone slope that I'd traversed on my previous visit, meaning I'd overshot my mark. We about-faced and soon came across ‘CV5’. This was tagged JF-552 on the right wall about a metre in the cave.

Further back down the cliffline the others had a bite to eat while Serena and I scaled the cliff to find ‘CV4’. I wanted to place the tag so it could be viewed from down below the cliffline but in the end the left wall was the most tag-friendly (unfortunately not easily viewed from down below). It was tagged JF-553.



Two goons in the bush (but none in the hand).

Serena headed off to sully the wilderness while we continued round to JF-254. There is a good 20 m pitch just inside the entrance so I looked around for appropriate SRT rigging. Nothing jumped out at me so I bridged over the top of the pitch on small ledges and down-climbed a few steps to the top of the proper part of the pitch – again, no anchors. Without any bolts and lacking the otherwise required ~30 metres of ladder, I lost interest and headed back out. The important thing is that we now know where this cave is and have it safely locked away in the GPS. As long as they keep the satellites up in the sky then we should be right!

Serena, having shed a few kilos, could be heard heading our way so we started our ascent of the cliff to go and tag ‘CV3’ and ‘CV2’, which are located immediately above JF-254 atop the cliffs. Unfortunately we failed to inform Serena that a hard right turn was required up on the plateau and we didn't see her for a little while after this.

‘CV3’ was tagged JF-554 on the right of the lower of the two close entrances. ‘CV2’ was tagged JF-555 on the left wall of the narrow rift entrance about 200 mm down. Next stop was the swallet ‘CV6’, and hopefully reunification with Serena.

Most of the way over to ‘CV6’ we re-established verbal contact with Serena, who was suitably miffed with being abandoned. Chances are she would have found her way back to the car on her own, but failing that would have seen the expression of a strong natural selection pressure. Either result was going to be a win for the human gene pool. Unfortunately in this contemporary world of convenience and modern medicine the selective pressures borne upon 21st century *Homo sapiens* rarely presents it with potentially life-ending situations anymore. This would explain how Kath made it this far.

At 'CV6' I jumped down into the large walled doline and placed a tag (JF-556) on the back wall ('uphill' side) to the left of the drippy fissure. I then sought Bunty's opinion on whether or not to tag the associated swallet 20 metres down the hill. While obviously all part of the same local system, we decided the two main features were suitably cave-like and far enough apart to warrant separate tags. While transporting the tagging gear to the swallet I stumbled over a log, caught the drill on an overhead branch and managed to sling the bundle of tags off the end of the drill bit that I had them swinging from. 'Where did they land?' I hear you ask. Why down the first of the two tiny entrances between the two main entrances, of course! Jingle, jingle, clatter, clatter ... FUCK IT! Despite my attempts to drown it out with further swearing, the sounds of raucous laughter reverberated through the forest. So, still swearing liberally, I jumped back into the JF-556 entrance, squirmed down the horrid muddy slot and crawled along to the base of the daylight hole to retrieve the tags. Serena muttered something about karma under her breath. A few more 'shits' later and the main swallet was

tagged JF-557 on the overhanging cliff to the right of the stream.

Unfortunately, due to the large number of caves we'd tagged so far – and in no small part due to the amount of backwards drilling conducted by Bunty and Kath – the battery went flat halfway through the second hole, so the left fastener is not achieving its full potential. This raised Kath's spirits; she had been firing questions along the line of 'are we there yet?', 'how much further up the hill are these caves?', 'so, are we actually heading further away from the car?' since before lunch time, back down near JF-230.

We traversed round the contact to JF-269 Toss Pot, passing the 'untaggable' 'CV1' on the way, and wandered back out the Tachycardia track to the car. In the end it was quite a productive day tidying up the legacies of the early SCS days and very recent STC days, despite Kath's attempts to apply the brakes all day. Perhaps it will be third time lucky in my attempts to get back to the Tachy area and finish the tidy up.

JF-558 thru JF-561 – Quarries and Crushed Nurries

Chris Chad

20 November 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Ken Hosking

There were a number of GPS "anomalies" on the hill near the Junee Quarry in the form of "HOLs" and "HOLEs". I was interested in these partly because they represent a bit of a loose end, and also because they lie in between the ends of Junee Cave and Threefortyone. Two (HOL1 & HOL2) I couldn't find any reference for, but three others (HOLE37, HOLE38 & HOLE39) were found by Jeff Butt and co. on the way back from Ross Walker Cave one day (SS320:10). One of these, HOLE39 was described as a "10 m pitch into a spacious room", and revisit was suggested. I was the first sucker to pay any heed, so Ken and I set off to the quarry to investigate.

