

SPEIEO SPIEI 385

July - August 2011



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Front Cover: Alan Jackson and the hanging column in Loons Cave. *Photo by Rolan Eberhard.*



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

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Editorial

Here's a quick *Spiel* to catch up on the backlog, otherwise the situation will be bloody awful by the time I get back from China. With enough photos and a double dose of Buntoons one can manage to make it look like a normal-sized issue.

I'm very happy to get our recent exploits in Dissidence published for all to see. There's still a lot of work to do in the system associated with this cave and plenty of scope for adding to the current passage length of 2.64 km. Assuming I can still walk after China then it should be a fun summer (until the new bub comes in January ...) Andy has produced another beautifully crafted piece of literature for us. While his normal embellishment of the situation is present in his report I was pleasantly surprised by how accurate an account of events he managed to write; it's very unlike him.

There'll be two new STC babies in the next few months thanks to efforts by Amy/Dion and Loretta/me. Hopefully by early February JF-561 Cheap Vasectomy will be seeing another visit.

Judging by page 14 Rolan has decided that in order to get his depth record back it'll be easier to fudge the survey data in Niggly than put in the effort to find a new, deeper cave. I pity the poor bugger and what his life has become.

Alan Jackson

Stuff 'n Stuff

ANAGRAM FLASHBACK

There's no truth in the rumour that Amy's considering baby names including "Cadel Evan", in order to create an 'anagrammable' name like "Son to able caver nerd".

"Jack laden cave son" on the other hand just could be a possibility...

Amy Robertson

CAVING NEWS

Serena found this interesting website that lists all manner of cave-related newsworthy events:

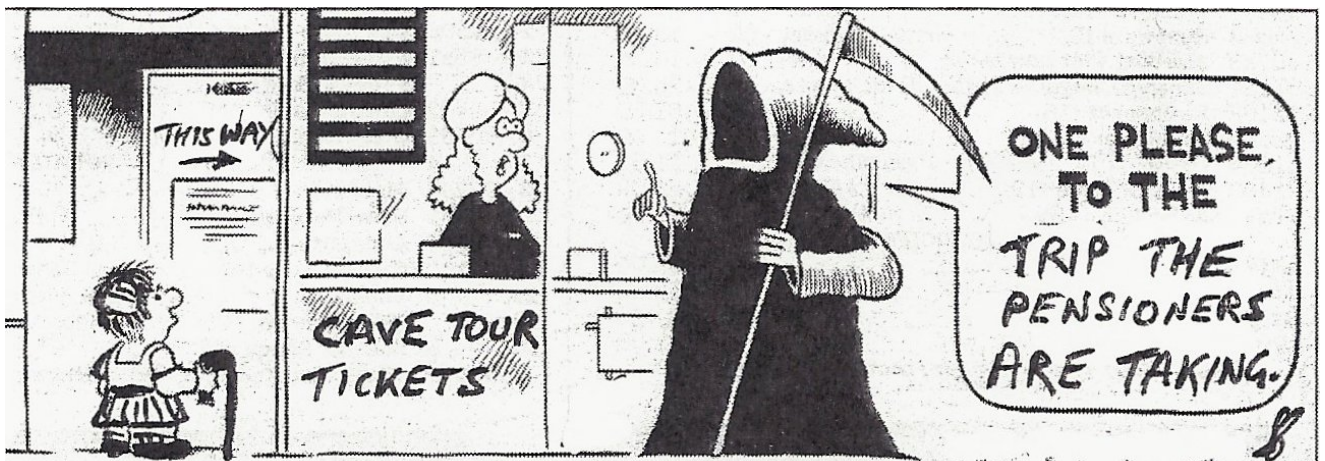
<http://cavingnews.com/discovery>

The majority seems to be reports of missing and dead persons in caves. Laughing at other people's misfortune is always fun so you can't go wrong with this website.



K. Bunton

When Chris Chad saw this photo of Bunty in the photo tag of JF-582 he begged me to put in on the cover of the Spiel. Being in landscape format made me less than keen but hopefully making Bunty a page 3 girl will sate Chris's appetite. Tasmanian caving doesn't get any more cutting edge than the scene depicted here.



Trip Reports

IB-11 Midnight Hole

Janine McKinnon

22 July 2011

Party: Nicolas Baudier, Anais Carlin, Trent Ford, Janine McKinnon, Petr Smejkal, Ric Tunney

Nico's girlfriend had arrived from France for a few weeks so some caving trips were on the itinerary. First off the rank was the classic Midnight Hole through trip.

Despite this being winter, the water levels in the creek were quite low as we crossed it on the walk in. So we had no concerns about Mystery Creek Cave for the outward leg of the trip.

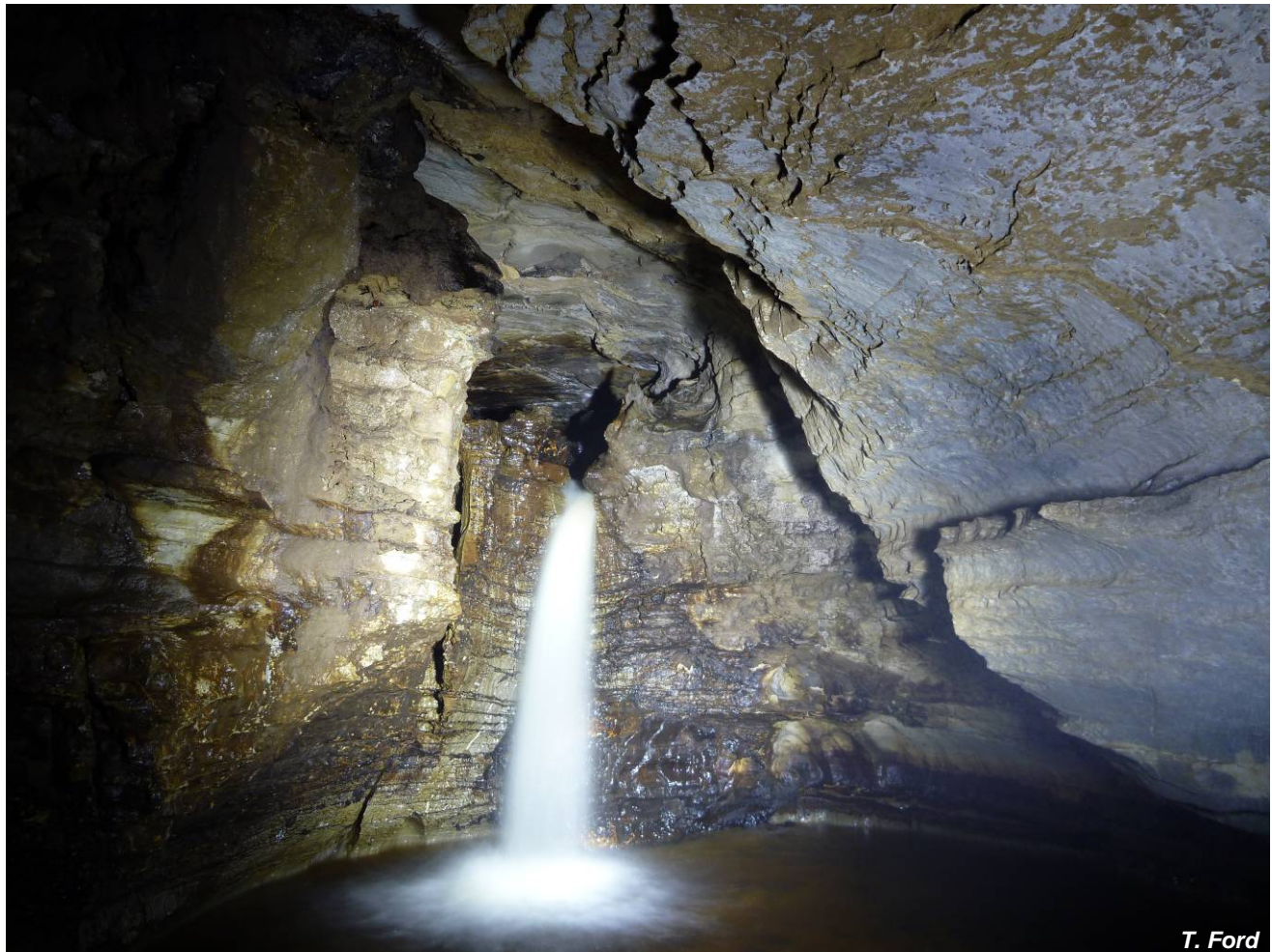
All went smoothly and well on the descent through the cave, with the small problem for Nico that his right hand became very sore quite quickly. By the last couple of pitches he was having a lot of trouble with cramps in the hand. Still, he made it to the bottom of the cave, so all was good.

On the way out through MCC we noted debris at the level of the skyline traverse. There are some times when you REALLY can't do the through trip! The water levels were very low on this day however.



T. Ford

Caver-jam at the bottom of the first pitch.



T. Ford

The Boiler Room in Cephalopod Streamway, Mystery Creek Cave.

JF-221 Owl Pot & JF-223 Tassy Pot

Alan Jackson

23 July 2011

Party: Nicolas Baudier, Anais Carlin, Serena Benjamin, Trent Ford, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Grant Rees, Petr Smejkal

With China scheduled for September it was time to knock off a few classics to get some prusiking under my belt. There turned out to be many tagalongs. Team Elite (me, Grant and Anais) took Owl Pot while Team Lame took Tassy Pot. Team Super Lame (Nico) spent the day on the surface.

Team Elite bounced Owl Pot in a few hours, leaving it mostly rigged, yawned a bit, chatted with Team Super Lame at the cars, had a bite to eat and then ambled into Tassy Pot. Finally, after a cold hour of waiting at the top of the 70 m pitch, all four members of Team Lame were out of the way and the three of us bounced the 70 m and then derigged Tassy Pot.

Back on the surface, Trent had opted out of tackling Owl Pot (he was suitably knackered already). The three less-lame members of Team Lame finally appeared from Owl Pot far too many hours later and we headed for home.

Yawn ... what a dull day.

