Speleo Spiel 411

November - December 2015

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

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Front Cover: Practising basic counterweight moves at Fruehauf Quarry. *Photo by Stefan Eberhard*

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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Issue No. 411, Nov. – Dec. 2015

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Editorial

And we're back on track. An issue out in one of the two months listed on the front page – amazing! It's good to have it back on schedule in time for the new Editor to take it over in March 2016. A little birdie tells me that Serena is simply gagging for the job, so I guess there's no need to advertise the position.

This is a bumper Christmas special edition – full as a tick with a great range of stuff. Exciting 'ebents' to report on this issue, with it being a bit of an Eberhard special too – some extremely overdue trip reports from Rolan and Stefan AND a report with Patrick Eberhard's name in it. Yep, that's right, the next generation of hard caving is upon us (hopefully). The old farts are kicking again and the succession plan is taking off. I'm excited (it means I can retire).

This issue has been a bastard to put together but it's a joy to think of it in your hot little hands (or is it 'on your warm computer screens'?).

Alan Jackson

(Acting [somewhat like an] Editor)

Stuff 'n Stuff

Junee-Florentine Track Conditions and Clearing

The big dumps of snow in July and August 2015 caused a lot of treefall across roads in the Florentine Valley. A filming trip to Growling Swallet on the 4th August was aborted part way up the road to the Gap due to the snow and lack of chains, and as it later turned out we would not have got very far up the Eight Road due to treefall anyway. Instead we filmed the snow and forest below the Gap and at Junee Cave (see pictures). I returned to Eight Road with a chainsaw on 18th August and cleared many trees up to the gravel dump. The remaining 500 m or so to the end of the road was very heavily choked with treefall and will require another chainsaw effort to clear for vehicle access, although it's still navigable on foot. I embarked on another major tree clearing job on the Junee Quarry Road during the club's September caving bash. One day was spent clearing the 2 km or so up to the KD car park, and another half a day on the track to Cauldron and KD (part way). Some further minor work is needed on the KD track to clear a couple of annoying logs.

Stefan Eberhard

Road conditions below the Gap on 4th August 2015.

Sweetening up Honeycomb

Stephen Bunton reports that the new steps into the most frequented entrance to Honeycomb Cave at Mole Creek have been constructed quite sensibly and sensitively. There was a report in the most recent *Caves Australia* (#201 pp. 20-21). This is a good use of the ASF Karst Conservation Fund money.

Lost & Found

Found in MA2 Keller Cellar: one pair of Ray Ban sunglasses. Condition: suitable for one-eyed people only.

Found in JF4 Khazad-Dum: one 'Magnetic Flashlight', probably circa 1980-something. Condition: might have been dropped at some stage and has suffered minor water damage.

Alan Jackson

QANTAS Discovers Junee Cave

Qantas (Magazine), #269, Nov. 2015, carried an article (marking its 95th birthday) describing "95 exciting, fun, romantic, delicious and family-friendly Australian experiences you probably haven't heard about", one of which is the "Junee Cave Track, 1km" [*see next page*]. It describes the entrance as: "a visual treat in its own right" and goes on to hopefully announce: "Experienced cave divers, however, can explore subterranean delights beyond, including Australia's deepest limestone abyss." So, Janine, you can stop looking.

[*Interesting that The Needles gets a mention too (see next page), as it features on page 9 of this issue – Ed.*]

Greg Middleton

Tasmania

The Apple Isle walking tracks you didn't know about… until now.

BY **BARRY STONE**

Junee Cave Track, 1km

Approached on a 15-minute trail beneath towering ferns and swamp gums, the walk to the entrance of Junee Cave (90 kilometres north-west of Hobart) is a visual treat in its own right. Experienced cave divers, however, can explore subterranean delights beyond, including Australia's deepest limestone abyss.

→ The Needles, 3km

A jagged ridgeline on the fringes of Southwest National Park, The Needles is reached via a scrub-encroached trail, a 400-metre climb and a 30-minute ascent on natural steps to its 1020-metre summit. Why do it? For staggering views of mounts Mueller, Anne and Field West and lakes Pedder and Gordon.

↓ Cape Queen Elizabeth, 12km

If you're a Bruny Island resident, you'll know it – a trail that begins at its airstrip, bisects two lagoons then climbs to Mars Bluff with views over The Neck and far-off Fluted Cape before a descent to Miles Beach, previously deserted, now with a population of one.

↑ Three Capes Track, 46km

Better rug up for this brand-new track, which can be walked over three days with two nights' stay in cabins. Perched on Australia's tallest sea cliffs, taking in capes Raoul, Hauy and Pillar, this ambitious Tasman Peninsula trail is our most spectacular coastal walk; a chilling descent into the windswept latitudes of the Roaring Forties.

Hellfire Bluff, 13.8km

First you drive almost to Copping, then Kellevie, then 7.4 kilometres on a forestry road and park your vehicle in an old quarry. From there, it's a bash through scrub to a trail that dwindles to nothing as it ascends a 200-metre-high ridge overlooking Cockle Bay. Worried about crowds? You needn't be.

A few of QANTAS *magazine's 95 good things to do.*

Trip Reports

JF36 Growling Swallet – Living Fossils Extension

Rolan Eberhard

'Living Fossils' was discovered in 2012 following a push by Stefan and me in the Black River/Coelacanth section of Growling Swallet. Within the overall layout of Growling Swallet, the passages concerned trend away from the otherwise converging network of tributaries within the active levels, notably Mainline. Their more easterly alignment suggests scope for a confluence with a major conduit inferred to exist to the north of Growling Swallet. This conduit is necessary to account for streams known to flow to Niggly Cave from caves north of Growling Swallet (e.g. Porcupine Pot). This possibility was recognised back in the 1980s, stimulating a number of trips, mainly focussed on pushing upper level passages (e.g. Servalane), none of which yielded the hoped-for breakthrough. Prior to the recent trips, Coelacanth seems to have been entered on only three occasions, all more than 25 years ago (Hume 1985a, b, 1988). A return trip seemed well overdue.

