



# SPEIEO SPIEL 397

July - August 2013



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**Front Cover:** Janine ascends  
Macocha Abyss Czech Republic.  
Photo by Ric Tunney



# Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the

**Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated**

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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

Welcome to the first and presumably not the only *Spiel* I will produce. I reckon I should be able to hold this position for longer than a few weeks.

In this edition of the *Speleo Spiel*, I am proud to say, is an article describing caves developed in rock other than carbonates. Some would call them overhangs. There are three instalments of the “Ric and Janine Show” in Eastern Europe and trip reports from the winter solstice weekend. I have taken the liberty of appending the map of H-2 Vanderstaays Vault that should’ve accompanied the trip report published in the previous edition.

Thanks to Alan for his detailed cheat sheet on how to be an efficient and ruthless editor. You may have guessed by now, from the familiar layout and style, he also provided me with an easy to use template. All I have to do is come up with witty things to say in the captions of photos sent in by Janine, learn the fine art of filling space for the sake of an orderly layout, and get *Spiels* out on time.

PS. Thanks to a secret society of sub-editors who have commenced my training in the art of editorial Jedi

Matt Cracknell

## Stuff ‘n Stuff

### WINTER SOLSTICE

Thanks again to Arthur and Siobhan for opening their cosy Francistown home for the annual STC winter solstice weekend to a bunch of grotty cavers and their kids (it can’t get much worse!). A great deal of fun was had by all.

Matt Cracknell

### JANINE THE MACHINE

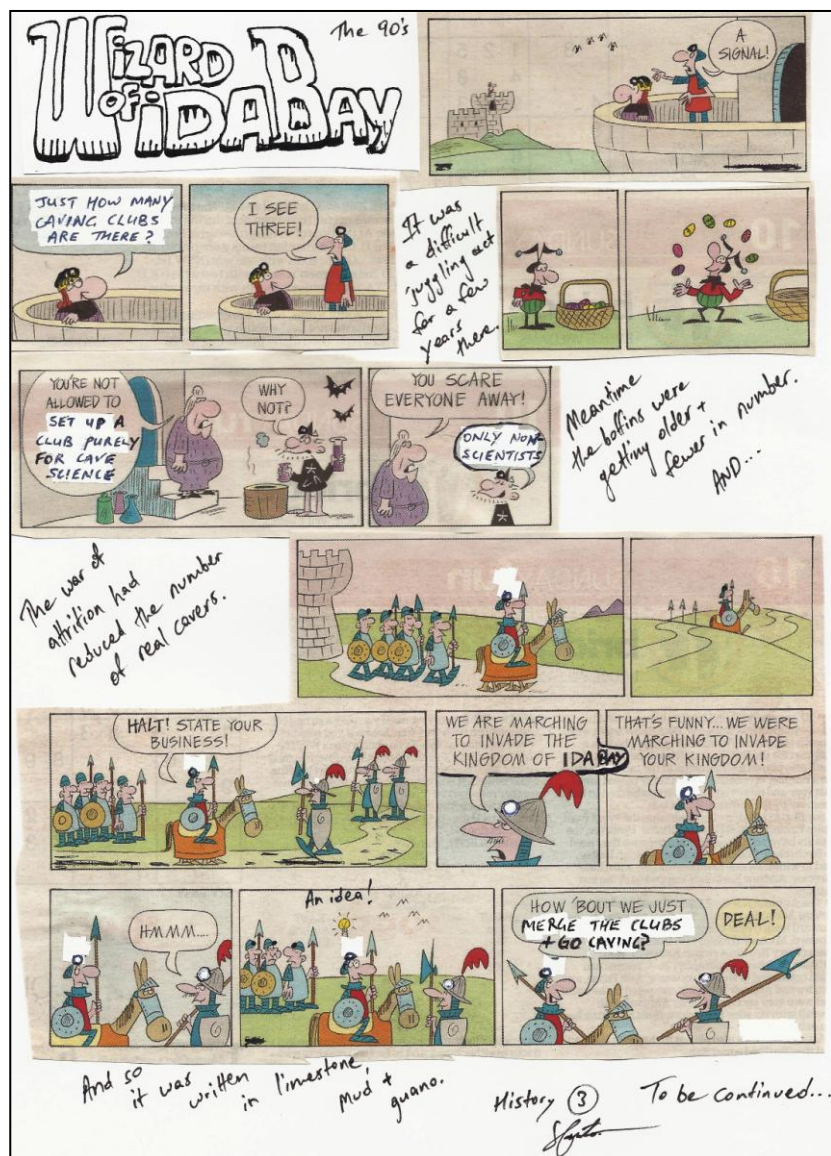
At the ICS (International Congress of Speleology) conference held in Brno, Czech Republic, this July, Janine won two events in the female “old farts” (over 45 year olds) SpeleOlympics. The 30 m prusik, in 2 min 54 seconds; and the Rope Trainer (technical rope skills course) in 8 min 5 seconds.

Ric Tunney

### FAME AND FORTUNE

One of the more colourful members of the club, Yoav, recently got his ugly mug on the front cover of the *Saturday Magazine* (*Mercury* 24/08/2013) that comes with the Mockery ... err I mean *Mercury*. I haven’t read the article but I can guess that there was much talk of gadgets, tree climbing, caving and the great stuff he is doing in putting together *Tasmanian Geographic*.

Matt Cracknell



M. Cracknell

Random space filler, WI-62  
Crystal Cave Margret River WA



## Trip Reports

### Two Northern Non-Limestone Caves

**Greg Middleton**

**24 January 2012**

**Party:** Greg Middleton & Simon Bland

On 24 January 2012, while helping John Wylie with some cave documentation in northern Tasmania, I took time out to do some recording of my own. John had told me about **Bullocks Cave** and Simon Bland was kind enough to guide me to this sandstone cave off the Lakes Highway, near Jackys Marsh.

The cave was mentioned in a recent report by Henry Shannon (2012), in which, following a visit in December 2011, he described it as “a well-known local feature on a pioneering era track down to Jackeys Marsh, so-called from the story that bullockies used to stable their teams in there overnight.” As to its mode of formation, he suggested it had been “hollowed out from the inside of a large joint block [of sandstone] by granular disintegration of the rock depositing loose sand on the floor, and its subsequent removal by sticking to the feet of passing animals, ant lion activity and the like.” He rejected any involvement of wind, noting there were no signs of wind erosion “on even the loose sand”.

