Speleo Spiel 405

November—December 2014

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

Front Cover:
Bunty in the Blood Bucket, STC Cave Rescue Course, JF36 Growling Swallet. Photo by Janice March.

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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Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc.
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Editorial

It appears that I offended some STC members with my rant about referencing in the last *Spiel*. I sincerly apologise for upsetting anyone I may have singled out (read the Ric and Janine Show). I still stand by the intentions of that rant, to make my life as editor as easy as possible. Obviously I have a lot to learn about the art of commiting public slander without getting in trouble.

Still, this issue of the *Speleo Spiel* still manages to contain a reasonable amount of trip reports despite a couple of omissions in retaliation for my last editorial. As usual the JF has been getting a pounding. Chris & co. find "caverns measureless to man", well almost, on the northern side of the Hastings ridge. A trip report of epic proportions describes an equally epic trip plumbing the depths of Growling. Last but not least a first draft of the Exit Cave system is revealed.

Matt Cracknell

Stuff 'n' Stuff

Sixteen Legs

An ABC report on the Bookend Trust Sixteen Legs project can be viewed online at http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-17/author-neil-gaiman-drawn-to-film-about-tasmanian-cave-spider/6020080?WT.ac=statenews_tas

Phil Jackson

Annual General Meeting

The STC Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Tuesday 3 March 2015. All office bearers are reminded that reports great and small are required to be either posted to the STC email list prior to the AGM or presented to those present on the night.

Matt Cracknell

Trip Reports

Cave Rescue Course

23-26 October 2014

Stephen Bunton

Cavers: Lots of STC people, visitors from up north and from interstate, yes even from WA plus a helper from Sydney.

The basic plan was that we would do two training days at Fruehauf Quarry and then two days in a cave up the Junee-Florentine to practise the skills we had learned. Andreas in his role as Search and Rescue Co-ordinator had organised that Alan Warild from NSW Cave Rescue fly down and give us the latest cave rescue course. When Al delivers this course to mainlanders often they don't get to first base because the cavers' vertical skills aren't up to the task of crossing rebelays and other such technical stuff. With most of us being experienced Tasmanian cavers, it was assumed that we had sufficient experience in vertical caves that testing this pre-requisite knowledge was not considered necessary. It therefore came to me as a bit of a surprise that the first thing we did was learn a few knots.

Al, with all his vast deep caving experience, has honed not just his SRT rig to a bare minimum but he has refined his fast and lightweight attitude, applying it to cave rescue as well. The overarching idea is that you can rescue somebody with the basic SRT gear that everybody carries, plus a couple of pulleys that everybody should carry; Oh! and a stretcher. The jury is still out on which is the most suitable stretcher. Al brought the NSW one with down him. By contrast the attitude of most rescue organisations is bigger, heavier and stronger but this necessitates truckloads of gear and men that look like they drive trucks. Convincing these types to change their mindset, that lightweight is good, has proved difficult. For experienced Tasmanian cavers the advantages of a lightweight approach were immediately apparent.

The significance of learning to tie knots was that in a real cave rescue gear would be recycled through each stage of the rescue. So the ability to untie a knot easily after a lift has been completed and then use it further up the cave on another stage, is a great advantage. It means there is need to spend forever untying figure eight loops and double fisherman's bends. (Trivia time: A knot is a knot or loop in a rope whereas a bend joins two ropes.) So we learned to join two ropes with an overhand knot [*Hang on, he just said a "bend" joins two ropes ... me thinks the "Trivia time" point is lost – Sub. Ed.*] in order to make slings for anchors. This knot was known to those people who use it for pull-down trips. It was henceforth known as the EDK or European Death Knot. (Europeans use it on abseils and Americans think they are mad!) It's safe and easy to tie. We adopted a bowline on a bight for rebelays, a figure-8 on a bight for y-hangs as is standard these days and a Stein Knot to tie off a haul-line rig that was ready to go but not required yet.

All this stuff was presented to us in PDF form to study before the course but as is the way with these things (and maps!) it only really made sense afterwards. Anyone who wants access to this info should get hold of the PDFs and pester one of the participants for a bit of instruction. Like First Aid everyone should know how

Fruehauf Quarry: four little cavers hanging on a line. If one should fall then there will be ...

to do it!

The remainder of the first day was spent in doing counterweight haul systems. No big men with big muscles here. Al reckoned that if you have to use brute strength then you are doing it wrong! He informed us that more cave injuries happen on rescues than at other times and many of these are back (lifting) injuries.

The next day we learned how to do Tyrolean Traverses with the stretcher and human redirections. By the end of the day we took a patient for a lap of a rope course up the cliff across the cliff over to a nearby tree and then down to the ground. If we could complete all this efficiently then we had all the skills. Unfortunately we didn't. Janine who was the patient for this exercise was stuck for a while and a fair bit too much muscle was required to salvage the situation. The difficult bit; the bit that will require some more practice was the transition from one stage to the next.

On the third day we went to Owl Pot and extracted a patient from two pitches down. Owl Pot has the worst muddy, grovelly entrance pitch and it was here that the real benefit of the Tyrolean Traverse technique was demonstrated. For each lift we needed a controller, a counterweight person and an attendant on a separate rope to stop snags. People were broken into teams and given assorted roles. Al's real skill in this type of training, despite knowing all his stuff, presenting it well, having a sense of humour and making it interesting with anecdotes about the potential pitfalls (literally) was that he could manage the people. Everybody was involved. Everybody took on all the roles at some stage during the weekend. Nobody took over all the time and nobody was allowed to be a passenger.

I learned heaps and found an endless supply of energy and enthusiasm over the weekend. Al must have spotted that I had the potential to get carried away and possibly transition into "action man" mode. So on the fourth and final day, I was the patient. This day's exercise was extracting a patient from the bottom of the Dry Bypass in Growling Swallet.

From my point of view, through a muddy pulley in front of my face, it all seemed to go well. The exercise went smoothly and quite quickly once the stages were set up. The thing that impressed me most was the "chatter" listening to the way in which people spoke to one another respectfully; everybody knew that everybody else was equally as skilled. Also the care for the welfare shown for the patient was quite evident and reassuring. I was impressed!

Overall this was a fantastic four days. I hope we never need to demonstrate these skills for real but certainly a few more practices, certainly an annual day refresher would be good.

[*Another article documenting this Cave Rescue Course will appear in an up-coming issue of* Caves Australia – *Ed.*]

Fruehauf Quarry: Al Warild directing traffic while others look on.

Fruehauf Quarry: don't drop Janine.

JF36 Growling Swallet: Cave Rescue Course ... even Alan (right) is smiling, or is he just squinting?

