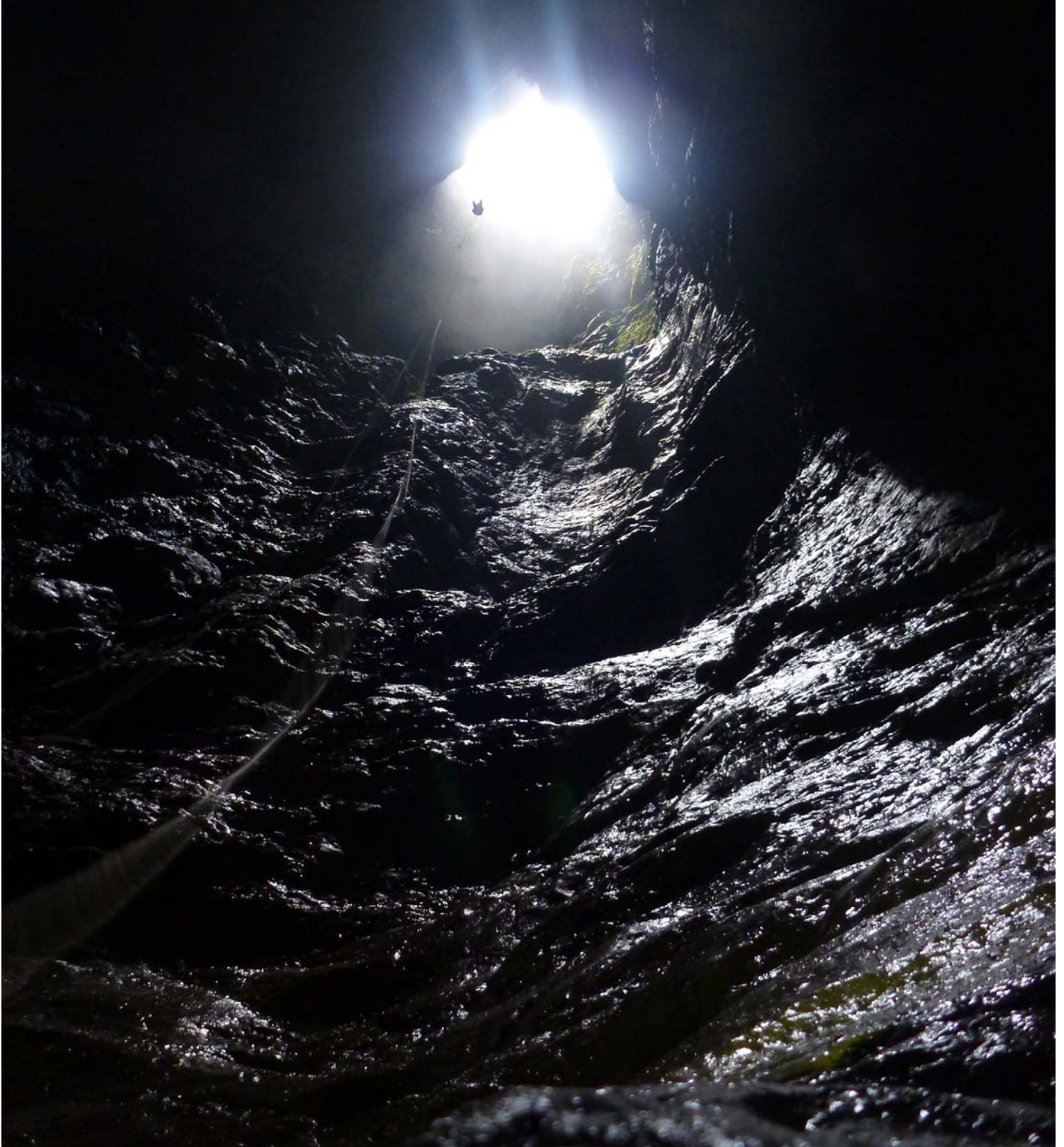


Speleo Spiel 410

September - October 2015



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Front Cover: Serena ascending the impressive Keller Cellar entrance shaft. *Photo by Alan Jackson*



Speleo Spiel

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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

Rapid fire *Spiel*. Sorry if the “Stuff ‘n Stuff” contents is a bit the same as last issue, but it’s only been a week since I did the last one and little has changed.

Keep the trip reports rolling in. I hope to have the November–December issue out before Christmas, just to make Matt look inept. (I did warn you that character assassination would become the focus.)

Alan Jackson
(Acting Editor)

Stuff ‘n Stuff

CHRISTMAS BBQ

Friday December 18 at Mt Stuart Park, Mt Stuart. A start time of 5 pm has been confirmed at the December meeting, so it’s official. The park can be accessed off the very end of Benjafield Terrace or midway along Keith White Crescent.

Facilities-wise, I believe there are some gas bbqs, shelter, a playground (with a whiz-bang slide and rock climbing wall) and a large grassed area for ignoring your children in. Still no golf, but dogs on lead until 7 pm and then they can roam. No signs saying children on lead, but probably best to do so in the interests of hygiene and general pleasantness.

Alan Jackson

JF LAME WEEKEND – 2-4 OCTOBER

It seemed like a good idea at the time but it soon became clear everyone else thought it was a good idea too – at one stage it looked like more than 40 people were coming. Luckily the usual attrition occurred (last minute illnesses mostly but a few straight out no shows who will be barred from future events) and actual numbers ended up being moderately sensible (17 on Friday night and 22 on Saturday night).