JF-221 Owl Pot & JF-223 Tassy Pot

Janine McKinnon

23 July 2011

Party: Serena Benjamin, Trent Ford, Petr Smejkal, Janine McKinnon

This is my half of the “two caves in one day training for China for Janine, Serena and Alan” epic. [*Epic? – Ed.*]

Alan and his crew of two got away from the cars first. No surprise there. I think Alan had already decided this was a competition. We weren’t far behind though and were soon rigging the entrance pitch of Tassy Pot.



Alan explains the rules of the competition to Janine.

Our rope lengths were interesting. One rope to the rebelay on the first pitch and then another from there to the bottom of the second pitch. This meant that I really needed to have two anchor points at the first rebelay, the p-hanger there and a natural which is about a metre below. It took me a few (quite a few) minutes to get the length of the bunny ears right, time that Alan wouldn’t be losing rigging Owl Pot (he had been there recently and remembered the rigging well).

Not that I was in a race with him, or anything ...

Second pitch rigging went quickly and smoothly, and then I hit a small snag on the third pitch. We spent some time rigging this. More time lost.

Not that I was in a race with him, or anything ...

I got to Goodbye Chamber, with Petr close behind, and we waited for the others with the rest of the rigging gear. And waited. Where were they?

Trent hadn’t heard Petr call “rope free” and had been waiting at the top of the third pitch. Finally he decided to go down. More lost time. [*This makes it sound like the situation was Trent’s fault, which is not the case. The problem was that Petr didn’t continue shouting “rope free” until he got a response from Trent. – Ed.*]

Not that I was in a race with Alan, or anything ...

All went smoothly once we had the rest of our party and we all got to the bottom of the 71 m pitch. I immediately started up, as we still had another cave to do today and,

I wasn’t in a race with Alan, of course ...

As I prusiked up to the top above the first rebelay I thought I could hear voices. No, couldn’t be ...

Bugger, it was.

After waiting for Alan to do a suitable amount of gloating (not that he was in a race, or anything, you understand ...), I continued out of the cave. Serena exited close behind me, and Petr soon after.

We had lunch and waited for Trent.

After half an hour we were getting cold and keen to get Owl Pot done. We checked Tassy Pot and Serena saw Trent starting up the entrance pitch. After a shouted discussion he decided that he wasn’t keen to do Owl Pot so we headed off from the cars at 2:40 pm.

The trip down the cave was quick and efficient. Alan had shown remarkably little faith in our determination and had de-rigged the bottom rope, and left it at the top of the previous pitch (just in case we did want to go to the bottom). We picked this up and re-rigged the pitch and dropped to the bottom. This was quickly done as Alan had left all the knots in the rope.

Bottom bagged, it was straight back out. I had remembered the entrance pitch/slope as very muddy and unpleasant. I hadn’t been there in 25 years. It is nice to know my memory is accurate sometimes [*Well, once at least – Ed.*], although I’d have been happy for this to be one of those occasions when it was wrong. It may be another 25 years before I go there again.

Petr and I (de-rigging) were back at the cars at 5.30 pm. So it wasn’t an epic day at all.

Alan and crew beat us by about 1.5 hours. Damn.

Not that we were in a race, or anything ...

[Janine also included a rigging guide but since it didn't significantly improve on Gavin's from seven years ago I

decided it was shorter to publish this: for rigging guide see SS341:7-8 – Ed.]

JF-337 Slaughterhouse Pot

Janine McKinnon

29 July 2011

Party: Nicolas Baudier, Anais Carlin, Janine McKinnon, Petr Smejkal, Ric Tunney

This was to be a Slaughterhouse Pot-Growling Swallet through trip. Unfortunately it rained about 90 mm in Maydena the previous night, and it was warm for the preceding few days, so significant amounts of snow on the Mt Field plateau were melting. When we arrived at the entrance to Growling it was a churning maelstrom of fury. I know it does get higher than this but I have never seen it at higher levels. We couldn't have made it across Garths Creek to start down the entrance safely, let alone come back up that way. So, it was to be a Slaughterhouse bounce trip.

SH was quite drippy on the way down but not actually wet. We had a smooth run to the bottom in a little over an hour and I was expecting to spend some time looking around, maybe go through Windy Rift to look at the junction with Growling, check out Herpes, and the Trapdoor Swallet

waterfall, maybe a wander into the top of Destiny. However, when I asked how everyone was feeling and what did they want to do now, Anais expressed a very keen wish to head straight out. Apparently they don't have water in the caves in southern France and she was a bit wet and very cold. She just wanted out. [*The French have a history of waiving the white flag prematurely – Ed.*]

So, after a quick bite, she and Nico started up the bottom pitch. We thought Petr should get a bit more of a look so while the others ate, Petr and I went through Windy Rift as far as the slippery chute. Then Ric, Petr and I rushed down to the Trapdoor waterfall, and I rushed back to join the other two while Petr went for a look with Ric to Herpes. They found it sumped at the first mud bank handline.

More rushing later, I caught up to Nico and Anais in the lower rockpile and the other two caught us before the middle pitch.

It was a short and slightly disappointing day's caving, but I have done it all before, and no doubt will again, so I lost out less than Petr did.

JF-382 Dissidence

Alan Jackson

31 July 2011

Party: Serena Benjamin, Trent Ford, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Grant Rees

For some reason we decided Dissidence was a good target for a jolly on the drive back from our Nine Road exploits the previous weekend. I wasn't so sure it was a good idea during the walk in as we scrambled round and over innumerable tree-falls in the driving rain. It was a truly miserable walk in.

Things got better underground as we discovered that Renegade Squeeze had made good use of the couple of years it has been since our last visit and had flushed itself of most of the black stinking crap that used to inhabit it. The cave was quite wet with most of the minor inlets running. We soon found ourselves at the bottom of Vertical Euphoria trying to take photos with Trent's camera. They didn't turn out brilliantly by any stretch of the imagination but, since they're the first ones ever taken there, and we'd hardly come prepared with a plan or appropriate equipment, one can't complain.

We also planned to have a peek at Run Rabbit Run so I shot up first and commenced rigging Negative Reality Inversion while the others started up. Serena missed the turn off and had an unintended better look at Union Jack for a while. Trent decided to stay put as he didn't fancy bouncing the 42 m pitch immediately after the 55 m pitch. He mistakenly thought we were just bouncing the 42. As a result he spent a couple of hours fighting the cold while we toured below.

With a Scurion (albeit an early model) and Grant's megabright hand held LED torch we were able to truly appreciate how high sections of Run Rabbit Run are. Grant was keen to see the deepest point as it would mark a new low for his caving career; his previous best was Owl and Tassy Pots the previous weekend and probably something at Bungonia prior to that (which is a different kind of 'low').

The rockfall was as awful as I remembered but better without bags. We checked out Softly Spoken Magic Spells and I allowed the others to talk me into pushing the low lead off the pretty end of the chamber. I'd previously been reticent to damage the delicate-looking dust floor but I wasn't feeling as caring this time. It continued for about 10 metres, progressively getting lower until it got too low. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the floor wasn't as delicate as it looked and the trog marks were hardly discernable; conscience intact.

The deepest point is only 30 m from this point (albeit rather unpleasant) so we soldiered on, without Serena. At the drafting tight spot that is the end (Quiet Desperation) we got rather enthusiastic about its potential. I could see larger passage on the other side and I could almost fit. Janine and Grant both tried too, Grant even taking his trogsuit off, but to no avail. It wouldn't take much to open this up! While Grant got dressed again I decided I'd just take another look at the other (uphill) end of Quiet Desperation. The fact that we'd noticed a potential climb during initial exploration, but not attempted it, had been nagging away at me for years. The climb, immediately above the pink tape survey station, proved to be very easy and only a few metres. To my delight it led to a small passage with a draft that meandered this way and that for

about 10 metres before popping out into a medium-sized chamber. Oh goody! Once down on the chamber floor I stood still and my ears pricked up at the sound of running water. At the lower end of the chamber appeared a healthy-sized stream which gently bubbled down lovely stream passage of generous dimensions. I squealed like a girl, did some little twirls and clapped my hands a few times. I couldn't go on alone. The other two hadn't noticed where I'd gone, so it was arguably unsafe to proceed, it was already late in the day and anyway, it's no fun unless you have someone to race in virgin passage. I took a deep breath and returned to the others.

Back at the junction with Softly Spoken Magic Spells I found the others and spilled the beans. Grant was keen to launch straight into it – mainlanders and virgins rarely get the chance to mix. Figuring that it was late in the day already and that Trent was miles away slowly freezing to death we opted for heading out.

Clearly jealous of all the attention I was receiving for my teasers of new passage measureless to man and so forth, Serena went to desperate lengths to get everyone focused

back on her. As she climbed up into the narrow passage immediately below the rockfall she tried hauling herself up on a large (400 mm diameter) wedged boulder. It turned out to be not so wedged and there was an awful din as rocks tumbled, girls screamed and onlookers gasped. As per usual I missed all the action (Serena only tries to kill herself when I'm present but looking the other way). By the time I'd turned around, expecting to find Serena four metres below me with a broken leg and a large rock inserted in her person, the other two had managed to pry off the half of the boulder that had jammed against her leg and haul her back up a bit – it turned out she'd somehow managed to avoid chasing the other half of the rock down the drop. Phew. No broken limbs – just some severe bruising (of leg and ego). We got moving.

Once back in shouting range of Trent we got him on his way and started out ourselves. The added bonus of the new stuff was that we didn't have to derig. Joy.

Serena made it back to the car and even made it to work, planting trees with me, on the following Monday. She was lucky to get away so lightly.



T. Ford

The best photo of Vertical Euphoria we could manage. It doesn't do it justice.

JF-382 Dissidence

Andy McKenzie

6 August 2011

Party: Serena Benjamin, Trent Ford, Alan Jackson, Andy McKenzie, Grant Rees

Once again I would be woken at some unearthly hour due to JF-382. In the four years since Renegade's exciting re-

discovery it has been cause for many sleepless nights, many tosses and turns. It sounds romantic, melodramatic even, but this cave truly must be recognised as one of Aussie's, and indeed the world's, most superb, classic exploratory speleo sagas. It has given us lucky few so much: a dig, an explosive entrance, a classic spiral entrance series, ridiculously large cross joint passages, pitches worthy of names such as Vertical Euphoria, even a series which justified its being named after a three part

epic track by Pink Floyd. It also brought caving legends Rolan and Trev out of retirement for a day! It has kept me awake many nights due to nerves, excitement, and pain from hauling heavy bags on extended trips, and then three years after the initial exploration I've lain countless times at night and thought "where the hell do we look next? At which point in the cave should we focus our next effort?" And then, by way of text message by my old mate Jackson, I was once again tossed from my slumber, with an annoyingly succinct text message late one Sunday which read simply "Dissidence is going again! You coming down next weekend to explore the new streamway I found today?"