We started by skirting around the edge of the quarry so I could have a cursory look for JF-46 Quarry Hole. In doing so we soon stumbled across a hole that turned out to be HOL2 under a couple of large logs. It was only a little thing with some old degraded decoration and a bit of moonmilk. It was duly numbered JF-558 [*Survey on page 24*], and we made our way across to HOLE39. This turned out to be a series of three entrances in a rift-looking thing up above the cliff line rather than below it as I was expecting. The pitch in the middle entrance turned out to be just 7 m rather than the optimistic 10 m described, and led to a crappy room of breakdown certainly unworthy of our even more optimistic 40 m rope. It turned out it was a free climb out through the entrance next to it anyway, so a bit of a disappointment really. Not the short-cut to the end of Threefortyone like I had imagined! The pitch entrance was tagged JF-559 under the big log across the rift. [*Survey on page 25*] I then wandered over to check out HOLE37, HOLE38 and HOL1. HOLE37 and HOLE38 were just boulder caves at the base of the cliff, not so much caves as gaps between the scree that is being drawn into the adjacent mega-doline. I didn't deem them worth tagging. I

found nothing at HOL1 except an unenterable slot maybe a couple of metres deep.

On the way back to the ute, we had a bit more of a look for JF-46 and only came across a small hole that hardly seemed worth tagging, but we did, tagging it JF-560 because you couldn't tell it was a pointless waste of time just looking in the entrance ... you had to get in there and turn on your light to come to that realisation! [*Survey on page 25*] We didn't find JF-46. Perhaps it was eaten by the quarry at some stage, but we could have easily missed it. The limestone in this area seems to have been smashed to bits by the mega-doline. I doubt I'd be too enthusiastic about directing too much attention here in the future.

We then took an unscheduled trip back into Maydena as I had forgotten to fill up with fuel and only realised this as we were coming through the gate. "E" probably wasn't going to stand for "Enough" today, but a couple of fizzy drinks with our lunch were a nice luxury.

We then headed into Rift Cave to find JF-Z5 which is a hundred metres or so up above Rift Cave. This seems to have been discovered by Jeanine Davies in 1985, and explored shortly after by Andrew Briggs and Chris Davies (SS211:2). It was described as a rift 2-3 metres wide by 3-4 metres high descending at 80 degrees to 70 metres deep. I had also realised that Jeff Butt's survey of Rift Cave had an odd little surface survey off into this area (probably making it synonymous with JF-Z14 as well), which I suspected would lead me to the right place. We trudged up the hill (Ken reckons walking up hills is a stupid idea) following the GPS and old orange tapes to find a crappy little rift with an awful looking entrance at roughly the right spot. It didn't look right, but it wasn't the first disappointment of the day so I squirmed in, barely getting out of sight and getting thoroughly mucky. We tried to avoid it, but we decided it really should be tagged, and while Ken got the drill out, I had a quick scout around, but didn't get more than a couple of steps before stumbling across a gaping great big hole in the ground. This was more like it!

I scrambled down the rotting myrtle that occupies the cave to have a bit of a look, and confirmed this was what we were looking for. I sent Ken down as senior rigger while I

tagged it JF-561 on the northern side of the entrance. Ken was fussing around a lot so I made my way back down the (arguably unsafe) sloping entrance to where the pitch proper started. There were no anchor points here but the rotten myrtle proved an adequate rope protector. Ken soon decided he didn't like launching off a platform into a cave that appeared to be made of wood, not limestone, so we swapped over and I descended the ramping pitch past a couple of small ledges to the next point where the myrtle had taken up residence, and the end of our 40 m rope. I put in a rebelay off a convenient window at this point and followed the remaining myrtle several more metres to the bottom of the cave. The last bit was especially grotty, wet and unpleasant. At the bottom there was a sandy floor and shallow pool with a short ascending passage to some avens and an impressive display of fossils of those spirally shell things.

Ken came down, and we surveyed out with Ken complaining it was like Ida Bay all the way up. Admittedly I had to downgrade my survey because I could no longer see what I was drawing due to all the mud constantly splashing around. The cave turned out to be 55 m deep rather than 70 m, but its vertical depth is more than its horizontal extent, so Bunty would love it! It is probably the most likely possibility for a connection to the large ascending passage in the Silver Lining extension of Rift Cave, in fact it might be worth an extended grovel on the last few metres of the pitch to see if there isn't something we missed.

JF-558 thru JF-561 – Been there, done that, won't be going back there again

Ken Hosking

20 November 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Ken Hosking.

It began at a small cave to the rear of the Junee Quarry when I lost my footing as I began to tag the cave, shot down the slippery entrance slope and got my nice clean thermals coated in mud. Some days start like that and mostly they continue in similar vein. After this non-event of a cave was tagged (JF-558, most likely corresponding to HOL2) we continued along the rear of the quarry, and found a nice looking hole in the ground, corresponding to hole 39. The entrance pitch seemed a little less than the 10 metres estimated by Jeff, but otherwise it seemed to fit the description.