Friday really only saw the Jackson-Bell family doing non caving-related activities in the general area. We kind of almost found a cave on the far side of the Serpentine Dam and made a mental note that there aren’t any signs actually saying ‘turning up with your own rope and rigging off Aardvark Adventures’ Gordon Dam abseiling rig is strictly prohibited’. In fact, there wasn’t even one saying that it is frowned upon, or even gently discouraged. So that’s on the list of things to do. There were several evening arrivals on Friday night in preparation for Saturday’s activities.

On Saturday a few extras turned up. Trips ran to Frankcombe Cave, Owl Pot and Growling Swallet while surface dwellers visited Tarn Shelf, Russell Falls, Junee Cave and Junee Quarry Road tree clearing. Disappointing levels of alcohol were consumed Saturday evening so it appears the hard drinking heydays of the club are over. Eric March is keen to start a spa appreciation club though which could pay dividends once he’s old enough to drink.

Sunday saw trips to Welcome Stranger and Pooshooter, more tree clearing work in the Cauldron-KD area and some bushwalking somewhere.

Individual trip reports, where applicable, are published elsewhere in this issue.

Thanks for showing up and making the weekend a success. It was a pity three sizeable family groups were all struck down with various diseases at the last minute but that’s life. I

nominate someone else (anyone, please) to organise the next one – it should be something we do once or twice a year.

Alan Jackson



A. Jackson

The two Jackson brats strike a pose in ‘Serpentine Dam Cave’.

WONDERSTRUCK

Nic Haygarth’s Tasmanian cave history book, *Wonderstruck*, is out. STC members (all categories: active, inactive, family, life, friends of STC etc.) get a 20% discount off the RRP (i.e. \$40 instead of ~\$50) and the opportunity to have the book signed by the author.

The Mole Creek launch is called ‘Cave tourism at Mole Creek - a conversation with

Nic Haygarth about his new book *Wonderstruck*’, and is at the Mole Creek Hotel, Saturday 12 December at 2.30 pm, introduced by Meander Valley Mayor Craig Perkins.

In addition there will be book signings:

- Tuesday 15 December 12 noon at the Devonport Bookshop, Rooke St Mall, Devonport
- Wednesday 16 December 11 am at Petrarch’s Bookshop, Brisbane St, Launceston
- Thursday 17 December 5.30-6.30 pm at Fullers Bookshop, Collins St, Hobart

The book is also available from Nic’s website for \$54.95 (including postage) at <http://nichaygarth.com/>

Alan Jackson



Trip Reports

Grotte des Cavottes, Gouffre des Ordons, Gouffre de la Baume des Cretes

Franche-Comté region, France

Tony Veness

Wed 13th May - Sunday 17th May (Ascension I. weekend)

Party: Jane Pulford, Tony Veness (STC & Speleo Nederland) and friends.

(This article is best read whilst listening to 'Flight of the Conchords' 'Foux du Fafa')

A long weekend in the Lowlands meant it was time to escape the dog turds of inner-city The Hague and head somewhere with double digit elevation. We'd been north to Norway two weeks prior so heading south for caving in France seemed a nice balance.

800 km, 16 Randy Newman / Bob Dylan / Neil Young cassettes and 10 hours later we were there. The drive south through Belgium and Luxembourg was picturesque and speedy with the satnav warning of turnoffs 200 km ahead and Google Maps giving heads-up of the inevitable roadworks and accidents. The bicycle density dropped off inversely proportional to the rising strength of liquor available at the petrol stations. "25 Euros of Benzene and a litre of overproof Jägermeister please". Our overloaded middle-aged Toyota Prius made short work of the rolling hills along the route and suicidal deer were nowhere to be seen.

We were caving with three others from Speleo Nederland and we stayed four nights at a commercial campground just outside the town of Ornans in the Doubs département (Franche-Comté region, by the Swiss border). It was the calm before the summer storm of the European holiday season and we rubbed shoulders with Swiss, Italian and French families staying in motorhomes, tee-pees and bungalows with their well-behaved dachshunds, pugs and poodles. Mostly harmless would be an apt description and our collection of small tents, ropes, filthy gear and late-night fondue (three cheeses) attracted little attention. Needless to say the campsite shoppe did a decent croissant and baguette each morning. We gained kudos by helping the neighbours extract their 3.5 tonne motorhome from the post-rain quagmire on Sunday.

Over the middle days of the five days we visited three caves. Our guidebooks described the how, when and why of each cave in translated English and provided maps and rigging guides. All caves were very short walks from car parks and never very far from a cowpat. Plans evolved somewhat as the rain started and the camp was overrun with well-mannered slugs of various sizes. The original plan for long, wet and deep caves turned into short, less wet and deep(ish) caves plus some touring of monster stream sinks and resurgences.

The three caves varied greatly and were all good fun. Wet and low versus large and well decorated. Walk-in vs. abseil-in vs. bum slide-in. Rigging was a variety of mild steel spits and pitons, and stainless steel P-hangers and eye-bolts. All three caves have been visited for 100+ years so the 10000+ bums over various tight bits ruled out any chance of ripping a caving suit on a pointy bit. Usual collection of carbide dumps, graffiti, rock tables and chairs where convenient and bolt farms at the

top of pitch heads. We lost count at some pitch heads of the impressive collection of retired, expired or suspect metal wear. 30+ pieces in some spots; a museum of what to hang a rope off over the last 100 years. I suspect Messrs. Bosch, Makita and Hilti contributed somewhat to the collection though over a 100 years a lot can be done with elbow grease I suppose.