The simplicity of the sentence, yet the complexities of the meanings behind it made me fall in love with the Tassie hard man once again. The elusive stream had been discovered and that bastard had had the decency to give me the option of exploring it with him. Of course I was going down to Tassie next weekend!

So I called, Alan giggled down the phone, I giggled back, then we swore lots, then we giggled some more. Memories of holding hands and skipping down passages measureless were flooding back! See, the romance is real!

So a team was organised. Of course Sabrina would come; the discovery of Dissidence was as exciting for her as it was for us. She has been invaluable in the work that has gone into the cave and has certainly become one of Aussie's elite. The other crew were in the form of young gun Trent - the send anywhere to see if it goes, enthusiastic guy - and young dumb and full of cum Grant. This was exciting for me. I can see a future in Tassie cave exploration in this young crew. An enthusiasm, a clique that has been short in recent decades of JF caving. Game on. I spent the standard \$40 on food for the day at Jackman and McRoss since Sabrina hadn't made me any 'sandwiches' as she had promised; thanks mate!

The walk in was full of banter, the usual Jackson stuff, the usual McKenzie stuff, and surprisingly Serena giving it back just as hard, another turning point in the game. Trent, hard to break, banter rolling off his back. Grant, well, I think he was freaked out by someone paying out on Alan for a change - he was quiet!

The crew had been lovely enough to leave the cave rigged, so descent down to Run Rabbit Run was quick and, aside from constantly being blown away once more by the size of the cave, it was without incident. We left the photography gear in place at the bottom of the slope and descended into the bowels of the boulder ruckle. Man, I must have spent three years supressing this memory; it was way worse than I remembered, my route finding clearly not what it used to be. We passed the deepest point and climbed up to the lead. How did we miss this? An obvious climb into a perfect hole in the roof. Alan commented that should the following 40 cm by 40 cm phreatic be 1 metre the other way, the cave wouldn't have gone again.

The climb down out of the passage was into a decent stage of development with an active streamway underneath, as I waited for Alan and the kids I stood where he had the week previous and stared into the abyss, the streamway meandering away into the dark as it has for eons. Full credit to AJ for leaving this for "the Dissidence team."



Serena bridges for the climb into the new stuff.



Terrible photo but it shows the dimension of the first 100 m of stream passage in the first section of the new stuff.

We decided to de-tackle and do what we do best in JF-382, go off grabbin' new passage - eagerly pushing each other out of the way to try and get the lead! The water kept disappearing and we quickly found a closed down area where we lost a bit of hope, surely old Dissy wouldn't let us down? No way! We popped into a 5 m by 8 m passage which just kept going! The direction was classically south east. There were several leads left and right but the streamway kept going. We leap frogged the lead, more so when, after a couple of hundred metres, the vadose development took hold. We would be in the roof, then 10 metres later in the stream, squeezing, pushing on. Alan eventually got away, my hips being too much at a few spots; this was reminiscent of the lower sections in the Punishment Series. One particular squeeze at a 150 degree angle sloped down with a 2 metre drop below into a knee-deep pool really had me stumped. Man, I must have had a long break from all this JF tight caving. The last cave I'd been through was Hang Son Doong! Alan was gone! I tried to convince myself that I'd get back through, and eventually realised that I couldn't let the Jackson have it alone, I'd never hear the end of it. I pushed through, and fell down the drop into the pool below, quickly bollocking myself, too far from home to knacker myself here. I caught Alan; there was a junction, a wet way, and a dry way above. Alan had already checked the dry way so we climbed back down into the stream again where the passage closed once more. With Alan ahead the constrictions became more awkward. I had several attempts on one particular nasty and finally gave up. This

cave was not one for me! The kids caught up and eager Trent followed AJ where Grant and I wouldn't, or didn't really want to fit. Serena followed the roof passage.

We waited for around 10 minutes, until Trent re-appeared asking for the survey gear. "What happens? Is it worth coming through? How far does it go?" the reply was "around 25 metres more, to a sump, I couldn't see the end, Alan was in the way." Man, I'm glad I didn't follow! Even at this early stage in the game I'd noticed Trent's estimates to be somewhat exaggerated!



T. Ford

Almost all over – the vile mud-coated, knee-deep water zig-zag a couple of metres before the final sump.

This was tragic caving, but a sump was definitely terminal. Serena returned cold and damp, Grant was freezing too. I sent them back along the way to try to get warm, but before they had gone too far the lads returned, really wet and getting cold! Taking charge, I figured that out of the three, Grant was probably the warmest, and also the youngest, therefore the one who would have to harden up and do some surveying! Trent was properly cold, on account of lying down in the stream, and Serena is always the gofer in side passages and the like so I sent them back to get dry kit and check out some sides. AJ gruffly inducted Grant into the JF School of surveying... "This is MY disto, keep it dry, keep it mud free, and give me TWO readings. Point it, click it, and look at the screen, it measures *distance*, DON'T MAKE ME ANGRY!" ... I had forgotten how charming Alan could be.



T. Ford

Alan sitting in the sump – surveying doesn't get any better than this ...



T. Ford

Andy and Grant contemplate the futility of caving at the junction near the sump.

We started back, it took Grant a few tries to get the hang of what we were doing, "three metres, no six!" but he soon caught on and even with Alan's demands he kept his professionalism and kept moving back towards the bags. Bizarrely Trent kept re-appearing with claims that he kept losing his way in the 40 cm wide streamway, and that he couldn't find the way on! Brilliant! We got some great legs, 15 metres, 25. Think we even got a 30! There were leads here and there and we had a peek in a few. Trent by this point had given up getting lost and claimed to have warmed up so had a climb around in the leads too. During one of Trent's lost moments he found a biggish cavern with two passages heading off it! It was getting late in the day so we decided to rest the crew while I climbed into the obvious passage and smashed my way through some slaty looking fill into a good rift. After 50 or so metres I came back to say it was definitely worth surveying. Meanwhile Trent had discovered that he couldn't fly as he tried to scale a climb from Alan's shoulders, promptly falling off. However, he's a hard little bugger and didn't seem too fazed. It was time to eat so we headed back towards the bags with the idea of a change of thermals and some overpriced chocolate croissants. The team was tiring quickly, but I'd paid good money for a weekend in Tas so was not letting them off lightly. After a chat over some chocolate we decided to head back in to tie off some of the question marks and bring the survey data back to the old survey station just past Quiet Desperation. One lead went for at least 30 m so we decided to add it onto the survey. After 120 m and no word from the front we decided to leave a station and a question mark and carry on working back in the streamway. On return, Trent claimed to have discovered a further 500 m of passage back up there! Serena estimated 200!

Due to the onset of fatigue the crew were making wrong decisions in regards to route finding so, with constant reminders about how far we were from home, we headed out slowly. We had a good system for surveying, Serena finding a station, Grant marking it, Trent shooting the leg, me taking the readings and AJ scribbling geekily. It was like clockwork, I was almost disappointed when we eventually tied it in!

It was 2130, we had had our day, so we decided to climb back to Run Rabbit Run and try taking some photos. It was slow, arduous work getting back. My route finding was surprisingly bad and the team seemed to be looking for their second wind. On arrival back we set up the obvious shot, which in that place is surprisingly hard, as you have to shoot from halfway up the boulder slope on account of big blocks taking up the frame lower down. I wanted to try to illuminate the shaft into VE, and god knows with a Scurion or three we had enough lumens to light the place! The shots looked good on the camera's small screen so I was happy, however I had made a grave error not checking the setting of the film speed - apparently set to 2000 for some reason - and the shots came out extremely grainy. We sent Trent, Grant and Serena ahead to start climbing pitches while we tidied up survey notes and put away camera gear. Alan did a few Disto shots from the top of the rock pile in Run Rabbit Run and got several 79 m ceiling heights but other spots were out of range.

On arrival at the bottom of Negative Reality Inversion we realised just what a slow climb out to the surface it would be, so we did what AJ and I do best, started to gang up and bully everyone, but mostly Grant who had already had a hard enough day. We would occasionally have a dig at each other, just for the sport, but it was like old times; I had missed this! We cruised up admiring the passage, especially the dizzy heights of Union Jack's ceiling. We all climbed up one after the other through the spiralling entrance series, me bringing up the rear, with a big grin! The cave had delivered once more, I had forgotten about the excessive mud and the terrifying boulder choke but I hadn't forgotten the classic nature of the trip, absolutely brilliant. We surfaced after 2 am and pretty much rolled down the valley, everyone having to find their third wind to get back to the car, where four tired cavers promptly fell asleep while Alan drove us home. I was stoked to come past New Norfolk and have Alan shouting at me to talk to him to keep him awake. Did this mean we had almost broken him? Or is he just getting old?!

Dissidence is now not far from being 3 km long, with lots more to survey. We are 10 m short of the depth potential with a current cave depth of 321 m. Amazingly the cave had sat proud at 8th deepest in Aussie for the last four years but thanks to Alan's persistence and the good work of a long day it now stands at 5th deepest. I feel super lucky to be part of the ongoing exploration of this superb hole.



A. McKenzie

Run Rabbit Run chamber – again, not a brilliant photo but it's all we have.

JF-382 Dissidence

Alan Jackson

20 August 2011

Party: Chris Chad, Alan Jackson, Grant Rees, Petr Smejkal

My personal enthusiasm for this trip wasn't high for some reason but some sense of excitement managed to assemble itself by Thursday evening and plans started coming together. Various excuses were coming in from the usual characters; Serena was doing SES training, Janine was still on the mainland, Trent was on standby for a new baby. Knowing that I wanted to derig the cave on this trip meant I needed a few people to help drag all the gear out so I cobbled together a semi-cave-literate team at the last minute, or so I thought.