Our initial impulse was to pursue a diving lead at the downstream end of Coelacanth (Swallowing Gullet sump). We also recognised there was potential for dry leads, especially in the vicinity of a large breakdown chamber which had been noted during the earlier trips. Survey data indicates that this chamber is close to Servalane, an upper level passage accessible from the known parts of Growling Swallet without diving. If a dry connection could be found this would simplify the logistics of pushing Coelacanth, entry to which otherwise required diving a sump which provides access between Black River and Coelacanth. However, as the sump was known to be shallow and not particularly long, one of our objectives was to attempt passing it by free diving. If successful this could also simplify logistics. These objectives and a general reccy of Coelacanth were the purpose of our first trip.

Low hanging fruit: 5th January 2012

S. Eberhard, R. Eberhard

As back-up in attempting to free dive the Black River sump we carried a rudimentary scuba setup, comprising a hip-mounted 15 cubic foot aluminium 'baby' tank (the same kit I used back in 1984 when Nick Hume and I dived the connection from Black River to Pendant Pot – the regulator was purchased in August 1979!) Upon arrival at the sump, Stefan strapped these museum pieces to his body and commenced probing the submerged passage in the vicinity of the dive line, still there from 1985. He popped up again very soon, with information that it was only a short duck through to the next air space.

During Stefan's probing I could hear his exhaust bubbles, even when he was on the other side of the duck. This implied a 'dry' connection and with some searching I found a gap with a few inches of air space extending off one side of the sump – a classic roof sniff, requiring a crab-like sideways motion with the body mostly immersed but enough air space above to maintain air intake. This avoided complete immersion but would close off with a small rise in stream stage.

The air space beyond continued for several tens of meters to a further short roof sniff/duck which may have been sumped off during the 1985 dives. Beyond lay Coelacanth. This impressive piece of cave is comparable with parts of Mainline, being spacious and clean washed. We headed downstream for a look at the Swallowing Gullet sump but weren't equipped to dive it on this trip. The sump seems to be a static pond at low stage.

Stefan kitting up 1980s style prior to diving the sump between Black River and Coelacanth.

1980s dive line tied off at Swallowing Gullet sump.

Our initial exploratory efforts were directed at the stream, the flow of which attenuates to nothing some distance before Swallowing Gullet. Searching about revealed a low crawl off the side, close to the point where the streambed becomes dry. This looked promising at first, but proved merely a loop connecting back to the main passage. The fate of the water is unclear as the passage is mostly floored by bedrock without obvious openings which could account for the loss of flow.

We then turned our attention to the large breakdown chamber. This is associated with a bouldery slope off the southern side of the main passage, not far from the Black River-Coelacanth sump. A fissure in the wall about a third of the way up the boulder slope attracted our interest immediately. This contained no sign of previous entry. Initially narrow, the fissure soon opened out to modest chamber with a mud slope

leading up to a passage of crawling to stooping dimensions. This continued for some distance before intersecting a further chamber; this one containing large precarious boulders. A somewhat gymnastic section of rockfall preceded a further chamber, larger again.

By this stage in the trip we were weary after 8 hours of wet-suited exertion and conscious of being a long way underground in a remote passage not known to other cavers. The decision to stop became easier when the large passage deteriorated into a confused rockfall zone. We pushed this for a bit but turned around without reaching a definite conclusion – the options had degenerated to progressively constricted slots between mud-covered boulders. We headed out feeling that prospects were still good for finding more quality cave.

Back after time off to savour: 6th February 2013

S. Eberhard, R. Eberhard

Unencumbered by diving kit, we made good progress through to Coelacanth. The pace slowed thereafter as we commenced surveying the new passage, now named Living Fossils. Having completed the survey we investigated the terminal rockfall. Unfortunately, all leads in this area seemed to either choke off in muddy boulder chokes or connect back to known parts. This was disappointing but did not exhaust our stock of leads.

The principal remaining lead is found on the northern side of Living Fossils. This yielded an ascending passage which split into further leads off a moderately spacious chamber. Our exploration of this area was curtailed by lack of gear to attempt climbing a high rift on one side and general fatigue late in the day.

Initial section of northern side passage in Living Fossils.

Helictites in Living Fossils passage.

Left overs: 8th January 2014

A. Jackson, S. Eberhard, R. Eberhard

Having plucked the low hanging fruit and savoured it with reptilian slowness over several years, we invited Alan on the next trip to scavenge on the left overs. Actually, prior to the trip we still held hope for a further breakthrough, as we now knew that Living Fossils passed beyond the most downstream point in Coelacanth and was therefore in a good place to go a lot further. To assist in the exploration we carried a climbing rope and basic rack, intending to make an attempt on the ascending lead found previously. On arrival at the base of the rift, closer inspection revealed that the climb was more serious than initially thought, comprising a vertical rift 20-30 m high with few natural holds or protection. A concerted effort would be required to have any chance of success here and we didn't have the right gear to attempt this.

The fall-back lead was a horizontal continuation of the chamber at the base of the rift. This was found to go for a few tens of metres in a narrow passage with a trickle of a stream at its base. Progress slowed when we entered a section with profuse flowstone coatings on the walls and floor. Due to the fragility of the formations I went ahead for a solo reccy with boots off. I turned around 20-30 m further on, having climbed several short steps and entered a narrow section adorned with tiny fragile tree-like helictites. Beyond this point the passage appears to continue but is increasingly narrow and heading upwards. To avoid impacting the helictites I don't feel this passages needs to be pushed to the bitter end. We surveyed the finds before heading out of the cave.

Concluding remarks

The discovery of Living Fossils demonstrates that despite the feeding frenzy of exploration in Growling Swallet by TCC in the 1980s, all possibilities had not been exhausted. Living Fossils is particularly interesting given the 'third divide' (sic) hypothesises, which postulates that a major subterranean watercourse exists to the north of Growling Swallet, beyond the two presently known major streams (Mainline and Black River). This is consistent with the results of water tracing investigations (Eberhard 1994).

It is interesting to note that parts of Living Fossils are up to 50-60 m above the level of the Swallowing Gullet sump, putting it at a similar elevation to Servalane. It is quite likely that these

passages are genetically related, implying potential for discovery of linking sections. The furthest surveyed point in Living Fossils lies 40 m above Swallowing Gullet and about 150 m beyond it in an easterly direction.

Living Fossils increases the surveyed length of the Growling Swallet by 390 m. It is unclear what this means in terms of the overall length of the cave, given the state of disarray of the JF36 data in the STC archive. A map of the new section accompanies this article (see page 9), indicating the relationship Living Fossils, Coelacanth and Space Rat Alley at the eastern end of Servalane (thanks Alan). The map includes additional data collected by Stefan during a dive in Swallowing Gullet (see his article elsewhere in this issue). That dive concludes this minor renaissance of exploratory effort in Growling Swallet.