T. Veness



T. Veness



T. Veness

Top – Stuffing 'le sac' at the camp ground.

Middle – Heat-seeking, cheese-eating missile.

Bottom – Traverse in Grotte des Cavotte.



It's not all bier and skittles.

We met other groups in the first two caves and parallel rigged the third not knowing if there was a group below us somewhere or if the cave was pre-rigged for another day. Greetings started with Bonjour and handshakes when groups collided. A common language was soon found to discuss where we were from, what we were up to and have we rigged our own ropes. No fisticuffs and the other groups generally consisted of four-five beginners in matching romper suits getting the low-down from a pair of stylishly dressed old-hands.

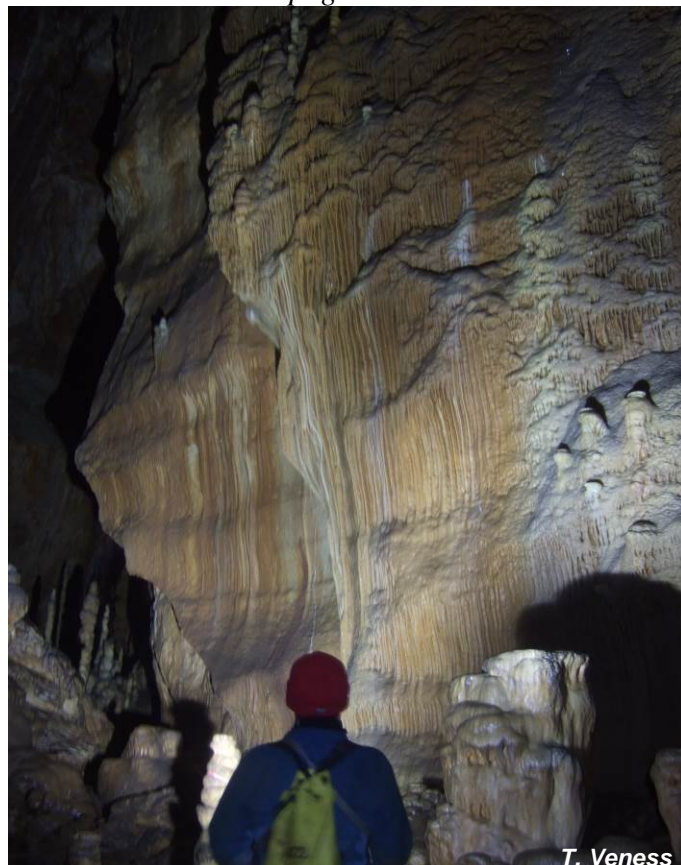
Whilst wandering across the cow paddock from Gouffre de la Baume des Cretes back to the mighty Prius we met three cavers wandering over for a recce. What struck me was a) they were all under 25, b) they were stylishly dressed and c) they were cavers! Jeez Louise! I finally understand why Expé sell caving suits for the whole family. Whilst hardly mainstream, I suspect everyone in the region knows someone that caves or has caved at some point.

A very enjoyable few days in a lovely area. Not quite Juneeflorentine or Ida Bay but the milk was unpasteurised, the wine cheap and the locals friendly. Vive la France.

Right column photos:

Top – Pretties in Gouffre des Ordon

Bottom – T and J at Source du Lison



JF210 Sesame – More Surveying

Alan Jackson

6 September 2015

Party: Ben Armstrong, Serena Benjamin, Zach Brown, Rolan Eberhard, Alan Jackson, Petr Smejkal.

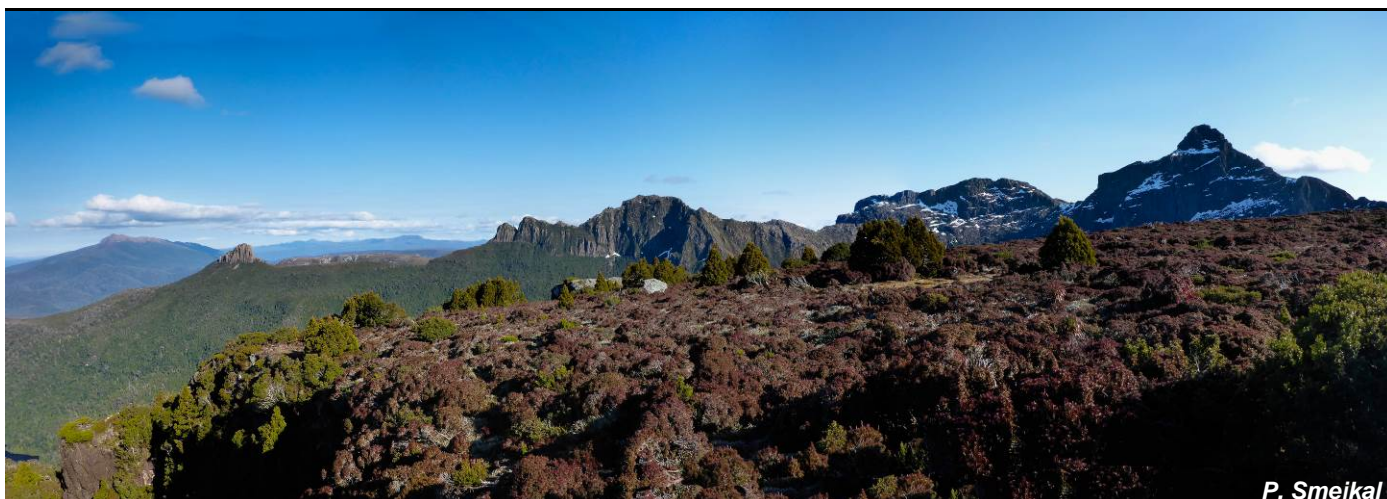
Petr had some beginners lined up for Niggly so I redirected them to Sesame so they'd still get some caving done as originally planned AND I'd have some minions to achieve something useful. Rolan and Serena used the opportunity of a rigged Sesame to do some science.