The first job was to pop some fluorescein into the little sink above JF-381. I had always theorised that this came into the side passage with the 8 m aven at the end on the right hand side of Union Jack about 30 m down from the bottom of Spent Force pitch, which then drains into The Serpentine. I had also assumed (after a failure to prove a connection between Yabby Creek water and the water at the bottom of Negative Reality Inversion pitch) that The Serpentine must now be the NRI pitch water source. I thought this dye trace would kill two birds with the one stone.

Once I caught up the others at The Serpentine junction we hung about for a while hoping to see green but we grew impatient. Assuming my theory was correct, I decided to give the whole lot a head start and put another teaspoon of fluorescein into The Serpentine stream (now a much bigger stream than sinks at JF-381). Ultimately I was also expecting to see green water in the new extensions, assuming it was the main collector for the bulk of water in the cave.

By the time we'd all bumbled down to NRI and descended it the inlet there was still showing no signs of green. The displacement between these two points is only about 40 m in the horizontal plane and about 60 m in the vertical plane, so I was anticipating a quick flow-through time. We continued on, hoping to see a green tinge on our exit.

Once in the new stuff we moved to the side chamber that Trent discovered off station RP744. There were two good leads off this chamber. The first required a short aid climb. I kneeled on Petr's back and managed a nice skyhook placement that allowed me to hang comfortably (particularly so for Petr) while I placed a nice high bolt to clip the etriers to. Beyond the initial 3 m step I was able to climb up a chimney another 6 m or so. A bank of super sticky clay partially filled the passage at this point which would need a digging implement of some kind to easily shift. I couldn't pick a draft but the passage appeared to continue on the other side and it is worth a return in my mind.

While I had been up there Grant had headed off to look at the other ascending passage leading off this chamber (which Andy had investigated briefly a fortnight earlier), but he had returned already saying it was too tight and sharp. Soft bloody mainlanders. Upon my suggestion (perhaps 'insistence' would be a better word) that we head

back in there, push it properly and survey out, everyone seemed to get cold feet. Everyone seemed happy to do the Disto but all claimed that instruments were beyond them. Jesus Christ! Finally I coerced Chris into instrument duty and we headed in. Petr popped up the etriers for an assessment of the dig/lead.

The other passage was indeed a little tight and quite sharp - but it was virgin passage for fuck's sake! Grant took the lead again for a little while but soon came to another 'too tight' bit. I overtook him and somehow managed to survive the 3 m of slightly annoying passage and popped out into a ~2.5 m wide circular pot. A 2 m climb at the back provided access to continuing passage. There was no running water in any of the passage but this section had many shallow pools that suggest it isn't entirely a fossil branch. A few metres later the passage dropped to the left and changed from vadose nature to low wide phreatic. It would seem reasonable to suggest that when/if this passage is active this section would be sumped. The passage continued off out of sight round a gentle right hand bend but since the other two had clearly showed they wouldn't be joining me, I turned around and set up a survey cairn in the little circular pot, cursing the whole way.

Grant was selecting survey stations about as well as you'd expect anyone on their second ever surveying trip (poorly) and Chris seemed intrigued with the two strange pieces of aluminium in his hands. After a handful of interminably slow legs I suggested to him that I now understood why he did most of his surveying in obscure Florentine caves on his own - no one else was patient enough to wait for his readings. I took the instruments off him and did them myself. Finally, 79 m of survey later, we joined back into the last station in the initial chamber.

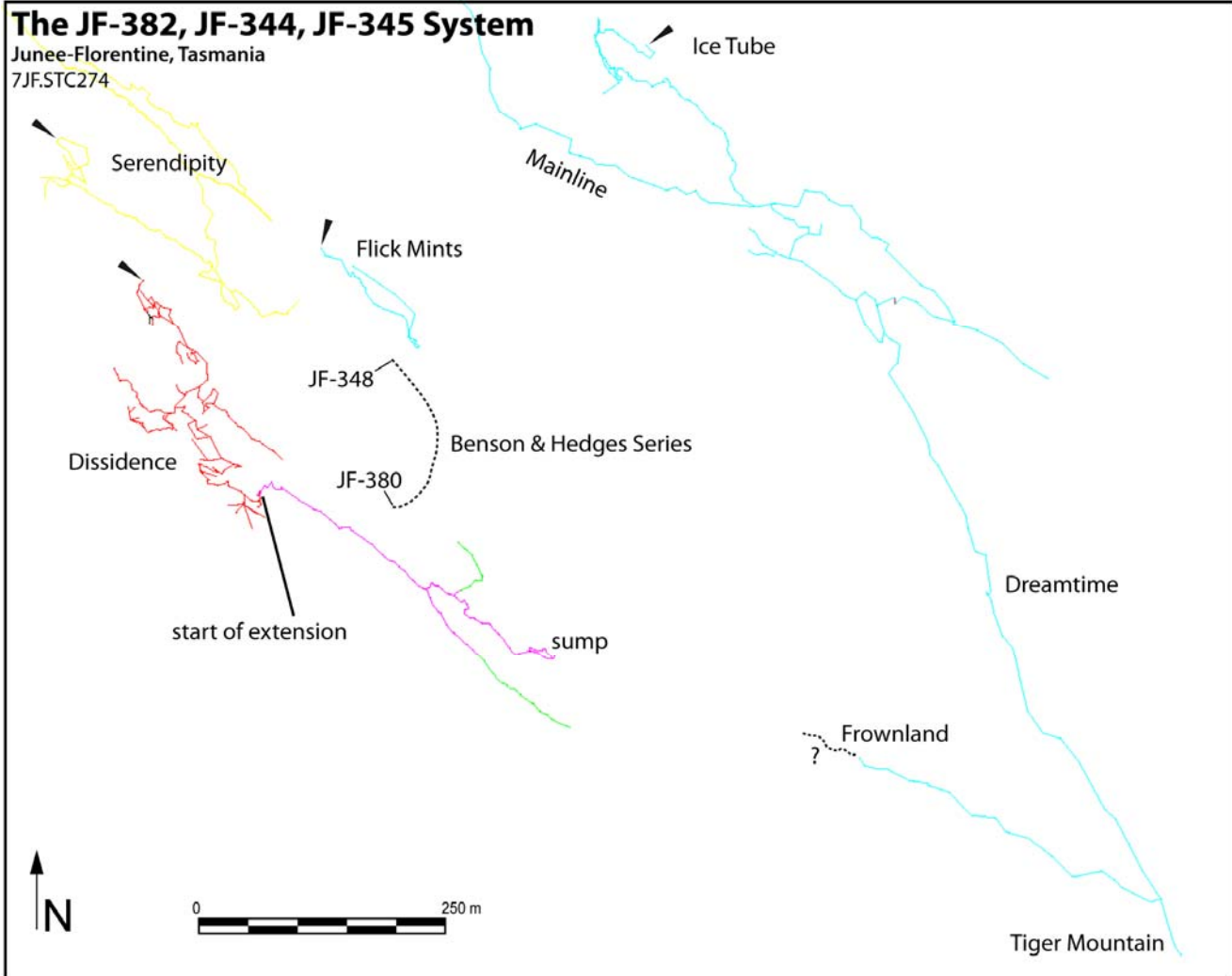
Petr was nowhere to be seen but eventually appeared from the main stream passage below. He had not been able to work out where we'd gone. I was rapidly losing what little faith I had left in my 'team'. To check for draughts in the side passage I let off a little smoke but all we got was a chamber full of slow moving smoke, very much like an earlier experience in Pendant Pot. I left the etriers hanging on the side lead for a return trip later in the year with an appropriate digging implement.

Sensing that Chris was well off his game I decided on setting only one more target for the day - to finish the survey down the fossil passage that parallels the main streamway. This turned out to be not too unpleasant (only the last 30 m is low and coated in vile mud). Chris had managed to restore some instrument form and took on that job again. At the end of the passage it narrows and drops (we shot a 7 m, 45 degree leg down the final slot) and it didn't look passable. Even if you did get down it there was no way one could generate enough friction in that mud to get back up again. Had it been draughting you'd come back with a hammer and a handline but for now it is likely to remain a dead end. We'd collected another 125 m of data.

The trip out was somewhat tedious to say the least. Chris had hit the wall before we'd even finished surveying. We had a lot of gear to shift out (climbing stuff we'd brought in on the previous trip) so packs were heavy. Before long we relieved Chris of his bag to expedite proceedings somewhat.

The JF-382, JF-344, JF-345 System

June-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF.STC274



Line plot of caves in the Wherretts Lookout saddle area. Cave entrances are indicated with long black triangles. Large pale blue cave is the back end of Growling Swallet. Frownland has never been surveyed and is (conservatively) estimated with a black dotted line. Flick Mints Hole is the smaller pale blue cave. Serendipity is yellow (main upstream continuation is cropped from this map). The contact zone in the Benson & Hedges Series (starting at JF-348 Benson Pot and finishing at JF-380) is indicated with a black dotted line. 'Old' Dissidence is indicated with the red line. The purple line is the passage surveyed in Dissidence on 6th August 2011. The green line is the passage surveyed in Dissidence on 20th August 2011. This map clearly indicates that we made a significant dent in the gap between Dissidence and Frownland, but we still have a couple of hundred metres to go.

I managed to be mostly encouraging and gentle on Chris as he slowly but surely dragged his body out of the cave. To his credit, he never whinged, he asked for help when he needed it and he never really stopped – he just ground his way slowly out. I saved up all my malice and taunting for the trip report.

At the bottom of NRI there was no sign of green water. There had also been no sign of it in the extensions either. This surprised me greatly. What surprised me even more was that the streamway in the lower section of Union Jack, just before it runs over Battery Point pitch, was green. I couldn't understand how that was possible. We traced the dye all the way back up Union Jack to the showering aven that comes in adjacent to the junction with The Serpentine. I was sure that this water got siphoned off into Yabby Creek further down Union Jack but this is now clearly not the case. My water arrows on the old Dissidence map are wrong!

Assuming that the two negative results for tracing Yabby Creek and now The Serpentine to the bottom of NRI are correct then that makes the undescended pitches in each of these passages much more attractive prospects. They were both left at very unpleasant bits of cave (tight and muddy) but they now have lots of potential again.