References

EBERHARD, R. 1994 *Inventory and Management of the Junee River Karst System, Tasmania*, report to Forestry Tasmania, Hobart.

HUME, N. 1985a Diving downstream Black River. *Speleo Spiel* 210: 5-6.

HUME, N. 1985b Survey/dive of "Coelacanth". *Speleo Spiel* 210: 7-8.

HUME, N. 1988 Growling Swallet in depth! *Speleo Spiel* 235: 3-5.

JF36 Growling Swallet – Diving Coelacanth Sump

Stefan Eberhard

15 March 2015

Party: Milos Dvorak, Stefan Eberhard, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Chris Sharples, Petr Smejkal.

This trip was a finale to the resurrection, during the last two years, of explorations in the downstream Coelacanth section of Black River in Growling Swallet. As described in the other trip reports by Rolan (Eberhard 2015), these explorations resulted in several hundred metres of dry upper trunk passage named "Living Fossils" which terminated in rock-fall. This termination prompted renewed interest in the Coelacanth sump which represents the semi-active lower level running more or less underneath Living Fossils.

Coelacanth sump was dived once previously by Nick Hume in 1988. Using a back-mounted tank system Nick reported a clear descending passage to a gravel blind at 18.34 m depth (Hume 1988). At the time this was the deepest point in the Ice Tube – Growling system. My interest in revisiting this sump was not in its depth but its relationship with Living Fossils and the strategic easterly direction it was heading - towards an inevitable intersection with the undiscovered master conduit that must carry the combined waters from Porcupine Pot and all the caves between PP and Rainbow Cave which ultimately drain to Junee via Niggly Cave. In planning to revisit the Coelacanth sump I hoped that the "gravel blind" might turn out to be a constriction that was passable using side-mounted tanks.

With terrific support from Chris Sharples, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal and Milos Dvorak, all the gear fitted inside six large cave packs and was transported in fast time to the dive base at the Black River sump / roof sniff. While Chris and Milos inspected the upstream section of Black River, Petr, Alan and Andreas donned wetsuits and helped with carrying the two 7 litre steel tanks to the sump. From here they took off to check the end of Living Fossils for leads while I prepared to dive. The sump pool is static, with no in-flow under normal conditions, but evidently this entire section of cave floods occasionally and there are flood deposits high up in Coelacanth and Living Fossils. The sump pool is clean, clear and inviting (see picture), apart from the chilly 6 degree water, this time made tolerable with the luxury of a dry suit. Nick's line was still in place.

The sump trended southeast, roughly along strike with occasional bends down-dip, and descended at a steady angle to the bottom of a classic U siphon. To my disappointment the obvious upward trending continuation was completely choked, albeit with beautifully rounded and polished calcite-veined pebbles and cobbles, tumbled like gemstones when floodwaters surge through under many metres of hydraulic head. Nick's line disappeared into the nest of gemstones. His line placed more than 30 years ago was still in good condition and even the taped line markers with metre distances written in Texta were still legible, although some of them had slid out of place along the line. I turned and surveyed out. The surveyed plan length was around 70 metres, somewhat longer than shown on earlier sketch maps. Alan has appended the sump survey to the main Growling survey (see page 9).

"Down among the Red Men" - The heroic volunteers who carried the dive gear: Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal, Milos Dvorak, Alan Jackson, Chris Sharples.

Coelacanth sump. Stefan checking it out during reconnaissance trip in January 2013.

After grovelling back to dive base in Black River, I briefly contemplated the option of diving upstream into Pendant Pot to check the feasibility of free-diving this short siphon which, if safely negotiable via a breath-hold dive, would make for a very sporty through trip. I should mention this was Rolan's idea as he scooped the first and only ever Pendant - Growling pull-down through-trip followed by "on-sight" sump dive with a single pony bottle more than thirty years ago. Beyond the Pendant Pot connection there also lies the prospect of revisiting Nick's earlier and possibly inconclusive upstream underwater explorations. The return of the Living Fossils crew, who reported no new leads, and the late hour dissuaded any further diving on this trip. I must say I don't feel highly motivated to return to push upstream Pendant and I am very happy for others to take on this challenge. With this in mind I left four dive weights (and possibly also two line weights?) cached at the Black River dive base to assist the cause of future upstream explorations, by whomever is game. We collected an additional 4 litre tank left from trips the previous year and made our way out with heavy loads. Rolan's rope on Destiny pitch was left coiled at the top of the shaft as we had no space for it in any of the packs. We surfaced after about nine hours underground.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Chris Sharples, Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal, Milos Dvorak and Alan Jackson who selflessly and efficiently carried the packs of very heavy dive gear all the way into Black River and back out.

References

EBERHARD, R. 2015 JF36 Growling Swallet – Living Fossils Extension. *Speleo Spiel* 411: 4-6

HUME, N. 1988 Growling Swallet in Depth! *Speleo Spiel* 235: 3-6

Milos Dvorak and Petr Smejkal (on rope) at the base of the 27 m Destiny pitch which drops into the Black River section of Growling Swallet.

JF633 Ring Hole – and a sump it is!

Andreas Klocker

31 October 2015

Party: Serena Benjamin, Andreas Klocker, Fleur Loveridge (Oxford University Caving Club), Grant Rees.

It'd been less than a fortnight since I'd arrived back from my annual stint to Oxford (UK) when I had one of my close Oxford caving friends visit on the end of a work trip to the lameland. Fleur loves cave exploration (and hence surveying ... at least that's what I extrapolated from her love for exploration) and I'm not big into tourist trips (there's way too much exploration to be done to waste time touristing) so we decided to continue with our work in Ring Hole. A few days before the trip I also heard via Alan that Grant Rees also just moved to Tassie to do some real caving, so another young and dumb one who didn't know what he was getting into when he signed up (much more grown up and pleasant than Dickon though) and in the end even Serena came along (she's back!). So that made four of us, three of whom have never been to Ring Hole. The plan was to continue down the pitch which Steve Fordyce ran out of rope on (Fordyce 2015) and connect into Sesame (so the plan at least).