JF337 Slaughterhouse Pot–JF36 Growling Swallet

Beginner through trip

1 November 2014

Petr Smejkal

Cavers: Rogan Adams, Milos Dvorak & Petr Smejkal.

Milos and I organised this trip to take one of our new members, Rogan, and prove his SRT skills. So far, Rogan had only visited Welcome Stranger and he was more than keen to try some vertical stuff.

Before we went for the trip I had quite a busy week at work and my mind was somewhere else. Why I am boring you by saying this? Well it is my way of apologising for the fact that when we got to the carpark at the Eight Road I realised that my SRT gear (except my cows tail) was lying on the stairs at home. Not a very pleasant discovery when you are going to do a bit of vertical caving. Our original plan was to do the trip from Growling into Slaughterhouse Pot but due to my forgetfulness, we did the opposite direction instead. Before we went into Slaughterhouse Pot we checked the water level at Growling. Surprisingly, despite the fact that it had rained for the last fortnight, the water level wasn't that high.

At the first pitch in Slaughterhouse Pot, Milos and Rogan put on their SRT gear. I put on a couple of slings, a cows tail and a karabiner. Milos went down first, Rogan was next and I went last. Milos and Rogan did not have any troubles and then it was my turn. I had not used a Munter hitch for a few years and I was a little nervous doing it again. In the end, there were no dramas and we negotiated all three pitches and the rockpile quickly. Rogan had no problems on the ropes and he did not struggle in Windy Rift. It would be great if all beginners were as capable. The trip through Growling was smooth and we got out of the cave in less than two and a half hours. I don't think that I've ever been on such a fast beginner trip. I did not even have time to take any photos.

As we exited the cave so early, we decided to have a look at Russell Falls on the way home.

Russell Falls.

JF207 Voltera

The end of the story (for now …)

15 November 2014

Andreas Klocker

Cavers: David Bardi, Stephen Fordyce, Andreas Klocker, Liz Rogers, Petr Smejkal & Sandy Varin.

On our last trip to Voltera we were about to derig the cave when on the way out I decided to have a quick look at a small passage close to the top of Stairway to Niggly to see what's there … expecting it to crap out for sure. But strange things do happen in caves and it went … down a pitch. After a quick look down that pitch last trip with very quick and dirty rigging we decided that this lead needed to be pushed properly.

So off we went with Petr and the Lamelanders (who are almost getting more capable than some 'real' Tasmanian cavers … beware!). Since there were six of us we split into two groups – Sandy, David and myself started rigging the lead and Liz, Petr and Steve were going for a photographic excursion down Stairway to Niggly.

The new lead kept going down a few small pitches which were each just enough of a pitch to use a rope rather than free climb (unless your name is Dickon Morris). A few bolts later Petr showed up, not even pretending to be a fan of cave photography and with quite severe virgin cave withdrawals. Needless to say he needed his fix, so he took the drill happily and bolted the next pitch, which was the first proper pitch in this lead (~10 m), which was quickly followed by an even nicer (but wetter) ~15 m pitch. Sadly soon after Petr came back up and told us that the cave ended in a very narrow rift … the end of that lead.

So decisions had to be made. Since it was clear at that point there were no known leads left in Voltera, and it would be hard to get people to come back just to finish a survey and derig, we decided to finish the survey and derig as much as we could. So Petr and I started surveying and derigging the new lead while the others took all the gear which was not needed any more and started heading out. Obviously the Fistula lead to a traffic congestion, but after only a small amount of inappropriate language (small compared to most trips through the Fistula that is) we hauled all the ropes to the other side.

It was then time to climb up one of my favourite pitches in the JF. Apart from someone who was going to climb as one of the last, and left their SRT kit in the first cave pack going up the pitch [*This sounds strangely familiar – Ed.*], resulting in lots of shouting and rope acrobatics, everyone got up in one piece. Now the cave is fully derigged, with all the concrete screws removed (apart from one in the Fistula in case someone wants to come back to enjoy this special place again).

Sadly this is the (current) end of the Voltera story. The downstream extension of Niggly is so close, but still so far. It's time for a new project I think (or back to Boulder Jenga to find the source of its amazing draft)? I should also say congrats to Steve for surviving his first 'real' cave - and that with a damn heavy pack! He has already booked his next flight to Tassie for more punishment!

JF203 Bone Pit

Four decades after its survey …

16 November 2014

Andreas Klocker

Cavers: David Bardi, Stephen Fordyce, Andreas Klocker, Liz Rogers & Sandy Varin.

It was time to go back and have another look at Bone Pit. This cave has previously been pushed to a depth of ~100 m with a depth potential of more than 300 m. Previous trip reports talked about a narrow drafting rift at the bottom … and from Voltera we just learned that it's always worth revisiting caves since in the dark ages of carbide lamps, and too many going leads in other places, the way on was often not found.

As this was probably the first ever SRT trip into this cave we had to rig on the way in, but luckily much of the cave's depth is gained by simple walking down a talus slope. The first impression of this cave, and further impressions on the way down, quickly showed that the map of this cave definitely didn't do it justice. It's big, beautiful, and by JF standards very well decorated.

We quickly found our way to where we thought the bottom two pitches should be but since the drop off started in a very long rift, with a million options as to where the pitch head could be, it took us a while to think before we started rigging. Luckily we rigged exactly at the right spot and landed at the bottom of an amazing chamber! From this chamber the way on, as described in Briggs (1982), is through a very small hole. Since we were running low on time (to catch a flight for some back to Lameland) only Steve took his harness off and had a quick look, but couldn't find the drafting hole in the side of an aven as described by Briggs (1982).

We then headed back home and left the concrete screws/hangers in the cave but took the ropes out. Be aware of the pitch length of the last pitch on the map, which might have been measured in beard length or something similar (or previous cavers descended other parts of the rift). At the entrance we used a 15 m rope tied to a tree, then a single bolt next to the tag and a Y-hang just around the corner. On the way down the talus slope we used a handline (~6 m) for one of the slippery climbs. The next pitch says 16 m on the map which we descended with a 23 m rope rigged using a Y-hang at the top. The last pitch says 20 m on the map and a 27 m rope got us barely to the ground, again rigged using one Y-hang at the top (we had to extend the Y-hang with some tape to make it long enough).

We are definitely planning a return to this beautiful cave. The small hole at the bottom needs another look and it seemed like there might be more pitches hiding underneath some boulder piles. Similar to JF463 Constitution Hole (the most similar cave to Bone Pit that I know in the JF), though there might be a million ways down the cave ending at the same spot. Nevertheless, due to its prime location it's worth another trip!