We got the cave derigged (bolt plates left behind though) and we were back in Hobart a little after midnight. It wasn't an overly productive day but 205 m of new data is better than a poke in the eye. The fossil passage that parallels the wet way proved to be interesting. It extends 30-40 m beyond the south-eastern most point of the wet way (i.e. new closest point to Frownland). It also nearly got as deep (-319 m, only 2 m off the wet way). Mustering the enthusiasm to extend this passage may lie with future generations though. Trent would probably be easily talked into doing it head first in the nude though. The other section we surveyed is heading for the Benson and Hedges Series (JF-380 et al.), which is interesting too. See the map above showing relative passage locations.

Assuming I survive China, the list of Dissidence-related jobs to complete later this year is:

- Dig in JF-381 – it draughts well, we now know the water joins in and it'll add about 10 m to the depth of the system
- Go back to JF-436 and drop the new pitch that we opened up but never descended.
- Drop pitches in Yabby Creek and The Serpentine.

- Confirm JF-373 Punishment Pot water connection to Vertical Euphoria (and even go chasing draughts in there again – it MUST connect). This would further extend the cave's overall depth beyond that of JF-381's contribution.
- Determine if the VE water is the source of the stream in the new section.
- Push the various leads in the new section.
- Get back to Frownland and finish the survey.
- Hit the Benson & Hedges Series caves again – JF-380 is the pick of the bunch in my opinion.

And probably the hardest of all:

- find some good cavers who aren't afraid of survey instruments.

IB-38 Milk Run

Janine McKinnon

27 August 2011

Party: Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Grant Rees, Petr Smejkal

This was another in the series: Tassie cavers train for China expedition.

I had missed a couple in this series, notably the interesting ones involving exploring in Dissidence. Serena had missed the previous week's trip, so we felt we really needed to get out there this week. We had planned a KD bottoming trip with Alan, the third member of the China trio, but he had gone lame on us, so another venue was chosen.

Grant is always keen for caving whilst he is in the state and Petr hadn't been put off enough by the previous week's trip into Dissidence and was fronting up for more.

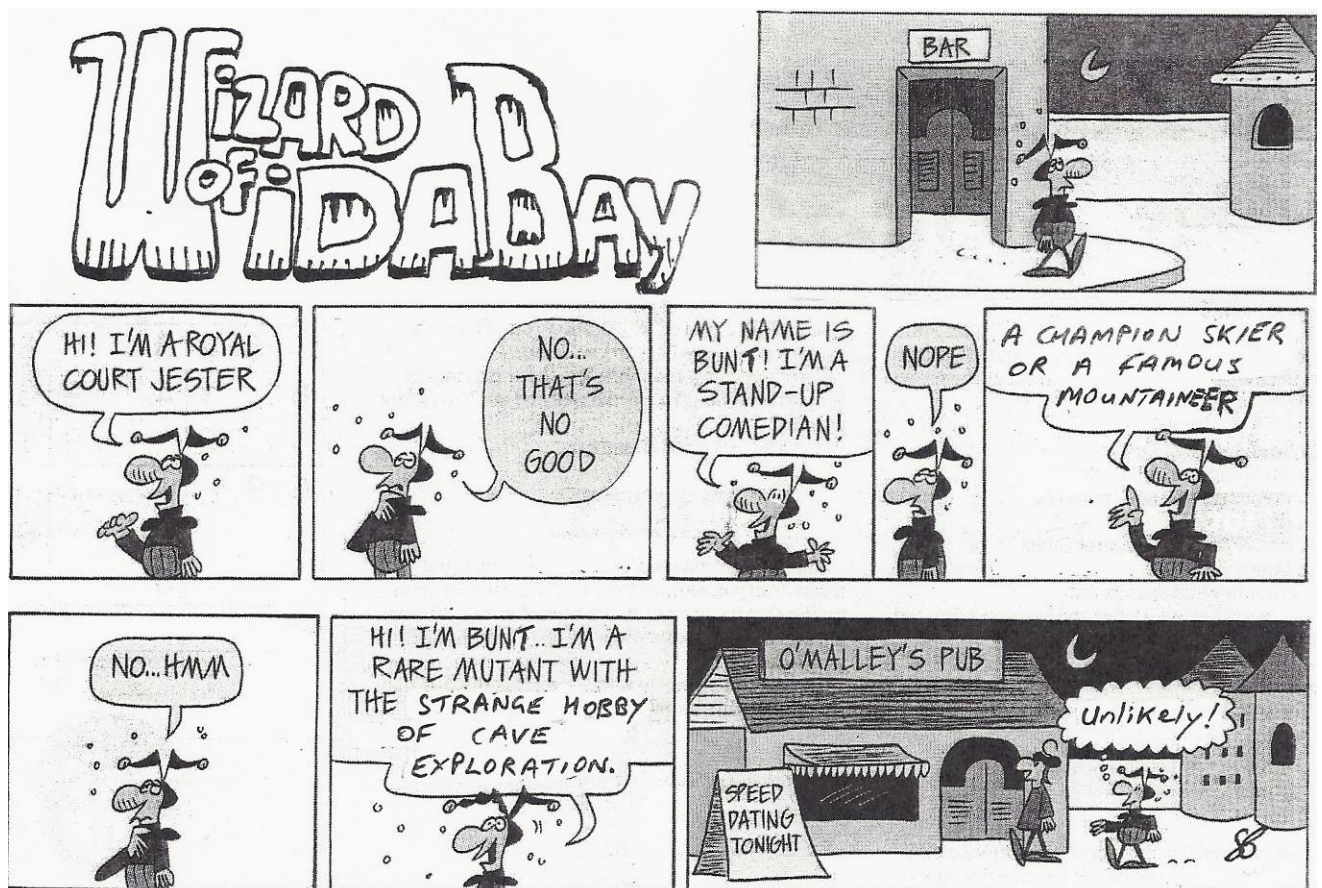
This was going to be much tamer.

The walk in was quick and despite a 15 minute detour to the caves up the taped route first encountered uphill from the Mini-Martin track (yeah, yeah ... I've written myself some notes this time so I don't get lost again), we were at the entrance in 1 hour 15 minutes from the car. [*This is why god invented the GPS – Ed.*]

I rigged down and we were all at the bottom in 1.5 hours from me starting in. The P hangers really make for a quick, easy trip. We had a half hour lunch and poke around and then started out. Grant got the pleasant task of just going out, Serena took the bottom rope and headed out, Petr derigged the bottom couple of pitches and then took his bag of rope out and I came up last de-rigging the top 5 pitches that the 120 m rope had stretched to cover.

We were all out and packed up 4 hours after I started in. Not a really epic day, I know, but a nice, efficient, easy and fun day's caving. There should be more of it I say!

(Rigging guide in SS 349)



Other Exciting Stuff

JF-566 WY Gemini Nomenclature

Chris Chad

[Greg Middleton despaired that the previous issue of the Spiel documented a new name for a cave but didn't explain its origin. I've hassled Chris and this is what he proffered – Ed.]

WY Gemini was inspired by frustration and my general disorganisation on the day.

Another hobby of mine is Astronomy in the field of timing occultations, i.e. observing one celestial body pass in front of another in order to determine the size, profile and position of objects at a higher resolution than can be achieved with a ground-based telescope. The night before I was observing a suspected double star pass behind the dark limb of the moon. The plan was to try to observe a stepped light curve in conjunction with a number of other observers across Australia and help determine if indeed the star was a double or not. The software I was using to provide the predicted times and lunar profile curiously gave an alternative name for the star beyond the usual catalog designations, of WY Gemini. Stars that have a constellation designation are usually brighter stars, so I was surprised this particular star was almost verging on having a name. I could not find this designation in any of

the other cross referenced star catalogues I use, so it was a bit of a mystery to me (though of no consequence). The WY would be an ASCII representation of Greek letters ... I'd guess Omega Gamma, making it roughly the 580th catalogued star in Gemini. The poor sap that started cataloging his stars by this method has been superseded several times since. I'd imagine someone someday will sweep aside the current system of cave tags and replace it with something more accurate and more comprehensive as has happened with star atlases over the past 400 years.

Anyway, the occultation was due to happen around 6:30 pm, so the kids were still up, and Toby was wanting to ride his bike around inevitably bumping the telescope, pulling out cables etc. Then, just minutes before the event, the whole thing was occulted by the house, which resulted in a hasty move, then a father-in-law tried to help, but with 30 sec to spare I had it all back, the vibrations damped out and a cloud came in. Literally within 0.2 seconds of the event I was clouded out. Luckily I got some data through the cloud, but it wasn't entirely clear what was true and what was camera noise.

JF-566 was a bit the same. Not much had been going right in the lead up, and when I found it, I had assumed it was something it wasn't. Nevertheless, administrative hassles aside, it was a pleasant cave and I was happy to find it.

Validating Survey Accuracy – JF-237 Niggly Cave

Rolan Eberhard

Participants: Rolan Eberhard, Chris Sharples, Serena Benjamin (various dates in 2010 and 2011)

Misclosure errors provide an opportunity to quantify the accuracy of a cave survey. This is most easily done where the interconnected nature of the passages in complex caves like Exit Cave and Growling Swallet creates multiple natural survey loops. Additionally, caves with multiple entrances provide opportunities to tie surveys in to surface controls, which can be used to correct some of the distortion that may arise in underground surveys. In contrast, caves of relatively simple form such as Niggly Cave contain few if any natural loops and have only a single known entrance. In this situation a survey traverse through the cave will essentially dangle below a single fixed point, with no obvious means of testing the veracity of the result in any plane, other than re-surveying the cave.

The ASF Survey Commission has published what it refers to as expected errors for different standards of survey. For a grade 5 survey, which implies a precision of 1° and 5 cm (indicative of a typical Tassie cave survey?), the expected error is cited as 2%. The suggestion is that the result of a grade 5 survey traverse 1 km long will yield a result that is accurate to within 20 m. In contrast, Warild's (1994) 'random error curves' imply that the misclosure on a 'good survey' over a distance of 1 km may be a bit over 3 m if the survey legs are 5 m, but will double if the same traverse is done in 30 m legs. Clearly, many different factors come into play, including the instruments and

survey method, the skills and commitment of the surveyors, and the nature of the cave being surveyed. A survey of a steeply inclined cave where the majority of legs are vertical pitches is likely to be more accurate in the vertical plane than a survey of a cave where the legs are closer to horizontal, because in the former there is less scope for inclinometer error (assuming use of Suuntos). Conversely, accurate compass readings are difficult on steeply inclined legs, so the accuracy of the survey in the horizontal plane may be reduced. Compass and clinometer readings on the same survey leg can vary between individuals and instruments (Hunter 2010).

