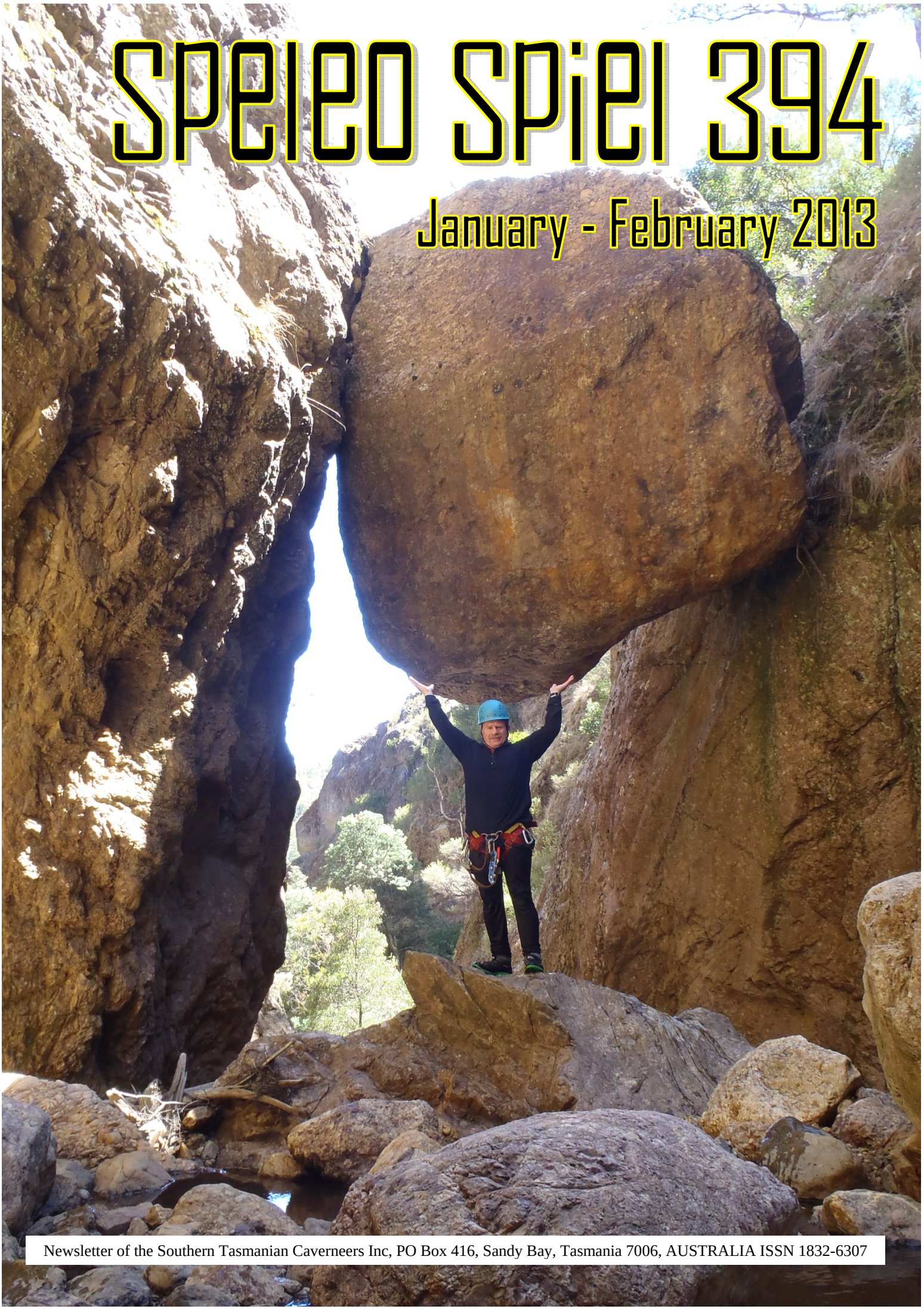
Speleo Spiel 394

January - February 2013



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

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Front Cover: I always told you Damian was strong. Machinery Creek Canyon. *Photo by Alan Jackson (but using Damian's camera)*

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

Speleo Spiel

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Editorial

January and February have seen some good caving undertaken. Janine's been flat out trying to drown herself in a range of sumps and we got a good turnout for what proved to be a productive and fun weekend up in the bad lands of the north with Northern Caverneers.

March and April are shaping up too with Exitravaganza 2013 swinging into action and a possible return to Mole Creek. We'll all have to take May to December off so we don't ruin our average.

Alan Jackson

Stuff 'n Stuff

TRIALS BIKE CAVE

Some may have noticed Ken's general absence of late. Well, he was diagnosed with a minor heart problem which deemed any participation in strenuous activities like caving to be high risk and life threatening. You might be forgiven for thinking Ken now passes his weekends with his feet up on the couch with a glass of red and good book. In reality Ken has embraced his mid-life crisis and is getting back into a sport from his younger days – trials bike riding. Apparently trials bike riding is non-strenuous and not a patch on the hazards of caving …

He updated me recently with a new find to rival the likes of Carpark Caves I and II. Ken has found Trials Bike Cave near Jericho. Ken supplied the following notes for the easily shocked:

Special notes for the environmentalists:

- internal combustion engine operating in a cave,

- dog in cave (just visible on the right),

- no consideration being given to potentially delicate sheep droppings on the floor of the cave.

Ken, aka Evel Knievel, in Trials Bike Cave – and we thought he looked silly in a caving suit!

It's great to see that even members of our Battery Point elite still harbour an inner bogan. Ken is believed to be working on some ASF guidelines for minimal impact trials bike riding in caves. The wearing of unnecessarily loud jumpsuits is likely to be banned for fear of excessive noise pollution.

Ken has provided a brief trip report which appears later in this issue.

MEETINGS ARE ON TUESDAYS NOW

Did you turn up on Wednesday 6 February looking for the club meeting? Unlucky, you were a day late. Meetings are now held on Tuesdays (the first thereof in each month, other than January). This departure from tradition allows us to avoid losing the Civic Club as our meeting venue.

EXITRAVAGANZA 2013

It's coming. Are you prepared?

Organisation is well underway for this year's Exit Cave survey fest. The main game will be played out 9 March to 16 March. If you haven't expressed an interest already then contact Tony Veness immediately.

AGM

The AGM will be held on Tuesday 5 March 2013 at the Civic Club, 134 Davey St, Hobart. It will kick off at 7:30 pm, a little earlier than normal meetings. I suggest you arrive at 8 pm, citing the abnormal start time as your reason for stuffing it up, and you might avoid being elected as an office bearer. We need a new president, vice and secretary this year, so keep your Tourettes syndrome under control.

CHRISTMAS CAME, JUST LIKE THEY PROMISED

Thanks to the Buntons for allowing us into their car port for a pre-Christmas sausage and beer fest. Bunty demonstrated his suitability for the proposed position of STC Cake Decorator by outdoing himself with an over-decorated birthday cake for the Editor.

It was a good turnout but failed to raise any noise complaints from the neighbours. Hence it can only be considered a marginally successful evening.

The anatomically correct birthday cake.

Bretts and Jacksons commandeer the picnic table.

A selection of STCers, including Greg with what looks like baby spew on his shirt.

Trip Reports

South Bruny Island Dolerite Sea Caves

Stephen Bunton

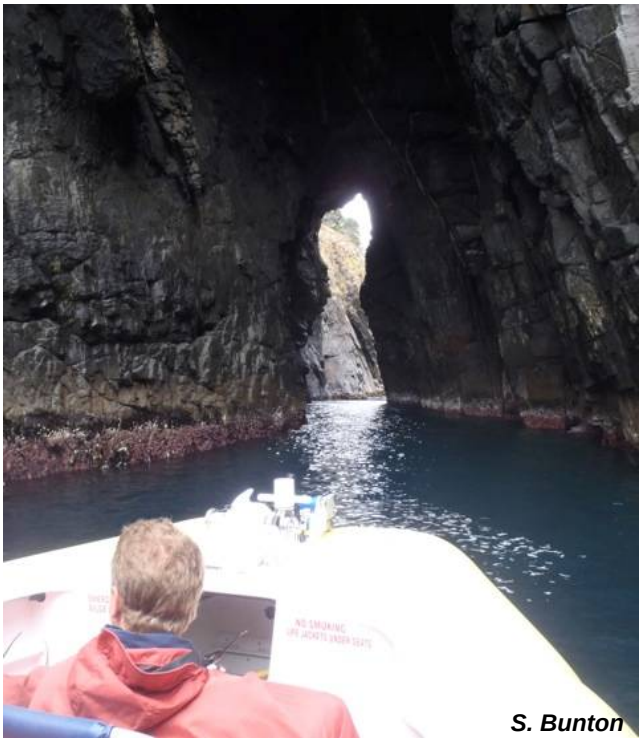
23 December 2012

For those of you who aren't quite up to armchair caving but still want to see what's out there without getting your gear muddy, there are some amazing dolerite sea caves on the SE coast of Bruny Island. These are easily explored from a comfortable boat if you part with a not inconsiderable sum of money to join a Rob Pennicott tour. There's Jimmys Cave named because he swam through it and Keyhole Cave named because the general public lack the same imagination we show with nomenclature. Most of the caves are where faults have fractured the already jointed dolerite allowing deep weathering as well as wave action to do their thing. There's a good breather hole, which is a triangular roof sniff at sea-level but it sucks awesomely and then when the next wave comes in and compresses the air it blows out an incredible plume of spray. If you did risk snorkeling into it the compression would probably burst your eardrums.

A dolerite sea cave.

Unfortunately most of the caves aren't worth tagging, exploring, mapping and documenting, even though they are bigger than anything we have found at Maydena recently. In fact most of our recent finds could fit into one of these caves! The reason I say this is not because I'm prejudiced against non-limestone caves but it's a case of value being determined by supply and demand. There are heaps of these caves out there and they are plainly obvious. The thing that makes limestone caves so intriguing is that they are cryptic, take time and effort to find and explore, as well as the fact that they are a part of a "system". Dolerite caves are impressive but they stand alone in their magnificence.

If you want to be wowed-out then Bruny Island Cruises is a worthwhile day out. For me the most exciting part of the day was the shoals of krill we saw. Prior to this, I'd only ever seen krill in specimen bottles or tanks. Again it was probably the cryptic nature of these animals and the fact that they are a part of a system that made them so interesting. Unfortunately my "happy snap" digital camera auto-focuses and so I have a nice picture of the surface of the water above the krill ball.



Another dolerite sea cave.

Many Falls (and plenty of stumbles) Creek

Alan Jackson

3 January 2013

Party: Gavin Brett, Alan Jackson

Google updated its satellite imagery of regional and remote Tasmania late in 2012 and within a couple of days Gavin had spotted an obvious waterfall off the south-eastern flanks of Moonlight Ridge in the Southern Ranges. A quick check of the topo map indicated the watercourse in question, a tributary of the D'Entrecasteaux River, was called Many Falls Creek, with a total of four unnamed waterfalls mapped. It would be a long walk into unknown conditions but we couldn't get it out of our heads.