We entered by the lower entrance (JF210) and re-clipped the rigging all the way to the bottom of the 1980s extension. Rolan and Serena stuck with us to this point and then helped jog Rolan's memory of how to find the 1990s extension. After 15 minutes of scouring the memory and mud banks Rolan found the streamway and awful wet crawl (Vera's Wet Hole).

Hooray. Rolan and Serena then departed, collecting some sediment samples on the way out. The rest of us surveyed from 10 metres before the horrible wet thing back out to Jeff Butt's red tape/station at the top of the old 'last pitch'.

The amount of water going into Vera's Wet Hole was significant (enough to make the squeeze impassable/a drowning hazard). It looked suspiciously similar to the volume of water entering JF633 Ring Hole and what pathetic survey data was collected in Ring Hole on the most recent trip indicates the water is going in that direction rather than to Voltera like we initially theorised it would.

With low water levels critical to getting into the 1990s extension I figured that was at least three months away so I decided to derig the cave totally. We were back on the surface at 4:15 pm with plenty of daylight left so I conned the guys into 'just a quick survey' to link the JF209, JF633 and JF210 tags (~100 m). Lovely.



P. Smejkal

Mt Anne from the North East Ridge.

MA2 Keller Cellar

Alan Jackson

26-27 September 2015

Party: Serena Benjamin, Rolan Eberhard, Alan Jackson, Petr Smejkal

A jolly to Keller Cellar was mooted by Rolan in spring 2014. Dates were set but the weather conspired against us and the thought was lost. Serena stumbled across that thought a few months ago and the flame was rekindled. Weather postponed the trip twice but eventually the trifecta of no other commitments, a good forecast and sufficient enthusiasm transpired.

Rolan had done a day walk to stash the rope (and check for snow damage on the track) on an earlier weekend so acceptably light packs were in order, except for Petr, who we convinced to carry a second rope so we could talk during the abseil. The walk in on the Sandfly Creek track wasn't delightful but wasn't that awful either. The wet bits were wet and the scrubby bits were scrubby but the King Billy pine bits were simply magical and the weather was so good it was almost unbelievable. It took us about 4.5 hours to get up onto the ridge. We passed the afternoon by popping into MA1 Anne-A-Kananda entrance for a tourist. Lots of snow and apparently not as much Czechoslovakian poo as there used to be (Tony Veness collects it).

We were up bright and early the next morning and off to find MA2 by 7 am in thick morning mist. We located the approach gully just past MA1 pretty easily and soon spotted what we thought was the right cave (it had a good six second pitch) but getting there proved interesting and time consuming. The words 'rugged' and 'hostile' come to mind when considering the karst terrain on the North East Ridge. Eventually we located a safe route and found ourselves at the entrance with the tag (wired to a rock spire).

We rigged parallel ropes and cruised down this utterly majestic shaft with its three entrances looming overhead, like a giant salt shaker. We bumbled about the bottom, observing lots of skeletons (mostly possums, wallaby, antechinus, a species of rodent and a quoll). Serena found a harvestman wandering about, as well as a couple of dead ones. We then commenced the long ascent of the ~130 m pitch.

Back in the sunshine (the mist had lifted) we packed up, retreated through the jagged terrain and were back at camp and

ready to walk just before 3 pm. Then commenced the three hour slog back down to Scotts Peak Road – ugh!

Keller Cellar is a fine cave, despite its disappointingly abrupt and premature termination. It should be on any self-respecting Tasmanian caver's list of good stuff to see and do. Go there; it's hell sick.



P. Smejkal

Appalling weather ...



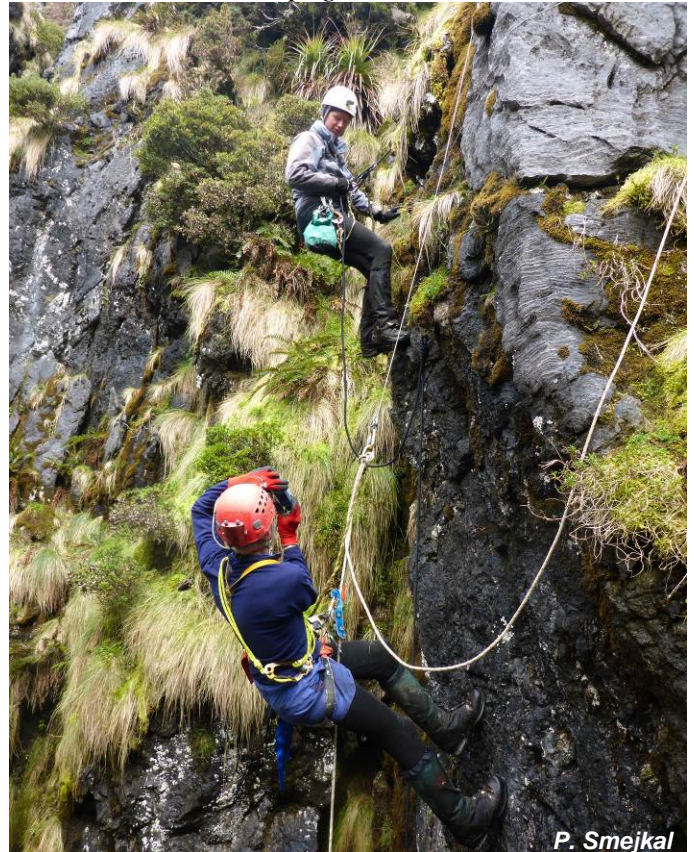
P. Smejkal

Serena found a leech, or rather a leech found Serena.