While Chris wandered off to look around, I rigged the pitch off a convenient overhanging log and got my caving gear on. Once in the hole, it was very clear that a rock about the size of a small car's wheel was looking decidedly unstable. This was despatched to the bottom, making a very satisfying noise. With this rock gone, more hanging death was apparent, so Chris ran a tape from the other side of the pitch head to provide a redirect. All this had taken some time, but eventually a short abseil gave access to the bottom of what was later measured to be a seven-metre pitch. At the bottom of the pitch there was a small chamber with two passages running off. A west-trending passage ascended via a shaky looking rock fall and choked off after about three metres. An eastern passage also ascended, culminating in a short climb back to the surface. I popped out of the climb, mere minutes after descending, to re-join

I thought it was a good little cave, though cavers that have recently had surgery on their balls might find the sloping pitch a bit of a mongrel, and if foolish enough to clamber around on the initial slope you may find yourself straddling the myrtle causing your eyes to bulge. I have named the cave Cheap Vasectomy because I had recently had surgery on my balls and found the sloping pitch a bit of a mongrel, and whilst clambering around on the entrance slope I found myself straddling the myrtle causing my eyes to bulge. No point complaining though as Ken was fulfilling that role as we tried to sort the gear out of the pile of muck. [*Survey on page 26*]

It was getting a little late, but we poked our head into Rift Cave as Ken had never been in the cave before. There was very little water compared to my recent visits. It was a straightforward walk out and a reasonably productive day.

Further Reading:

DAVIES, C. 1985 Junee Florentine – 3 September 1985 *Speleo Spiel* 211: 2

BUTT, J. 1989 Junee-Florentine-Surface surveying in the vicinity of the Chairman Track. *Southern Caver*, 55: 10-11 [This article contains a map of the survey I used to derive the location of what I believe to be both JF-Z5 and JF-Z14 – now JF-561].

BUTT, J. 2000 Ross Walker Cave(s) and environs: 25/6/2000 *Speleo Spiel*, 320: 10.

Chris only a few metres from the pitch. It seemed like a lot of effort to explore such a minuscule cave. With the cave duly sketched and tagged (JF-559) we continued on our way.

As we neared the top of the quarry we spotted another small cave. Chris still had his caving suit on and descended a nondescript hole and another tag was added (JF-560).

We failed to find JF-46 Quarry Hole on the way back to the car, and decided it was time to head into the Rift Cave area for the real work of the day. However, we first had to head back to Maydena to re-fuel the truck as we figured that the local servo would be closed by the time we got back that evening. This enabled us to have cold fizzy drinks with our lunch, a rare treat when caving in the Junee-Florentine.

After lunch we tackled the relentlessly uphill track to the Rift Cave area, firstly going in search of the hole above Rift Cave that was reported to be seventy metres deep. At about the right place according to the GPS, a small entrance was found, and Chris clambered in only to find it didn't go anywhere much. When we emerged, and climbed up a small bank, a massive gaping hole in the ground appeared. A massive myrtle has speared down the doline and protruded into the entrance pitch. The scene was superb, and this cave looked very inviting. Little did I know that this cave had a persona like that of the sirens that tempted Odysseus, being lovely from a distance but lethal when approached.

Chris managed to climb down into the doline, but a slip would have had serious consequences, so I rigged our 40 m rope from a nearby tree. We debated trying to get a better hang for the rope by descending from the upper side of the doline, but settled for the low side. A drop of about ten

metres into the doline had us at the pointy end of the myrtle, and revealed a near-vertical (later found to be around 70 degrees) pitch. In keeping with the illusion presented by the cave, the pitch looked clean and inviting. However, there was not a rigging point in sight. After I messed about for a while, hanging on the rope over the pitch in search of a rigging point, or at least some sort of inspiration, Chris lost patience and decided to go down anyway, reasoning, quite correctly as it eventuated, that if we ran the rope over the end of the slightly rotten myrtle, the rub point would not be so bad.

I waited near the myrtle as Chris went on down, clearing dangerous perched rocks at every awkward step in what was turning out to become a far-from-pleasant and even further from clean, pitch. Eventually the 40 m of rope was exhausted and Chris had to tie on the additional 30 m that he was carrying. In yet another of this cave's tricks, the changeover was at a point where water cascaded out of the rock above, meaning that the knot crossing and adjacent rebelay had to be done in what amounted to heavy rain. Another 10 or 15 metres of contorted, muddy pitch followed before it was possible to alight, climb down a short distance and reach the bottom of the cave, this being a dismal mud-filled sink. Thereafter a short climb led to the only nice part of the cave. This was a dry ascending passage with numerous snail-like fossils in the walls.

We then commenced the miserable business of surveying out. Going out, I was alert enough to put my hood on to keep water from flowing through my helmet and down my neck. Unfortunately I had neglected to put my knee pads on, and the cave made me pay at every prusik cycle. The survey was not as bad as expected, as once out of the confines of the lower section of the cave, it was possible to take a long sight up most of the entrance pitch. Even so, the climb up at an uncomfortable 70 degree angle ultimately gave rise to the name of the cave. Chris had undergone surgery a week or so earlier, the nature of which can't be discussed here as it's secret men's business. On the way up, an unlucky slip caused a very tender part of his

anatomy to come into violent contact with the cave. The cave was immediately named Cheap Vasectomy.

We hauled ourselves out, completed the survey and tagged the cave (JF-561). I judge this cave to be in the same class of grottness as Gollums Grovel at Ida Bay. I'm pleased to have been to both caves, but even more pleased that I will not return to either.