Reference

Briggs, A. 1982. The saga of the “Bone Pit”. *Speleo Spiel*, 182:2

H31 Two Gum Entrance

23 November 2014

Chris Sharples

Cavers: Serena Benjamin, Sarah Gilbert & Chris Sharples.

Caves seem rather few and far between in the perfectly good dolomite on the north side of the Hastings Ridge in southern Tasmania. Despite what a large subjacent doline and stream sink (H215) in siltstone about 80 metres above the dolomite contact seems to hint at about what lies beneath, only one significant cave (H216 Bell Chamber) has previously been documented there (Jackson 1990; Cracknell 2013). Having revealed my minor obsession with mapping the Hastings Dolomite in *Speleo Spiel* 403 (Sharples 2014), and given the continued elusiveness (non-existence?) of the legendary lost decorated cave on the north side of the Hastings Ridge (as described in Sharples, 2014), it was time to check out the only other reported cave on that side of the ridge that I had heard of.

Arthur Clarke had mentioned to me a cave on the north side of the ridge that he had been shown by Wayne Chynoweth, a tramway buff who previously found and named it "Two Gum Entrance" in honour of two enormous old gums nearby. Arthur was able to give me a GPS location for this feature, which turned out to plot very close to where my previous geological mapping suggested the upper boundary of the dolomite should lie at the western end of the Creekton Rivulet valley, so this seemed promising. Serena and Sarah seemed interested in a bit of blundering around in the bush with the promise we might actually find a cave, so one fine day we set off up the Adamsons Falls track. We left the track uphill from the reported cave location and started blundering down towards it through a mess of pesky scrub that gradually turned into more open forest as we progressed down the slope. There was a little excitement when, for no apparent reason and despite the windless conditions, a large branch suddenly crashed down about 20 metres away from us; however despite this existential [*It would have felt physical if it had crushed you – Ed.*] threat we finally made it to the purported cave location.

Serena spotted it almost straight away – a low grotty entrance at the foot of a siltstone outcrop underneath a large fallen log, with a small flow of water trickling in. However, inside the cave was roomy enough and a short scramble over siltstone rubble gave way to a real solution cave in nice clean unsilicified dolomite about 4 metres down. Nearby a dead male cave spider (*Hickmania troglodytes*) hung ominously suspended on a thread while a rather fat female – the suspected femme fatale – lurked nearby. A few more metres down the chamber terminated in an impenetrable solution crevice taking the small trickle of water. We didn't completely check every possible nook and cranny but prospects for further exploration look bleak to say the least. Even so I was completely satisfied because the one thing this wee little cave does have is that holy grail of geological mapping, a clear exposure of the unconformity between the dolomite below and the siltstone above. As Matt Cracknell later pointed out, this pattern of caves developed beneath 'breakdown' entrances in the overlying siltstone is a common feature of the Hastings karst, exemplified by caves on the south side of the ridge such as Lyrebird Lair (H3) and Wolfhole (H8) [*aka subjacent karst features – Ed.*].

Two Gum Entrance is located in a patch of rather nice old growth forest which seems to be a short distance beyond the limits of historic logging and tramways in the upper Creekton Rivulet Valley. I was sitting outside the cave sketching a rough plan and section of it while

Sarah points to Tasmania's "Great Unconformity" within Two Gum Entrance Cave, where nice clean Precambrian dolomite is overlain by Permo-Carboniferous siltstone and basal conglomerates.

Wayne Chynoweth's muesli bar wrapper, found at the entrance of H31.

Sarah and Serena enjoyed the ambience of the enormous gums after which the cave is named, when Sarah noticed an old muesli bar wrapper jammed into the bark underside of the fallen log over the cave entrance. This turned out to be inscribed with Wayne Chynoweth's record of having discovered and named the cave on Saturday 29 February 1992, which we left in place in lieu of properly tagging the cave.

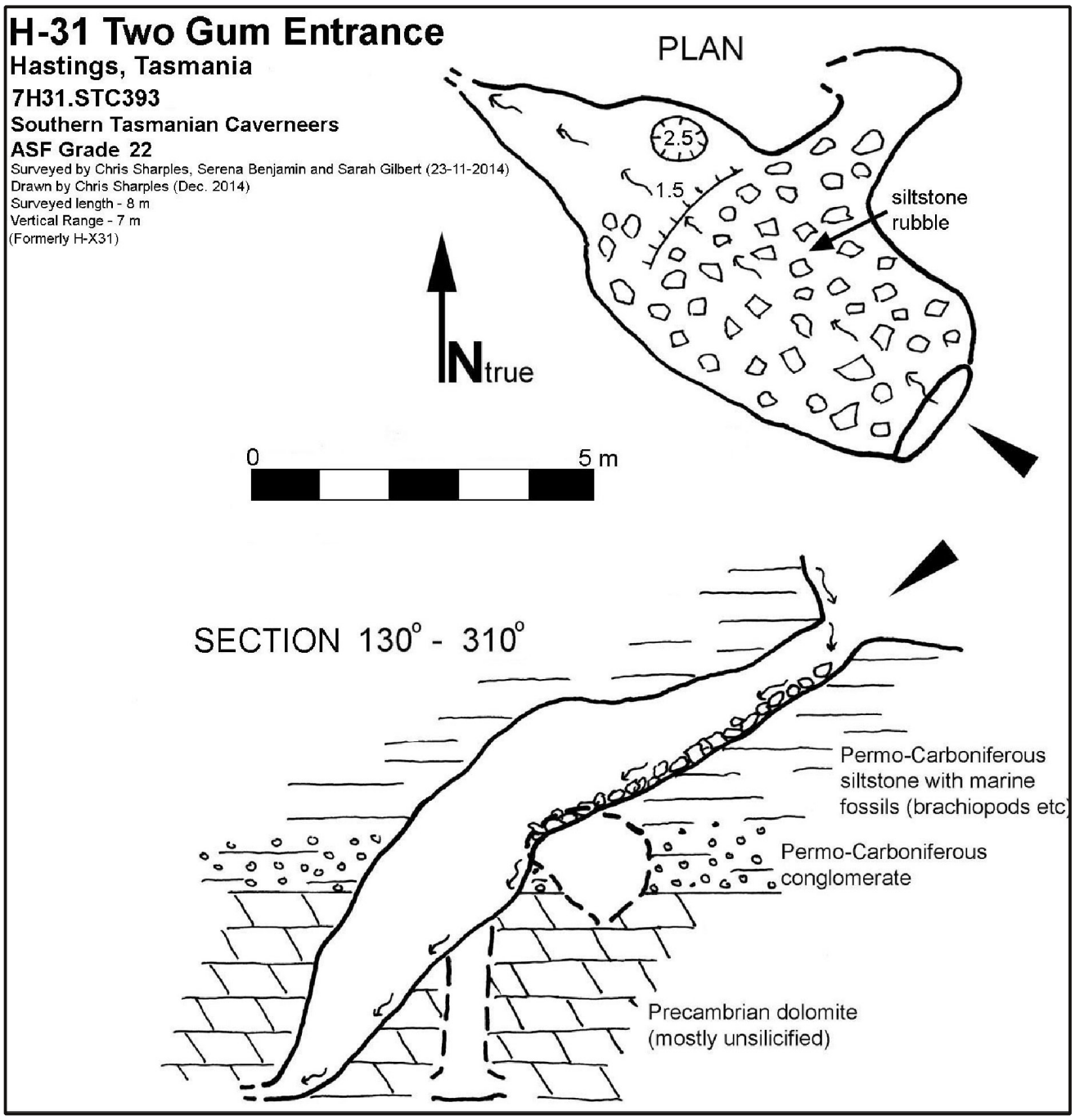
After some subsequent discussion with Alan Jackson & Ric Tunney it was decided that the lack of a formal cave tag should not deter us from retiring the cave's old X number (HX31) and replacing it with the designation 'H31' [*Oh the plethora of emails discussing this seemingly insignificant choice – Ed.*], this irregularity being the lesser of two great evils in Alan's opinion. All that is needed now for all the proper protocols to have been satisfied is for someone to return with a drill and tag the cave.