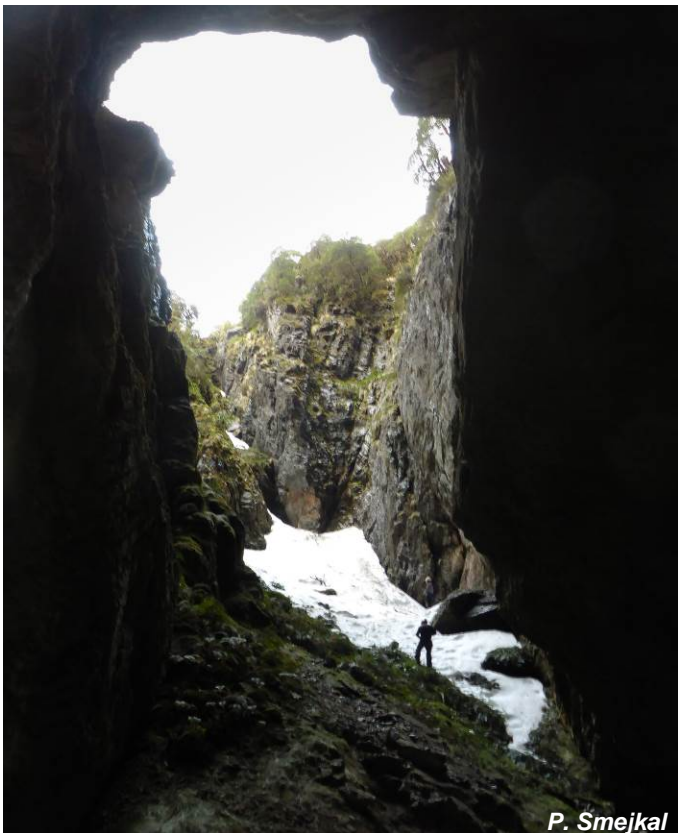
P. Smejkal

Anne-A-Kananda was a little snowy.



P. Smejkal

Petr photographs Alan's bum while Alan photographs Serena's bum – Keller Cellar.



P. Smejkal

Anne-A-Kananda



A. Jackson

Serena and one entrance – Keller Cellar.



A. Jackson

A hole in the ground – Keller Cellar.



A. Jackson

Serena and two entrances – Keller Cellar.



A. Jackson

Serena and three entrances – Keller Cellar.



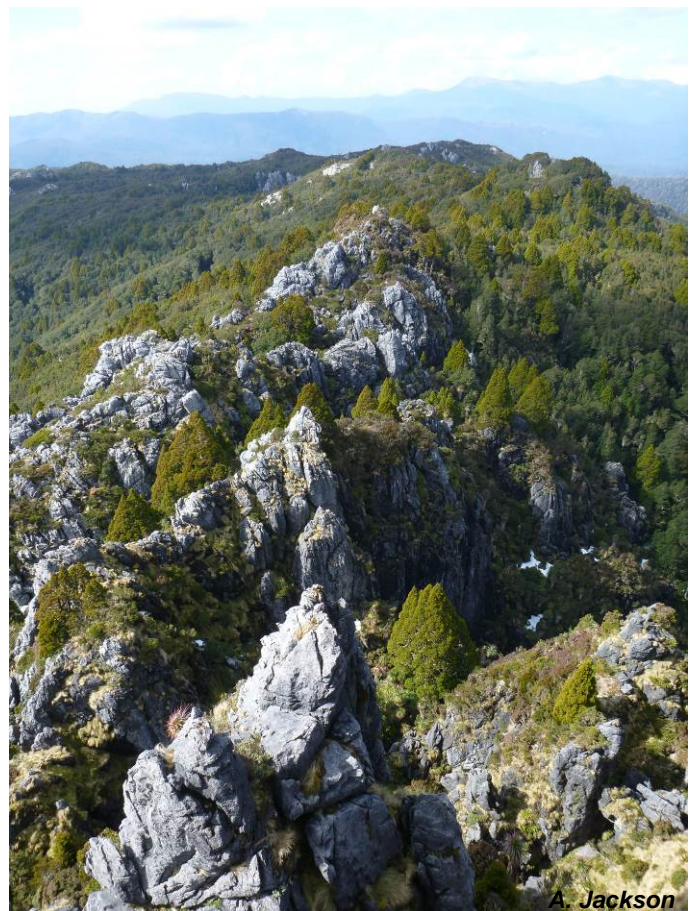
P. Smejkal

This is steep mum – Keller Cellar.