We started at the usual caving carpark and headed up the Southern Ranges Track. Once we broke out of the forest and tall scrub onto the end of Moonlight Ridge the views were great to the north and the north-west. Track conditions were a bit muddy but wet feet were inevitable if the day went to plan so it wasn't too miserable. Wary of the potential scrub conditions we would encounter accessing Many Falls Creek we opted to head right up onto Moonlight Ridge to get a good view down over the valley before choosing a final line of attack. The wind up on the exposed plateau was horrendous – the precursor to the terrible fire conditions that day, and the following, that would devastate parts of the state. We had to walk in a tuck position and my sunglasses blew off my face and were out of sight five seconds and two bounces later. Gavin had already lost his sunglasses earlier in the day, presumably having fallen off his head in the scrubbier parts of the track.

Adamsons Peak to the north (top). Moores Garden, Mt Bisdee and distant Federation Peak (bottom).

Just before the first saddle on the ridge we surveyed our target. Down in the bottom of the gully the scrub looked bad but up on the flanks of the ridge the vegetation was minimal (being at 1000 m a.s.l. and severely wind-pruned). The first fall is two kilometres down from the saddle so we had to choose between bashing down the creek line the whole way, hoping for open conditions, and traversing high for as long as possible before making a shorter bash through the thick scrub to intersect the creek lower down where it should be of sufficient size to have carved a scrub-free corridor. We chose the latter and made quick progress at first. The last 150 m was absoloutely horrendous – 2-3 m high scoparia and other friendly plants. We crawled, squeezed and scratched our way to the creek, which opened up like an old friend to smother us in space and cool water. Naturally, we assumed we were home and hosed.

Respite from the scoparia – finally intersecting the creek (top). A section of pleasant going in the creek (bottom).

The going was good for a while but then came the long sections of overgrown creek which provided quite an obstacle-course of roots and stems intermingled with wading in freezing water. The open sections came frequently enough to keep morale high though and soon enough we were atop a lovely 6-10 m wide, 70 m long stepped cascade that terminated in an abrupt cliff with a several second drop. We had reached the first fall – the one so clearly visible on the satellite imagery.

We'd opted not to carry cumbersome ropes and abseiling gear. This meant we had to rely upon skirting any major obstacles by heading into the scrub. This was quite an effort for the first fall as the scrub was horrendous and

numerous 2-6 m cliffs forced us ever wider. We chose the southern (right) bank for the first fall. Finally we made the valley floor and headed back up to the waterfall. It was a truly majestic sight, with the full morning sun illuminating a spectacular vista. The nature of the geology, a fine-grained sandstone with almost perfectly horizontal bedding, meant the water cascaded evenly over the full width of the ~30 m wide face. It almost seemed engineered. The main drop was around the 35 m mark, plus around 20 m of cascades leading up to it. We relaxed, sucked up the scenery and again assumed we were home and hosed now.

The lovely cascade just above the first waterfall (top and bottom).

The deep valley provided relatively open rainforest and the creek bed provided good going. A little downstream there was a ~3 m cascade that was easily negotiated and then some wonderful slab walking. After 500 m or so we encountered our next obstacle. The valley narrowed, cliffs circled around us and the water plunged over two ~8 m waterfalls. Once again the scrub on the sides was our only option. We skirted the first fall on the left bank, using a small tributary to regain access to the main creek. The second drop was fairly easily bypassed using the right bank. The creek remained steep but the going was pretty easy, with many more wonderful slab sections formed by the choice geology.

Another 500 m or so of good going lead to some more small waterfalls that were easily bypassed. From this point onwards the rock seemed to have some kind of lichen growing on it which made it white – it was like chalk to look at. Fortunately it was fairly grippy despite its slick appearance. The going, while still steep, flattened off a bit and we were convinced that now we just had a long slog to get out – there wouldn't be any more major obstacles. We were wrong.

The top and bottom of the first fall.

Things got very steep very quickly with consecutive waterfalls launching themselves at us. The cliffs circled again and bypassing each fall became quite challenging. In hindsight the contours on the topo map do look pretty exciting in this section. After clambering down several falls we stuck our head over the edge of yet another one to

realise we had a serious section in front of us. We could see two 20+ m waterfalls in a narrow canyon and then could only guess what was round the corner, but judging by how far down the valley floor was only a short distance away we knew it was going to be exciting.

A tributary at the first fall and some lovely pandanis.

Waterfalls two and three.

A couple more waterfalls.

A nice fall in the 'white canyon'.

Sticking with the creek was not an option and the surrounding cliffs made the prospects of skirting the falls a real challenge. We stopped smiling, put the camera away and climbed some trees to see if there was a break in the cliff line on the right bank that we could exploit. I even checked mobile phone reception at this point as I had the feeling that this was going to turn into a long day and that a

little forewarning to the homefront wouldn't go astray. Alas, no phone reception anymore. In the end we didn't have to traverse too far away from the creek to get down but it was bloody steep with lots of Tarzan maneouvres and shimmying down trees required. We ventured back to the creek eventually and found ourselves at the bottom of a ~30 m waterfall which wasn't either of the two we'd seen from the top, so it was either the third or fourth in this set. A few more little ones followed.

Gavin climbs down a cascade with the start of the nasty section beckoning in the background. The priority was survival rather than photos for the next little while.

The map said we were about 1.6 km from the junction with the D'Entrecasteaux but it felt like three. The gradient was unrelenting and there were so many little drops and large boulders to negotiate. The rocks had started becoming slippery now too and Gavin's footwear was letting him down; Many Falls Creek in more ways than one. I managed to only have a small number of spills but with every step being a cautious one it was very physically and mentally sapping. Finally the gradient levelled off and the creek promptly split into four at a massive log jam. Deepish pools made for plenty of wading but with the hot winds roaring over our heads it was nice to cool off in the creek. The junction with the D'Entrecasteaux was a welcome sight and made for a morale-boosting milestone (a notable anagram of limestone). The D'Entrecasteaux itself varied from wide, open cobbled expanse to long thigh-deep pools which would then terminate in massive log jams, causing the river to split up into numerous smaller channels which would combine later on back into traditional wide open cobble stretches again. After a couple of kilometres we spotted our first blocks of limestone which also lifted morale. Shortly after the river vanished underground and the thunderstorms rolled in overhead as the forecast trough made its way through. We didn't get much rain though. We half followed what we presumed was a taped route (some old blue ones and other more recent red and white striped ones) and then the river emerged and the welcoming blue of the Camp Gumboot depository came into view. Now it was just the horrible slog out the Skinners Track. There may have been plenty of uphill but it was a pleasure to have a semi-formed track to follow and the opportunity to mentally switch off.

Eroded limestone pillars in the D'Entrecasteaux – a welcome sight.

At the top of the quarry we could smell smoke and we nervously peered over the top bench to see if the whole world was on fire. It all looked far enough away so we relaxed and trundled down the hill to the welcome sight of the car. We had left at 8:10 am and returned at 7:45 pm, so all up almost 12 hours.

All in all it was a bloody awesome day out, even if our bodies were battered, bruised, scratched and knackered. Would I do it again? Probably, but not for a little while. It would be great to take ropes and do each waterfall directly but a paucity of natural anchors would mean it would require plenty of bolts, which all takes time; might be a job for 'Mad' Max Moller. Then there's the thought of the long slog along the lower reaches and back up over the hill to think about – total day out was over 22 km with more than 1100 m of elevation gain and loss. Plenty more new things to be done out there before a return is required but I would recommend the trip highly to anyone else with the nouse, fitness and foolhardiness to endure the relentless nature of the walk.

JF-4 KD Sump II Dive (trip 1)

Janine McKinnon

6 January 2013

Party: Janine McKinnon, Ken Murrey (VSA), Ric Tunney

The first trip was to rig JF-14 Dwarrowdelf to the top of the bottom pitch. Ken was visiting from Melbourne for a week of caving, and a couple of cave dives (he is also ASF-CDG & CDAA). This was very fortunate for us, as Ric and I would have otherwise been dragging all the gear to the cave, and down, alone. Such is the current state of vertical caving in Tasmania (Alan offered but has brownie

point issues, and we wanted to save them for the dive attempts).

We got underground by 10:30 am. The rigging went smoothly, although it is never a fast trip with all the rebelays and bunny ears to put in. We brought a spare pack, with the handline for the rockpile in the bottom chamber, and a stove for hot drinks on the dive trips; working on the principle of doing whatever it takes to keep the sherpas happy. Although, thinking about it, a cup of soup is probably insufficient for that. Lucky I had a few dried figs to offer as well then.

The spare pack we left at the top of the penultimate pitch.

Ric brought up the rear, and waited there for Ken and I to return from rigging the bottom pitch.

We used the one rope to rig the second last and final pitch (the infamous 120 m, 9 mm ex-Niggly rope that is horribly jerky), and as we were not dropping it this trip, I was concerned to make sure the rope actually reached the bottom. It would be a real bummer for someone to go down carrying a tank and have to prusik back up because the rope didn't reach! Thus I made the loop from the previous pitch fairly tight in the tie-in to the bottom pitch bunny ears. I could do it quite easily though, so that was fine. No one shorter than me was coming down.

The trip out was easy without gear and we were all back on the surface after five hours caving.

(See *SS*350 for Dwarrowdelf rigging notes).

JF-23 Lawrence Rivulet Rising

Janine McKinnon

9 January 2013

Party: Janine McKinnon (ASF-CDG/STC), Ken Murrey (ASF-CDG/VSA)

The main reason I am writing a trip report for this dive is to record the state of the line as we found it. I intend to do repairs and replace the current line, but wishes don't always become reality, for many reasons. So any future divers venturing there should assume the line is as described here unless I write an updated report at some point.

So, this was a trip for Ken to have a look at this resurgence, and for me to go to the end of the cave, which I had yet to do.

I sent Ken in first, so he would have the best chance at good visibility. Unfortunately the flow of water out of the entrance was particularly low, and Ken stirred up the sediment as he searched for the small entry to the cave. Thus, when I followed him about 5 minutes later, I could see nothing, and took several minutes finding the way in the entrance squeeze, as the line he had laid to the in-situ (permanent) line into the cave (hidden below water level), followed a somewhat circuitous route.

Finally I was on my way along the permanent line through the restriction and along the horizontal flattener, feeling my way in zero vis. As I reached the point where the passage descends sharply I ran (almost literally) into Ken coming out. I turned and exited.

I had been in the water for about 10 minutes.

Ken reported that the permanent line was broken and shredded a short distance down the slope. It was not repairable. He had decided not to run his own line and continue.

The cave was now totally silted out so there was no point in going in again.

That must count as about the shortest dive I can recall ever doing.

The permanent line needs replacement, preferably with a thicker line. As stated, I plan to do this is the next year, weather conditions permitting.

JF-4 KD Sump II Dive (trip 2)

Janine McKinnon

12 January 2013

Party: Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Janine McKinnon (diver), Ken Murrey (to part way through the Depths of Moria), Ric Tunney

We had planned this trip to coincide with a trip to Hobart that Andreas was doing for work. This was very fortunate as he had very generously offered to fly down here to help with these diving trips when they occurred. This way he got two weekends in, and work paid for the airfares.

He was really needed as the club is unable to field two local cavers with the will, fitness, expertise and strength to help with the tank haul to and from the sump. Alan is one, of course, but Ric and I aren't strong enough to carry a tank. They weight nearly 10 kg full, plus a couple of kilos of personal kit, makes for a heavy pack. Our limit is about 10 kg each.