References

Cracknell, M. 2013. H-216 Bell Chamber – Type II Fun. *Speleo Spiel*, 397: 8-9.

Jackson, P. 1990. *The Hastings Karst Inventory*. Report to Forestry Commission, Tasmania, 6 pages plus plans and maps.

Sharples, C. 2014. Looking for the legendary lost cave at Hastings. *Speleo Spiel*, 403: 8-10.



JF36 Growling Swallet

7 December 2014

Alan Jackson

Cavers: Dan Haley, Alan Jackson, Michael Packer (& Pat and Tony Culberg for a bit)

New member, Dan, needed vetting (he looked tough but I needed proof) and I saw an opportunity to do something useful in Growling at the same time. Pat and Tony hadn't been to Growling for some reason, so they tagged along as far as the JF36 entrance for a tourist then we others continued on to JF337 Slaughterhouse Pot.

First job was to extend the recently replaced rigging on pitch 1. Ric and Janine found the rope came up a few metres shorter than the label said it would so I had a short piece of anti-social, soon to be retired from active caving, 10.5 mm rope with which to replace the natural back-up/approach line. We soon realised we should have brought some multigrips with us to get the maillons (treated with Loctite) undone, so to get around that we just did some rather tedious rethreaded knots. It was a pleasure to abseil all three pitches on rope that was neither oval-shaped nor incapable of threading onto a Stop – good work Ric and Janine for their community service.

Our second job was to stash the two tanks for Andreas's Dreamtime Sump dive as far in as we could be bothered. We got them as far as the top of Avons Aven (so I could test what swimming in cow shit [Herpes III] would do to Dan). Dan made the usual mixed noises of pleasure and horror.

Destiny was next. I wanted to do some resurveying of Black River and Coelacanth so the Eberhard's recent finds in that area could be plotted with a bit more certainty. I wasn't sure of the location of any relocatable stations in the area. After the pitch, one wades the shallow muddy pool, then turns and climbs up the muddy boulder pile stacked in the rift. Then, on the far side of the boulder pile one descends to 'base level' again. About two thirds of the way back down the boulder pile there is a pink tape with 'old tin can – possible 1980s survey marker' written on it. As the tape suggests, there used to be a tin can here which Rolan and I suspected used to be a survey station (Rolan removed the can earlier this year as part of his War on Cave Trash). More on this can and the survey later.

Anyway, we surveyed from this pink tape, down

Tangerine Dream into Black River and down to the Black River Sump. We shot a splay to the projection to which the dive line is tied off (our station 20). We then enjoyed the horrors of the swimmy, roof-sniffy, ducky bits (surveying as we went). We all managed to miss the pink tape that marks the start of Rolan and Stefan's Living Fossils survey (which was the point of the whole exercise) and soon found ourselves at Coelacanth Sump wondering how we went wrong. Ah well, two surveys are better than one. We tied the survey into the pink tape where the dive line starts, assuming it was a survey station and beat a retreat, searching for the elusive Living Fossils pink tape. It was quite obvious on the outward direction and we tied it into the nearest station we could remember from the inward journey (unfortunately ~50 m back up the passage). We tied in to station 36, which is unmarked, but station 31 back towards the Black River Sump has a pink tape on it now too. A hasty retreat was then beaten to the main entrance. Dan did well and learnt one very valuable lesson – bananas are not suitable cave food.

The Tin Can Situation

The survey notes in the archive say 'Destiny > Tancan' and the wet passage shortly after the Destiny rockpile is called Tangerine Dream on the map. Perhaps it was a can of tangerine that inspired the name? Wailes (1982), which recounts the discovery of Tangerine Dream and Black River, refers to eating 'mandarin oranges' while sitting on the rockpile on which the can used to be located, so we're getting a citrus theme coming through. In Eberhard (1982), which covers the next trip to the area, 'Tangerine Corner' is referred to, which might be the same place, or not. When all other sources of information fail there's only one thing left to do – ring Trevor. Trevor has confirmed that it was a can of some citrus fruit that they ate and that it was left behind as a marker, as lots of activity at the time centred on pushing the upper levels above this area and various pitches existed, so they wanted a recognisable object to confirm if they all dropped back into that spot. Trevor was confident that the can was never used as a survey station. So, that pink tape is NOW a survey station, but wasn't beforehand. Luckily we overshot Living Fossils and tied it into the Coelacanth Sump tape. The old survey ties in really nicely with the new one between Coelacanth Sump and just upstream of the BR Sump, but the Tangerine Dream section doesn't work at all. Perhaps a third survey of just that section will sort out whether the new survey was dud or the old one. Always more to do. It turned out that Rolan's fudge for linking in his LF data was within a few metres – sly old dog.

References

Wailes, T. 1982 Further Exploration of Growling Swallet: Towards the Black Sump. *Speleo Spiel*, 181: 5-8.

Eberhard, S. 1982 Growling Swallet. *Speleo Spiel*, 182: 3.

JF36 Growling Swallet

Dreamtime Sump dive

13 December 2014

Stephen Fordyce

Cavers: Dave Bardi, Stephen Fordyce, Dan Haley, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Liz Rogers & Sandy Varin.