I photographed (Photo 1, Photo 2) and surveyed the cave (Fig. 1) with assistance from Simon. The entrance is just over 7 m wide and rises to 5.5 m. The cave extends back some 9 m, though only the front half of this is flat, as the floor rises to become the back wall. The floor is fine grey sand, no doubt breakdown material from the eroded sandstone, together with humus. It is hard to imagine the cave providing shelter for many bullocks, though it may have been a comfortable camp for the bullockies. We then drove to nearby Liffey Falls State Reserve and walked down the track to the falls. At the base of



Photo 1. Entrance to Bullocks Cave

the lowest falls is a cave which I wished to survey. **Liffey Falls Cave** was reported in this very newsletter by Albert Goede 36 years ago (Goede 1977), but as far as I am aware it has never been surveyed. Goede learned of the cave because cave crickets (which he said, on advice from Dr Aola Richards, represented a new species of *Micropathus*) had been collected there and lodged in the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston (by Thomas C. Triffitt 15 March 1953 and V.V. Hickman 14 May 1953 – Arthur Clarke pers. comm. 9 June 2013). Goede collected more specimens on 13 August 1977 but unfortunately it seems that Dr Richards never got around to describing the new species and it may be that the specimens have been lost.



Photo 2. Looking out of Bullocks Cave

Goede suggests “the cave appears to have formed by lateral undercutting of the cliff by the stream. Subsequently the front part has suffered roof collapse, creating fairly dark conditions at the back. The cave has developed in a pebbly mudstone with a lime-rich matrix and poorly developed coralline formations are found on some of the walls” (Goede 1977). Goede noted a cave cricket population of about 100.

Kevin Kiernan noted the existence of this cave in his survey of caves and karst areas in Tasmania (1988) and Clarke (1997) included it in his list of “Tasmanian caves with occurrence records (as per RFA Database)”, presumably due to its cave cricket population.

Again, I photographed (Photos 3, 4, 5) and surveyed this cave (Fig. 2), assisted by Simon. The entrance is about 28 m wide, varying from about 2 to 3.8 m in height; it extends back a

maximum of 12 m. It is fairly robust and hopefully protected by the fact it lies within a State Reserve.

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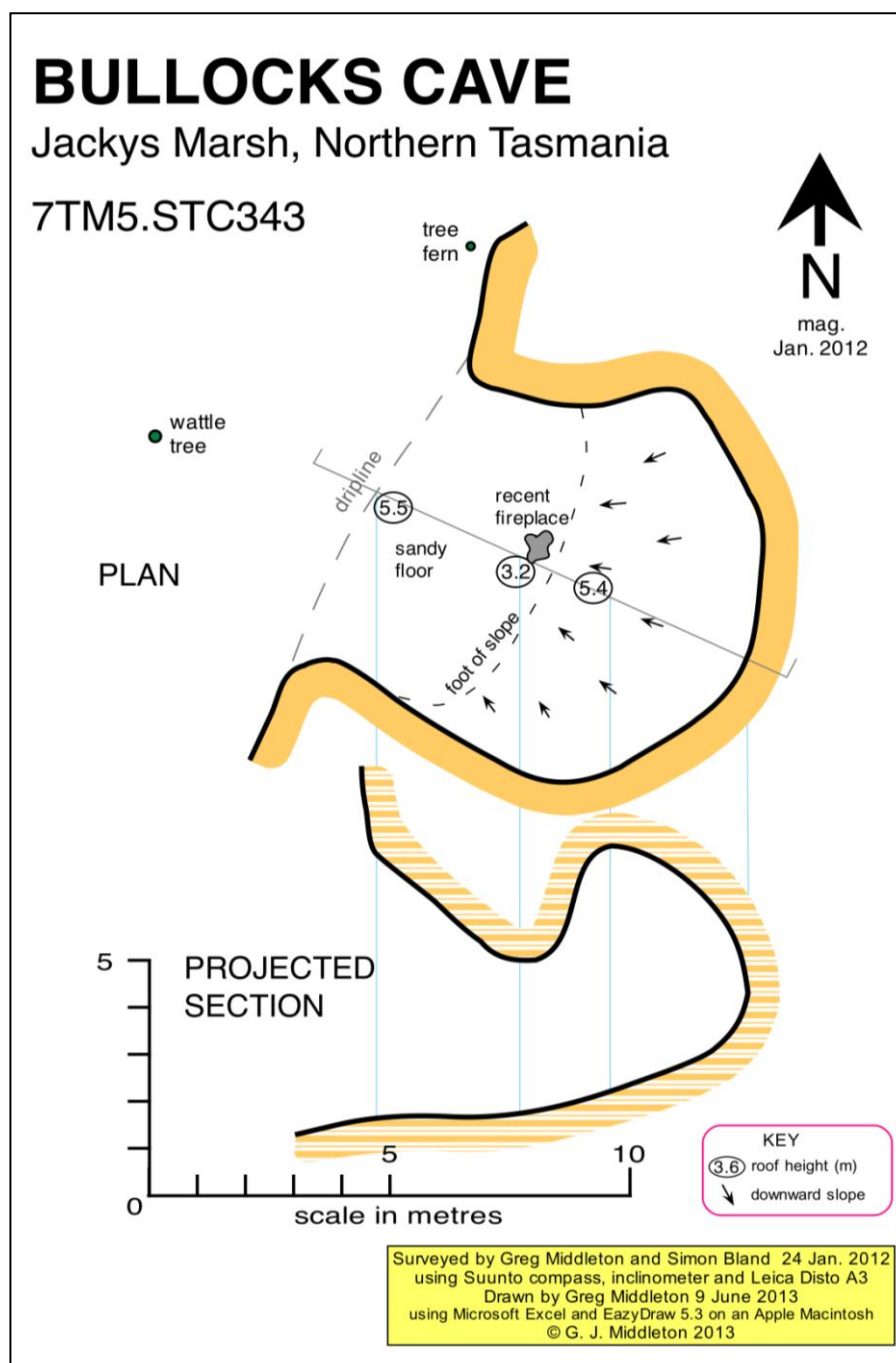