Ken was staying up at The Giant's Table and had offered to come and carry a pack as far as he was able to go. He was meeting us in Maydena at 8 am.

The rest of us left Alan's place at 7 am, and were travelling well until Alan realised he had left his socks behind, so we turned back before Granton. Andreas also realised he was missing caving socks, so Alan got extra pairs from home. We were off again by 7:30 am.

As we were organising ourselves at the carpark Ric thought he had forgotten his socks. This seemed to be a day of sock dramas. Luckily he found them, so the day wasn't cancelled for want of a pair of socks (humour alert). With disaster averted we were off, and at the cave before 9:30 am. Five people to carry the diving gear (and personal caving gear) to the cave made for reasonable packs.

Alan started in first (with one tank) and quickly disappeared down the cave. He obviously wanted time to tinker with the rigging (memories of Jeff Butt). Andreas went next (with the other tank), with me behind in case he needed directions (and help with the pack on the third pitch head). Ken next, then Ric followed.

The tanks were carried in caving packs for protection, and I had used SS valve plugs, rather than the usual plastic ones. This was to ensure that we didn't have a potentially injuring high pressure escape if one of the valves got knocked open. We also carried a shifter to open the plugs

if they were under pressure. This has happened to me before.

The fins were used to secure the tanks in the packs. Regulators were packed in containers with hoods, gloves and other soft clothing to insulate them from damage, if possible. My computer was in a small box.

Damage to delicate gear is a major concern with all the banging and thumping that packs take on the vertical bits, and particularly through the rockpile of the Depths of Moria.

Despite what looks like a lot of gear (see kit below), it was the least, and light weight, that I could safely get away with.

We all gathered at the bottom of the final pitch after an uneventful descent. Ric had been planning to put in a rebelay on a natural flake he had seen on an earlier trip down the bottom pitch. This would have broken up the big drop nicely, particularly for the prusik out, making it easier and quicker. Unfortunately the flake turned out to be loose, and only appears to be held in place by a small chock stone, and is not the blade of bedrock it appeared to be. On closer inspection it actually looks potentially dangerous and we will consider trying to knock it down the pitch on the de-rigging trip.

We dropped SRT gear and headed to the bottom chamber. Moving the gear had been quite easy, and continued so, until we hit the crawls in Depths of Moria. Then it became a team effort. Ken found he couldn't get himself through the restriction half way along the crawls (a squeeze between a boulder and the wall), and so we redistributed gear and sent him home.

We reached the sump 2.5 hours after starting into the cave. I started getting the diving gear out, and myself dressed in my drysuit. The other three helped speed things up enormously by putting the regulators on the tanks, weight on the harness and generally getting the kit unpacked and ready. Ric knows it all well from being my support person, Andreas is a diver with a similar rig and Alan observes and learns fast!

This was very helpful for us all. Never underestimate the value of reducing the time spent sitting around in a cold cave whilst someone dives.

Ric also set up the stove to boil water for drinks. Unfortunately, just before I went in for the first dive, the billy fell over as he was reaching for it and he burnt his hand quite badly. He plunged it into the stream for a while but still made a mess that blistered badly over the next 48 hours. It didn't stop him continuing the trip, or getting out afterwards unaided … but I get ahead of myself.

The stream flow was low and I thought this was good conditions for the dive. Possibly, in hindsight, a bit more flow would be better; to help clear silt more rapidly, and possibly find or confirm the main route of the stream.

The four weights taken in several decades ago were still on the ledge near the sump. They are the old style that thread through a weight belt. They will be left there at the completion of this exercise for any future parties.

Alan acted as support, passing me stuff, as I kitted up on the pool's edge and checked all the gear.

Stefan Eberhard's line from his 2006 dive (*SS*352) was still *in situ* at the pool edge, and I could see it for about 2 m into the pool.

I had an exploration reel ready but started the dive by following Stefan's line, hoping it would be unbroken and in place as I descended. That would save me a lot of time.

I started down and the dive report follows:

Dive 1.

The line was still intact on descent. The tie offs were good, and the line taught. Visibility was not consistent but was about 0.5 m in the good bits, and less in most parts. I was trying to check the line, get my bearings, look around, and check my exit, whilst also being aware that speed was of the essence to keep ahead of the silt that would follow me, as the slight flow was in my direction. As Stefan described in his report in 2006, the passage plunged steeply down to 11 m, and then headed down a steep silty bank to 15 m.

White Anaspides were everywhere.

The line disappeared into the silt at the bottom here, it was buried at least a foot deep, and I took several minutes digging it out, producing great billowing clouds of silt in the process.

It was here that the onward direction curved sharply to the right and entered a small horizontal passage, about 0.5 m high x 1.5 m wide, as Stefan describes. This was at 17 m depth. I was lifting the line out of the silt (it was buried a few inches) as I went. Visibility was now zero, but with the odd "opening" of a couple of centimetres, so I got glimpses of the line and the surrounding cave. The line disappeared into much thicker silt after about 10 – 15 m, by my estimation; it's hard to estimate accurately in the conditions. I started digging again and after some effort, and lots more silt, I pulled up the silt stake and lead weight Stefan had used previously. This is confusing. He describes placing them at the start of the narrow passage and I was quite some distance into it now. Had some of the tie-offs come adrift and the weight and stake been washed into the passage during floods in the intervening seven years? It seems a bit improbable, but the reality is that I was some distance into the restriction and I was at the weight and stake. I appeared to be at Stefan's furthest point of penetration, as far as I could tell from his description of his second dive. I could see almost nothing but the passage did seem to be continuing slightly upward ahead, from feel. Anyway, there was no line continuing further. I reset the weight and stake into the floor and stopped and considered; visibility was zero. I waited a few minutes but visibility did not improve so I decided to go back and give it a chance to clear. Exit was in zero visibility. The line in the flattener was somewhat slack but good enough to follow and I had nothing that I could feel to tie off to so I didn't bother.

Summary Dive 1: max depth 17 m, time 13 min. water temp. 6-8°C

Dive 2.

I waited about half an hour and went in again. I tried to get to the end of the line as fast as I could, but whilst the sump to the start of the flattener had largely cleared to the usual stunning vis. of 0.5 m or less (but good enough to follow a line, or wall), once in the horizontal passage the silt was still in suspension. I took a bearing into the passage and read it as SW. This is not a certainty as the

vis. was very poor and I could barely read the small stuff on my computer (old eyes didn't help). I found the silt still being there a bit strange, and possibly important? I went to the end of the line anyway, tied in my primary, and started groping forward in zero vis. A short distance (maybe 5-7 m) past the weight the passage started tending steeply upwards but was getting very narrow, and still only 0.5 m high. I continued a few meters up slope, at about a 45 degree angle, feeling my way. The height of the passage was reducing slightly, by my gestimate, but more importantly, I could feel the width reducing. It was still wide enough for me to fit through but was starting to get tight. I wasn't game to risk getting caught in a passage I couldn't turn around in and have to back down slope, in zero vis., where I'd never actually seen what the passage was like at any time. I wasn't prepared to take tanks off and push them through in these circumstances. I waited a few minutes, hoping for a glimpse of what lay ahead, but the vis didn't change.

I thought about leaving the reel there but didn't want to risk it flushing away or having the line unravel off the spool in the time before I got back here again, so I reeled back as I backed out to where I could turn around at the weight, and removed it from the tie in to the lead weight. Trip back out of the narrow passage was the same zero vis. as the previous dive. As I continued up slope the vis. improved to a couple of centimetres again.

Summary Dive 2: max depth 17 m, time 25 min

Air consumption for both dives combined was less than half tanks.

So I have almost certainly penetrated to the furthest point of Stefan's exploration on my first dive. I have pushed maybe 5-8 m beyond that point on my second dive. Prospects seem poor for this passage to continue large enough to fit through but there is still some possibility so I will return.

Dive kit: DUI TLS 350 drysiut, Bare polarwear 200 undersuit, 2 x 7 l steel tanks, 2 x XTX 50 second stage regulators, 2 x Apeks cold water first stage regulators, canoe helmet with 2 x Princeton Tech lights, Nitek Q dive computer, Razor harness with wing, safety reel, rocket fins, mask, gloves, hood, Light Monkey reel with 100 m 3 mm sinking line. I used one of the four weights, but this underweighted me a little when my tanks lightened.

Spares: shifter, small dive multi Allen key.

Sidemount configuration.

A cup of soup appeared in my hand as I divested myself of the drysuit, however I had to put it down for a few minutes as I was shivering so much I was spilling it everywhere.

Ric started moving the gear we were leaving behind to a safe place up higher in the rockpile as I started packing the gear we were taking out. Andreas and Alan were taking the tanks again. The drysuit, undersuit and regulators Ric and I were carrying between us. Fins, helmet, mask, harness, cooking gear were staying for the next trip.

We started moving out after three hours at the sump, at 3:30 pm. Alan headed off with his gear, after helping with the gear passing through the Depths of Moria. Being Alan, he was then flying ahead of us other three, and we didn't see him again until we were out of the cave.

Andreas went up the bottom pitch ahead of me, and then I leapfrogged past him so I would be at the top of the third pitch to help get the tank through the restriction. After that I went for the surface. Alan was waiting when I got out, to help with gear at the top, and Andreas and Ric were both close behind.

We were all out at 6:30 pm.

I want to thank the four of them for helping with the heavy loads so I could dive. Sherpa-ing is a somewhat thankless task; it's lots of hard work without the excitement of the diving (not that I'd call this one fun).

Ric, in particular, goes beyond the call of spousal duties by being involved. I am pretty sure no other 62 year old cavers have hauled gear to and from the KD sump, or possibly any other cave this demanding, in Australia.

The return trip was planned for the following weekend, to use Andreas' availability. Alan started planning how to get the brownie points for it.

JF-4 KD Sump II Dive (trip 3)

Janine McKinnon

19 January 2013

Party: Serena Benjamin, Chris Coxson, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Janine McKinnon

My tanks had been refilled and we were all ready and keen for another attempt at the sump. Alan, Andreas and I were returning after last week's trip. Ric was unable to cave as his hand was very tender and delicate from the extensive burn he inflicted on himself last week, but we had gained Serena and Chris.

Chris was another of my attempts to relive past caving practices. He is new to the state, young (21 years old), caves in northern British Colombia, says he is SRT competent, looks lean and fit … and none of us have caved with him, or know anyone who has.

This is so TCC. Off on a big trip with a total unknown. Happy days!

We arrived at the Dwarrowdelf entrance around 9:40 am and quickly got dressed and organised. Chris, we noted, had all the right SRT gear, and knew how to put it on, so that was a good start.

I headed in first at 10 am, with Alan hot on my heels, and I reached the bottom of the big pitch half an hour later. Ah, the joys of a pre-rigged cave. We awaited the others.

There had been a few millimetres of rain the previous day and the cave was noticeably drippier this week. The bottom pitch was quite splashy. I wondered how that would affect the sump.

Once we had all assembled, and removed SRT kit, we started off to the sump together. The waterfall in the KD bottom chamber was noticeably higher flow than last week, as was the stream flowing to the sumps. The water levels were still only moderate summer flow rates though.

The usual pack passing occurred through Depths of Moria but all went smoothly and we were at the sump at midday.