We then had a brief trip into Rift Cave, just to give me a taste for this cave that I have never visited before and then walked (staggered in my case) back to the car.



A picture speaks a thousand words – Ken after JF-561.

Other Exciting Stuff

SAREX 2010

Matt Cracknell

The motivation for the theme of this year's Search And Rescue EXercise (SAREX) was to recruit search volunteers. This had come about from the difficulties that the police had in enlisting enough rested volunteers for the difficult search at Tahune earlier in the year. The majority of the first day was taken up watching power point slides on topics such as ground search configurations, comms, protocols and equipment checklists. The second day consisted of a mock rescue where teams of 5-6 went out in a predefined search pattern, looking for an "injured" man. He was eventually found after the entire group of volunteers, police and SES joined together in one very long line search. That afternoon we watched as the

Westpac helicopter went through a series of drills. Later, several lucky attendees managed to get helicopter joy rides.

Overall the exercise appeared to fulfil its aims. There seemed to be about 20-30 volunteers attending SAREX over the 2 days. The powerpoint slides were a little dull at times but contained important information for those who had not previously been exposed to search situations. Personally, gaining an understanding of the responsibilities that the police search coordinators willingly take on during a search was the most striking lesson of the weekend. Also it was good to see a substantial number of STC members there for the weekend. Many thanks to SAREX coordinator Josh Peach for providing us with a well catered for and excellently structured weekend.

Book Review:

Created from Chaos – a geological trail of 100 sites in Tasmania by Peter S. Manchester

Stephen Bunton

There could not be a more appropriate title. This effort from a former geology lecturer at UTAS could only be described as chaotic. Like all books I review I started by reading the sections about which I know something. In terms of the caving information it was poorly researched, amateurishly presented and quite erroneous. It is such a pity that this potentially golden idea suffered the reverse Midas touch. It's a total lead balloon! This book still ranks Niggly Cave as the deepest in Australia. A short phone call to any local caver [other than Rolan – Ed.] would have sorted this out. The maps credited to a paper by Kevin

Kiernan were originally published in *Vertical Caves of Tasmania*. It is clear that Peter Manchester talked to no-one during the editing process and as such fails the most elementary tests of academic credibility. It seems like he has done just what my Year 9 students do when they think they have finished an assignment; they press PRINT and consider it's over rather than ask their mum to proofread it. A telltale sign is that there are no acknowledgements. It certainly wasn't edited, not even for typos. As such I can have very little faith in the information about the places I have not been. Nevertheless the choice of venues is comprehensive and appropriate, given that they are all easily visited with only a short walk at most from your car. Unfortunately the book tells you what is there but doesn't really point it out clearly enough. I have visited many of these spots and when I visit them again I might look them up but take what I read with a grain of halite.

The Thing Returns

Chris Chad

My article about the "Thing" (SS380:19) gained a bit more interest than I anticipated. It was simply a tongue-in-cheek space filler with the hope someone would be naive enough to head out and "explore" it. As it turned out, a number of people concluded that I genuinely believed it to be a hot prospect. Certainly, I think it's an interesting and novel feature which draws one's eye from the aerial photography, but it is not something I will ever bother to visit. Whilst I'm not interested, others may be, so I'll pass along what I know. Thanks to those who showed interest and recounted their stories.

As a bit of a project I am putting together a map of the Junee-Florentine. Primarily this is a map with cave entrances superimposed, but modern mapping systems allow a lot of clever things to be done, including the linking of maps, photos, descriptions etc to make the map interactive. I am lucky to have the tools to develop such maps through my work, and the maps are primarily for my own benefit, but as they develop I hope to have a useful reference that others will be able to use to help with their explorations, or simply find their way to a cave. As the average punter tends not to have a fancy GIS system at their disposal, I've been fiddling with replicating the maps in Google Earth, a handy tool which I am using more and more for my work, and a tool that is freely available for anyone who has access to a computer (or mobile these days) and a functioning brain [*there's the sticking point – Ed.*]. The biggest challenge in putting together such a map is accurate cave entrance data. Obviously the club GPS is the most extensive source of cave entrances easily available, but a big issue is working out which waypoints are reliable and which aren't. Certainly there are waypoints that are simply in the wrong place, others are doubled up (two or more apparent locations for one cave), and some of dubious origin/accuracy. There are also plenty of random temporary waypoints some of which are untagged caves and many that aren't, two of which reside in the club GPS as X1 and THING. I was busily filtering out some of this crap and found that X1 and THING were close together (within potential error) and corresponded with a feature

that shows up as a surprisingly geometric hole in the forest. As this is up on a bit of a tabletop/bluff and 50m above where I understand the karst contact to be, I pretty much immediately formed an opinion on what I thought it was, but the X1 tag and it's unusually round appearance made me do some digging (figuratively speaking). After all, a 40 m diameter hole punched through 50 m of overburden would presumably link to a pretty impressive cavern if it existed! X1 was quickly discounted as little more than a convenient mark, and then after referring to the topographic map I decided that my initial impression was more likely and it is simply a small lake. What the origin of the lake is, i.e. is it karstic, or glacial, is a matter for someone who is interested in such things.