Growling Swallet is a particularly extensive and significant cave in the Junee-Florentine area of Tasmania, and has been known since the time of early European settlement. The cave has a very impressive opening in the form of a slot [*read chasm – Ed.*] in a cliff, with a significant creek [*read river – Ed.*] flowing into it in summer, and by all accounts an unimaginable torrent of water for which even Alan Jackson does not have words to describe, in winter. The water has been dye traced to emerge from Junee Cave, ~8 km away as the crow flies. Growling Swallet is one of the major feeders to this system.

With over 11 km of surveyed passages, many of which are of "master cave" proportions, and at present four entrances, the Growling Swallet system is big and complex. Being a streamway cave with lots of water there are inevitably passages which terminate in sumps. Additionally, only a couple of hundred metres separate it from the nearby Niggly Cave, which apart from having Australia's longest free-hanging pitch (a ball-breaking 190 m) is a big system in itself. Also a probably more likely (and exciting) prospect is making a connection to the Porcupine Pot/Tassy Pot/Owl Pot master cave system which is kind of in the middle. There is big potential for the discovery of gigantic "classic master cave" streamway passages, like the one in Niggly, which ends (both upstream and downstream) in gigantic rockpiles.

Obviously, connecting these two systems would be a significant achievement, and the Dreamtime Sump in Growling Swallet has the best prospects for doing this underwater – it had been dived before in the 1990s without much success in the good direction (Hume 1986; Hume *et al.* 1992), but Andreas thought with the passage of time, improving of equipment and (at least as Sandy put it) "balls so big, they had to be put on my chest" there was a decent chance someone could get further.

Alan outside the cave in the lovely forest and sunshine, wondering whether he could hang tanks off his kneepad straps under his trogsuit.

With that in mind, the grand caving wizard Alan Jackson with sorcerer's apprentice Dan Haley had spirited a pair of 7 l tanks wrapped in the wetsuit of Andreas Klocker (the fiercely anti-mainlander Tasmanian resident of 12 months) to the top of Avon's Aven under the guise of a "beginner trip", and then fronted up again this weekend for the dive trip. With only a small amount of convincing by Andreas, this set the scene for the dive trip which took place on Saturday 13 December, along with the arrival of Liz Rogers, Dave

How many cavers does it take to put a diver into a sump 5 hours away from the cave entrance? Answer: it depends whether they are mainlanders and whether you like getting out before midnight.

Artist's impression of Andreas' shower complete with Herpes mud

Bardi & Sandy Varin, and me (Stephen Fordyce) as the mainland <*insert suitably derogatory comment here*> Sherpa and moral dive support contingent.

As usual, Andreas did a stellar job of preparations and picking us up from the airport. I was on an earlier flight and as I was the alternate diver, we double checked the gear and packed my drysuit, brought along with much weight-related creativity on crummy Tiger Airlines. Wearing your kneepads under jeans makes for a good place to hang all sorts of heavy caving gear that will otherwise make your carry-on luggage too heavy. My only regret is that the only people I had on hand to share the experience with were the unamused Tiger Airways staff.

Anyway, we got to the cave on Saturday morning and were underground about 10 am. It was a hot day and we were glad to get out of the sun, until after 15 minutes of climbing down wet rocks, and that was a distant memory for the next 12 hours. The cave is obviously a very active streamway that sees a lot of water so is not much decorated but still pretty in a shiny-black-rock-with-mud-on-it kind of way. There were some bypasses that we took, some careful edging around the outside of pools, and crawling along ledges, so that most of us had dry feet and relatively dry undersuits by the time we reached the turnoff from the water, and crawled up into a small dirty passage past gigantic mudbanks with flood debris 5 m higher than current river levels. A comforting thought …

There followed some interesting obstacles, starting with Windy Rift, having a draft so strong that teeth were quickly chattering, while bodies and bags were wedged in awkward positions. The fun continued with some more improbable squeezes, and several sphincter-clenching ladders (both up and down), which have been in the cave possibly since before Alan got rid of his trendy mullet. Oh and also Herpes III – a lovely little squeeze in ankle deep mud that smells nasty, and you have to wallow in it to get through. Sadness levels increased proportionally with sock wetness levels. As Andreas pointed out – rich people pay a lot of money to get mud like that smeared all over them, we should consider ourselves lucky. Perhaps we should bring some out and leave it in Andreas' shower next time?

The complicated breakdown passage through Necrosis and Bronchial was bigger but we had to pay attention to find the way through as it was very complicated and despite the heroic attempts by the survey and mapping teams, the map was about as helpful as Sandy's offer to lend Alan her spare trogsuit. Now having the tanks and wetsuit made for a much heavier load, as we negotiated the rockpiles and plotted bringing in bigger tanks to slow Alan down and stop him complaining about the slow pace.

Finally we heard the sounds of the stream, and we reached the "running passage", which Andreas had insisted was so big and smooth we could jog down it. Sadly, the visions of a concrete walkway complete with handrail quickly evaporated but we did make good time over the cobblestones. A minor muddy detour up and over "Bloody Smokers" to avoid dunking ourselves in the stream and after a final slippery climb-and-slide we were at the Dreamtime Sump, with strict but largely futile instructions not to muddy the water flowing into it.

It only took a brief discussion to establish that the chances of me in a drysuit were going to be better than Andreas in a wetsuit. The motivation levels for spending possibly an hour diving in 6°C water in a drysuit were also surprisingly higher than the motivation for making the transition from wet wetsuit to wet trog suit, heated vest notwithstanding. There are plenty of other places to discuss the pros and cons of solo diving – in this case carrying in two full sets of dive gear was just not going to happen, and one set was bad enough. Risks, equipment and diver abilities were assessed and accepted by the team leaders, the team and of course, the divers.

Anyway, after some amount of faffing and a little help from my friends, I'd made the transition from trogging gear to diving gear and sidemounted 7 l tanks, and was face down on the mud bank next to the stream, ready to create a silt cloud the likes of which this cave had never seen before. As the stream was flowing gently downstream and shallow, a quick entry was required to avoid my own silt cloud being swept ahead, and obscuring the 2 m visibility. Thirty seconds into the crawl/swim and just before it got deep enough for me to float, the reel jammed but after some cursing it was free and I was back ahead of the silt cloud.

With a mental picture of the map from the previous 1990s dive in my head, I kept to the right-hand wall – the passage was flat, wider than I could see, and quite low, head on one side sort of stuff, but still with a millimetre or two of clearance on my chest and back without having to do any burrowing, well – most of the time. The visibility was ok and I could stop and look around for a couple of seconds before the silt cloud started getting ahead. Tie-offs were scarce and crumbly, but I managed to find a few – whether the line survives the winter floods is another story. Given the passage was not scoured as the streamway passage had been, I think there is a good chance.