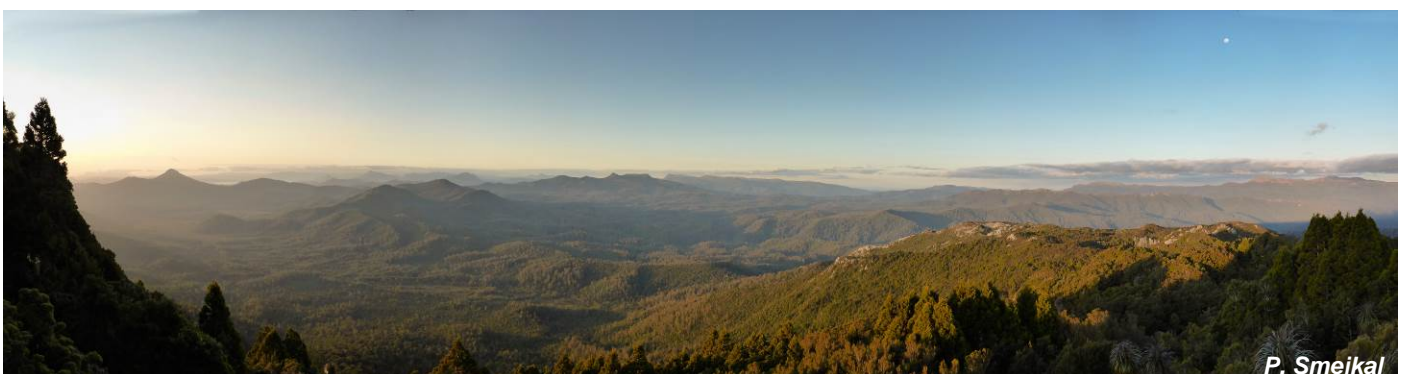
A. Jackson

Serena and three entrances looking like one entrance.



A. Jackson

Insane terrain – North East Ridge.



P. Smejkal

Sunset, North East Ridge.

JF7 Frankcombe Cave

Alan Jackson

3 October 2015

Party: Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Eleanor March, Janice March, Michael Packer and extended family (Sherry, Stan, Isabelle, Charlie), Chris Sharples.

It was a lame caving weekend in the JF so first cab off the rank had to be something horizontal and pretty, down the bad end of the Florentine Valley. I'd not been to JF7 so it at least it would be new to me.

Frankcombe proved to be a very nice little cave with everything you need to keep the kids (mostly) happy – spiders, crawls, pretties, no bottomless pits to fall down and one evidently quite startled platypus suffering from the shock of a serious home invasion. After a couple of hours we were done and back at the cars. Bunty had informed me the cave was untagged before the trip so we came prepared and slapped one on it (at 'face height' in the middle of the entrance on the roof/entrance arch).

To fill in time we located JF80 and JF229 for those planning on trips to either or both of those caves the next day and did some tree fall clearing from the associated roads. We also ducked up the Nine Road to see how much clearing the Owl Potters had had to suffer (lots) and to entertain the children by launching projectiles down Tassy Pot. The Owl Pot team emerged as we were about to leave so we exchanged pleasantries, cleaned Guy out of his homemade biscuits and headed home with a tray load of children squealing with delight as overhanging branches tore their skin off and shed spiders on them. Safety first.



A. Jackson

Plenty of pretties.



A. Jackson

Janice admires a spray of straws.



A. Jackson

Stan and Pax suffer the crawl.



A. Jackson

Anna the poser and some spiky white things.

JF221 Owl Pot Chainsaw ‘Messacre’

Geoff Wise

3 October 2015

Party: Erin Bannink, Guy Bannink, Serena Benjamin, Zach Brown, Geoff Wise.

I filled up the chainsaw and threw it in the car as a bit of an afterthought before heading to Maydena. There might be a tree or two across the road and it might come in handy ...

We all jumped in Guy’s car at Maydena and headed off. It didn’t start well. The first tree fall was just before where Westfield Rd and the Nine Road split. It was big by my chainsaw-ing standards. What was worse was that you could have missed the Nine Road after that if you didn’t look as there were multiple trees down right at the turn off. I was starting to think I should have packed more fuel. I cut while the others dragged the mess out of the way. After that it was easier to walk up the road clearing the multiple fallen trees as we went. About two thirds of the way up there were fewer trees across the road which meant sitting on the bonnet of the car with the chainsaw getting driven to the next tree fall. We made it to the parking spot at about 11:30.

We geared up and headed off to Owl Pot. Guy stopped at the bottom of the second pitch while the rest of us headed to the top of the last. Time was getting on and Guy was waiting so we turned back. At the Bowling Alley I discovered Guy is a tough love kind of parent. For Erin’s first vertical trip he had constructed a chest harness out of a bit of 3 mm cord (or maybe a shoe lace). We swapped it for a sling which would be more comfortable. The trip out was smooth other than the last muddy slope and everyone had a good time.



Geoff and Zach do it on the bonnet of Guy’s car.

JF36 Growling Swallet

Sarah Gilbert

3 October 2015

Party: David Butler, Sarah Gilbert, Cath Hemley

As members of the JF Lame Caving Weekend, we arrived in Maydena on Saturday morning to join the circus. Being totally disorganised for the weekend and leaving all planning to the day before, I was the obvious candidate for a last minute change of plans Saturday morning and off to Growling we went.

The heavy snows of the past winter had brought a lot of branches down on the 8-Road. It had been cleared up to the first big pothole and then we walked the additional 800 m up the road. We cleared some of the smaller branches on the way out, but it needs a return trip with a chainsaw. We headed

down the Dry Bypass and rigged short safety ropes on the jug-handle and the bottom climb. I had glanced at the map the night before and wanted to have a look up New Feeling since I hadn’t been there before. We managed to find it on the second attempted side passage (luckily DB was on the ball). A nice flattener and a climb down into a dry and wonderfully quiet chamber. We discovered two fixed ropes disappearing into the ceiling but as we’d left our SRT gear back at Stal Corner they weren’t much use. DB reported the climb wasn’t nearly as scary as it looked. The sketchy climbs were worth it with lots of pure white stals, straws, columns and flowstone, as well as some impressive banded sediment banks. Very pretty part of the cave and a contrast to the roaring water. A trip of poking around exploring and re-familiarisation in a cracker of a cave. Relaxed day’s caving then back to Maydena for dinner, wine and socialising.