We quickly started moving the stashed diving gear down from the ledge it had been left on and pulling the gear we

had carried in out of the packs. Andreas put an extra weight onto my harness and set up the regulators, whilst I got into my undersuit and dry suit. Alan moved my diving lights to Andreas' helmet (he has a waterproof Scurion, lucky boy). I'd have done this last week when I discovered he had a caving light I could dive with, but I didn't have a screwdriver to take my diving lights off my diving helmet. This week I had come prepared.

Serena helped by finding gear, and Chris was official photographer. We were a busy, efficient little group. I wanted to spare the others as much waiting around time as possible by being fast and efficient. They had their brew ready by the time I was kitted up, gear checked, and ready to dive.

Janine preparing to dive the sump.

The plan for today was to do one long dive. I would head to the end of exploration last week as quickly as possible, in the hope of keeping ahead of the silt and getting some visibility in the passage beyond my previous limit. If the passage continued large enough for me to fit, then that was obviously the go, until I reached thirds, or ran out of passage. If it didn't, then I would do as detailed a search of the sump pool as I could manage, looking for other possible passages. I still wasn't convinced this side passage was the main flow path of the stream.

Dive 3.

Today's dive was the third in my assault on the sump. I had noted on arriving at the site that the flow into the sump was a little greater than last week, and the water level slightly higher. Looking down into the sump, the visibility looked less than last week. The line could only be seen for less than 0.5 m.

I headed down the line and immediately realised that my visibility was even less than last week. I could see only a few centimetres through the water. The rains had obviously stirred up the silt and there was heavy suspension still in the water.

I headed down slope and found the line loose at two of the tie-offs before the bottom of the pool. These took a couple of minutes to re-tie. I was concerned that this was losing me necessary time to stay ahead of the silt. The flow was higher this week but still slight.

Silt had also started to re-settle over the line at the entrance to the passage, but only by a centimetre or two. I headed straight into the passage, still ahead of the silt flow, and tied off some slack line as I moved along. The passage hadn't become any larger in the intervening week.

I crawled to the end of the line and tied in my reel. The silt was starting to pass me as I moved ahead but I still had reasonable visibility … well … reasonable being 10-20 cm. I crawled (you couldn't call it swimming in the confined space) as fast as I could and managed to reach the steeply upward rising slope before the worst of the silt arrived. I could see I was on a silt and gravel floor, with rock on the ceiling. The bank continued ahead upward at a steep angle (about 45 degrees), and I gained a couple of metres on last trip's distance. I could see the gap between floor and ceiling diminished to about 20-30 cm; too small for me to fit through. The walls narrowed to approximately 0.5 m wide. The silt overtook me at this point and I lost all visibility.

I was unable to turn around here (or didn't want to try anyway) and I backed back to the point where I had tied my reel into the weight. I reeled my line back in as I retreated. I had been intending to leave the exploration line in-situ at my furthest point of penetration however I changed my mind on site. I decided that the trouble involved in securing it in zero vis., to walls with limited solid anchor points that I would have to find by feel, possibly at the expense of considerable time, wasn't worth the trouble for the short distance I had gained on the end of the current line, in passage that doesn't currently go. I knew I didn't really have air issues but, in the very cold water, there was a limited time I could dive before getting very cold. I had not brought the clothing I wear under my undersuit in these very cold waters, for bulk and weight reasons.

Having untied my line from the weight, I turned around and made another zero vis. exit from the passage.

This had only taken some 15 minutes, I discovered when I could see my computer again outside the passage, and I had four fifths of my air still, so I now started the search of the pool. My visibility was only a few centimetres at best, so the search was not going to be comprehensive. I attempted to be systematic however. At -15 m I tied into the fixed line and headed across the sump at right angles to the fixed line. When I encountered wall, after about 5 metres, I started feeling along the wall to the right for several metres. When I found nothing I moved back to the left for what I hoped was several metres beyond where I had reached the wall. I then reeled back to the fixed line and moved up to -11 m depth. I repeated the same pattern. At -8 m I repeated again and found myself swimming for

about 10 m from the fixed line, about 5 m into a narrow rift. I got quite excited for a few seconds, before this proved to be a blind rift. My last foray from the fixed line was at -4 m depth, around the walls of the sump pool.

I was starting to get cold and had exhausted the prospects in the current environment so decided to call the dive.

Dive time: 31 minutes. Maximum depth: 17 m. Water temperature: 6-8°C. Air consumption: 70 bar each tank (full tanks 230 bar each)

Conclusions: The higher flow this week enabled me to see the flow through the small passage via the faster silt movement. I now think this is the main passage on. The steeply rising gravel floor is almost certainly infill. The current dimensions of the restriction at the limit of exploration are too small for a diver to pass through. Current prospects in this passage are zero, in my estimation.

Whilst the roof is solid rock, the floor isn't. Some digging might make the passage passable to humans. It depends how deep the gravel and silt are.

So what we need now are some Pommy digging cave divers.

My inspection of the sump pool for other passage was the best I could manage in the very poor visibility. I was as systematic as I could be. I do not think there are any alternate routes around the main passage from within the pool. I am reasonably confident about this, however, due to the circumstances, I cannot say with 100% certainty that this is the case. I do consider the prospects so fleetingly small that I will not be returning.

Soup was ready by the time I was out of the water. I really appreciated it as I was quite cold again. Andreas started dismantling gear whilst I sipped soup.

We got the gear all packed away fairly efficiently and I took off my dry suit and undersuit as a last act to try to warm up a bit.

We discussed bringing out the weights but decided that they were now a piece of history so should remain there (read: none of us wanted to carry them out). I did bring out the four silt stakes that were there.

We left the sump at 2 pm. Alan and Andreas again took the heavy burden of the tanks. Serena and Chris had good loads, and I took as little as I could get away with (but my pack still weighed 8.4 kg)!

The trip out was smooth and drama-free. We stayed together until the bottom of the big pitch. Chris headed up first, followed by Andreas and then Serena, moving at their own paces. Alan and I stayed together to de-rig the cave to the bottom of the small pitch below the 55 m pitch (P4). Although, when I say that, I mean Alan came last and did most of the work. The ropes have been left in the cave for retrieval on another trip.

I caught Serena just as she was starting up the entrance pitch, so the timing worked beautifully. The last person was out at 5:30 pm.

Oh, how did Chris go? No worries at all. He's perfectly fit, competent, and in the right head space. I knew it all along … (we won't mention the times I, and others, have got it wrong).

(See Stefan Eberhard's KD sump II dive attempt: *SS*352)

Final preparations before the sump dive.

Australia Day Long Weekend – Mole Creek

Alan Jackson

26-28 January 2013

Participants:

STC – Damian Bidgood, Darren Holloway, Kerrin Huxley, Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, Jane Pulford, Ric Tunney, Tony Veness.

NC – Jessica Bales, Jill Bennett, David Butler, Andrew and Janice March (and children, Eric and Eleanor), Stephen Jacobs, Cathie Plowman, Dave Wools-Cobb.

Clubless – Rob Armstrong, Gerald Van Rongen, Ceri Weeks.

In November 2009 I started a survey project in MC-75 Mersey Hill Cave thanks to the encouragement of Steven Blanden. I didn't quite realise at the time what we were starting – my brief trip report of this first survey trip appears in *SS*375: 8. After that trip Albert Goede contacted me and gave me a wad of surveys and some early trip reports. I'll type them up and publish them at some stage. I'm not sure when the cave was first discovered but in 1957 it was surveyed as a 'Rover Project' led by a J. Wanless. Over two trips they surveyed the cave to the 'roof fall', a total of 1778 feet, and produced a map. Albert Goede acquired that map/data and copied it for TCC on 27-9-1958 – (map number 7MC MERS. TCC59). The map contained little detail (passage wall, ceiling heights, few side passages and a plethora of unimaginative names). The raw data doesn't appear to exist (and would all be in feet and inches anyway).

In 1984 Kevin Kiernan took an interest in the cave while employed at the Tasmanian Forestry Commission.. Over two trips he surveyed from the entrance to the same rockfall area with Deb Hunter, B. Diacotto and Phil Jackson. A map was produced (7MC75 FCT2) which was in metres, contained reasonable floor detail and some of the side passages (some just sketched in). Thankfully Kevin wasn't into assigning stupid names so there are few of those. Both maps line up pretty well (once you take into account the first map has north pointing down the page).

One of the two parties, or maybe there's a third survey out there, left permanent survey stations through the cave – made from ~2 inch steel nails through one inch square orange plastic markers with survey station numbers punched into them. Many are still in place, others must have washed away. We re-used some of them in our 2009 survey but one had to be careful of the steel nails affecting compass readings. [*I've since learnt that Rolan resurveyed a fair portion of the main streamway back in 2000 while scoping up good blocks of land to buy up for karst protection, so there is a third survey out there – now there's four – Ed.*]

Anyway, with no original data from either trip to work from the two previous surveys have been rendered as nothing more than of interesting historical value. During the TasTrog ASF conference in Launceston in the 1990s the 'terminal' rock fall was climbed and a whole lot more cave was found beyond a pitch on the other side. This had never been surveyed; hence our project.

Steve Blanden had the audacity to be diagnosed with cancer a couple of years ago and tragically died as a result of it last year. Stupid really that it took Steve's death to give me the kick up the bum required to get this project moving again, but that's what happened. I assumed that no one in STC would be interested in helping me survey a flat, wet cave in Mole Creek so I harassed the wider Northern Caverneers population. Enthusiasm was high and surprisingly it all turned into a joint STC/NC love-fest over the Australia Day long weekend – what better way to celebrate invasion day than to invade the north and pillage their caves.

Saturday – 26/1/13

We met at the Mole Creek shop then travelled in convoy up to Hadyn and Lynne Steadman's property at Mersey Hill. There were keen punters everywhere so we divided up into three survey teams. Team A consisted of Janine, Jane, David Butler (NC) and Darren. They were charged with rigging the pitch beyond the rockfall and to survey onwards from there. Team B consisted of Tony, Ric, Dave WC and Stephen Jacobs (NC). They were to locate and survey the delicate side passage identified in Kiernan's map and then relocate to the main stream if time allowed. Team C consisted of me, Kerrin, Cathie Plowman (NC), Jill Bennett (NC) and Rob Armstrong (a friend of Darren and Kerrin). We would pick up from the last station from 2009 and head up the stream passage to link in with the start of Team A's survey.

Team A did as instructed. Team B found a different side passage 40 m downstream of their original target and spent the rest of the day in there (except Ric and Dave who didn't fit through a tight bit and spent the day talking in the streamway and getting cold). Team C started well but got distracted by the real Kiernan's side passage (it was drier than the streamway). After completing the side passage Team C continued up the streamway but failed to make it to Team A's survey. Team C would have made it further but I led them through the third wet crawl instead of over it – two members piked at the almost roof sniff and the other three only managed another seven legs before succumbing to the cold. The day's tally of survey data was 767 m.

A good pub meal and plenty of beers perked everyone up again that night.