Figure 1. Bullocks Cave





*Photo 3. Entrance to Liffey Falls Cave, beside the lowest waterfall.*



*Photo 4. Panorama of Liffey Falls Cave.*



*Photo 5. Simon in front section, Liffey Falls Cave.*



*Photo 6. Simon in semi-dark trench at back of cave.*

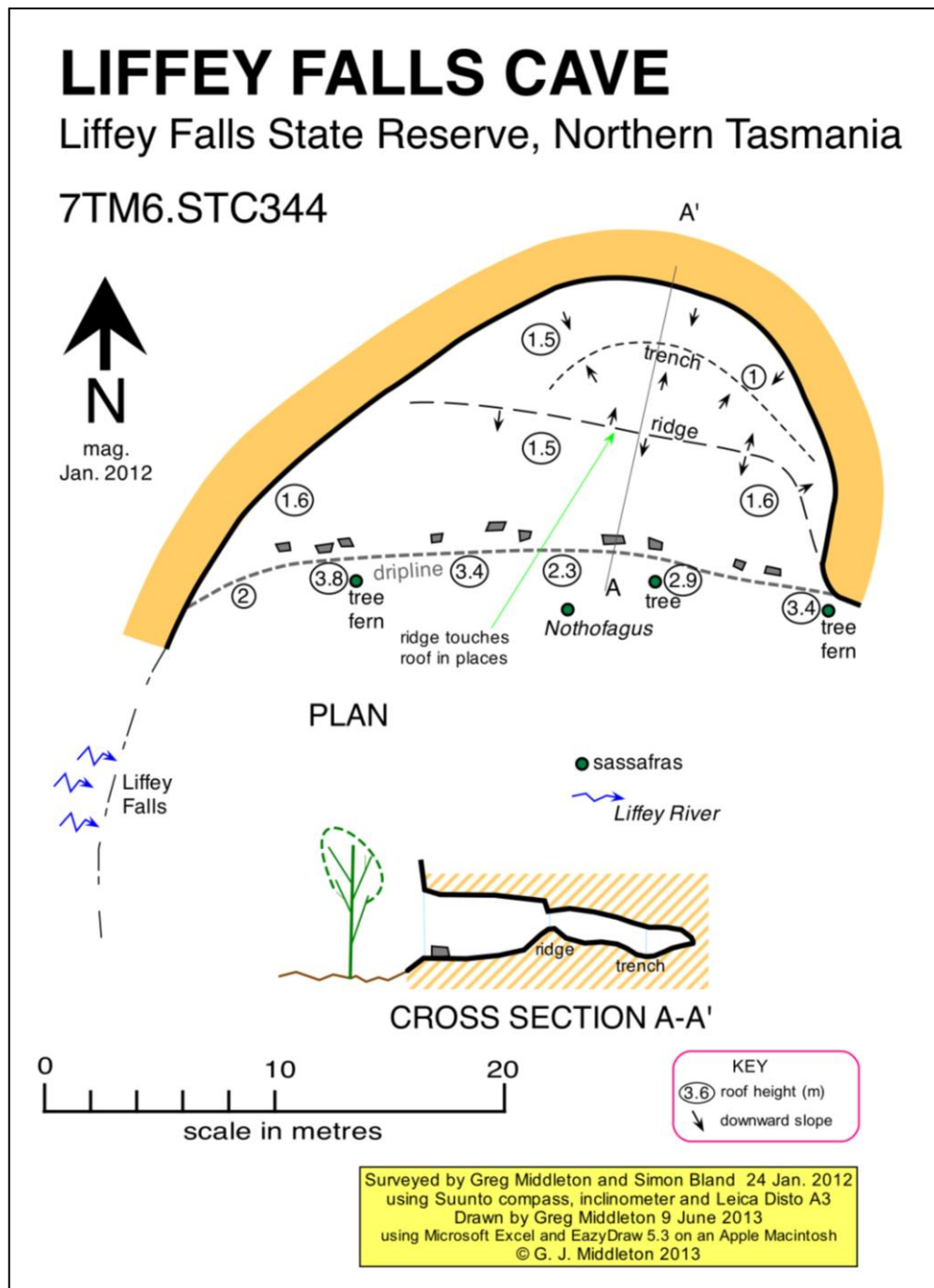


Figure 2. Liffey Falls Cave

## Caving in Europe 2013 – Part 1: Buso della Rana, Vicenza, Italy

Janine McKinnon

15 June 2013

**Party:** Janine McKinnon, Angela Sorontello, Ric Tunney & four others whose names I forget.

This is a mostly a horizontal cave system of some 40 km of passage, on several levels. Exploration is still ongoing, and this is done from underground bivvy sites over several days, a few times a year. We were visiting a friend in Vicenza for a week, and she had arranged for us to go on a caving trip with the local grotto: Club Speleologico Proteo di Vicenza. Sometimes it pays to have a friend who taught for 40 years in the local

high school. She knows just about everyone in town over the age of 15!

The club was visiting the cave on the Saturday with two objectives:

1. To visit the first campsite and prepare and supply it for an exploration camp in a few weeks. This was to be an overnight trip, staying in the camp.
2. A trip to a restriction an hour short of the camp to widen the restriction with explosives.

We were asked to join the first group, which we were really keen to do, with three caveats:

1. We had arrived in Vicenza on Thursday evening after 42 hours of constant travel (and no sleep) from home. We were rooted [*this is not a caveat!* - Ed].



2. We had a theatre engagement for the Friday night, which wouldn't finish until midnight, and the group was starting into the cave at 7am (about 40 minutes drive away) [*neither is this!* - Ed].
3. We had no sleeping bags or camping gear with us and little time to organise for two days underground [*nor this!* - Ed].

So we reluctantly opted to go with the second group, who were conveniently starting underground at the respectable time of 10 am. This proved to be the right decision, as you will discover shortly.