A survey currently underway in Niggly Cave provided an opportunity to quantify the order of accuracy of the survey method and to compare this with the original 1990s survey. The more recent survey utilised a Leica laser disto with built-in digital inclinometer. The instrument reads to 0.001 m and 0.01 degrees. Bearings were made using a Suunto compass interpolated to the nearest 0.5 degree. Results are summarised in the table, which compares x, y and z coordinates of the respective survey at five points in the cave. Note that the earlier survey left few fixed survey markers, so some of the points are not necessarily the same survey stations, although they are likely to be close.

Early on in the process it became apparent that there was a significant discrepancy between the earlier and more recent surveys. This was most noticeable in the horizontal plane, with the 1990s traverse implying a more easterly alignment of the cave, amounting to more than 20 m by the base of the second pitch and beyond. At this point in the cave the two surveys differ vertically by about a metre, although this increases by about 4 m at the base of the 19 m pitch

which precedes Black Supergiant. Initially, it was not clear whether one or other survey was the principle cause of the error, which was potentially in excess of 10%. Accordingly, a loop was surveyed from the entrance down to the base of the second pitch and then back to the entrance, in order to assess the veracity of the methodology used in the newer survey. This survey covered a distance of 375 m in 28 legs and was completed on 11/7/2010. The misclosure in this survey is the difference between stations G28 and G28A in the table ie. about 2 m (0.6%) horizontally and 0.3 m (0.08%) vertically. The order of magnitude of the misclosure is similar when this survey is compared with the first of the more recent traverses (14/2/2010).

These results provide some confidence in the methodology which underpins the Niggly survey currently underway. The earlier survey was a conventional tape and Suunto compass and clino job and it's probably fair to say that the various participants were generally more concerned with 'getting the job done' than maximising the precision of the result. Even so, the apparent magnitude of the error is somewhat surprising and suggests that ultimately there

may be a case for resurveying other major caves. In fact several of Tassie's deep caves have been surveyed more than once. In the case of Khazad-Dûm, this was shown to be significantly shallower than claimed by the cavers who explored it in the 1970s (Butt 1999). On the other hand surveys of Anne-A-Kananda in 1982-1983 and 2002 misclosed by 2 m vertically (Butt 2002); the horizontal misclosure was not reported.

References

- Butt, J. 1999 Khazad-Dum: Setting the depth records straight. *Speleo Spiel*, 314: 9.
- Butt, J. 2002 Three lightweight expeditions to Anne-A-Kananda (MA9) at Mt Anne. *Speleo Spiel*, 333: 3-11.
- Hunter, D. 2010 A field trial of common hand-held cave survey instruments and their readers. *Caves Australia*, 183: 10-12.
- Warild, A. 1994 *Vertical: A Technical Manual for Cavers*, 3rd edition. The Speleological Research Council: Broadway NSW.

| Survey date | Station | X (m) | Y (m) | Z (m) |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| Base of 2 nd pitch | | | | |
| 7/4/1990 | A23 | -61.6 | 130.0 | -43.7 |
| 14/2/2010 | F32 | -84.7 | 123.9 | -45.8 |
| 11/7/2010 | G28 | -86.3 | 123.9 | -44.3 |
| 11/7/2010 | G28A | -88.6 | 121.7 | -44.6 |
| Inlet Junction | | | | |
| 7/4/1990 | A71 | 103.9 | 161.5 | -60.3 |
| 14/2/2010 | F85 | 69.9 | 153.9 | -64.6 |
| Top of 86 m pitch | | | | |
| 28/4/1990 | B2 | 267.6 | 100.9 | -74.5 |
| 28/3/2010 | F114 | 240.4 | 113.3 | -78.6 |
| End of Scary Rift | | | | |
| 28/4/1990 | D67 | 321.0 | 49.1 | -78.0 |
| 3/7/2011 | G19 | 289.0 | 53.8 | -80.1 |
| Base of 19m pitch | | | | |
| 29/3/1991 | D12 | 346.7 | 63.5 | -164.6 |
| 3/7/2011 | G3 | 319.7 | 64.0 | -168.8 |

Table: Comparison of surveys, Niggly Cave, 1990-2011. All surveys commence at the JF-237 tag.

Ric and Janine go Caving in Europe

Janine McKinnon

Slovenia

Some of you may remember a young Slovenian caver who came to Tassie last summer and did a Valley Entrance-Exit through trip with the club. His name was Marjan but everyone calls him Mario. He stayed with us for a week and invited us to stay with him, and go caving, when we were in Slovenia this Northern summer. So we took him up on the offer.

Trip 1. Two couples go caving.

22 May 2011

Mario introduced us to a friend and local caver, called Roman, and his girlfriend (Gordona), the evening we arrived and we arranged to go caving with them the next day.

The cave they chose was called Lenčkova jama, was only a 10 minute drive from "home" at Postojnska, and a 2 minute walk from the car. The entrance was easy to find and just a walk into a small chamber but at the far end was a gate they have built over a vertical squeeze. The cave from here was a fairly new one that they had only pushed

(with a little help from some “bang”) in the last couple of years.

Once through the gate we soon arrived at a 10 m pitch. As we were to discover throughout our caving in Europe, this was permanently rigged. However it had several rebelay (the Slovenians LOVE rebelay!) and Gordona was a beginner. She could abseil and prusik but not cross rebelay*. So we had a rope with us just for her to use. Whilst Roman rigged the rope for Gordona I went down the proper route. Ric followed whilst I gave Gordona a bottom belay.



Roman and the custom gate.



Ric and Gordona on the pitch.

The cave was spacious without being impressively big, had some decorations, quite a bit of mud, a couple more short pitches and a traverse and terminated in a moderate-sized chamber. It was pleasant, easy caving.

Gordona was struggling a bit with the ropework though and it was interesting to listen to a couple having an argument without being able to understand what they were

saying. However the gist was easy to interpret: she couldn't remember how to do SRT properly and Roman couldn't understand why she was having trouble and not enjoying herself. He belonged to the “big, strong, experienced, tough, young male” category, had never caved with a female before (they don't seem to have any in Slovenia, as far as I could discover), and subscribed to the “just toughen up and do it” philosophy. She was in tears or swearing, alternately, a lot of the time. This wasn't helping their relationship! Luckily there was another compassionate, understanding, supportive female present to help and encourage her (Alan inserts wry comment here).

We exited the cave after about 4 hours underground and adjourned to Mario's place to clean up and plan our evening's entertainment.

**This was interesting. Roman, and Mario, went to great lengths to explain the elaborate system that potential Slovenian cavers have to go through to be accredited before they can go underground, at all. This included extensive SRT skills, including full rescue capability (including doing pick-offs). Apparently there are national testing days where potential cavers are tested by nationally accredited instructors. They both agreed with this system, defended it enthusiastically, and Roman was an instructor. Yet here was Roman's girlfriend on our trip and she could barely go down and up a rope. (Her “training” had been by Roman, was obviously very basic, and had been 6 months earlier with no practice since). I didn't have a problem with her being there (it was a good beginner's cave, from my perspective), just a problem with the difference between words and practice. Mario was not with us as he was 2 hours drive away doing his testing. He has been a very active caver for 3 or 4 years.*

Trip 2. Three alone in Postojnska Jama.

23 May 2011

Last year we did a tourist trip into Postojnska Jama, arguably the most famous tourist cave in the world. That was before we met Mario. Did I mention that Mario lives in the house next door to Postojnska Jama and is a cave guide there? So this year we were going to have a private tour of the cave, after closing time.



Ric and Mario at the Postojnska Jama 'entrance'.

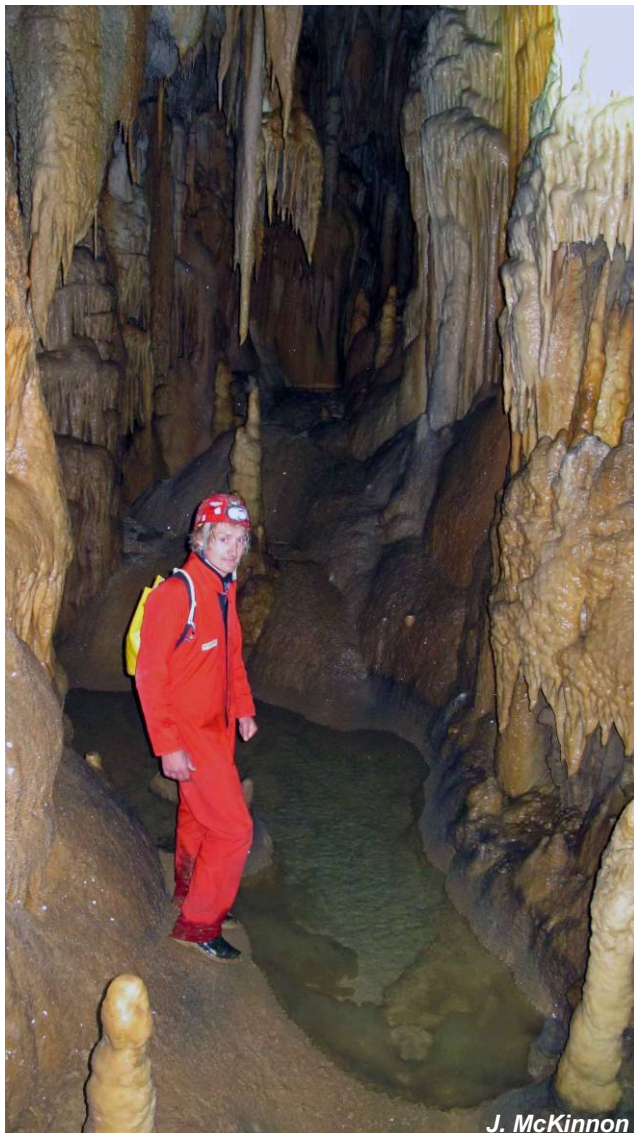
We left Mario's house at 6.30 pm, got some gumboots and caving suits from the gear store, and entered the cave at 7 pm. Unfortunately we were unable to take the train through the first parts of the cave (management apparently would look poorly on one of their guides taking a private train trip) and so we had to walk alongside the tracks. Mario did have access to all the lights though, so we turned them on as we wandered through the tourist areas of the cave. This

cave is huge, with massive chambers and lots of decorations. To be alone in there was a totally different experience from being on a tour with several hundred people.