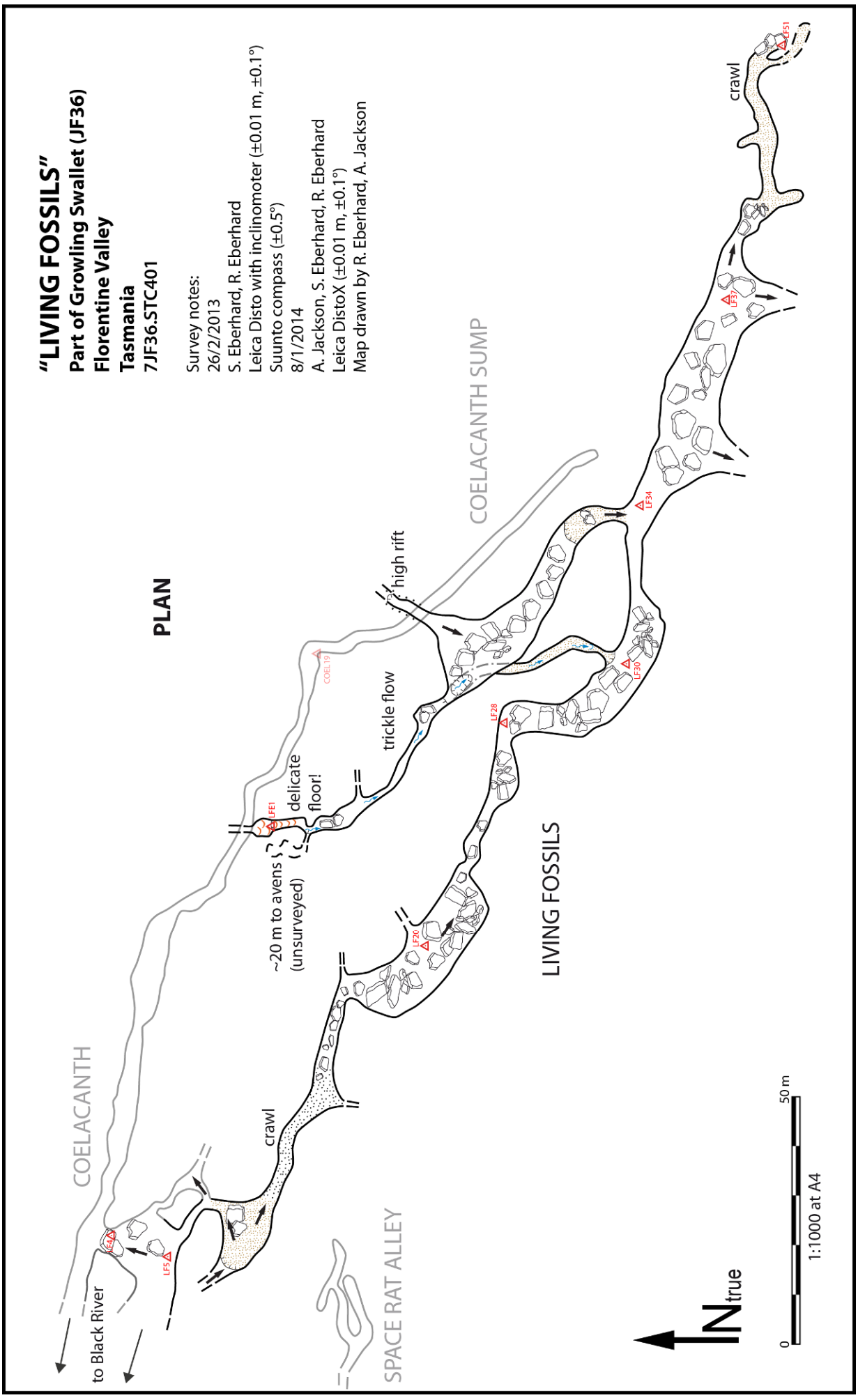
So off we went, through the wet and the tight, until we arrived on top of the first pitch head (down the left at Grande Junction). There the ladies decided to survey (what lovely ladies!) and Grant decided to come with me and try not to freeze while I was fixing lameland rigging (\begin{rant} who on bloody earth would put a single 6 mm concrete screw on top of a pitch head!! \end{rant}). Whatever happened, I placed a second anchor, tied in a longer rope and continued to Steve's last Y-hang where he ran out of rope, replacing his rope for the longer one I brought, put in another Y-hang and dropped the last ten meters. Once at the bottom I was going to wait for the others to bag some booty but I only had to look ahead to see the one thing I didn't want to see – a sump!!

So once the others came down Grant and myself did some acro-yoga to climb over the sump, just to find out that there's no way around/over it with some pretty nasty mud on the other side – the sort which tends to eat gumboots. So after some gummi bears and swearing we headed back up, did a quick tourist excursion to the other pitch head and headed for home.

And while this trip report is late and full of crappy English grammar (only I am to be blamed for this), thanks to Fleur we brought back the best sketches which have ever left this cave! She even drew them up for me as a pdf before she left the country!! Maybe we should send David Taberner to visit her in the UK and learn a few things about drawing up cave surveys

Reference

FORDYCE, S. 2015 JF633 Ring Hole. *Speleo Spiel* 409: 7-8


"LIVING FOSSILS"
Part of Growling Swallet (JF36)
Florentine Valley
Tasmania
7JF36.STC401
PLAN
Survey notes:
26/2/2013
S. Eberhard, R. Eberhard
Leica Disto with inclinomoter (±0.01 m, ±0.1°)
Suunto compass (±0.5°)
8/1/2014
A. Jackson, S. Eberhard, R. Eberhard
Leica DistoX (±0.01 m, ±0.1°)
Map drawn by R. Eberhard, A. Jackson
COELACANTH
to Black River
LF5
LF4
crawl
~20 m to avens
(unsurveyed)
LFE1
delicate
floor!
COEL19
trickle flow
high rift
COELACANTH SUMP
LF26
LF28
LF30
LF34
LF37
LF51
crawl
LIVING FOSSILS
SPACE RAT ALLEY
N true
0
50 m
1:1000 at A4

JF414 Jolly Roger, JF387 Porcupine Pot, JF36 Growling Swallet

Alan Jackson

1 November 2015

Party: Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Fleur Loveridge, Michael Packer, Grant Rees.