Caving (or doing anything) with Italians is an interesting experience, we have found. They are big on enthusiasm and conviviality, not so much on organising or thinking ahead. When we met a couple of them Thursday evening, they told us to just Google the cave to find its location, and to just arrive to be ready to go caving at 10 am. So that is what we did, except the location that Google gave us was wrong. We discovered this after walking around for 20 minutes in an unlikely looking location. Several phone calls and SMS directions later, we discovered we were half an hour away from where we should have been. Finally we arrived half an hour late (we had allowed "getting lost" time in our plans, just not enough of it). Being Italians, they weren't that fussed about the delay and we all got dressed on the tables of the restaurant near the entrance and wandered in around 11 am. The entrance is very big and impressive (see Google for photos).

The first party had entered around 7 am, as planned. The entrance is an outflow stream and this had been in flood two weeks earlier but fortunately now was quite low. There is a deep pool a short way in where they have constructed a traverse to bypass with stemples placed in the wall, running for about 30 m. This was a clever idea, I thought.

We walked much of the first hour, after passing the gate at a restriction near the entrance. The cave has a few crawls and grovels and is generally easy caving. The rock is dolomite and has no decorations or even particularly interesting rock formations. The cave had been heavily trogged where we visited.

After about two hours we reached the site for the explosives crew to do their thing. I didn't think the restriction was tight but some of the boys are a lot bigger than me. Ric decided to stay with the work crew whilst I and two others went ahead to the campsite to see what was happening there. The restriction was a vertical rift with a rope traverse but wasn't particularly hard.

We continued on for about half an hour and reached a very muddy 10 m climb up from the stream we were following.



Wilderness restaurant 100 m from cave entrance

There was an electron ladder and belay line in place. I didn't bother with the belay line but the others did. We then faced a very slippery, muddy traverse across a pit for about 8 m. There was a slack line in place but strangely no foot prints in the mud from this morning's group. Camp was around the corner apparently. We called but got no response. We could not hear anyone. It was going to take the three of us half an hour to get across and back, so we decided it wasn't worth doing if we couldn't be sure the others were there. We turned around and headed back.

On arrival back at the workface we found they had drilled the holes but not placed the explosives yet. We also found the first group, the ones that went in at 7 am. They had just arrived. They had spent all that time lost, doing circles in the interconnecting passages in the entrance series. They all thought someone in the group knew the route, but apparently no-one did. Valiant to the last, they were continuing on with their plan to go to camp and stay the night. After the requisite socialising, and smoking (this is Italy), for half an hour, they moved onwards. Ric and one member of our group decided to head out at the same time. The powder monkeys spent another half hour finishing their job before we started out too. I led out and only had one spot where I was unsure of the route. I was quite pleased with that! It's not like I have the best navigational reputation. We did a side trip through a wet circuit near the entrance, just for fun, and were out by 6 pm.

Beer and Brushetta were, of course, necessary at the nearby caver's pub before we all headed our separate ways. There is a map of the cave, and many photos from it, on the walls of the hotel.

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## H-216 Bell Chamber – Type II Fun

**Matt Cracknell**

**29 June 2013**

**Party:** Yoav Bar-Ness, Matt Cracknell, Anna Ekdahl, Sarah Gilbert, Han-Wei Lee & Chris Sharples

It was that time of year, Arthur and Siobhan once again kindly opened their cosy house at Francistown as a base for a couple of days of caving and a good dose of fruit-fuelled merriment. We rendezvoused at Arthur's at the civilised time of 9:30 am and bundled into two cars as dark clouds threatened overhead.

We geared up at the start of the Adamsons Falls track as the heavens cleared and bathed us in brilliant sunshine. It didn't take us long to locate the H-215 doline/subjacent karst feature and rig this for a bit of fun.

I used the club GPS to get a good (~5 m error) position on the southwest corner of the pit and took a couple of survey measurements to tie in P. Jackson's survey/map. We packed up and made our way gingerly down the steep escarpment looking for the elusive contact and even more elusive entrance to H-216. The contact proved to be a fair way down the valley although we knew when we had crossed it as the stream had cut a small gorge into the dolomite.



Several previous attempts by Chris to find Bell Chamber had ended in disappointment, so we split up and started searching. It didn't take long for Sarah to find the top of a rift marked with the H-216 tag on the southern flank of the valley. It was steep and treacherous and it appeared that there was an easier way into the cave below the tag.

My rigging was creative to say the least. There were very few options for good anchors except for a couple of boulders wedged in the narrow rift. Unfortunately these were not positioned favourably for providing good access into the cave. I managed to get safely to the bottom of the first pitch and the rest of the party slowly trickled in. Access to the next pitch was gained via a narrow slot in the far wall of the small chamber at the bottom of the first pitch. There was one solid projection just above head height that offered a safe anchor. There were no options for rebelayes or redirects where the pitch opened out into a small shaft ~10 m deep. However, there was no cause for alarm as the walls were smooth water-worn dolomite.

The true glory of Bell Chamber became apparent at the base of the second pitch. The only way on was a low series of small muddy cascades or steps that terminated at a constriction. The mud and organic sludge in the bum end of the cave was hideous. Just to make life interesting we quickly collected some survey measurements and started the slow process of heading out one by one. My crappy rigging and ample layers of

black sludge hindered our progress. It took us a couple of hours to get to the surface. The final heave over a large rock that was our main anchor was especially difficult. The gap was too narrow to squeeze past but just wide enough to get wedged in as you were climbing out.

We were all convinced that coming back to this particularly hellish cave was not high on our list of great things to do. To pass the time and reconcile ourselves with the decision to spend a day caving in this neck of the woods, Anna revealed to us the four Types of Fun:

- **Type I** – You had fun and were happy to tell other people that you were having fun.
- **Type II** – You didn't have fun and you will not even attempt to pretend that you did.
- **Type III** – You didn't have fun but you will convince other people that you did just to see them try.
- **Type IV** – You didn't even try because it definitely didn't look like it was going to be fun.

Back at Arthur's place the party had kicked off with an influx of gate crashers. Petr, Lucy and Patrick (their 1-year-old), and Sarah and Jasmine (my 2-year-old) were livening up the general mood. A great deal of delicious food and fruit wine was consumed ... Some things never change.