We also went to all of the areas that are not on the tourist route. There were some well decorated chambers in these parts of the cave and we tip-toed past crystal pools, admired seldom-seen formations and traversed large chambers.



Ric off the beaten track in Postonjska Jama.



Mario in Postonjska Jama.

When we reached the massive room where the salamander display is housed (along with the tourist shop) we were able to spend some time examining them in their tank. It was very interesting. They are true troglobites, with no

eyes and semi-transparent white bodies, yet they definitely responded to the strong light of my Scurion. Whenever it was shone on one of the creatures lying immobile in the open, it would quickly move away under rocks. This happened several times. Presumably they have some light sensitivity. [*Or the heat was burning their flesh ... - Ed.*]

When we had finished taunting the wildlife we continued back out along the train tracks. We were able to get a much closer, (slower!), look at this part of the cave now. We looked up avens and side passages as we went. This cave has been fully explored, of course, but it was still interesting to look in the nooks and crannies as we passed.

We exited the cave at 1 am after a truly unique caving experience.



Ric and Mario show their strength in Postonjska Jama.

Trip 3: Getting truly vertical.

27 May 2011

Mario was taking us to their local training cave, called *Javorniško brezno*. This was a cave 160 m deep, all essentially one pitch, with a few ledges and offset bits, but where you are on rope the entire descent/ascent. As this is Slovenia, a rebelay was placed every 20-25 m, whether it was necessary or not. They don't like long sections of free hang. So we were going to get to pass a lot of rebelayes. All good fun.

We left Mario's place at 6 pm, after he got home from work. Before the main event we planned to see two other tourist caves that are seldom visited in the area.

The first, Pivka Jama, is at the bottom of an impressive doline. This is part of the Postojnska system but only connects through sumps. There are well constructed metal steps (with hand rail) in good condition, all the way down to the gate. This has taken considerable construction effort and been quite expensive, so I found it strange when Mario said that trips go there only very occasionally.

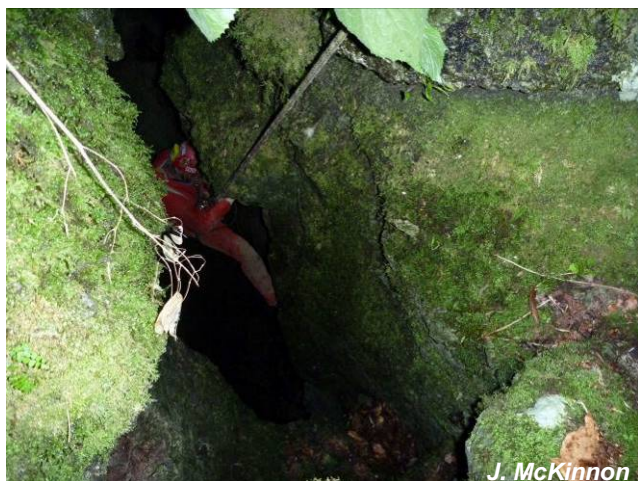
Once through the gate we found ourselves at river level and followed this upstream along a constructed walkway, usually about 10 m above river level, that in several places had been tunnelled through the rock. The passage was large and the river similar in dimension and flow to Growling Swallet. We followed this walkway for several hundred metres, until the river sumped, and then we climbed steps up to a higher level.

The upper sections were largely rockpile fallen from the ceiling of the large chamber we were in, with some interesting formations in black. We left the cave through another gate at the top of this chamber and climbed another set of well constructed metal steps to get out of this doline (which is a different one from the one we entered). This entrance was called Crza Jama.



Black formations in Crza Jama.

Finally we moved on to the main event. We drove for 10 minutes and parked on a forestry road. The entrance was in a small doline, 5 minutes walk from the car. It was just a slot in the wall. The cave is permanently rigged, again, and so we had the enjoyment of not having to drag any rope along with us.



The entrance to the vertical training cave.

Mario went first, followed by me and then Ric. The cave is essentially a dry rift, with some nice pitches but not of large dimensions. A bit like Milk Run, but more vertical. There was some interesting rigging, and a couple of very interesting traverses and rebelay, as fits a vertical training cave. We had a great time on the way down. Some 15 rebelay later (but I wasn't counting) we reached the bottom. This was an unremarkable spot, apart from the graffiti that some previous cavers seemed to feel necessary to mark their success in reaching the bottom. The graffiti was dated recently (last decade or so, I can't remember exactly) and so I found it interesting that the locals hadn't removed it.

We started out after a brief snack and enjoyed the benefits of frequent rebelay; short waits and no-bounce rope. On the way up Ric found the nut loose on one of the bolts. We didn't have a spanner with us but he hand-tightened it again. Mario said that this happens all the time and that they take a spanner and retighten it every 20 trips. Ours was the 15th trip since the last retightening. Hmmmm ...

The whole trip down, and up, this cave took less than 2 hours and we were home by 12.30 pm.

Austria

Due to a combination of coincidences, chance encounters and generosity, we got to do two caving trips, with two different clubs, in Austria. I won't bore you with the details of how they came about, just the cut and thrust of the action.

Trip 1. A Tassie-style hike to the cave.

29 May 2011

We were staying in the lakes district of Austria about 4 hours drive from Vienna. We had arranged to go caving in a high alpine area half way between us and the capital with a girl called Wetli, from a club in Vienna.

We left our accommodation at 6 am and rendezvoused with Wetli at 8.30 am. There were 6 of us for the hike up the mountain to the cave entrance, as Wetli had brought a friend who was going to continue on hiking to the mountain top and we had also travelled with the friends we were staying with, who also intended to hike on after we went caving.

We climbed steeply uphill for 1.5 hours, gaining several hundred metres in altitude, before arriving at the junction of the hiking track to the top of the mountain with our route to the cave. Here we parted company with the other three, who were planning a circuit, after first organising a location and time to meet up again.

It was only a 20 minute walk around the mountainside to the first entrance we planned on visiting that day.

We were going to the Oetscherhoehlersystem. A large and complex system with 26 kilometres of surveyed passage, and several entrances.

We entered the Geldloch entrance first, which is a large walk-in entrance, steeply dipping over boulders to the chamber floor. These caves are very new with no decoration but this part had ice formations, and an ice waterfall, which got us very excited. I have never seen ice formations in a cave before. After oohing and aaahing for a while we moved on to explore other passages in this part of the system. They were all dry, well trogged and easy to move through. We left after a couple of hours and moved back around the hillside for 10 minutes to another entrance. This was the way into Taubenloch.



Wetli and Ric at Geldloch entrance.

This part of the system boasts the second largest chamber in Austria and it was this we were here to see. A little bit of

rope work was needed to get to this chamber but, as usual, the pitches had permanent rigging.



Ice formations in Geldloch.



Wetti climbs to Taubenloch entrance.

We made our way through easy passage for a few hundred metres before reaching a rigged climb. We thought the rigging looked a bit tatty but it was nothing to what we saw at the top for the 10 m drop on the other side. Bits and pieces of several generations of rigging were still *in situ* and for some unknown reason there was a ladder and an SRT rope hanging down the drop, right on top. Abseiling right against a ladder brought back memories of the bad old days and I discovered my skills in not getting wrapped up in the ladder were very rusty.



Ladder and rope pitch in Melker Dom.

This drop brought us into one end of Melker Dom Chamber, the one we had come to see, and it was certainly worth the visit. It is 100 m x 50 m in horizontal dimensions and maybe 30 m high.

We made our way over the boulder piles on the floor to the far side and then Ric went back to the bottom of the pitch so we could both get perspective across the chamber. Scale always looks different when you have a person, with light, at the other end.

Wetti pointed out the way on to the rest of the system from the chamber. This was a well marked (BIG red tape) hole in the boulder pile floor. Very small and tight. One caver had already died in this rockpile during exploration, when some boulders shifted. It was still being used for exploration trips but apparently it is still very unstable and few cavers are prepared to go through.

We were just here for a jolly so this was our turn-around point.

The prusik up was straightforward, if you don't mind a ladder wrapping around you as you prusik. I seemed to find a method that kept me untangled most of the time. The other two had slightly more trouble, if I could interpret their swearing properly.

We were out of this entrance after about 2 hours of caving here too, making for a nice 4 hours underground for the day.

The walk down the hill was a pleasant stroll and then it was a drive around to meet the others in our group, having a beer and some food at the meeting place (a mountain restaurant, of course - this is Europe) and the drive home.

Trip 2. Gasselhoehle.

3-5 June 2011

This cave was much closer to where we were staying than Geldloch; in the backyard, so to speak. We could see the mountain it was in from our balcony. However as the local caving club had built a hut (small, basic hotel by our standards) beside the entrance when they had discovered the entrance around the turn of the 20th century, we were going to stay there for the Friday and Saturday nights. That's the way they do things there.

We met up with Johannes and two others (I forget their names) at the carpark at the bottom of the mountain. We then all piled into a 4WD for a 20 minute drive up a forestry road, which is closed to the general public but the caving club has rights to drive along. We parked again at the end of the road and piled our packs into a Seilbahn before walking the 20 minutes uphill to the hut. The hut warden started the Seilbahn as we finished loading and our gear was waiting for us at the hut.

The hut is only open on weekends, with the hut warden and his wife arriving on the Friday and leaving late Sunday. Accommodation is available to the general public, in two dormitories, but they don't seem to get many takers. Cavers stay for free. Meals are available, which everyone has to pay for.

We settled ourselves into one room (which we had to ourselves both nights, YEH!!) and then had dinner. Very civilised. There was only one other person there, a club member "on duty" for tourist trips for the weekend. The club runs trips into the entrance area on summer weekends, for a price of course, and everyone who is able does one

duty as guide in a season. As Johannes was the only one who spoke English, we amused ourselves.



Seilbahn.