JF268 Pooshooter

Alan Jackson

4 October 2015

Party: Serena Benjamin, David Butler, Sarah Gilbert, Alan Jackson, Chris Sharples.

After ten years of savouring Serena had urged me to consider the merits of returning to Pooshooter. I decided it had been long enough and that a re-check of the feasibility of the dig before the unseen, but heard, big pitch was worth doing (Brett 2004).

The route up the hill wasn’t in too bad condition but was just as steep as it used to be. The entrance was still there and draughting like mad. Remembering that it had been early on in our fledging caving careers when we explored this cave, resulting in a variety of bolt types, I had come prepared with every type of bolt hanger I could muster (and used every type). Some rigging notes:

- P1 Bug-me (18 m) – tie off to 250 mm diameter tree immediately beside entrance and rebelay 1 m down from a wire trace tied off to the large fallen log downhill from the entrance (sharp edge, so metal or dyneema required). Redirect off a very tight tape around wedged boulder at the bend about 5 m further down (you could probably get a small nut in there more easily than a tape).
- P2 (22 m) – Y-hang off a spit and an 8 mm expansion bolt.
- P3 (8 m) – short tape around bridge in The Orifice protects your approach to a large natural bollard (long tape) which gets you nicely to the floor via a redirect (spit with very short tape/extender).
- P4 Shower of Shit (38 m) – accessed by getting off the previous pitch 1.5 m before the true floor and traversing a ledge then climbing up beside a massive boulder. A chockstone between the boulder and the wall takes a short tape which gets you down the start

of the pitch proper, where a rebelay is required (rigged with a very long tape up and over the massive boulder). About 6 m down a sloping floor is encountered over the main section of the pitch. Two 8 mm expansion bolts on opposite walls form a wide y-hang. [Note that we got to this rebelay (just) with a single 80 m length of rope and a 48 m rope got us to the top of P5 with about 8-10 m of spare.] Another 10 m or so down a single spit (with a short tape) is used as a redirect. A further 15 m or so down are two 10 mm expansion bolts on opposite walls for another wide y-hang. These two bolts get you down the last bit of the pitch. From here you can either continue straight down the following 12 m pitch (P5) or traverse Long John Silver to access the rest of the cave.

- P5 (12 m) – two 10 mm expansion bolts close together get you down with a minor rub half way down. [A 14 m rope was just long enough for this pitch.]
- Other pitches – from memory all the other bolts in the cave should be 8 mm expansions with the exception of the possibility of a spit, probably unmarked, to access the 16 m pitch on the right hand side of Long John Silver.



Sarah and Chris contemplate the discrete entrance to Pooshooter.

Serena and I got down first, quickly took off our SRT kits and dived down the boulder choke in order to avoid the rocks raining down from Shower of Shit above (the pitch is well-named). It was further and tighter than I remembered to the impassable bit but what lies beyond certainly proved to be as exciting as I remembered. Aiming rocks through the slot and getting them to bounce left at the end proved challenging but good shots were rewarded with four seconds of free fall followed by another second after the first bounce. So there's a pitch between 50 and 80 m down there by my estimate. I assessed the dig and decided while it won't be a ten minute job it shouldn't be an epic either and Pooshooter is firmly back on the list.

We returned to the death zone, where Serena was nearly sconed by a 100 mm diameter rock as the last punter arrived. Sarah was smart enough to decline her chance to view the dig and started out while Dave and Chris headed down for a viewing. Eventually we all headed for the surface and the trip was over after four hours or so.

We took a new route home in the hope of finding something new. After a lean start we eventually located three features on the way. The first was a large doline with two vertical options about 5-6 m metres deep (not explored). There were double pink tapes on a nearby sapling probably circa mid to late '90s (Nick Hume?). The second was a ~4 m deep decorated chamber blocked with rocks at the end of an impressive cliff line (this cliff area needs a return). The third was a small squeeze entrance to a small 5x3 m chamber which Dave explored. All three were recorded with the club GPS and labelled 'PostPooCave', 'PostPoo2' and 'PostPoo3' respectively. They require a return with the proper documentary equipment in the future.

So a relatively relaxing vertical trip and some new prospects to finish off the weekend.

Reference

BRETT, G. 2004. JF-268 Pooshooter, *Speleo Spiel* 345: 21-22.

JF229 Welcome Stranger

Michael Packer

4 October 2015

Party: Sherry Smart, Stan Fuller, Isabel Fuller, Charlie Fuller, Mervyn Smart, Janice March, Eleanor March, Michael "Pax" Packer.

It was the second day of Alan's Lame Caving Weekend. The morning had dawned bright and early and had been promptly ignored by everyone except Alan. Once various kids had been persuaded that not spending the entire day in bed was desirable and after being fed, cajoled into sorting out their gear, bullied into washing up the breakfast dishes and generally mistreated we squeezed all eight people into two (entirely too small) cars and headed for Welcome Stranger (JF229) for some kiddie-friendly caving.

After several stops to remove "trolls" (snagged branches that sounded like we'd run over a mythical beast) from the underside of the cars we arrived at the end of the road and trudged up the track accompanied by the requisite "are we there yet?" and "I feel sick" comments that always make these sorts of trips so memorable. During the trek we passed the lower entrance of the cave and it was noted that there was no water flowing out.