Porcupine Pot is on the list for this summer, so it was time to get the road and track upgraded and the pitches sorted. We had too many people for the plan so some parallel activity was arranged. We started with clearing the snow damage off the Nine Road spur to the track start (not too bad in the end) then sorted the track. At Porcupine we checked out the top of the first pitch to assess just how tight it really was and then split into two groups. Andreas, Fleur (visiting Pom) and Pax got to work on expanding and re-rigging Porcupine while Serena, Grant and I toddled 40 m down the hill to Jolly Roger.

Jolly Roger had proven a bit too exciting on its only previous trip (Jackson 2006) but we figured that with nearly ten years to settle that it should be safe as houses again by now. The draught was howling out of the entrance, which was encouraging. The scary boulder-pile entrance was still nerve-wracking but much as I'd last seen it. The pitch head was worse-looking than I remembered but upon closer inspection it wasn't evident that certain death would result. I whacked in two concrete screws above the small hole amongst the bridging boulders and slipped down. A couple of metres down it hit a sloping wall which induced a rub above that Grant didn't like, so I whacked in a concrete screw redirect and continued ~3-4 metres down the very steep wall. Here it opened up a little with a few options for onwards. I chucked in a second redirect with a tape around a column of rock and dropped the last ~3-4 metres to the floor of a small chamber. All three of us nosed around this chamber but found nothing but blockages (all silted up with mud and organic debris from the surface stream that re-joins the passage here). We then sent Grant up to push the various options a few metres up to see which just connected back to the bottom. One led over the last chamber and then up a slope (with very strong draught, presumably to surface). The other led down via a narrow slot blocked with a rock. We managed to shift the rock and give it a go. Grant didn't fit, so I had a go and did fit, but held grave concerns for reversing the manoeuvre. Fortunately it simply proved to reconnect to the lower chamber and I came back up the easy way. We headed out.

So, Jolly Roger is dead? Probably. Awesome draught which goes missing but not obvious from where it originates. Sticking to tradition, we determined that surveying the cave was clearly too dangerous.

We arrived back at Porcupine to find the others emerging with exhausted batteries, having improved the first pitch head and re-rigged a couple of pitches. We pulled the pin and went for a tourist in Growling instead (for Fleur's entertainment). We also got a bit more of the road cleared – it is now trafficable to the old apiary site (and probably to the end for low cars) with only moderate damage to your car's paint work.

Reference

JACKSON, A. 2006 JF-414 Jolly Roger. *Speleo Spiel* 357: 7-8

JF237 Niggly downstream

Petr Smejkal

7 November 2015

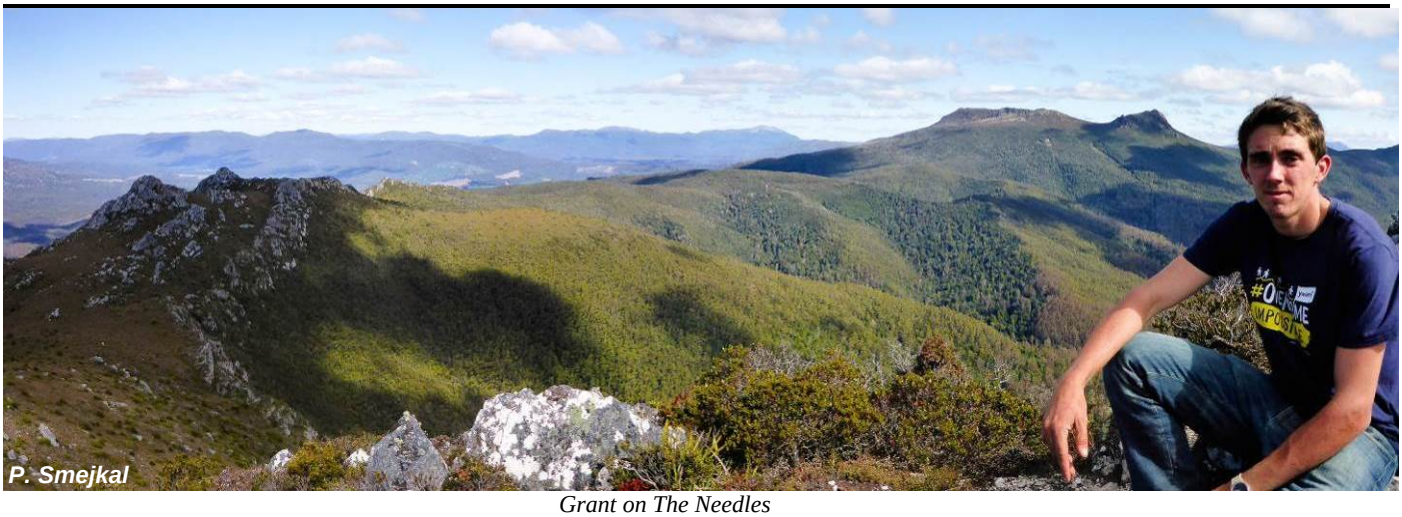
Party: Grant Rees, Petr Smejkal

It was a challenge to find some volunteers for this Niggly trip but in the end I was lucky enough and I did not have to think about moving it to another date. This time, the only person willing to do the scary rift and BSG warm up was our newest member Grant.

Grant and I left Hobart early at 7 am, but there was a car accident on the road out of Hobart and we spent half an hour waiting. Another big surprise was the damaged track on the way in to Niggly. Many trees had fallen, especially in the new grown regions, making the walk in an extra challenge. We did not take a tape so our plan was to make it back to the surface before sunset to navigate back to the car in the light.

We entered Niggly at 10 am. All went very well and we reached the bottom of BSG at 12:30 pm. Our original goal was to do some resurveys but as soon as we hit the bottom, we knew that it would be much better to get more familiar with the cave. The decision we made was to make a downstream excursion. I last did this excursion 22 months ago and it was the first time for Grant. Surprisingly the only place we struggled at was the rockpile after Mt. Niggly but we managed to get through and we got to the cave end at 2:30 pm. Our way back was much faster and we started climbing BSG at 3:30 pm. It took 45 minutes for each of us to reach the top and the rest of the cave took another 2 hours. We got out of the cave at 7 pm, exactly an hour before the sunset. The journey back convinced me to take a tape next time as the track is really difficult to follow.

We got back to the car happily at 8 pm. Despite its low popularity on the STC list I have to say that Niggly is a great cave and I can't wait to go there again.