After pushing through enough of this uninspiring flat stuff that I was, well, uninspired (in reality only about 25 m or so), things started to get a little bigger and with the passage maybe 0.5 m high I could think about buoyancy, and finning a bit more like a real diver, and follow the right wall better. The passage continued to grow, reaching 1-2 m high in spots, and dipping down

Chillin' at camp comfort, where the team waited for about 2 hours. Despite the smiles, chillin' was a compulsory activity.

from the shallow 1 m it had been to 3 m, enough to pop my ears.

Thoughts of silly things like warm beds vanished and I reflected on my favourite adaptation of a classic line from Snakes on a Plane – a well-researched documentary highly relevant to cave divers. Shortly the passage rose again, and after a minor squeeze between a ledge and the silt pile on the floor, I was in a big space with an upward-sloping floor and a surface above.

I paused a moment to admire this chamber that nobody has laid eyes on but me – one of those nice things about exploration, and one of the reasons why I like it. It was not very big, or with any particular leads (apart from another pool across a shallow mudbank), but it was nice to take in the serenity. Of course, tendrils of silt quickly started flowing across into the next pool, so I had to hurry across (crawling to avoid taking fins off) before the visibility was obliterated.

After swimming along some comfortably sized (0.8 m high by ~2 m wide passage) it shortly got bigger and I hit a brick wall. Not exactly literally, but well, enough to get the line stuck behind a tank and have the silt cloud catch up. Luckily the cave was big enough that the flow wasn't too bad and I'd also been able to avoid generating much silt (some came off the ceiling from bubbles). With things sorted out I hovered mid-water thinking about what the hell the cave was doing. With about 1 m visibility I was able to backtrack a few metres to the top of a silt mound and follow the top along – aha, "clear" water! (I always maintain that 2-3 m is plenty of visibility.) The passage had taken a 90 degree turn to the left, and a lovely passage it was too.

With the passage about 1-1.5 m high, and 4-5 m wide, I zig-zagged a bit to find the walls and also tie-offs. Also finding a silty floor, ceiling and walls, with sticking out bits on the wall and ceiling that looked like great tie-offs but were really just mud and broke off – reminding me of Elk River Cave in Victoria. Enough held, and I burned along the lovely wide passage at speeds exceeding that of several little white cave-dwelling thingummies I overtook, with the line unwinding off the reel in lovely fashion.

All too soon, the unthinkable happened – I ran out of line with plenty of gas to my turn pressure (the shallow depth and mostly easy tunnel really helped). Resisting the urge to add on my safety spool, and also the urge to jam Andreas's empty reel into the silt as the final tie-off, I responsibly wound it back in until I got a piece of semi-solid rock which would do. With nothing to take survey notes, the way back was occupied with counting knots in the line (yes, we were responsible and pre-knotted every 3 m) and trying to remember compass bearings, also carefully selecting my first words when I surfaced on the return.

With the gentle current washing fresh "clear" water in my face all the way home, it was a pleasant change being able to see on the way back and sure helped with my morale. Taking a few minutes in the chamber, I was able to see that it didn't have any dry leads, and I didn't have any line really to check for wet leads. Going back in good visibility (even in the tight stuff) gave me a good chance to check and tidy the line, which was pretty reasonable considering, and is even better now. Not long after, the dry team huddled shivering around the stove heard a bubble, then another and then saw my light emerge from the brown water.

"Guys, I'm sorry ..." – then a suitably long pause for effect – "I ran out of line!", achieved the desired degree of personal satisfaction, although by this stage of the trip, the news that the cave still goes is often greeted with dismayed comments about the now necessary return trip. Mind you Liz was still there in a flash (see what I did there?) to capture the moment on camera (and take promotional photos of the new Nomad LTZ harness/wing – I can highly recommend it). Andreas helped with the de-kit and Alan, who took great pleasure in telling everyone to shut up while he was writing down my memorised survey data and descriptions, while still fresh and before doing anything else. It was about 150 m of line that was laid.

With the data safely out of my head and onto (waterproof) paper, I was told unceremoniously to hurry up and get changed so we could get out of there. This may seem unfair to the non-caver, but the reality is that I was dry, warm and doing exciting stuff, while the others had been sitting in the mud, in muddy partly wet clothes, in a cave with ambient temperature 10°C, for the best part of an hour and a half with only the occasional hot drink or Dave & Sandy domestic argument for entertainment. The idea of cooking up some of the abundant aquatic cave fauna was also floated (again, subtle and brilliant) but discarded.

After my transition back into various bits of sad, muddy, wet, cold and smelly caving attire, and a small kerfuffle involving a missing pack that Dan "just so happened" to be sitting on, we were off. I should

The Nomad LTZ Harness/Wing about to begin what is probably going to be a hard, miserable and relatively short life, but with much excitement.

Liz, surely that's enough photos and can I please get out of the water now, my neck is hurting from the giant but awesome light it's supporting?

After a dive in 6°C water, it's always comforting to know you have something warm and comfortable to change into.

mention that there was so much gas left in Andreas' tanks that he was unanimously outvoted on the subject of whether they should be left in the cave for the next trip (in several months!). There followed an impressive motivational effort where instead of making a beeline for the exit, we made a scenic detour into the Dreamtime Passage, with nice high ceilings and wide walk-along floors.

The way back after this was fairly typical of long cave exits after you've been in there a while and sat around for ages/done a dive. Up is harder than down, out is harder than in, you have less energy/motivation and more bruises. The fun has progressed to the sort that in a week you can brag about it to your friends, but at the time is not very exciting [*Sounds like a Retrospective Pleasure Trip – Ed.*]. On the bright side, the extra effort meant maybe the extra warmth generated offset the cold from the wet clothes – but then on the other hand, where on earth is the extra effort meant to come from when it's after bedtime?! Drawing on our great reserves of strength and the watching (scathing?!) stares of Alan, we carefully negotiated all the obstacles in reverse and emerged from the cave around 11:30 pm into the darkness, hauling the packs with us.

By the time we got back to Hobart nothing was open apart from McDonalds, so we made our best zombie impersonations and downed various bits of junk food before parting ways and heading off to respective beds and optional (I won't name names) showers. The next day we did some more caving before heading back to Melbourne, discussed future Growling Swallet dive trips and somehow I ended up being delegated to write this report, which has turned into a bit of an epic.

What we achieved is quite significant in the context of the Growling Swallet system, and especially so as it is heading for Niggly/Porcupine caves, and "master cave of epic proportions". The underwater passage is almost definitely the main flow of the stream. It is well-sized and shows no signs of getting smaller. A return trip has that rare opportunity for a diver to be guaranteed (almost – this is cave diving after all) to be able to tie on a reel and swim off into the unknown, with the possibility of gigantic passage just around the corner.