I kind of assumed that most reading my article would pick up the subtle hints that I wasn't being serious. For example the absurd claim of 200 m of depth based on Google Earth, talk of using helicopters, lost tribes etc, and the likelihood that if I did think it was a genuine find that I would actually tell anyone before scooping the booty! Even the idea that a massive cavernous hole could have a GPS record but not be obvious in the literature seems a stretch ... even for SCS! Really all I intended to do was point out there are new and pretty good aerals available for the Junee-Florentine and recount Jeff Butt's acronym that I found amusing.

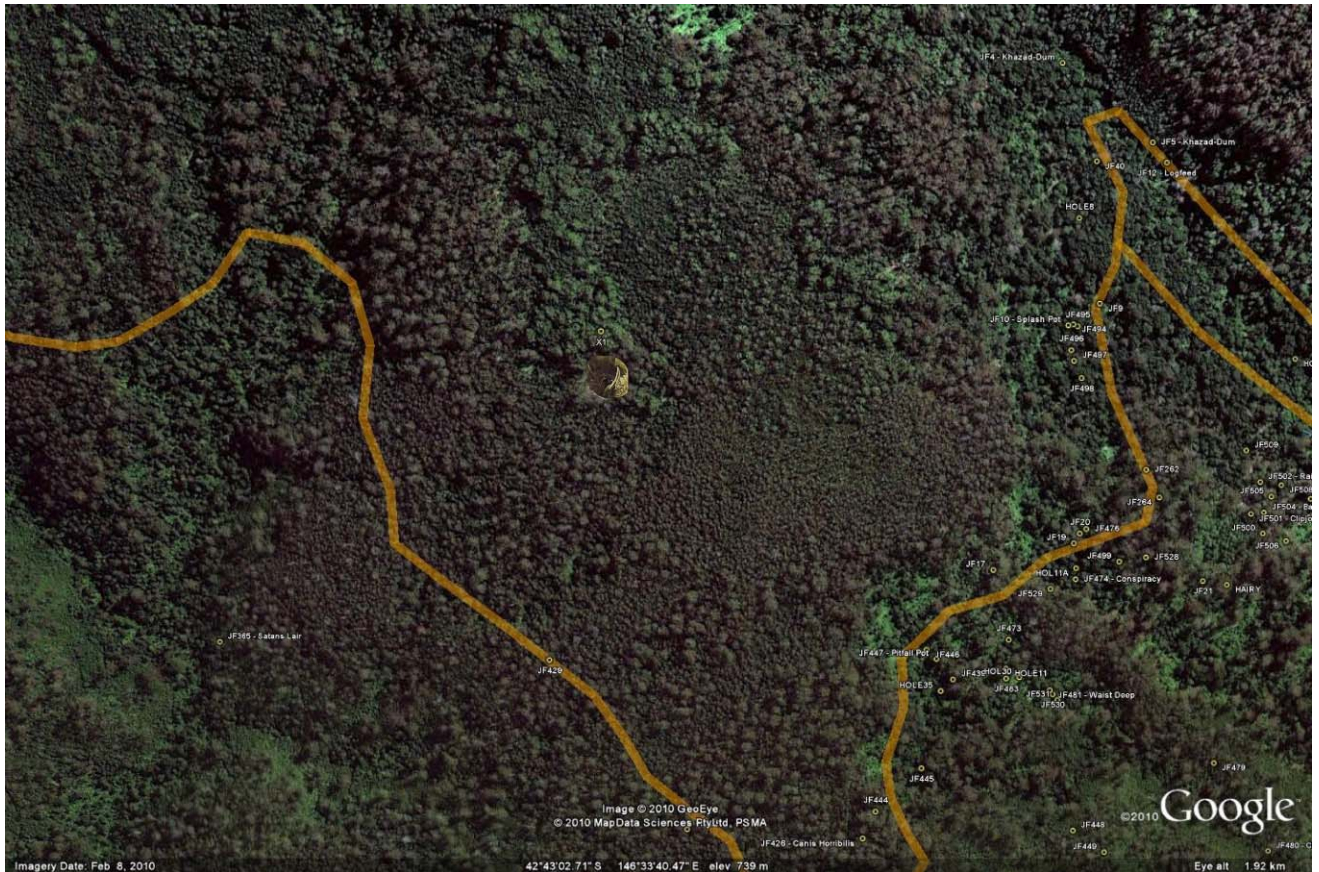
I didn't find a reference to the feature in the archive (aside from me bumbling across the referenced trip report) mainly because I didn't look. I simply didn't have enough to go on. Happily, I can now report that people have indeed visited the feature, and have confirmed it is a hole full of water, and of little interest as a cave. I have received personal accounts, and a trip report has been brought to my attention (SS101:9) that confirm this. I'm sure there are others.