Grant on The Needles

JF337 Slaughterhouse Pot through beginners' trip

Petr Smejkal

15 November 2015

Party: Zach Brown, Nathan Chapman, Grant Rees, Petr Smejkal

This was another beginners' trip, although Nathan was the only one with no proper caving experience. Nathan was going to stay at Mt. Field after the trip so he took his own car. I was leading the way but I lost Nathan at the bend near to Niggly track. I slowed down then I stopped and then I turned around and went to find what happened. It was good that we returned, as Nathan had suffered a punctured tyre and with all of us there the change took barely 10 minutes.

Nathan on rope (too tough for gloves, clearly).

We left Nathan's car parked where it was to make sure that he will not puncture another tyre and started heading towards Eight Road. Eight Road will need a bit of maintenance again; with the Bongo van we managed to get as far as the big paddle but no farther as the trees over the road were too dense beyond that point.

The day was beautiful and it almost seemed like a waste to go caving. The water in Growling was very low despite high rainfall in Hobart in the previous week. We headed towards Slaughterhouse Pot. All went great; I don´t remember any long pauses between pitches and our way through the rockpile was straightforward. In total I don´t think that we spent more than one hour in Slaughterhouse.

At the bottom we went to have a look at Herpes, Trapdoor and then we started walking out. Not much more to say, except we got back to the surface in three hours! What a great beginners' trip. When we arrived back at the car, the sun was still high and strong. It seemed like a waste of petrol to go back home so early with such beautiful sunshine – so we didn´t.

Grant suggested The Needles as an alternative plan. It was a rather sporty climb up, from the car park to the summit in 25 minutes. The view was excellent. We spent at least half an hour up there just looking at the scenery.

It was the best beginners' trip I have ever done and it will be very hard to beat it.

Nathan and Zach (and Nathan's missing gloves?).

JF633 Ring Hole

Stephen Fordyce

21-22 November 2015

Party: Dave Bardi, Stephen Fordyce, Brian Hedden, Alan Jackson (Saturday only), Andreas Klocker, Sandy Varin

Preamble:

JF633 Ring Hole is of interest, because it has flowing water which is [*was! – Ed.*] theorised to emerge in nearby JF207 Voltera, and also because it has passage close to and heading for JF210 Sesame Cave (also nearby). Either of these would make for very significant connections - especially (and as is most likely) in the case of Sesame, which has high potential for new discoveries.

Summary:

The weekend involved two trips into the cave with many objectives achieved, and leaving only a few more things to be done before the cave may be pronounced "finished".

- The original series of pitches in quick succession (the "Dave's Sump Extension") discovered by AK, SF and KM previously (Fordyce 2015, and pushed to a sump by AK *et al.* (Klocker 2015) was dived with little further prospect (now named Constipation Sump).
- The series of short pitches with more horizontal development (the "Sandy's Sump Extension") previously explored by DB, SV, MP and CH [*No trip report yet because they're too ashamed to admit they didn't do any sketches – Ed.*], terminating in a horrible sump, was re-rigged and partially sketched by AJ & SF. A high level bypass to the sump was found, along with approx. 150 m of additional passage which eventually choked into a nasty wet crawl and then a horrible sump not even worth attempting to dive.
- A promising side-lead with inflowing stream was only partly explored, and some others identified, half-arsedly pushed, and need to be pushed harder given their proximity to Sesame.
- The previously undescended "middle" pitch of the three we started with was descended and connected into the section dived by Dave (Constipation Sump).
- A new pitch (approx. 10 m) was discovered in rockfall under the main walkway, mid-way between the 3-way junction and the way to "Sandys Sump". This still needs to be descended - it probably connects to known passage further down.
- Survey of the lower sections was tied into the main survey back to the surface, allowing Alan to grudgingly plot Sesame and Ring Hole to show their relationship and just how close they are at the end of the "Sandys Sump Extension".

Saturday 21st November, 2015

After the usual amount of faffing we arrived at the cave via a secret Alan Jackson shortcut through thick ferns (which was subsequently lost forever the next day) and via Sesame. There was less water than usual, but still enough that we all wore rain-jackets until reaching "The Cloakroom". Brian, thus having been initiated to Ring Hole, was suitably impressed.

With sherpas Pax and Craig "Dropbear" Howell having bailed at the last minute, getting two sets of dive gear into the cave had been deemed too optimistic. Actually even with one set of dive gear and a bunch of rigging stuff, optimism apparently prevailed and we awkwardly lumped eight fully-stuffed packs between six people through the long squeezy section to arrive at the 3-way junction and regroup.

Here the group split, with the dive team of AK, DB, SV and BH heading down to Constipation Sump so Dave could have a dive. The open round tunnel reported by Andreas was found by Dave to be a horrendous silty nightmare. Dave reported the tunnel sloping down, meaning that the visibility was destroyed almost instantly and he didn't see much for the whole dive. He spent a good 45 min doing a braille inspection of everything and got to a depth of 10 m down a crack, but generally reported the prospects as being low. Flow was reported as "not much". Meanwhile Andreas did something to do with rigging, and then they all had a wonderful time climbing up about 150 m of pitches with dive gear and de-rigging as they went.

Meanwhile, Alan and I were making slightly heavy weather trying to find and make sense of the rigging of the pitches (which had conveniently been derigged) down to "Sandys Sump" and there was much conjecture and swearing. Some minor issues I had with bolting need not be mentioned other than to comment that I didn't realise Alan could be so tolerant (well you did say the *Spiel* would be heavily focussed on character assassination). [*The name 'Precision Engineering' has been assigned to this pitch – Ed.*] Our goal: to finish the survey and do better sketches on the way out.

We eventually made it down the series of pitches, including a particularly sharp and horrible squeeze with water dripping right on the back of your neck, and followed the small stream down until reaching the sump. Well, I guess I've seen a few sumps and this one was bloody awful, even to get close enough to look at it. The GroPro was found to have a flat battery after all that so I couldn't even get a photo to show Sandy just how crap it was. So all we had to do was survey and sketch back and we could help the others carry the dive gear out.

Maybe 30 m back from the sump where there was standing room, there was obviously some high level stuff going on, so while Alan made some preliminary sketches, I was tasked with attempting the "Archeology Climb" - so-named, because you had to dig through thick mud to find potential foot and hand holds. After a few sphincter-clenching moments and a lot of careful contemplation the top was gained and a lovely horizontal passage ran off into obscurity.