It is a great privilege being the push diver but the whole thing is so much a team effort that the efforts of the push divers are tiny in comparison to the efforts of the rest of the team that makes it all possible. Thus, thanks need to go to all team members:

-Andreas Klocker: trip organiser, gear provider and alternate diver – the passage is there waiting for you mate!

-Alan Jackson: trip leader and guide, provider of (extra dry) comic relief and generally keeping his very experienced eye on everyone. Also making very careful note of survey info and updating the map AND hauling the tanks and wetsuit into the cave the weekend before!

-Dan Haley: being on his second ever (I think?) caving trip having hauled in the tanks with Alan the weekend before. Absolute top effort and we hope you stick around.

-Liz Rogers (credit all photos): photographer/ videographer extraordinaire and the refined lady of the trip (only curses & farts occasionally), luckily for us sherpas she is at least sometimes taking on the challenge of making amazing cave art with only a small camera weighing less than 15 kg. Other times, well, the photos are even better (especially when I'm in them).

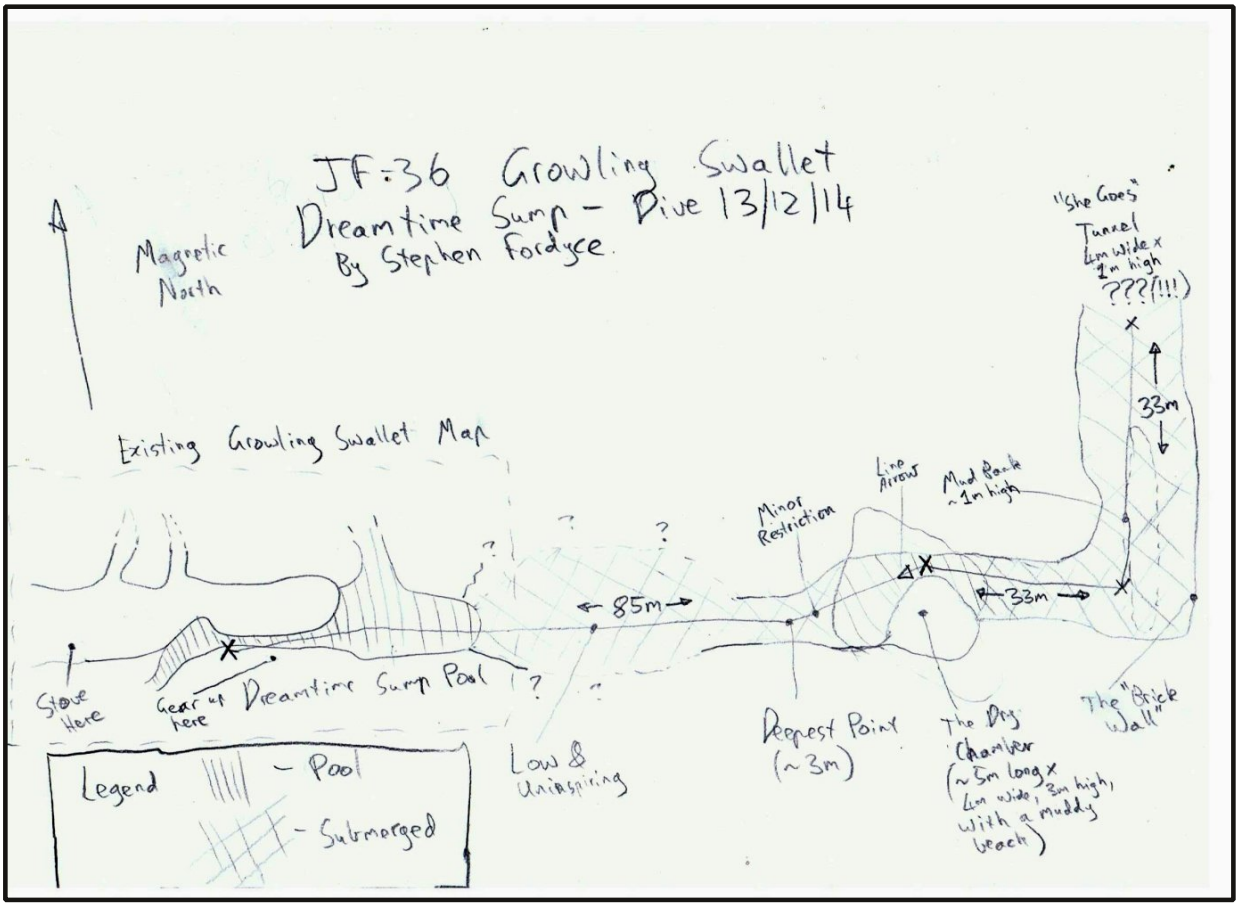
-Dave Bardi/Sandy Varin: The inseparable and hilarious extreme couple in white gumboots who keep everyone entertained and then sneakily carry more than their fair share of the load. So inseparable that if you throw mud at Dave's helmet, Sandy will get the blame (give it a try!).

-Stephen Fordyce (me): What can I say, if you've got this far (well done) you probably have a vague idea and dammit I wrote this report, that has to count for something!

References

Hume, N. 1986, The Mainline and Dreamtime sumps, *Speleo Spiel*, 218:5-6.

Hume, N., Nicholas S. and Wailes, T. 1992, Growling Swallet, *Tasmanian Cave Exploration in the 1980's*, Volume 1: 35-36.



Sketch map for the record – don't worry, there will be better maps with actual surveying next time.

JF203 Bone Pit

The draughting rift that didn't go

14 December 2014

Andreas Klocker

Cavers: David Bardi, Stephen Fordyce, Andreas Klocker, Liz Rogers & Sandy Varin.

Approximately a month ago the same group of Lamelanders and myself rigged Bone Pit and managed to get to the bottom of the last pitch when we ran out of time to re-find the draughting rift described by Briggs (1982; see the trip report in this issue of the *Spiel*). Now that we knew the cave and with bolts installed we could move quickly towards the bottom. While Stephen rigged the second pitch I had a look around and found a way to down-climb this pitch in a different part of the rift, beating him to the top of the final pitch. After rigging the final pitch and getting everyone to the bottom of the large aven we started the search for the draughting rift.

After a bit of squeezing/climbing/squeezing we found the final rift which is exactly as described by Briggs (1982) – a rift too narrow to get through (even for expert midget Sandy) with a cold draught coming out of it and a tiny dribble of water going down into it. Sadly all walls were solid without the possibility of moving a few rocks around to squeeze through, and progress would only be possible with POM-style techniques of cave [*de – Ed.*] construction.