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## IB-10 Mystery Creek – Type I Fun

**Matt Cracknell**

**30 June 2013**

**Party:** Yoav Bar-Ness, Jasmine Cracknell, Matt Cracknell, Sarah Eden, Sarah Gilbert, Chris Sharples, Lucy Smejkal, Patrick Smejkal (Buddy) & Petr Smejkal.

After a reasonably good night's sleep most of us (minus Han-Wei and Anna) bid Arthur and Siobhan farewell and headed down to Mystery Creek for a kid-friendly trip. For some reason I was carrying more gear than I usually take on a regular trip – nappies, food, spare clothes, and a very wriggly 2-year-old. It started to rain as we made our way down into the entrance.

We spent the next hour or so bumbling around the entrance and down to the Broken Column. It was a pleasant trip with everybody having a good time. Especially the kids - which means there is hope for the future of caving in Tasmania. The only other thing worth mentioning, apart from having Type I Fun, was that the number of glow-worms seemed to be the lowest we had ever seen.

*Jasmine  
poking  
around in  
rim pools*



*M. Cracknell*

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## Caving in Europe 2013 – Part 2: Frauenmauer-Langstein cave system, Eisenerz, Styria, Austria

**Janine McKinnon**

**6 July 2013**

**Party:** Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Barbara Weilandner & five guys from Gratz caving club.

We were staying with Wetti (Barbara) for a week in her apartment in Vienna, and she had organised for us to go on a

trip with the Gratz boys to a long system high up in alpine karst. They had two objectives for the day:

1. Two of them had a climb they wanted to do to check out high passage. This was in a side passage about half way to the first campsite (the cave has five campsites).
2. Our party was going to the first campsite to take in supplies for the next planned expedition later in the summer. We were the mules. We were also planning on re-surveying some passage near the camp.

We were rendezvousing at the car park at 7 am. As the car park is three hours drive from Vienna, we were staying for a few nights at the hut (and cave) owned by "our" caving club: wait

for it ... **The Landesverein für Höhlenkunde in Wein und Niederösterreich.** Don't you just love the German language? There are several umlauts in there but I can't be bothered working out how to put them in!

The hut was halfway from Vienna to the carpark, so we left at 5:30 am. The others were there, and ready to go, when we arrived so we quickly grabbed our gear and we all started the hike up the hill. We had been told this was a three hour walk each way, and a height gain of 800 m. The walk wasn't as long as we expected and we arrived after one and a half hours walking. The height gain was as described.

The entrance we were aiming for was at the base of a cliff line that rose to the high point of the mountain range. The scenery was magnificent but the entrance area is not a wilderness. The path is actually a hiking trail and there are iron steps up the steep climb to the large entrance. The first part of the cave is still on the walking trail, where people walk about 100 m through cave, to continue along their pathway. We geared up at the obligatory religious shrine and headed in together.

The entrance is a grand and impressive one, with ice formations to add to the atmosphere. The cave is big ... really big! In the order of 50 m wide and high, a-la Exit main passage. Huge rockpiles on the floor, all looking very "new". These caves are not very old, by our standards.

A short way in, we came to the gate at one of the few narrow sections of cave. We left our hiking packs here and continued on. We walked up and down "hills" for half an hour or so before reaching the first of the fixed rigging. All these Europeans seem to like permanent rigging in their caves.

We started along a series of stemples placed in the rock for climbs and traverses. Fixed ropes for belays were also in many places. After an hour or so we arrived in a moderate-sized dry chamber, this is where the climbing party separated from us. They would remain independent for the remainder of the trip.

We continued in along the main route of the cave and soon came to a 20 m drop. This had been rigged with fixed ladders and a belay line. We abseiled down. It was getting quite damp near the bottom as we were joining a very active stream with a waterfall to the side. The water level was high, according to the locals. There had been a lot of rain in the previous few weeks, plus snowmelt.

We continued downstream, with lots of climbing, bridging and traversing for another two hours, and finally reached the first camp after three hours underground. The trip had been very sporty and fun.

The camp was quite an impressive site. It was 30 m above the stream in a dry and quiet spot. They had a tarp rigged around the cooking area, with a table and chairs and LOTS of food. There was a bucket and rope to get water from a nearby source. We had an extended lunch with soup, coffee and various interesting foodstuffs and sausage, lots of sausage.

An hour later we started to our survey area. The other three guys were going to do photography on a pitch part way to our site. When we got to their drop off point two stayed, and one took us to the start of our survey section. The passage was getting smaller and narrower ... a LOT smaller and narrower. We kept going and going. Not there yet. Ric mutinied. Down to two. We continued grovelling on. This was not looking good. Finally our guide called a stop. We had arrived at the start of our section. We had two separate passages to do, one at



*Gearing up ... and praying*



*Lunch at Camp 1 [no sausages for Ric - Ed]*



*Every caver's dream, a cave in your bedroom*



the bottom of a 10 m wet pitch. We had the rope for that. We decided to leave that until last, IF we got to it! Total distance to be surveyed was about 400 m, we were told.

The passage was small and tight, but high enough to stand upright. We started surveying. After three legs we reached the restriction. Have I mentioned that there was a restriction that someone had got stuck in previously, and had to be properly rescued from? No? We hadn't been told that either until we got there. This was seriously looking like a lemon job.

The restriction was vertical. Wetti is quite a bit larger than me. She had a go but couldn't fit. I then tried and made it through, but not without some serious effort. We shot a leg through the restriction. I had a look around the corner and the passage wasn't getting a lot bigger. A stream was also entering from a side passage and thundering off down the onward route. I didn't have a clear view but it looked like there may not be air space the whole way. At the very least we were going to get soaked and pushed around in rushing 4°C water. We were not dressed for this – wetsuits would be needed in these temperatures (the cave is 6°C) to have any hope of doing the

job (and I didn't think the conditions would allow it anyway). The boys obviously hadn't thought this through well when they suggested we survey here in these water levels. So I told Wetti not to bother having another go at fitting through (not that I think she would fit), and we finished the survey after four legs. Now that's a productive day!

We rejoined the photo boys, and they had given up too as the pitch was too wet. The model had got drenched. Their club is not very SRT proficient apparently, and they had rigged the rope straight down the drop, with no attempt to keep out of the water. It was very wet on this trip, as I've said.