Having yelled a few vague things to a distant Alan, I also ran off into obscurity and virgin passage, returning when the passage dropped back down to good-sized passage obviously after the previously discovered sump. Alan had tired of waiting and had made the climb also – thus followed a rather comic series of ups and downs, but eventually all the stuff left below was retrieved, and there was a rope rather than the Archeology Climb.

Back towards home the passage came into a big chamber linking with the original passage below (and this is where we put the rope in, but it was derigged at the end of the day), but the exciting bit was the sump bypass in the other direction. Sadly, soon after bypassing the sump, the ceiling came down, and after a small tight rockpile and a long horrible wet crawl, Alan pronounced the end (in the form of another horrible, too-

low, wet sumpish thing) was nigh. So we sketched and surveyed out.

One other muddy lead near the home side of Sandy's sump was half-arsedly explored and given up when the thought of sliding back down (the inclination and mud were perfect!) was more fun than pushing through a tighter squeeze.

On the way back I made a foray up an obvious rift lead with small stream flowing in, and soon emerged into a large chamber (10 m long x 3 m wide x 15 m high) with the lead still going in the same direction, and more in the upward direction (enough rock choke to climb, for now). This was not surveyed and definitely needs to be checked better next time – at this point we were running out of time and motivation.

We left the various ropes coiled at the top of the pitches so Alan could retrieve his krabs, and made reasonable time back to the 3-way junction. After a confusing conversation about what signal was to be left if one team was already heading out, the dive team had left a tank in a bag, and their SRT gear. We grabbed the tank and headed on out, getting back to the cars only 20 minutes after they did, at about 9:30 pm, with just the hint of daylight still in the sky - wow, a record I think.

Sunday 22nd November, 2015

With insufficient sleep, and Maydena pies and Coke for breakfast, Sunday morning saw everyone except Alan re-entering the cave for another go. While the rest of the crew went ahead to rig the "Middle Pitch", Andreas suggested I should check out a lead under the waterfall in The Cloakroom. Well who doesn't like hidden passages behind waterfalls, so I wiggled, squelched and cleared my way through a tight rifty squeeze until the floor dropped away and I could make a very slow and careful descent down a muddy chimney to the chamber 3 m below. I followed the water through a stooping-height passage to the end, where I was surprised to hear Dave and Sandy beyond what looked like a solid rock choke! We made a light connection and established that I should not push any rocks through.

They made a cairn and we confirmed the spot as being just past the main squeeze rift passage where it turns sharply to the right and you need to lie in an awkward flat squeeze and avoid the drips (there is a cairn there now). This can be surveyed (or not) at a later date – it's not really an easier way.

Next, a little further along, I was sternly inserted into Andreas' epic drafting lead, only to quickly discover it joined in with the next major chamber. At least that was crossed off the list.

Finally, we all reached, rigged and descended the "Middle Pitch", which lead to another, and then connected with the low flat bypass in the "Daves Sump Extension". Sandy was able to find and downclimb a bypass to the final pitch. All this was a little anticlimactic, but not altogether unexpected; these will need to be surveyed properly later.

While all this was going on, I wandered around about, finding survey stations in unlikely spots and figuring it had been checked pretty thoroughly. But then I chanced upon a hole in the floor between the 3-way junction and Middle Pitch, which quickly turned into a 10 m drop into a chamber below. It didn't look like there were any leads, except maybe on the wall I couldn't see, so this will also need to be checked next time.

Our work pretty thoroughly done [*yeah, with the obvious exception of any surveying … - Ed.*], we were glad to grab the rest of the stuff and head back to Hobart for burgers and to finish setting up the awesome rope cleaner that I'd made for the good of the cause (and in an attempt to make up for skipping the state instead of washing ropes the next day).

Heading down one of the impressive Middle pitches.

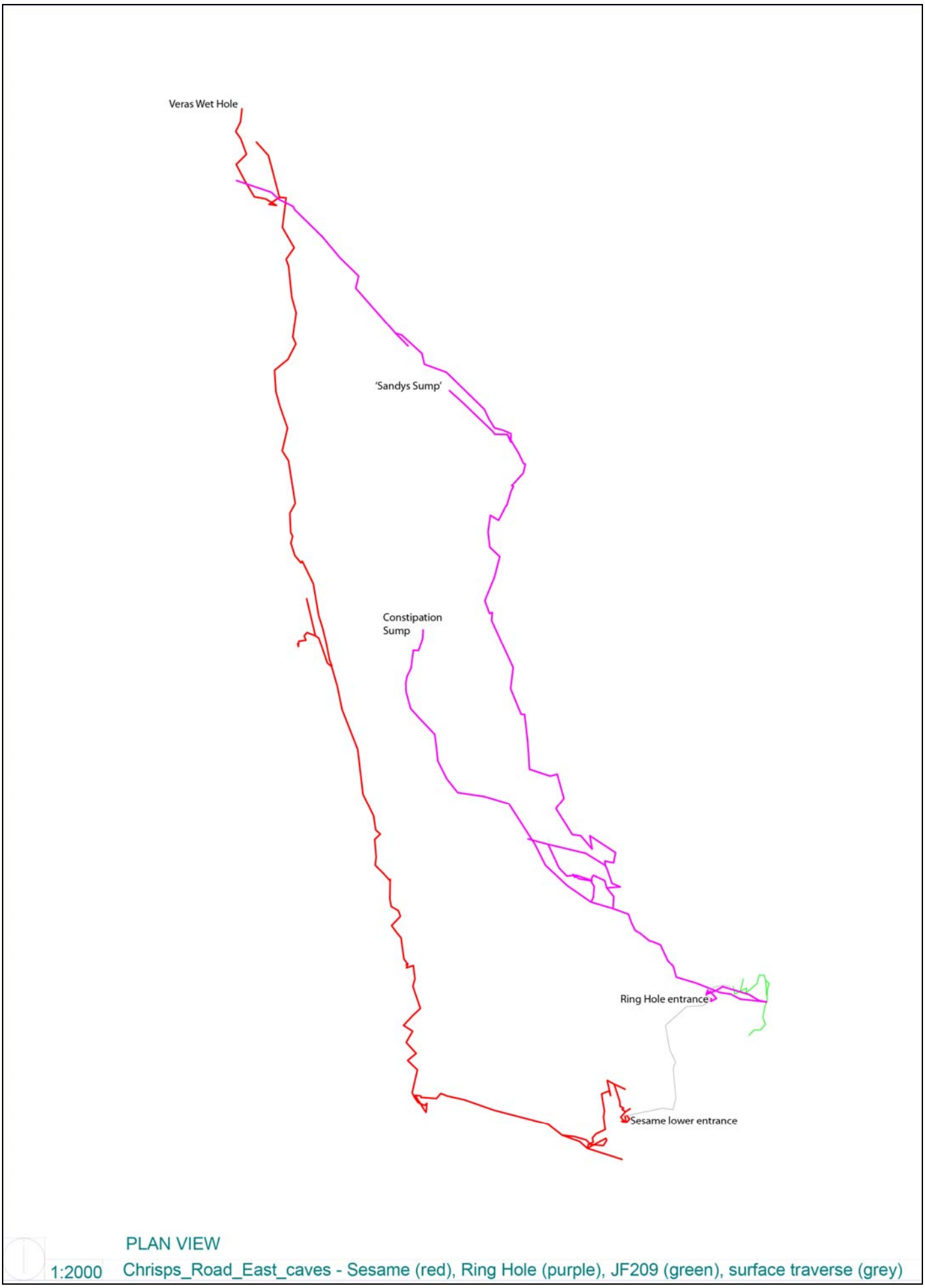
Another awesome TFM Engineering innovation about to begin a hard and dirty life.