Greg pointed out that the trip report by Jeff Butt I referred to seems to imply that Jeff and Dave were searching for a "broad flat knoll about 100m in diameter" rather than a hole. The grid reference matches the GPS waypoint and it seems improbable given the mention of THING and their GPS, that the THING waypoint in the current GPS isn't the same one. The current maps I have access to all interpret the feature as a hole full of water, but with photography it

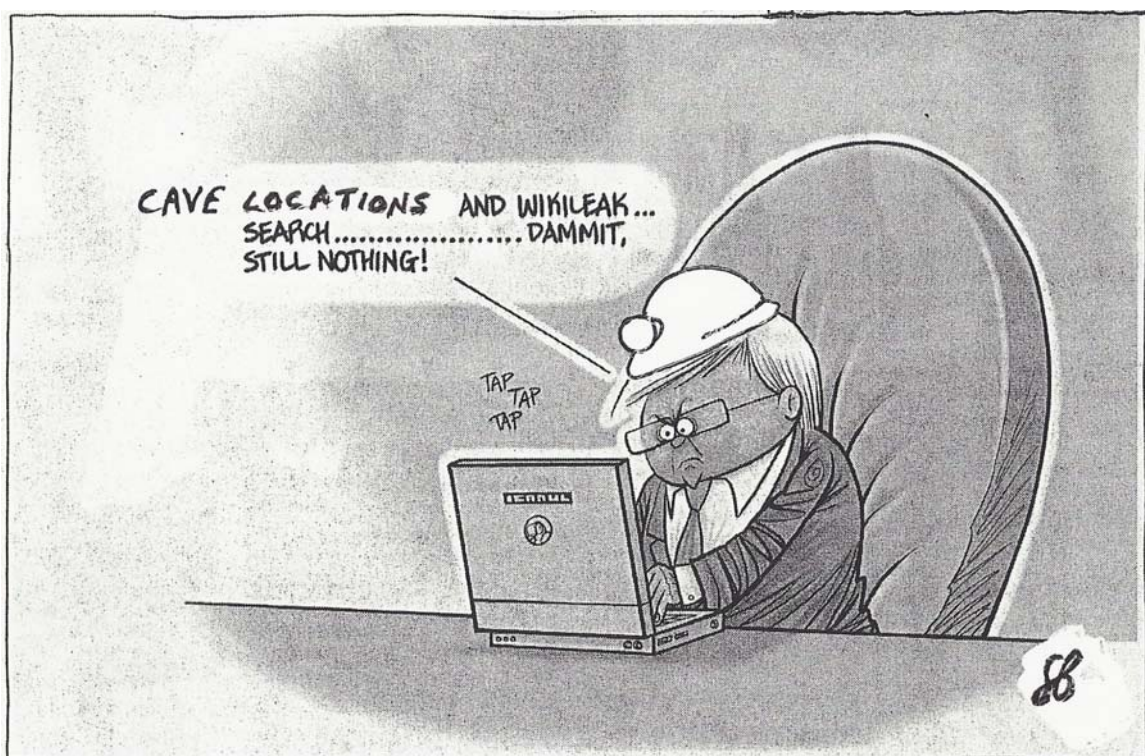
is possible for the mind to invert things, i.e. make a depression look like it's protruding out of the page instead of into it. Perhaps that has been the case.

In summary, various cavers have visited or attempted to visit this hole full of water since before I was born (considered by the good folk of Mendooran to be the beginning of time). They were lured there by aerial photos as was I. If you were to walk in a straight line from JF-4 KD to JF-365 Satans Lair, then you might just come across

it, but it would be a bugger of a walk. Considering that none of the big entrances like the Chairman, Rift Cave or Ice Tube are apparent from the air, it is unlikely that aerial photos in this area will be of any particular use for cavers. It seems the scrub is worse now than it was all those years ago, and I've been assured that ALL the deep caves were found and explored in the '70s so we are all just wasting our time (a bit like Ida Bay really).



I'll shout a beer at the next meeting to whoever correctly identifies the creature living in the hole. Orange line is the contact as per the Karst Atlas.