Without extending the cave any further we headed back to Hobart in time for a burger and beer, before doing the usual airport drop-off. Luckily the list of JF leads is long and we could tick one cave off this list but thinking about Bone Pit's depth potential and location it's a sad one to give up.

Other Exciting Stuff

Exit Cave Survey Project: An update

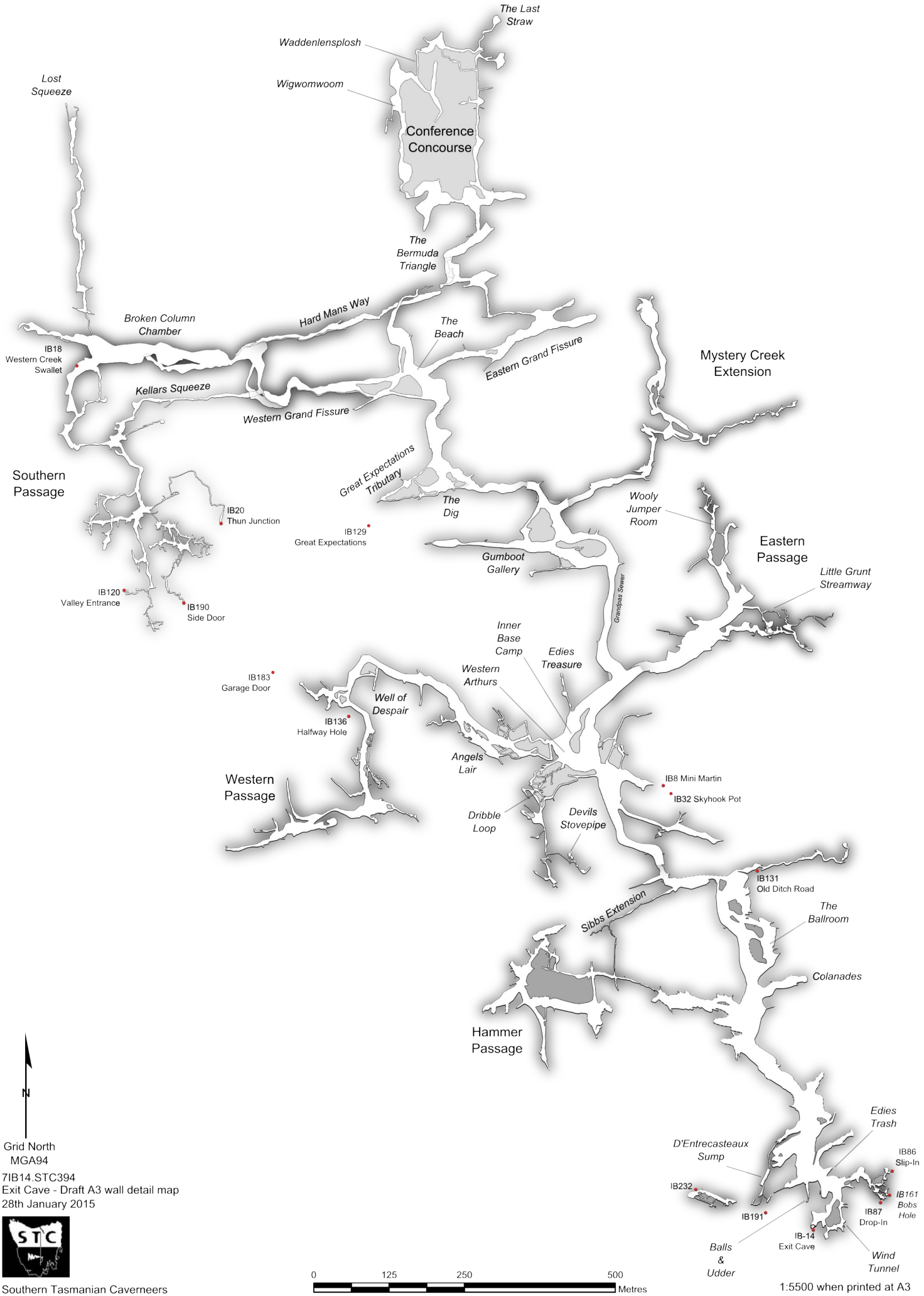
Matt Cracknell

To all those who didn't believe ... Recently the very clever expatriate Tony Veness, with some help from his friends, produced a "work-in-progress" draft version of the "master" plan map of the Exit Cave system. This map, compiled from five overlapping 1:1000 (A1) scale map sheets and drawn at a scale of 1:5500 (A3), shows the outline of Exit Cave annotated with important in-cave locations.

This map marks a significant milestone in the Exit Cave Survey Project, namely collating and plotting all survey data and overlaying in-cave sketches to scale in Inkscape.

There is still a lot of work to be done. Small inconsistencies need to be revisited and checked and additional map detail needs to be drawn on the A1 map sheets. Despite this, the current A3 map (overlayed with contours, walking tracks and survey plots of Mystery Creek Cave and Little Grunt) provides cavers and karst land managers (i.e. Rolan and friends) with an accurate tool for navigation and the development of preliminary karst conservation strategies.

There will be some trips running over the next couple of months to tie-up loose ends. To get involved contact Geoff Wise or Sarah Gilbert (or even maybe me if I get my act together). Finally, many thanks to all those that have participated and supported this long-term mapping project. It isn't over yet but the end is nigh.


The Last Straw
Waddenlensplosh
Wigwomwoom
Lost Squeeze
Conference Concourse
The Bermuda Triangle
Hard Mans Way
Broken Column Chamber
The Beach
Eastern Grand Fissure
Mystery Creek Extension
IB18 Western Creek Swallet
Kellars Squeeze
Western Grand Fissure
Great Expectations Tributary
Southern Passage
IB20 Thun Junction
IB129 Great Expectations
The Dig
Wooly Jumper Room
Eastern Passage
Gumboot Gallery
Grandpas Sewer
Little Grunt Streamway
IB120 Valley Entrance
IB190 Side Door
Inner Base Camp
Edies Treasure
Western Arthurs
IB183 Garage Door
Well of Despair
IB136 Halfway Hole
Angels Lair
Western Passage
IB8 Mini Martin
IB32 Skyhook Pot
Dribble Loop
Devils Stovepipe
IB131 Old Ditch Road
Sibbs Extension
The Ballroom
Colanades
Hammer Passage
Edies Trash
D'Entrecasteaux Sump
IB86 Slip-In
IB232
IB161 Bobs Hole
IB87 Drop-In
IB191
IB-14 Exit Cave
Balls & Udder
Wind Tunnel
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Grid North
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Exit Cave - Draft A3 wall detail map
28th January 2015
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Southern Tasmanian Caverneers
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