Sunday – 27/1/13

To my amazement almost everyone was keen to continue the survey effort in Mersey Hill Cave. We lost a couple of cavers from Saturday but gained other new arrivals. Team A remained the same and headed back to pick up where they'd left off. Team B lost Steve but gained Jessica Bales (nee Wools-Cobb) and swapped the bulky Dave WC for finer-boned Kerrin (horses for courses). Team C lost Rob and partook of the Dave/Kerrin trade. A fourth party – Team Tourist – also entered the cave, consisting of Janice March (NC), her daughter Eleanor (Andrew and Eric went cycling instead) and two potential new recruits, Gerald and Ceri. Ric had opted to take Chris Coxson and his recently arrived father for a jolly at Honeycomb and Wet Cave.

Team B completed its survey of the unexpected side passage. Team C had a DistoX malfunction which slowed its progress (later diagnosed as 'cold battery syndrome'). A number of side passages had the same effect. Cathie and

Jill piked at the hairy climb up in the rockfall and headed for home while Dave WC and I connected the main traverse into Team A's first station at the top of the pitch. Dave and I were planning to descend the pitch and survey downstream to the sump/end as well but the DistoX issue slowed us down somewhat and Team A appeared out of the gloom just as we reached the pitch. Team A had continued the survey upstream beyond the pitch as planned. The day's tally came to 350 m.

All up the cave is 1585 m long now. There is little to do between the entrance and the rock fall except two small passages that appear on the 1957 map near the entrance – Daschund Tunnel and The Dungeon. – which we haven't located yet. Semi-reliable NC sources suggest there's at least another 500 metres to go in the upstream continuation. We'll have another social get-together next summer and hopefully knock the bastard off.

Thanks very much to everyone who assisted with the survey effort. I was most impressed – this tends to happen when you have such low expectations of other people.

Monday – 28/1/13

Figuring I'd be sick of caving after two days of it I planned to descend Machinery Creek Canyon this day. I'd spotted this feature while spying maps and aerial photography for the Standard Hill Canyon trip we pioneered January 2012. The Dove River Canyon boys beat me to this one though and added it to their commercial operations late last year. While this meant I lost the likely title of being the first group to descend the canyon it did mean that it was all nicely bolted and optimum access points determined.

We were a party of seven: me, Ric, Janine, Jane, Tony, Damian and David Butler.

We shuffled the cars to the bridge over the Forth River (just downstream of the Cethana power station) and then left one at the Round Hill Café at the old township of Cethana. Janine and I enjoyed hot drinks while the shufflers shuffled. Immediately behind the café is the old access road for the silver-lead mining operations from the early to mid 20th century that put Cethana on the map. This is a lovely slightly downhill vehicle track that contours around to Machinery Creek and the abandoned mine workings. You could drive this section if you had a decent 4WD and no respect for your paint work (the first 500 m is rutted and overgrown and the rest of it is in very good condition) but it makes for a pleasant stroll.

The Dove Canyon guys told me that there was an obvious access point before the road crosses the creek which avoids a few hundred metres of stream bashing. We spotted it but decided to continue on just in case we were wrong. There is an old culvert at this spot and a steep eroding washout down to the creek, which is about 30 m vertically below the road at this point.

Once we reached the creek the water quality was less than desirable (lots of turbid ex-adit water obviously with quite a low pH and no doubt masses of dissolved metals and other nasties in it). BYO drinking water. The first bit was a tad dull, as we'd been warned, but lots of old mining relics made it more interesting and the name Machinery Creek certainly fits well (I saw it was labelled Claude Creek on an old mining map on display in the café). We spotted the better access point (washout) from the creek which puts you in just above the first half-interesting stream feature – a bit of a cascade and some large boulders.

Not far beyond this is a one metre drop into a pool immediately prior to the first proper waterfall. This required a brief swim. The first fall was about 15 m. There are two sets of eyebolts and chains – one on river right for use during low water levels and one on river left for higher levels (or soft punters). This fall had a brief swim at the base as well.

About 50 m downstream was the next waterfall. Bolts on river right provided access to a ~12 m drop into a quite unpleasant deep pool. There is a nasty rub point where the drop becomes overhanging that one or all of the four people who went down before me didn't treat with caution – the Club's 61 m 9.5 mm rope is now two 38 and 23 m ropes. Careful rope placement and calm abseiling avoids the worst rub. The first person gets drenched on this abseil but subsequent people can stay dry if a friendly person pulls them across on the last bit of the abseil.

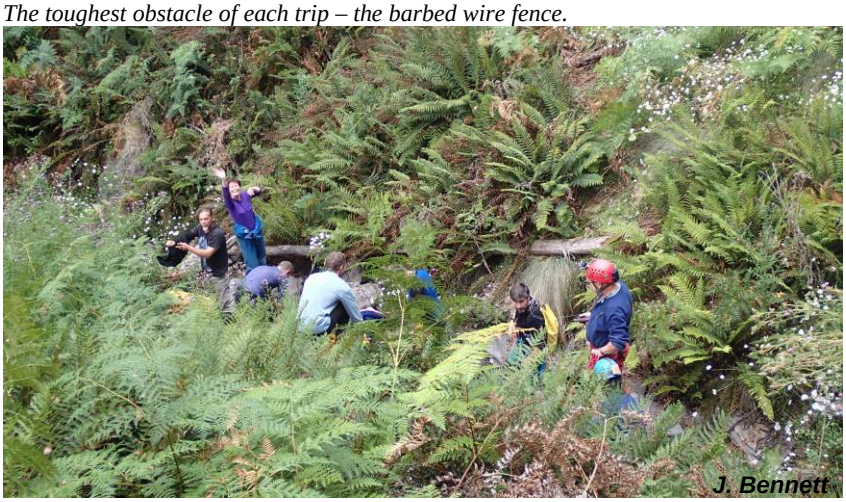
There were then two subsequent small drops with bolts/chain and a short swim or two. One is under an enormous chockstone that was the highlight of the trip for me. We had a bite to eat in the sun in a wide section of canyon and then continued on. A short drop with an awkward get off and traverse (if you don't want to swim) was next, followed by a dual option fall – two sets of bolts again) and then the final waterfall – a spectacular slippery dip/water slide. Unfortunately the final drop isn't vertical and the water isn't very deep, otherwise it'd be a cracker of a slide. One can scramble down the steep slab on river right beside the slide or there is a chain for people with small balls or slippery shoes. To fully protect this slab you need just over 30 m of rope, so a 70 would suffice for a pull down of the whole canyon.

The rest of the trip is a doddle down a fairly flat open stream to the bridge on the road. We spent about three hours in the creek/canyon, so even with the small car shuffle and the walk in it's a pretty straightforward and short trip. For best photographic results you'd want to be in the canyon around midday – the canyon runs north-south and is sufficiently wide that it allows good sunlight in. None of us had wetsuits and despite relatively slow progress (with seven of us) and several swims we all managed to stay warm with only a couple of thermals top and bottom. It was a very pleasant sunny day though. I highly recommend the trip – pleasant, short, picturesque and easy (downhill the whole way!).

The parking spot on the Steadman's property – we had a 'one caver – one car' policy.

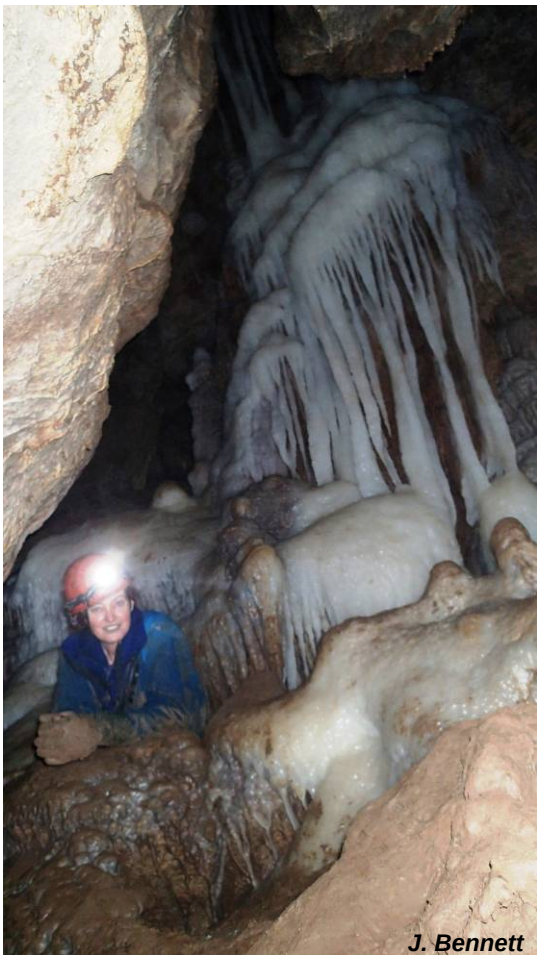
Dave WC pretends he's in charge (notice all the crossed arms and clenched fists).

The toughest obstacle of each trip – the barbed wire fence.



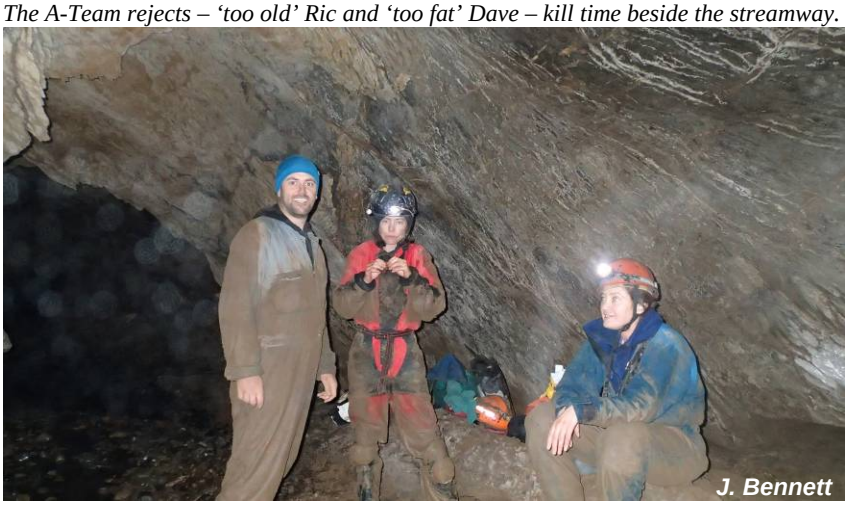
Kitting up in the ferns at the entrance.

Looking out the MC-75 entrance.

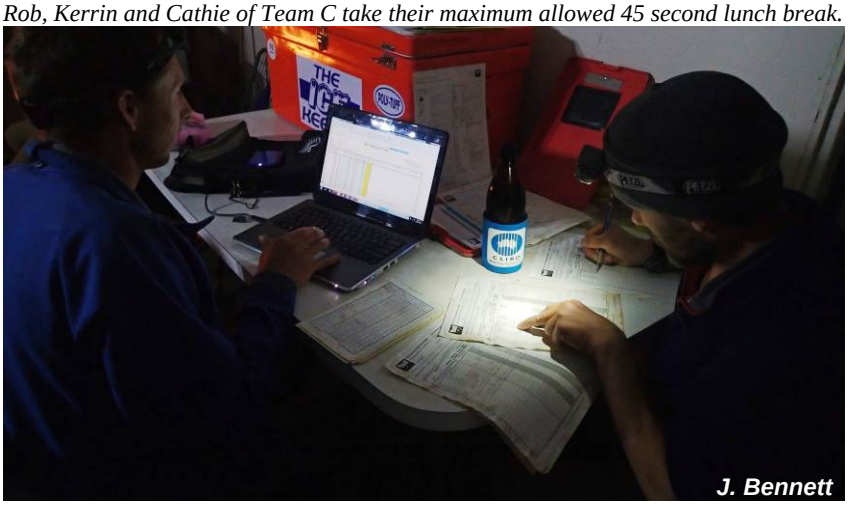


Cathie demonstrates why this side passage needs a good clean and a no entry sign (now that it's been surveyed).