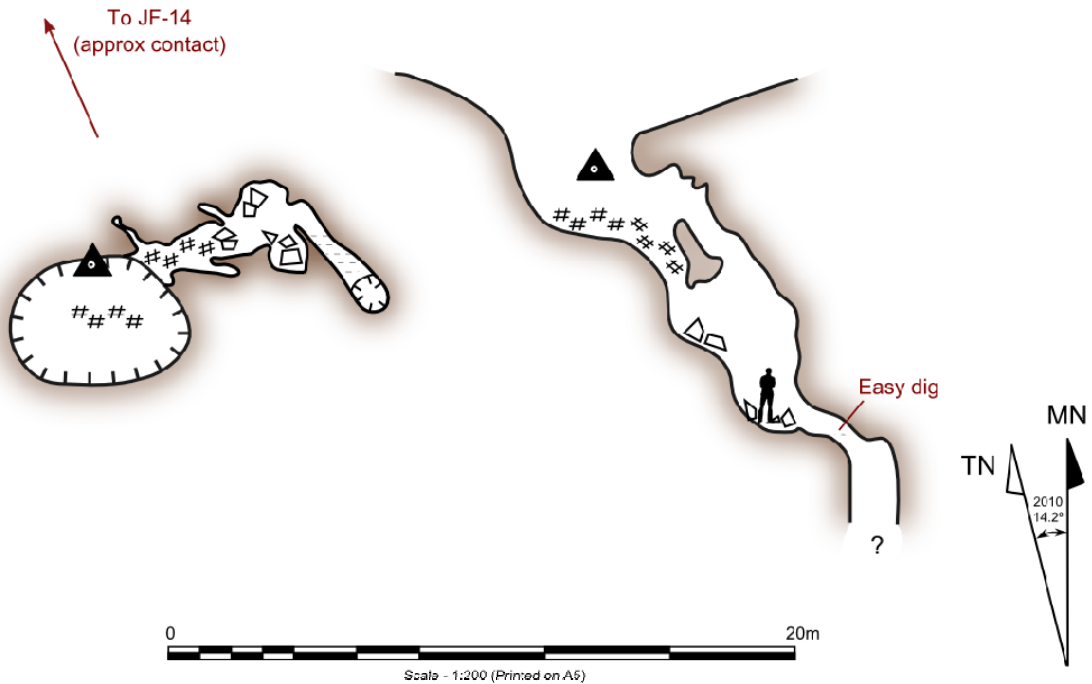
Surveys

JF-547

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF547.STC231

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad, K. Hosking 0/11/10
Drawn by C. Chad 10/11/10
ASF Grade 3.2