We picked up Ric back at the bivvy site and started the three hour trip back to the entrance. It was as much fun going out as the inward journey had been.

We were out of the cave after 10 hours underground. We still had the hour and a half walk back to the cars. It was just getting dark, around 9:30 pm, when we got to the cars. Two of the Gratz guys joined us for dinner at a nearby pub and Ric, Wetti and I arrived back at the hut at midnight.

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## **MC-29 and MC-1 Kubla Khan – Kubla Cave Leaders Accreditation Trip: Type III Fun**

**Matt Cracknell**

**12 July 2013**

**Party:** Matt Cracknell, Rolan Eberhard, Alan Jackson, Linda Overend (PWS) & Catherine Stark (MCC)

Over the past several years there has been much banter between Tasmanian-based caving clubs and PWS about formalising the Kubla Khan (KK) leadership accreditation system. Furthermore, Linda and Rolan were keen to get some extra names on the KK leaders list so that the responsibility for guiding trips was not falling on the few currently active leaders. As a result, Alan and I (STC), and Catherine (MCC) had been called up to partially guide a trip through KK and hopefully become accredited leaders.

The trip ran smoothly. At prominent locations in the cave we would stop to discuss where to go and more importantly where not to go. We learnt exciting things like how to wash a boot properly without spraying crud all over the flowstone and that Rolan always has at least 200 m of track marking cord stashed in his bag. As usual the cave was amazing but the trip somehow felt more like work than play.

It was mid-July and the water in the River Alph was unsurprisingly chilly. On this trip I wore a wetsuit as one of my previous trips had almost ended in disaster when I didn't wear enough and gave myself a taste of what hypothermia is like. This time I was cosy warm wading chest deep in a frigid river.

Surprisingly, we made it back to the surface while the sun was still shining. The reason for the relatively short trip was that we were all competent cavers and we didn't stop to take photos of pretties.

In the past couple of weeks, Alan, Catherine and I have been notified that we are now accredited KK leaders.

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## **MC-84 Honeycomb Cave –Type I Fun**

**Matt Cracknell**

**13 July 2013**

**Party:** Jasmine Cracknell, Matt Cracknell & Sarah Eden

The whole family had followed me up to Mole Creek for the Kubla Khan leader accreditation trip, which had occurred the day before. On the way home we stopped by Honeycomb Cave

as Jasmine had really enjoyed the Mystery Creek trip a couple of weeks earlier.

We spent an hour or so trying to get lost in the labyrinth of high level passages not far from the entrance. Jasmine loved playing in the sand, rubbing her grotty mits on stalagmites near the stream and stumbling around on the "wobbly rocks".

Sarah and I enjoyed being on holiday.

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## **Caving in Europe 2013 – Part 3: International Union of Speleology (IUS) 16<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology, pre-conference caving trip – Moravian Karst, Czech Republic**

**Janine McKinnon**

**15-21 July 2013**

**Party:** Numerous cavers including Janine McKinnon & Ric Tunney

What a mouthful of a title that is!

So, we went to the conference to see what caving in Eastern Europe is like. It proved to be very interesting.

As a quick overview, for this excursion, there were about 50 of us, from all over the world, based at a holiday camp within half an hour's drive of many caves. Each day there were about eight caving trips on offer, which we all signed up for as we liked. Some were vertical and most horizontal, although climbing fixed iron ladders counted as horizontal caving. There were 14

trips on offer over the five days caving, with some being only a few hours long and two trips being possible in one day.

There was no vetting of skills or ability for any trips; they assumed we knew what we could do and booked our trips accordingly! The level of trust involved in this amazed (inspired?) me. There were a few misadventures as a result (the Iranians who couldn't swim and did an SRT trip with two swims comes to mind) but no serious dramas. Anyway, I will give a short account of the trips I chose.

(There are all sorts of accents on these names but my keyboard can't do them) [*She orta get a Maç ^`ş! –Sub-Ed*].

### **Day 1: Macocha Abyss.**

We were the first party to do this [*ever in the history of everything? - Ed*]. This is basically a gigantic pit measuring 170 m by 76 m by 168 m deep (the abseil is 140 m). It is a dome collapse. There is a lake in the bottom of the shaft which is a cave dive. The Punkva River runs through the system. The bottom of the abyss is accessed by tourists via an unnatural tunnel system, and an open air track (or cable car) to the top.

We had a very short walk from the car park to the top of the abyss, where the locals had rigged the drop. It consisted of four rebelayes against the cliff and then a 90 m free hang drop to the bottom. We were a party of four; Ric and myself, and two Americans; Pat Seiser (who was in Tas. for the Exit project two years ago) and Kent. Neither Pat nor Kent had their SRT gear with them, and had borrowed some for the trip(s). Frog system, of course. Kent used a ropewalker system normally.

Pat and Kent had been told previously that they could just do the abseil and then walk back up (tourist route). Our guides expected us all to do the abseil, and prusik back up. This struck me as an optimistic plan, given that two of the party didn't have gear they knew, and had doubts about their fitness to do the climb!

I went down first. It was a brand new 10 mm rope, but very fast nonetheless. I REALLY needed my Raumer handy braking crab, on the narrow end. It was a spectacular abseil though. All made it down without incident and we went for a short tour of the tourist cave at the bottom.

Then it was time to go back up. After much discussion, Pat and Kent were allowed to walk out. Ric dithered [...] and then decided to go with them. I was the only one to prusik out. It was a spectacular view going up, and an enjoyable prusik; Clean rope, sunshine, good views. I did the 90 m in less than ten minutes, and about five minutes for the top bits. Heroes would do better but I was happy with that.

### **Day 2: Skienene (Glassy) Dom.**

This is another vertical entrance to the underground Punkva River system. The entrance itself is artificial and involves climbing down a short section (5 m) of fixed iron ladders in a concrete tube. The first natural pitch, of some 15 m, is reached at the end of the tube. The trip is a through trip, and the metal lid on the entrance was locked behind us.

The cave was quite short, with four pitches fairly close together, a final crawl of about 50 m, and then meeting up with the boats on the river section of the tourist trip. A small, fast party could do the rigged cave in less than an hour; we took four hours.