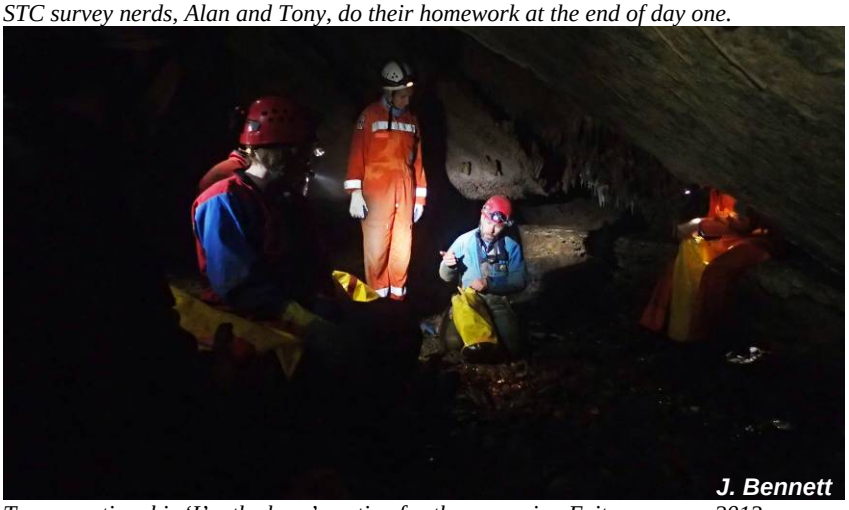
The A-Team rejects – 'too old' Ric and 'too fat' Dave – kill time beside the streamway.



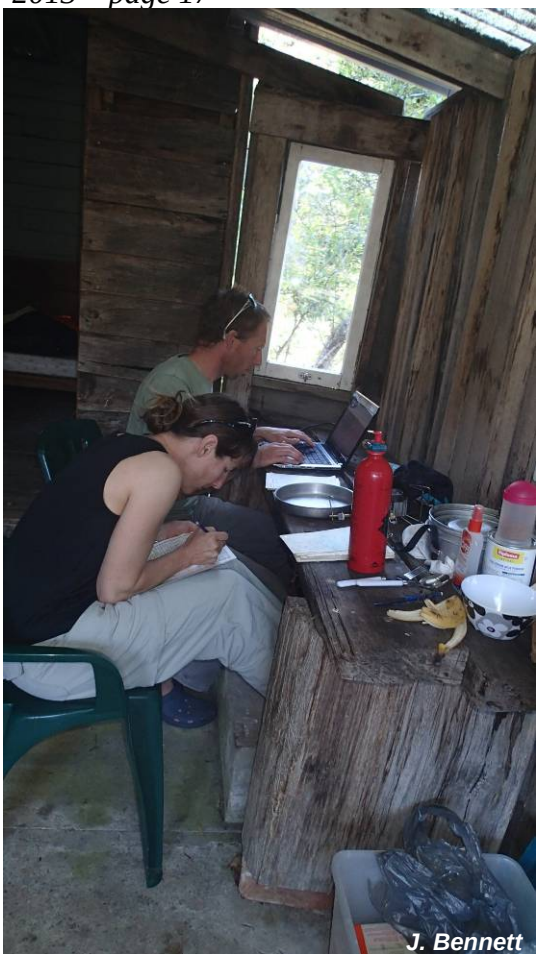
Rob, Kerrin and Cathie of Team C take their maximum allowed 45 second lunch break.



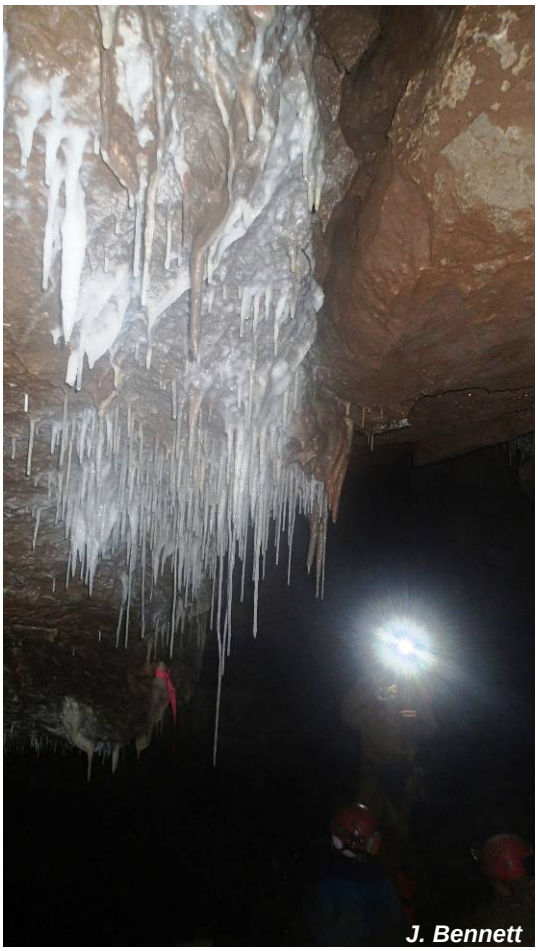
STC survey nerds, Alan and Tony, do their homework at the end of day one.



Tony practises his 'I'm the boss' routine for the upcoming Exitravaganza 2013.

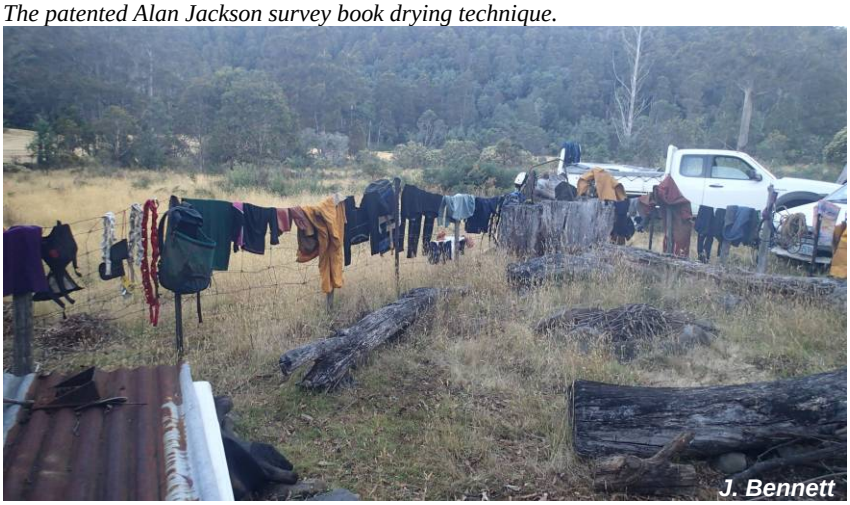


Jane joins Alan in more survey nerd work after day two.



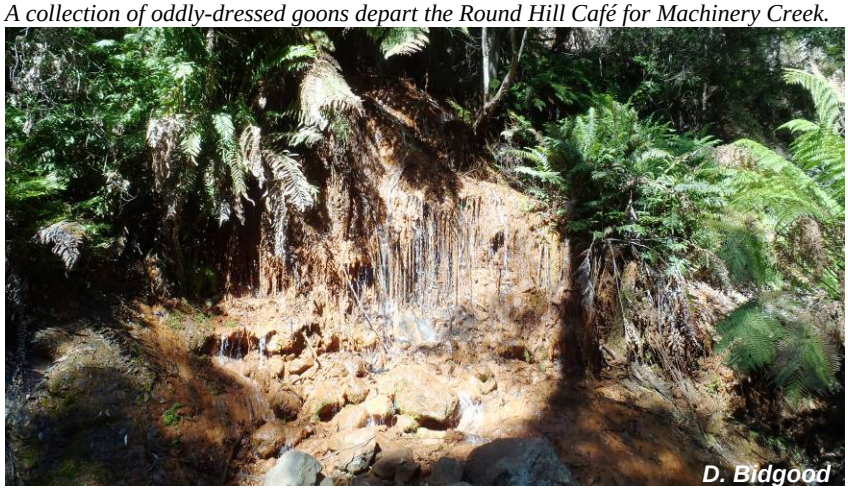
Pretties and an ill-directed Scurion at the start of the crappy ascent to the pitch.

The patented Alan Jackson survey book drying technique.

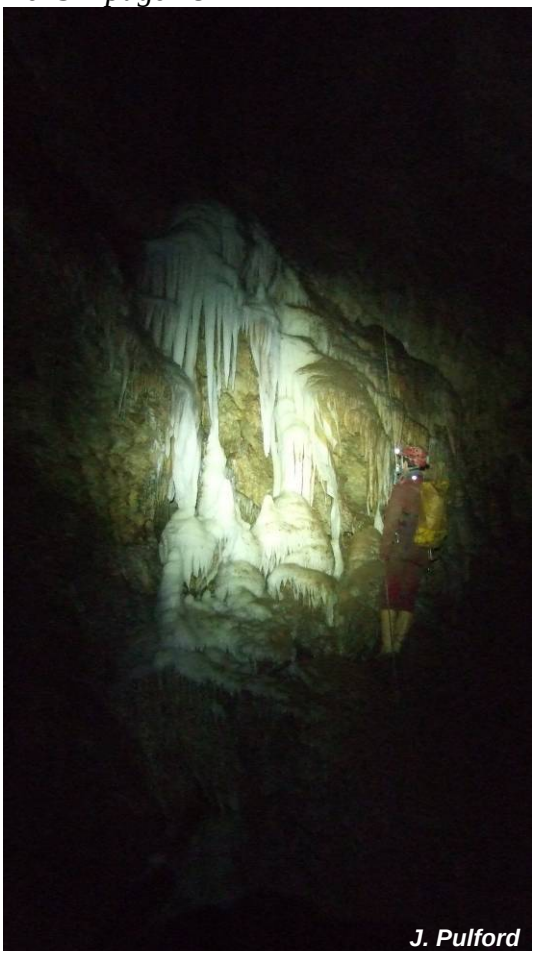


The Marakoopa Hut clothesline.

A collection of oddly-dressed goons depart the Round Hill Café for Machinery Creek.