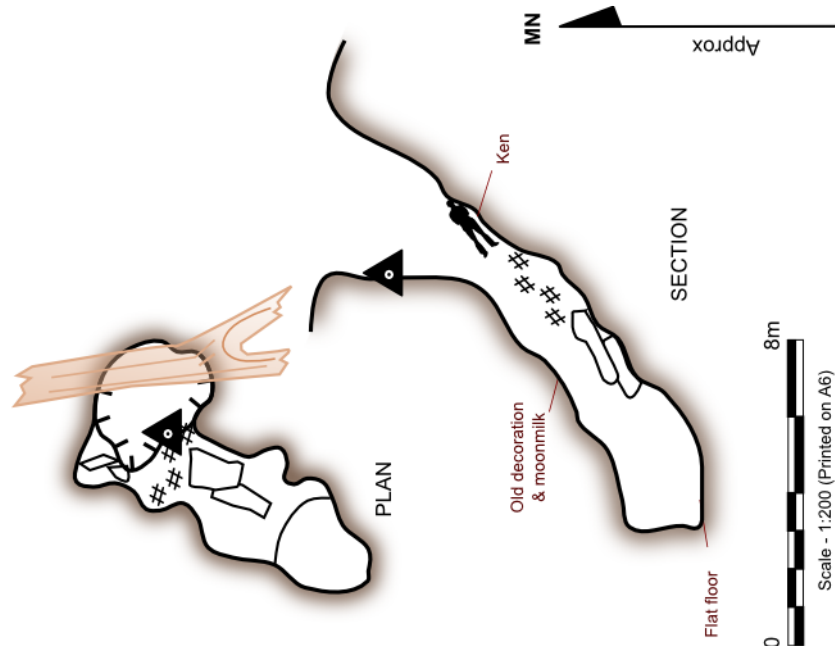


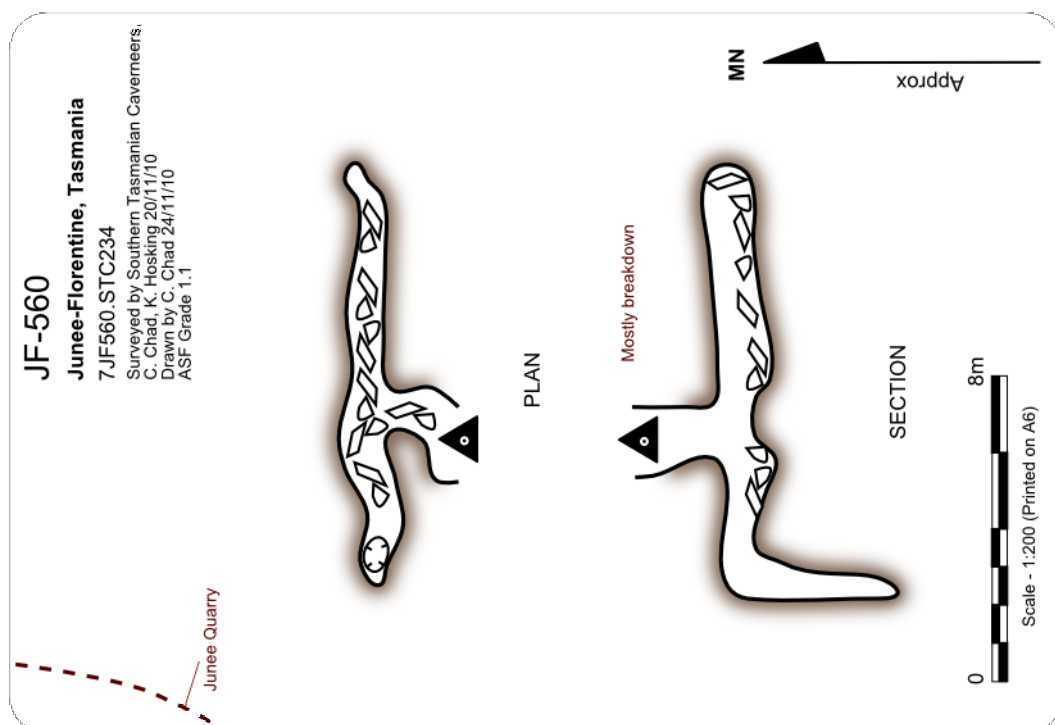
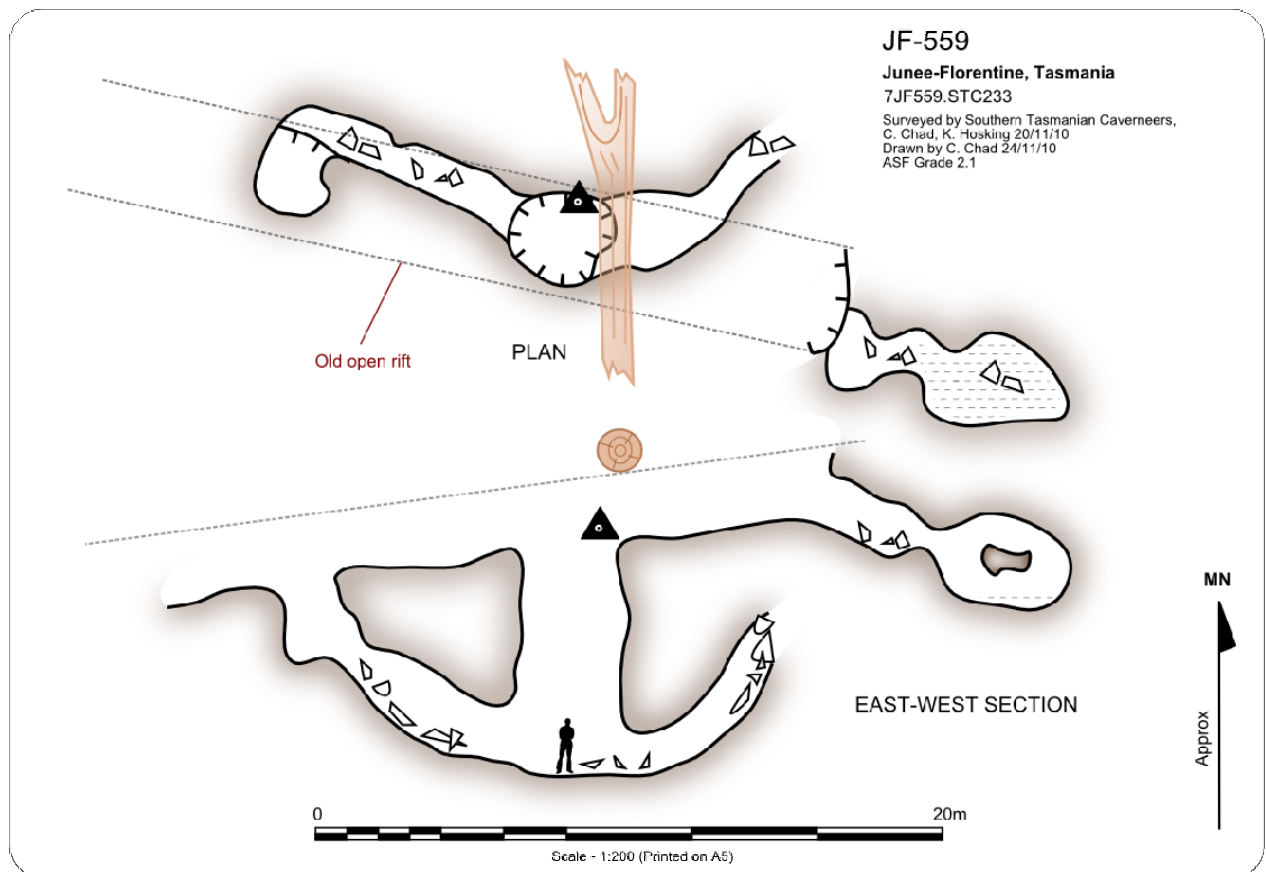
JF-558

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF558.STC232

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,
C. Chad, K. Hosking 20/11/10
Drawn by C. Chad 24/11/10
ASF Grade 2.2





JF-561 Cheap Vasectomy

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF561.STC235

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers,

C. Chac, K. Hoising 20/11/10

Drawn by C. Chad 22/11/10

ASF Grade 4.3

Depth: 55m

Length: 85m

Fossils

DEVELOPED SECTION











12p

30p

Muck & filth
everywhere

PLAN

Legend

-  Cave walls
-  Vertical change in floor level
-  Vertical change in roof level
-  Water Flow
-  Slope direction
-  Rocks
-  Cave entrance
-  Vegetation debris
-  Sediments
-  Tag

0 20m

Scale - 1:200 (Printed on A4)