*Janine descends the Macocha Abyss*

The first pitch drops into a moderate-sized room that was quite well decorated with flowstone walls and straws and helictites in several places. The floor was quite muddy though, and became increasingly so as we descended. The four pitches are each less than 20 m in length.

The rigging was interesting in places, with rebelayes on all pitches, and most offset by a couple of metres. The last one was really fun. It was on the other side of the pitch and a couple of metres higher. We had two Americans on the trip and they had lots of trouble with all the rebelayes. They each took 25 minutes to do the last rebelay. They aren't used to them, you know.

The formations that give the cave its name are found in the horizontal section at the bottom (see photo).

### **Day 3: Rudicke Propadani.**

A very large group (maybe fifteen?) cavers walked to the entrance of this cave. Four of us (and a guide) then took the SRT route down, and met up with the rest of the group who had gone the horizontal (iron ladders) route to the base level.

The SRT route started with a short (5 m) abseil down beside the stream, and then a traverse of 15 m to the next pitch. This immediately proved a bit challenging for some of our group as the traverse was an "arm strength" cowstails job. The last bit was uphill. Remember, no vetting of how strong, fit, capable any of us were. We all got there eventually so all was good.

Several pitches, with waterfalls, followed. One 20 m waterfall pitch is apparently frozen in winter! That would be neat.

It was a wet trip but good caving. Several interesting rebelayes again. There was a lovely, narrow, smooth-washed rock canyon section, and this is where the two swims were. They were only about 3-4 m long but that is a long way if you can't swim (note: the guide had actually asked us if we could swim before we started into the cave ... once bitten). At the end of the final abseil you jump about 5 m down into the final pool and swim across to join the horizontal section of the cave (and the other waiting cavers). It was a fun SRT trip.

After changing into the dry clothes we'd bought with us we stayed in our group and went for a look along the horizontal section. This goes quite a long way. It is a lovely streamway of clean sculpted rock, with a few areas of formation at various points. This cave is famous for the iron ladder that was left in-situ in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century underneath a trickle of water in a





*Namesake decorations in Skienene Dom*

flowstone area. The ladder and a pot are now calcite coated (see photo).

One interesting point is the rigging the Czechs have put in to make the caving easier. Fixed iron ladders I have mentioned (and they are in many caves) but also, only a few metres after starting along the streamway, we came to a section where the water was half a metre deep. They have placed a commando wire through this section, so you don't get wet above ankle level! This was typical of the infrastructure they have put into all their caves (or certainly the ones available on this camp).

We followed the stream to **Rudicky Dom** (see map), where the others decided they had seen enough. We had a time constraint: if we didn't get back for the bus at 4:30 pm then we'd have to walk the 3 km back to camp. Our guide was still keen, so the others started back and he and I made a dash for the **Obri Dom**, the largest underground room in Czech Republic. It was much quicker with only two, particularly the crawling bits. We got there, and back to the entrance (up 80 m of iron ladders) not long after the rest of our group had exited the cave. Good timing. We got back in time for the bus too, even better timing.

#### **Day 4: Popadani Lopace, & Vintocke Caves.**

Two short caves in one day, PLUS a tourist cave!

The caves are 200 m either side of a tourist cave, so easy walking. The first cave's entrance was excavated in an attempt to reach a diver who had died in one of the sumps. It was a concrete conduit one metre diameter, about 60 m straight down, with the ubiquitous fixed iron ladders. For the first time we knew about, there was a self belay rope running beside the ladders, but as we had not been told this, none of the six of us had SRT gear with us. So it was a 60 m free climb.

This cave was totally unremarkable. Fairly short, a few muddy, small sumps, mud, no formations; very ordinary really.

What was interesting was the engineering; LOTS of engineering. Iron ladders, with metal landing platforms. Mining-sized passage widening, more iron ladders with metal catwalks between offset ladders. Then we got to the first sump. We had a large pump, 12 cm diameter plastic pipe running from the sump and back along the cave. More plastic tubing for who knows what running alongside the sump and back along the passage, and various tools.

The cave continued along a crawlway to the next sump, some 30 m. We shared the crawl with the sump drainage piping. What an amazing way to run a caving hobby! The time, effort and MONEY that had gone into this cave is amazing. After about two hours we exited, to head for cave No. 2.



*Calcite encrusted pot, Rudicke Propadani*



*Eastern European cave infrastructure*

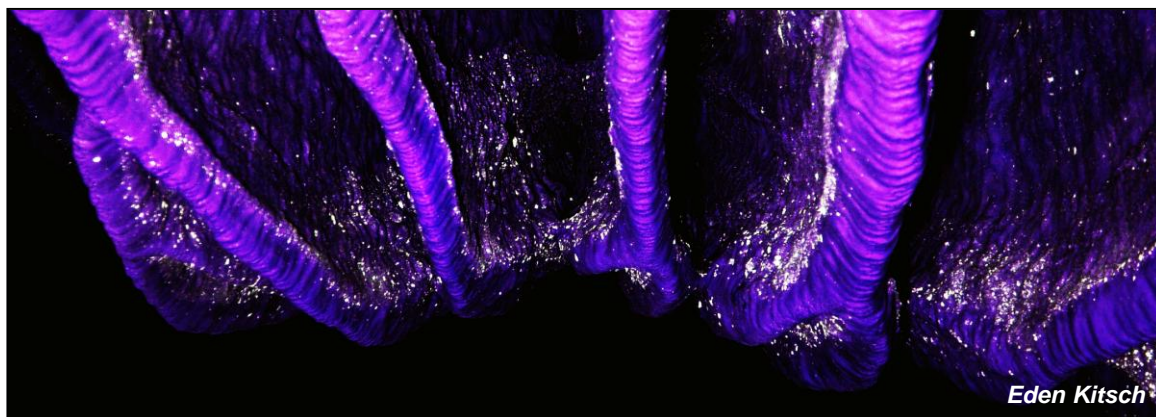


YOU'RE PUTTING ON WEIGHT!!

YOU HAVE TO GO! CAVING, HOW ABOUT YOU?

I'M DIFFERENT!

I DON'T HAVE TO PRETEND I'M YOUNG + FIT!