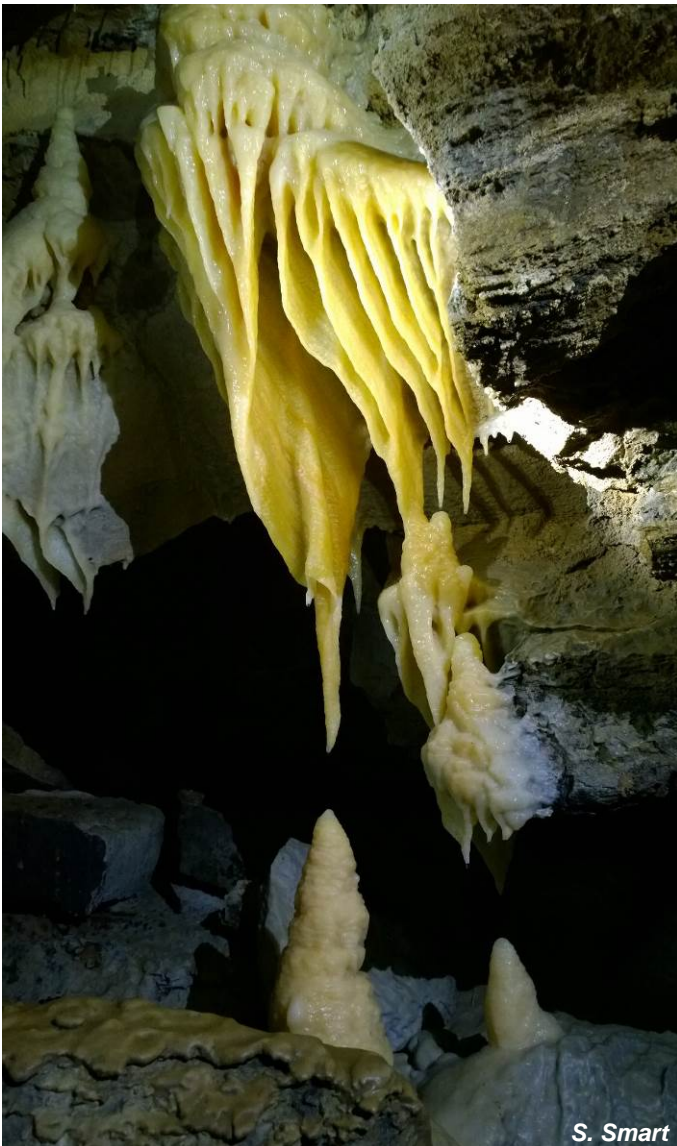
The upper entrance was soon located and all the kids were installed in their respective suits, boots and torches; amazingly no one had left anything behind! The gate was soon unlocked (it is barely hanging on with one hinge now) and the cave entered. We had one caving virgin with us (Sherry's dad, Mervyn), so we took it very easy through the first scramble and crawl into the cave proper despite the children's desire to hurl themselves bodily down the slope. First thing that was noticed was the total absence of water flowing in the main passage; this seemed unusual as it was early spring and not unreasonable to expect some water here as there had been in past years.

Progress through the cave was reasonably rapid and accompanied by gasps of amazement and statements such as "Well I never!" and "the lads at home will never believe I went into a cave" from Mervyn. Some short distance into the cave the sound of water was heard which I initially assumed was one of the children who had failed to take a toilet stop outside the cave but in fact turned out to be the missing stream. It has diverted and now completely disappears down a sizable slot in the wall. I poked my head into said slot but was not able to get any further as it folds back on itself and then appears to drop away. I resisted the urge to reach for the smallest child present, poke them into the hole and tell them that there was a bag of lollies just around that corner in an attempt to find out where



S. Smart

Pretty stuff (except for Pax, of course) in Welcome Stranger.



S. Smart

More pretty stuff in Welcome Stranger.

this new lead goes and instead returned to being a responsible adult. Potentially worthy of further investigation in the future.

The going got a little more difficult as we were now wading through the stream. Mervyn had only sneakers on (he and Sherry had fought it out in the carpark as to who had forgotten to pack their boots – he'd lost; Sherry can swing a gumboot with alarming accuracy) and so provided us with much amusement as he tried to retain dry shoes and even more amusement when he completely failed (it is quite amazing the lengths that someone will go to avoid wet socks). Whilst he did end up with soggy socks it didn't dampen his enthusiasm – top marks!

So, to the tune of squelching sneakers the rest of the cave was traversed with a brief side trip to have a look at the pretties in the main side passage. Artistic creativity was exhibited by Sherry, Stan and Charlie when they discovered that their torches could be switched to red light mode and, in true teenage fashion, immediately realised that they could make stals look like blood covered knives and rim stone pools look to be full of blood – who says gory movies aren't good for the imagination! Sherry continued to demonstrate her fantastic eye for light and photography and captured stunning picture after stunning picture with her camera phone with an ease that made me seriously consider never again lugging my DSLR, tripod and flashes into a cave.

The sump at the top of the cave was reached, lunch was shared out, lollies were divvied up and fought over and then the return trip was undertaken without incident (other than the previously mentioned soggy sneakers). The cave was exited and much swearing at the lock was undertaken whilst trying to jam two hands into a space designed for two fingers to hold the hasp in place whilst rotating the key – I got more bruises locking the damn gate than walking through the entire cave carrying a child who had suddenly developed an allergy to water.

All in all a good trip, fun was had by everyone and nobody broke anything. Thanks again to Alan for organising the weekend.