The next morning a third caver arrived at 8 am, and so after a breakfast of bread, cheese and salami (I'm not a great fan of Austrian food, I've discovered) we five headed off on the epic 30 m walk to the cave entrance.

It is gated, of course, and we were surprised to see wooden steps, handrails and electric lights. This club has put a lot of effort into making their cave accessible to tourists. I wondered why they put in such effort as surely not many people would make the effort to hike 2.5 hours uphill from where they have to park their car?

At the end of the tourist section we followed some rotting wooden planks, suspended along the side of a 20 m pit by rusting, fraying wire and string. This was a little unsettling. This stuff looked really, really old and crappy. But we didn't fall through, so it was on and up some tatty ropes and into the "wild" part of the cave.

The next obstacle was a traverse around the side of another 20-30 m drop. The handline traverse rope was very loose and at foot level. With a properly rigged traverse line this would have been easy but it was very disconcerting moving gingerly along with a (very) few slippery footholds and equally few good handholds, and the safety line under our feet (Johannes did mention, later in the evening, that they planned to re-rig it higher and more securely). After that it was all pretty straight forward, as we negotiated a few easy climbs and squeezes until we reached a small room with a rigid steel ladder, about 5 m long, lying on the floor. Our first job of the day was to get this ladder through a small crawl. This proved to be a very entertaining exercise. Having finally achieved this goal we discovered what it was for. A new climb up a flowstone wall to possible higher passage. All was clear.

Whilst two of the locals started manhandling the ladder into position, Johannes took Ric and I on a tour of the rest of the cave. This was extremely generous of him because the areas past this point had only been discovered by him, and the other two on the trip, in the last couple of years. It included well decorated areas that Johannes said were the best decorations in Austria, by far (apparently there is very little decoration in Austrian caves. They are too young and unstable). We were to make the total number of people who had been into these parts of the cave 6. One of the guys in our party hadn't been there yet.



Moving the ladder.

We sidled past a clear blue sump and climbed carefully up through some stals before climbing down into another small chamber. Johannes had taped a path through some formations on the floor, which was good. Our clothes were very muddy and he did not want to take them off, which was bad. We did some small gaps between formation, and climbing up flowstone, and the amount of mud on these formations was heartbreaking for such new, and little-visited passage. These cavers don't seem to know about protecting formations from dirty cavers. Such a pity. We spent 20 minutes admiring the stals and a few shawls before making our way back to the others.



Ric adding to the mud in the new section.

They had managed to climb up the precariously balanced ladder and returned with the news that "it went". Ric decided he didn't want to go up so Johannes and I followed the other two up and around the corner to a small squeeze. A bit of ropework later and we emerged into larger passage. We had new cave. We explored upwards first but soon ran out of cave, or, actually, got to a dodgy climb. We surveyed what we had found so far and then had meal number three for the day. These guys don't like to go hungry. Over food it was decided that one guy would head down the sloping ramp in the other direction, on rope, and report back. He disappeared out of sight around a corner 20 m down and finally called "off rope". I went next but when I was 30 m, and within earshot of him, he called up that he was out of rope and still in a precarious spot (or words to that effect, in bad English and some German, that I managed to interpret). I went back up and we decided that it was a job for another day.



The club 'hut'.

We surveyed our way back to the ladder and found that Ric had got bored with waiting (we had been about 1.5 hours), and left.

The trip out was uneventful and we found Ric sitting comfortably back at the hut, beer in hand, mud removed.

Only the hut warden and his wife were there; the club guide had left. We wondered how it was worthwhile for the warden to come up to sit and serve five people dinner. We were told that they had had 55 visitors during the day! All came to do the cave tour, and most had lunch too!! I don't think I truly understand how the outdoor scene works in Europe, or just how many people there are out doing activities in the mountains on a summer's weekend.

We had a comfortable night again and walked the 20 minutes down to our car in the morning, after a leisurely breakfast. As we drove away we saw a couple walking up the hill towards the hut. Another couple a few hundred metres further down the road .. some more people at the carpark where we had left our car ...

Feedback from Johannes was that they had 75 people arrive at the hut for a tour (and presumably beers, lunch, coffee, cake, etc.) on the Sunday. Plus two injuries that needed treating. Amazing. It wasn't even a very good cave (the tourist bits) to be honest. It certainly wouldn't happen in Australia. We're too lazy.

IB-2/IB-3 Loons Cave Surveying

Alan Jackson

While not an official STC project, I figure this should be reported on in the *Spiel* so we have a record of it (and it's a good excuse to put more photos of me in the *Spiel*, including another spectacular cover ...). As part of Rolan's efforts to put together the Southern Tasmanian Karst Management Strategy he wants to get decent surveys of some of the caves that see high levels of use (so he can more easily demonstrate which caves will be out of bounds in the future ...) We have started with Loons Cave at Ida Bay. The only previous survey of this cave is a hand-drawn line plot created from data collected by Brian Collin, Albert Goede and Peter Brabon on 13 January 1968. They only did the main section of the cave and surveyed a total of 1322 feet and didn't use a clinometer.

For those unfamiliar with this squalid shit hole (Loons Cave, not Ida Bay in general), Loons is essentially a fairly extensive horizontal system that drains an area on the northern flanks of Lune Sugarloaf. It is renowned for its extreme levels of pestilence and mud. It is popular with school groups, the Army, and commercial cave tour operators. According to Rolan, who has it on good authority from his brother, Stefan, the cave is a popular hang out for a rare hydrobid snail. I'm glad to say that the only reason I have ever visited this cave is in return for payment.

Rolan and I surveyed the cave over two trips: 11/4/2011 and 22/7/2011. Old SCS member, Luke Vanzino, crawled out of the woodwork to assist on the first trip. I found the cave to be surprisingly long and spacious. Without the mud it would be a great trip. All up we surveyed 1078 m of passage over a vertical range of ~30 m. Due to elevated water levels we were unable to survey about 20 m of the passage between the two entrances. The survey is almost drawn up – just a few minor labels to add. As the survey was commissioned and paid for by DPIPW, it technically isn't an STC map. However, the map will be published in a future issue of *Speleo Spiel* and a copy placed in the club

map and electronic archives, including all the raw survey data.



Some of the passage is less than desirable. I wasn't trying to avoid the mud but rather minimising my impact on the snails.



Keeping hands clean is a challenge. Keeping the insides of your gumboots clean is, I'm afraid, impossible.

Power Tools and Exit Cave – a match made in heaven

Alan Jackson

As part of the whole Exit Cave Resurvey Project, Tony and Co. suggested the river crossings not far in the IB-14 entrance could do with a tart up. Rolan called in the heavies and a crack team of engineers and bureaucrats were dragged to the cave to suss the situation. The result was a report by Parks engineer, Tim Chappell, called *Exit Cave Engineering Assessment – 2010*. A copy is in the archive for those who might be strangely interested.

The gist of the report was that the existing infrastructure (angle iron steps, associated handline/bolts and the other stream crossing handline rigging points) were not up to scratch (old, poorly installed and not 316 stainless steel) so should be replaced.

Rolan managed to scratch together some funds from his miserly budget (probably denying funds to his latest cave-gating plan) to invest in large quantities of stainless steel and I cobbled together a band of hapless volunteers to provide labour and power tools.

The bulk of the work was conducted on the first day of the Extravaganza survey expedition (20 Feb 2011); that way we managed to secure a larger number of plebs to carry all the heavy materials in.

Basically we replaced the old angle iron steps with new shiny stainless ones with such enormous glue-in bolts that they should never need replacing; chucked in a few new eye-bolts and rigged some new rope for the associated handline; installed new bolts and rope for the two stream crossings further into the cave; and hacked, heated and ground the old infrastructure out.

In order to achieve the number of large holes we had to make we had a lot of battery power. We had three hammer drills (and something like 8-10 batteries associated with them), a MAP gas blowtorch, cordless angle grinder and several other items. It was almost fun in the end. The photos tell it best though.

Thanks to Chris, Ric, Janine, Gavin and myself for donating the variety of expensive tools we had. Thanks also to the plebs who sherpa'd gear for us and assisted with the installation. Apologies to Chris' owl who politely declined our offer of hearing protection – he said he couldn't give two hoots.



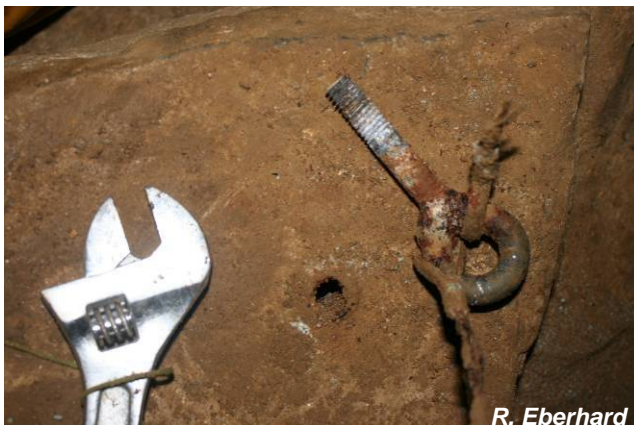
R. Eberhard

A hammer drill in a cave is worth two on a construction site.



R. Eberhard

Possibly the scariest thing I've seen all year ...



R. Eberhard

Some of the old bolts and traces were a little worse for wear.



R. Eberhard

Chris gives the old step bolts a little thermal encouragement.

A photograph showing two cavers in a cave. The caver in the foreground, wearing a blue helmet and a red jacket, is holding a yellow gas canister and a torch, lighting a rope. The caver in the background, wearing a white helmet and a red jacket, is looking on. The cave walls are dark and rocky. The name "R. Eberhard" is written in red at the bottom right of the image.

[illegible]

R. Eberhard

A photograph showing three cavers in red suits and helmets climbing a cave wall. They are using ropes and climbing gear. The cave wall is rocky and uneven. The caver on the left is wearing a blue helmet and a yellow backpack. The caver in the middle is wearing a white helmet and a yellow backpack. The caver on the right is wearing a blue helmet and a red backpack. They are all looking down at the wall as they climb. The lighting is dim, with a bright light source illuminating the cavers. The text "R. Eberhard" is visible in the bottom right corner.

An almost Abbey Road moment on the new steps.

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