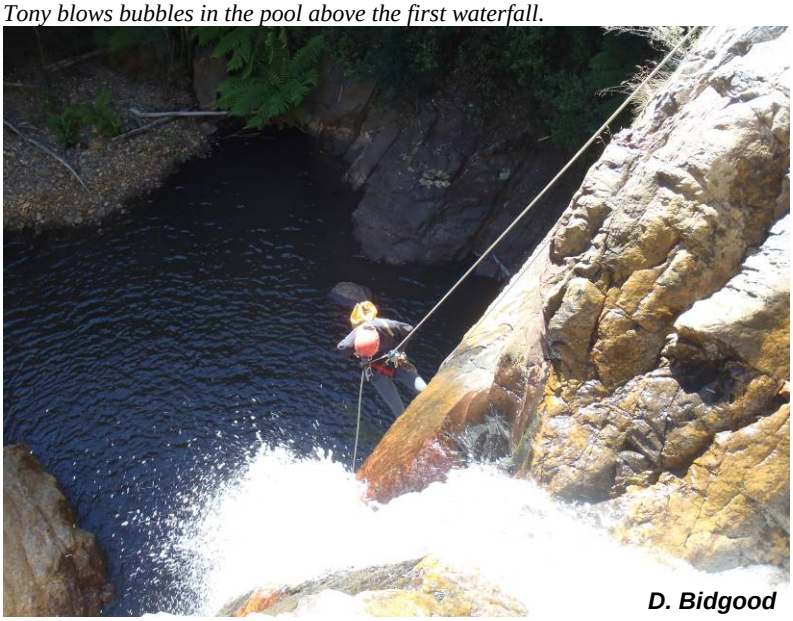
Acid Mine Drainage contributes to the local water quality …



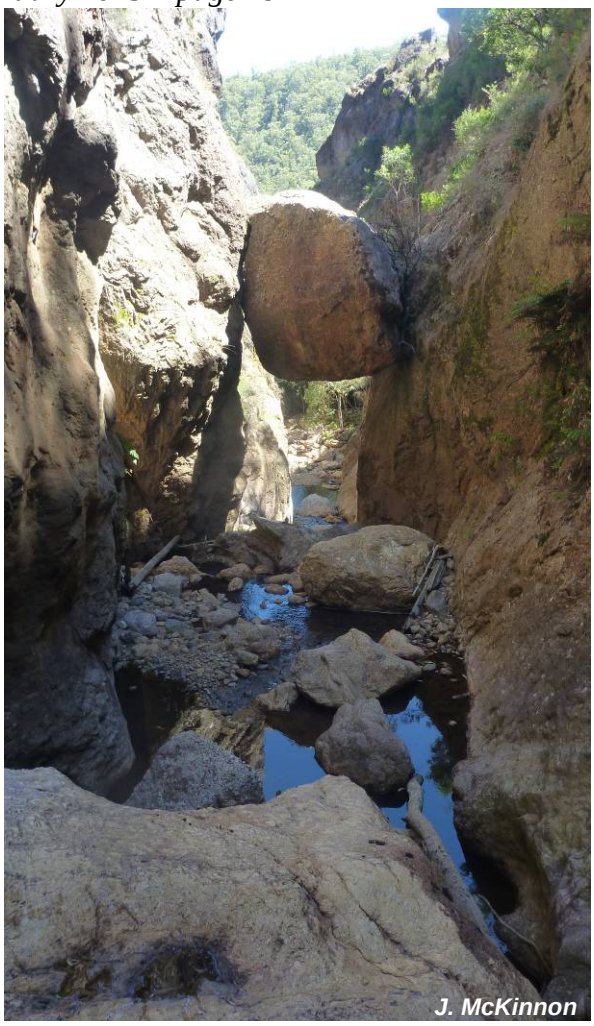
David Butler on the pitch in MC-75.

The view down the gorge from the first waterfall.

Tony blows bubbles in the pool above the first waterfall.

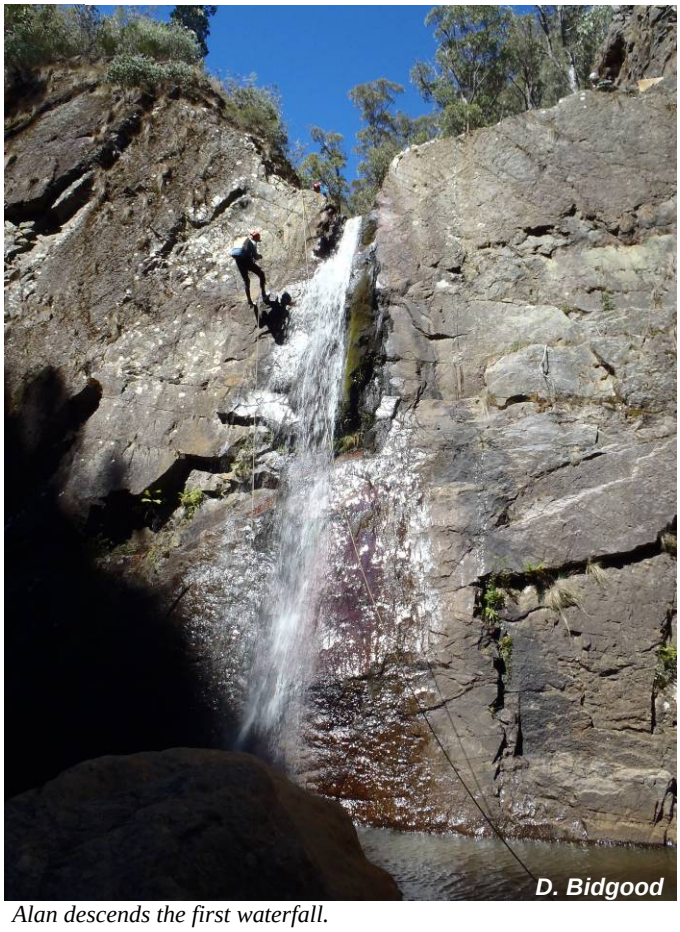


Ric descends the first waterfall.



The third drop (foreground) and the fourth drop beneath the giant chockstone.

Alan awaits Tony's arrival at the second waterfall.



Alan descends the first waterfall.

Looking back up at the fourth drop and the chockstone.

The fifth (very little) drop into a pool.

The view back up the canyon with the sixth drop in view.

Ric descends the handline beside the final fall/slide.

JF-14 Dwarrowdelf – de-rig

Janine McKinnon

2 February 2013

Party: Janine McKinnon, Jane Pulford, Ric Tunney

This was a quick trip to de-rig the cave following the second, and final, dive attempt on KD sump II, two weeks previous.

As we hauled all the diving gear out on that last trip, Alan & I also partially de-rigged the cave. We removed all the ropes as far as the bottom of pitch 4, and left them tied together and piled at the bottom of that pitch. Alan also removed the rebelay on Pitch 4 as he ascended, so there was no need for the de-rig party coming later to drop that pitch.

Thus, we now needed only to go as far as the top of pitch 4 to retrieve the ropes from further down the cave, and to de-rig the first three pitches on our exit.

As we were not in any particular hurry this trip, and Jane had not been into the cave before, we decided to stay together as we descended. Thus the last of us reached the bottom of pitch 3 not much short of an hour after the first started into the cave.

After lunch and packing, Ric started up with the 120 m rope. I followed with the remaining ropes and Jane came last, de-rigging the 55 m pitch as she went.

Ric continued up to the climbs above pitch 2, and waited to help haul packs. I waited for Jane at the top of pitch 3 to help with packing the rope.

We couldn't fit the rope for pitch 2 into our packs, so that was hauled up the cave, and out, separately.

All went smoothly and we were all back on the surface just before 2 pm. That made the total trip a bit short of 3.5 hours.

Ric and I both hauled packs of 13 kg up the cave, and our packs back to the car weighted 25 kg each, so de-rigging the cave at the same time as bringing out diving gear was never a sensible option, so it's a good thing we didn't try to do it.

Trials Bike Cave – Jericho

Ken Hosking

3 February 2013

Party: Peter Lockhart (Gas Gas Raga 250), Steve Harris (Scorpa 250), Mike Hull (Gas Gas TXT 280), Ken Hosking (Beta Evo 250) and Dougal (on four legs)

In presenting this report, I hasten to make it clear that this was not in any way an official trip, or indeed, a trip to look for or enter caves at all. It was, in fact, an unofficial practise day for some of the southern members of the Tasmanian Moto Trials Club at a farming property near Jericho. During a previous trip to the area, I had been told of the presence of 'caves' in the side of a valley near where we were riding, but on that occasion we didn't go close to that valley.

On Sunday 3 February this year, we decided to go to the cave area for the purposes of looking for likely sections to use in a forthcoming trials event to be held on the property. A 4WD track led us to an area where we could go no further on four wheels. Continuing on the bikes, we headed across to an area of heavily vegetated deep valleys and rocky cliffs, generally appearing to be of volcanic origin, but having areas of exposed sandstone. There were several small caves in the sandstone, not qualifying as anything more than rock overhangs in reality, but there was one large cavity, as shown in the accompanying photograph*. This appeared to be a wind-eroded overhang, measuring about 12 metres across the opening, with a distance to the back wall of about four metres. At the RHS of the opening, looking in, was a short passage that almost went as far as being in the dark zone. The carcasses of dead sheep and masses of sheep droppings everywhere did not particularly encourage exploration, although Dougal seemed to think that they had some appeal. The ceiling of the cave was interesting, however, reaching up into the sandstone about three metres to form a dome that contained complex erosion patterns.

With my having achieved a personal ambition of combining motorcycle trials with caving by riding through the cave, we rode on in search of more rock steps, logs, climbs and any other obstacles that might be used in the upcoming trials event. There is no shortage of any of these on this property.

**See photo on page 3.*

JF-584 Tigers Eye

Janine McKinnon

6 February 2013

Diver: Janine McKinnon. **Support:** Ric Tunney.

Tigers Eye pond has been known about in Tassie caving circles for many years, however it was never dived. A mainland group of cave divers happened across it a few years ago and have had several assaults on it. They have pushed exploration to the limit of human possibility, as far as any of them can determine. This January a small group (led by Grant Pearce) returned to survey the cave.

In the weeks prior to their arrival Ric & I had cleared a new track to the pond, as the old one had been obliterated by a massive tree fall. The start of this track is marked by a small piece of tape.

The survey team have improved this access by consolidating some steps into the steep bank and hardening the area immediately above the pond, where divers enter the water. How long this will remain once the winter rains start is anyone's guess but it is good for now.

My objectives for the day were to do a simple tourist dive into a cave I have yet to visit, and afterwards, to attach a tag near the entrance. I geared up (tanks) in the water as the first step is a bit of a bugger. I then swam across the pond to the small limestone wall on the opposite side to the entry point.

Grant's group had placed a heavy duty, permanent line into the cave. This starts below surface level and near the entrance to the cave, which is at the far side of the pond, under the large fallen tree (that obliterated the track).

The entrance is not particularly tight and visibility is typical Tassie sump (about one metre, or less). The line is thick (8 mm), highly visible white with red flecks, and taught. (spoiler alert) I followed it down to 35 m, and then turned the dive.

There is a horizontal section near the entrance, and then the cave dives steeply. There is one moderately tight restriction near the top of the descent but it is easily negotiated with sidemount tanks in place.

The cave width increases after the restriction, however with only a metre of visibility I could not see the far wall and thus couldn't determine the dimensions of the passage. The line runs down the right hand wall (as you go in).

There is a lot of silt in the cave, and not just on the floor. Touching the walls or roof (which is impossible to avoid in the small bits) brings dirt and muck cascading down, reducing visibility further (often to nothing). Much of the rock is crapola too (a technical term for you non-geologists), and fell apart as I touched it.

I did manage NOT to stir everything up so much that I lost visibility totally for any extended period of time. I had spoken to Grant's group, and they had said that it was much worse when they started diving but improved after they had done a few days, with two divers in there, twice a day.