*Grape Drapes - MC-14 Lynds Cave*



## Other Exciting Stuff

# H-2 Vanderstaays Vault

## Hastings, Tasmania

7H2.STC342

Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers:

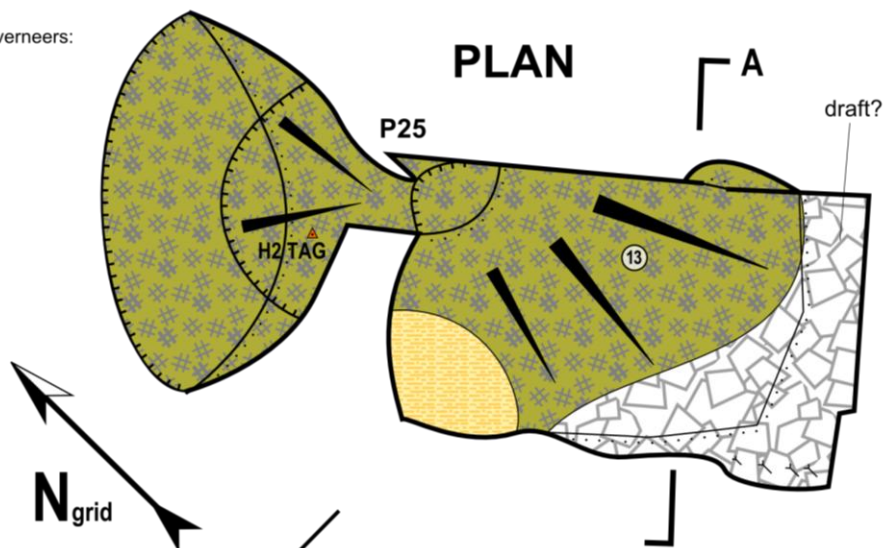
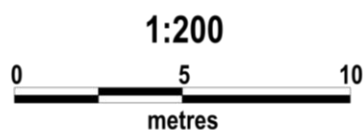
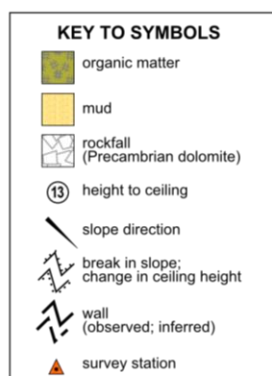
M. Cracknell and P. Smejkal

Survey Date - 19.05.2013

Drawn by M. Cracknell - 02.06.2013

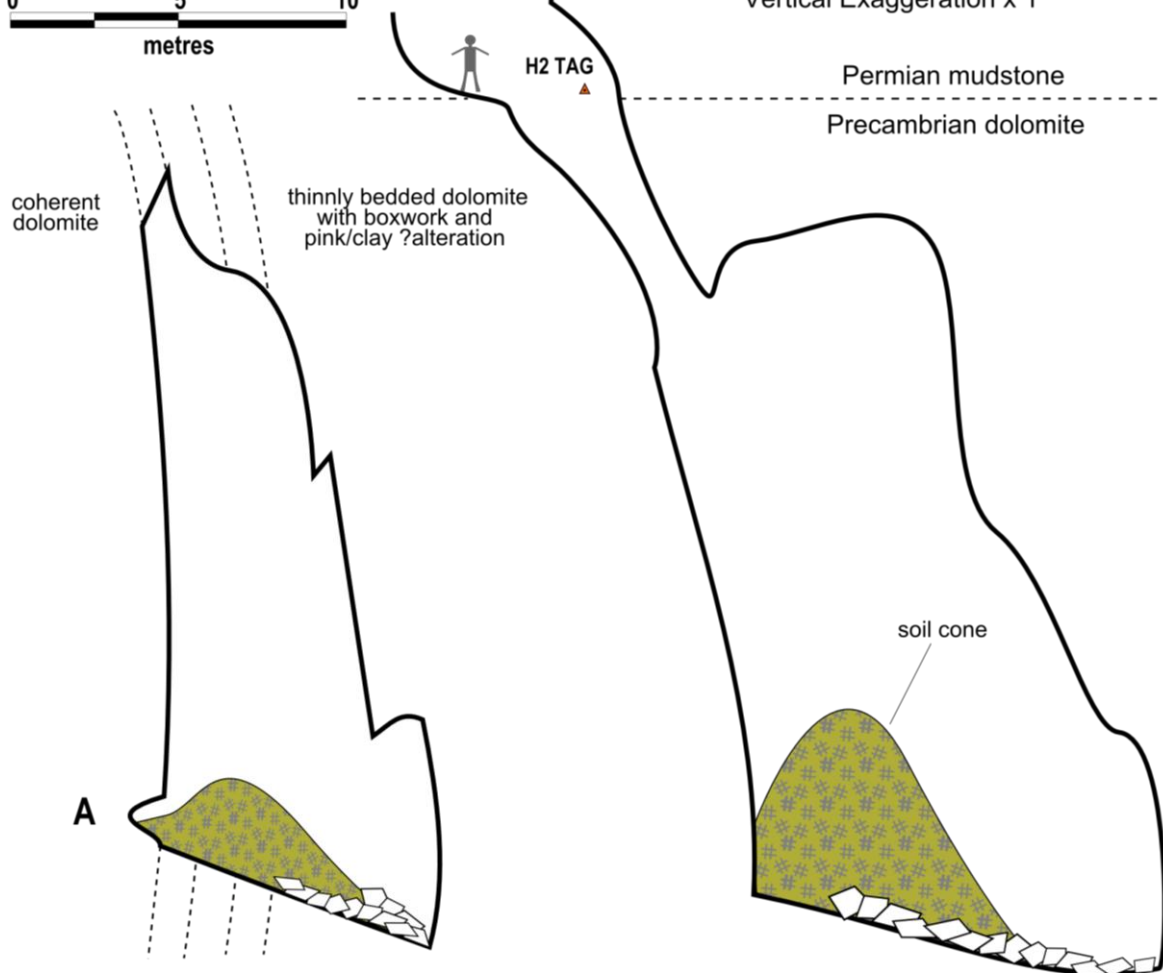
ASF Grade 54

Scale - 1:200 (A4)



## DEVELOPED SECTION

Vertical Exaggeration x 1



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