They were there at the beginning of January. This cave does not have high flow so I suspect that this build up of silt and debris only gets worse over time. Any diver coming here in future should expect this.

At 35 m I could still see the line descending, and I know the cave reaches 45 m. I was only doing a familiarisation and fun dive, and didn't want to gain a decompression obligation in 7°C water without oxygen to speed the waiting time. It wasn't like I could actually see much either, so extra depth wasn't going to gain me anything but touching the end. So I decided that was enough for me today (you can tell that I'm wondering if I should have kept going now, can't you?).

The trip out varied between half a metre and nothing for visibility, but was uneventful. Dive time: 30 minutes. Max depth: 35 m. Air consumed: 100 bar (from 2 X 7 litre tanks).

This is definitely a sidemount only cave, and the tanks shouldn't be too large either. The line is beautifully laid, well secured, and should last many a year, and through many floods, I would think.

After removing my dive gear I stayed in my drysuit to place the tag for the cave (JF-584). We have had this for a while and just needed to be prepared to get very wet in 7°C water to put it in place. The only limestone is the wall opposite the entry point for the cave, and I had to stand chest deep in water to put it in. Hence waiting until I was wearing a drysuit (yeah, a wimp, I know).

The tag is almost immediately above the entry to the cave, and the start of the fixed line. It is in solid limestone about 20 cm above the current water level. A piece of pink tape was inserted behind the tag. It is not visible from the entry point to the pond because of the large fallen tree (that obliterated the track..). It is visible from another fallen tree (it's a popular place for large fallen trees) beside the large fallen tree that …

The light was very poor there and a view from far enough away to give perspective was not possible, and so a photo tag was not taken.

Other Exciting Stuff

More Work for Rolan

Alan Jackson

Growling Swallet has been marked on the 1:100k and 1:25k Tasmaps since the day dot, as has Junee Cave. In 2010 someone moved to have Growling Swallet officially deregistered as a name, a motion that was carried by the Nomenclature Board of Tasmania on 15 September 2010 (Omission Notice No. 94, Nomenclature Board). My understanding was that this was the first step in having Growling Swallet removed from the Tasmaps. Rolan denies having initiated this deregistration as a part of his 'save Growling from the masses' campaign but the story is more fun if we allege otherwise.

Last year Greg Middleton joined a surface day in the KD area and took the opportunity to play with his new Garmin GPS before taking it overseas. After the trip he emailed me the following map (Figure 1) and the accompanying text:

I was just playing with my Garmin (trying to learn how to use it properly) when I discovered a new thing in Base Camp, called "Garmin Adventures". I thought I'd see what happened if I turned our 1 SEP walk into a "Garmin Adventure". It plotted the route onto a map. Nothing strange about that, except what else was on the map! See the attached TIFF of the map it provided. I was amazed to see KD shown, and then I noticed a few others. I don't think KD is in the right place - since we went to it - but that's not the point. Where did my GPS get those cave locations? I sure as hell didn't put them in. Surely they didn't get transferred by Bluetooth from yours????? Wadda ya reckon?

I had no idea how this cave location data had ended up in the hands of Garmin's map-making department but thought little more of it. Judging by the significantly erroneous position of many of the caves it was clearly not from a recent accurate GPS coordinate, perhaps just something gleaned from the internet by Garmin from an amateur caver who plotted caves on a map on their blog or something.

Recently Mark Euston and co visited the JF and because the usual access road was closed for bridge works I had to send them in via the other end of the Florentine Valley. As it was new to them I borrowed a wad of Bunty's hard copy 1:100 k maps to help with their navigation. They left them in the door of the hire car upon their departure and the maps haven't been seen since. I visited Service Tas to purchase replacement maps for Steve and, being a map

tragic, had a quick peruse of the maps while queuing to buy them to see if the most recent editions yield anything other than slightly sexier colouring and print quality. I was surprised to see a number of JF cave locations mapped on the Tyenna sheet (edition 3 2009). The following caves are shown (with varying degrees of accuracy):

- Junee Cave
- Rift Cave
- Niagara Pot
- Cauldron Pot
- Khazad-Dum
- Satans Lair
- Bone Pit
- Rescue Pot
- Pigmy Cave (several hundred metres away from where it really is)
- Growling Swallet
- Tassy Pot
- Welcome Stranger Cave
- Pillingers Creek Cave (in the Risbys Basin karst area)

Many of the positions of the caves marked on Greg's Garmin map differ significantly from the positions shown on the Tyenna sheet, suggesting they may be from alternative sources, or that Garmin did a crap job of copying the Tasmaps.

The Wedge sheet (Edition 6 2007) has the following:

- Nanwoon Cave
- Nunamira Cave
- Beginners Luck Cave
- An unnamed cave, simply labelled 'cave', in the right spot to be Cashions Creek Cave
- Annakananda (Mt Anne)

I quickly checked the map stand to see if the Maydena and Dobson 1:25 k sheets contained the same data but they only had Junee and Growling on them. I didn't check their issue date, but they were the GDA versions so I'd assume they're as recently printed as the 2007 and 2009 1:100 k maps discussed earlier. I also checked the 1:100 k map covering Ida Bay (Huon sheet) but Mystery Creek Cave was the only labelled cave that I spotted. Again, I didn't check the issue date for that sheet.

So, the plot thickens. No doubt Rolan is currently in a mad panic as he reads this, formulating plans for road gates, cave gates, submissions to the Nomenclature Board and a mass map burning in the public square.

Figure 1. Greg's GPS map.

My Electronic Guidebook

Stephen Bunton

This project started with *Vertical Caves of Tasmania – A Caver's Guidebook* (Bunton and Eberhard, 1984). The idea was to have all the information about any cave worth tackling together in one place with a standardised format. To do this all the maps were redrafted. Unfortunately some of the more beautiful ones, by Stefan Eberhard in particular, ended up at a lower quality.

Much to my displeasure, without asking either Rolan or me, John Salt scanned the whole contents of *Vertical Caves*. This was the start of the STC Electronic Archive. I was not going to sue him for breach of copyright; we didn't make much money on the venture and we weren't going to waste it on legal fees! Unfortunately the exploration frenzy that this guidebook inspired meant that it was hopelessly out of date within a few short years. Notable omissions include Niggly Cave, Flick Mints, extensions to Cauldron and Niagara Pots and eventually Tachycardia.

When the internet burst onto the scene in the '90s I could see the possibility for an electronic guidebook with hypertext links. I could have one file with a location map and the caves in the vicinity linked back to that file, or to a general access description for that area. (The first STC Archive was of this format.) Unfortunately the problem with this idea was the exponential growth in the number of links required and the constant editing to maintain them as working entities.

The next big breakthrough was when Apple computers got WordMac and other applications which meant that suddenly PCs and Macs could talk to one another. At about the same time computer memory became vast and so much cheaper. It was then that I decided the best course of action was to create Word files for each cave in the *Vertical Caves* format but cut and paste the location maps etc. into each file.

Many of the files were already set up for a reprint of *Vertical Caves*, although this was never really likely to occur in hard copy format. My Electronic Guidebook is just a continuation of this project extended to include all Junee-Florentine Caves. I have added to it continuously with each new discovery.

One of the problems is that not all the maps and location maps are of the same format, so the style varies a bit. The advantage is that it enables photos and descriptions of the caves to be added. This makes for more interesting reading than the list of spreadsheets in the Archive – it adds a bit more flavour!

A few people have got wind of this project and I have had requests to include my work in the Archive but I have resisted. Basically most of the work is derivative or material that is already contained in the Archive, the only original stuff is the text. The other reason I have resisted is that Alan Jackson and I are really the only people who go caving in the Junee-Florentine seriously and for most people it would just clog up their hard-drives with a semi-complete endeavour!

For "power users" the information in the Archive is more useful and Alan does a great job of maintaining that. Alan's done a great job of getting stuff into the *Spiel* and each couple of months I hang out to see it published and get the references for the maps that have been published. The other references for which I am eternally grateful are Rolan's reports to Forestry Tasmania on the Junee and the Florentine. (Eberhard, 1994 and Eberhard, 1996). Because we don't own any intellectual rights to these, it would also be wrong to publish any of their material even though a lot of it has been cut and pasted into my Electronic Guidebook.

The one big breakthrough, since *Vertical Caves* was published, and since Rolan's reports is the advent of GPS. Gradually we have relocated caves and GPS'd them and I have incorporated these into the Electronic Guidebook. In our search for old caves and other documented features, all new caves have been GPS'd too. It has actually been easier to keep up to date with new finds in the Electronic Guidebook than the old known caves. My records of recent finds are much more comprehensive; pity we haven't converted them into "worthwhile" caves. It is easier to complete files of insignificant caves as they are ticked off – never to be visited again!

So how many caves are there in the Junee-Florentine?

So far we have tagged up to JF-598 as well as JF-600 to JF-603. In this range there are four numbers where there are no details of the cave, seven unallocated tags and one allocated number (Log-waster) yet to be tagged. Pillingers Creek Cave (was JF-66) has been removed and now assigned to the Risbys Basin karst system although I still have a file on it. So, that makes it 589 tagged caves. There are also ten named caves that are not tagged, 84 JF-X caves documented but not tagged and 64 JFZ caves documented but not tagged.

I have files on all these caves and records of those JF number tags that have not been allocated as yet. That makes 747 "caves". However, some of these are entrances that join to other entrances and so they are part of the same cave. This means that there are fewer files than the number of entrances. In fact I have files on 725 "caves". An example of this is Khazad-Dum where I only have one file for JF-4/5 and separate files for Bethin (JF-525) and Dwarrowdelf (JF-14).

A cave is considered complete when I have written and cut and pasted; an introduction, location, GPS, location map, cave map, description, rigging notes, time required and references for it. When the file is complete I make a PDF of it. So far I have 44 PDFs i.e. 44 completed caves, a mere 6% of what is known is documented in this way. This might seem like a lifetime's work but the good news is that about two thirds of the caves are 90% complete. Mostly they lack a location map, which isn't such a great concern in this age of GPS. Our dependence upon access tracks is not what it used to be several decades ago.

The main caves for which there is little information are those of the Florentine flatlands that were found ages ago and don't sound particularly exciting. Some of these have seen the light of cavers recently (e.g. JF-104 and JF-107) and these have now been fully documented.

Originally I would have liked this project to be readily edited by anyone but not all images in Macs are easily read on PCs, hence my copying them to PDFs.

The beauty of this system is that I can always edit the Word files. In some ways I am documenting history as it is written. The other advantage for a semi-control freak is that there aren't multiple files out there in cyberland going viral. Anyone who wants to can have a look at what I've done and let me know what needs changing and updating.

At the moment the main time-consuming process is checking the GPS co-ordinates and updating them to WGS 84 (almost synonymous with GDA 94) now that the GDA maps have been published. This is slow repetitive boring work but it promises to up the percentage quite rapidly whenever I get the enthusiasm.

The main disappointment is that the maps of the best caves, like Splash Pot, are too big to paste into a Word file. The other disappointment is that some of the extensions to prominent caves have been surveyed but maps have not been drawn to a standard where they could be included in the Electronic Guidebook.

So just letting you know, I am about halfway through an ongoing project. This is good because it keeps me off the streets, out of the milk bars and revisiting the Junee-Florentine in the hope that one day we'll cash in on the big one!

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