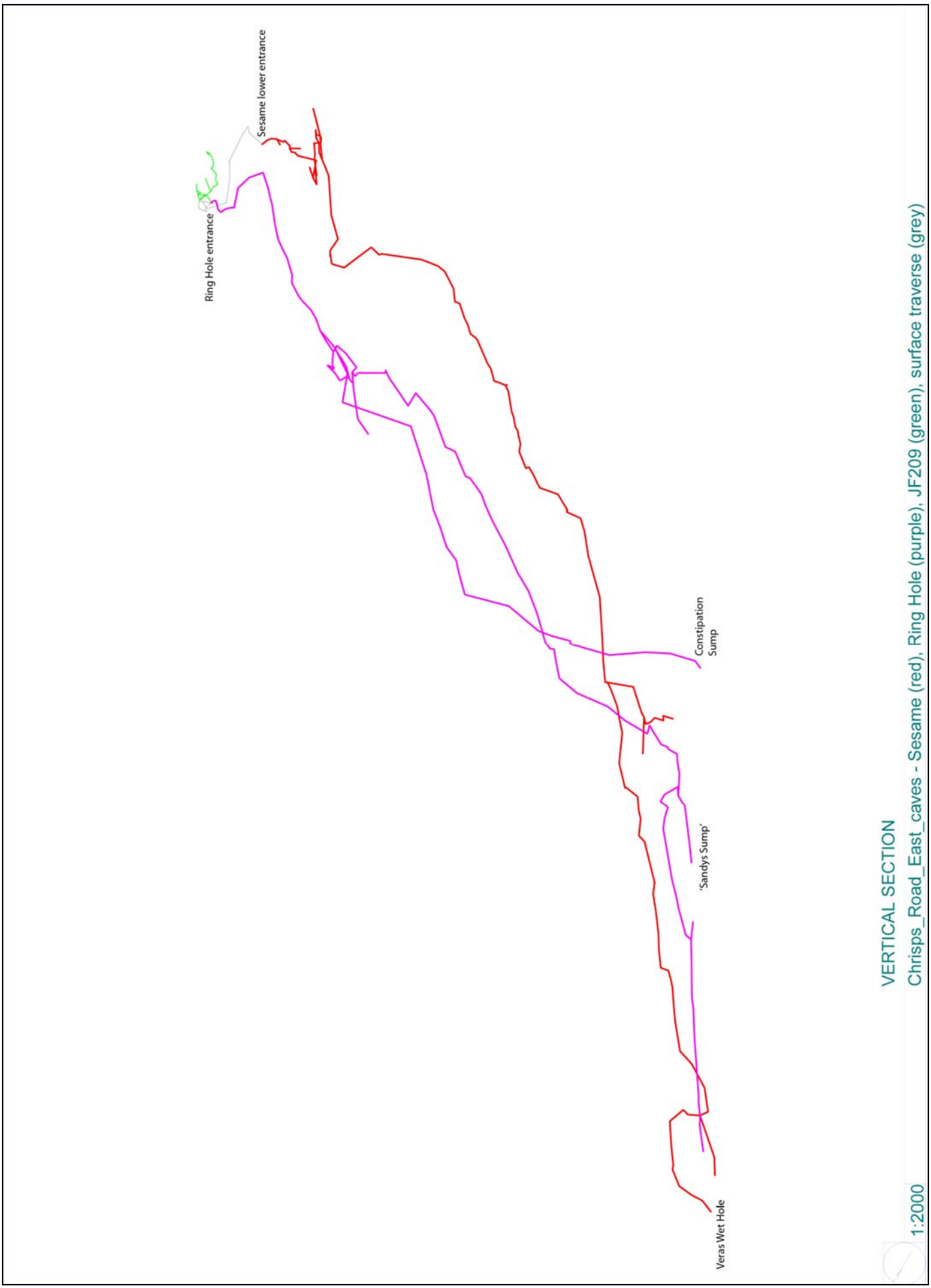
References

FORDYCE, S. 2015 JF633 Ring Hole. *Speleo Spiel* 409: 7-8

KLOCKER, A. 2015. JF633 Ring Hole –and a sump it is! *Speleo Spiel* 411: 8

[*Some dodgy line plots of Sesame, Ring Hole and JF209 are provided on the following two pages for context (and because there were two pages that really needed populating) – Ed.*]


Veras Wet Hole
'Sandys Sump'
Constipation
Sump
Ring Hole entrance
Sesame lower entrance
PLAN VIEW
1:2000
Chrisps_Road_East_caves - Sesame (red), Ring Hole (purple), JF209 (green), surface traverse (grey)


Ring Hole entrance
Sesame lower entrance
Constipation Sump
'Sandys Sump'
Veras Wet Hole
VERTICAL SECTION
Chrisps_Road_East_caves - Sesame (red), Ring Hole (purple), JF209 (green), surface traverse (grey)
1:2000

JF4 Khazad-Dum

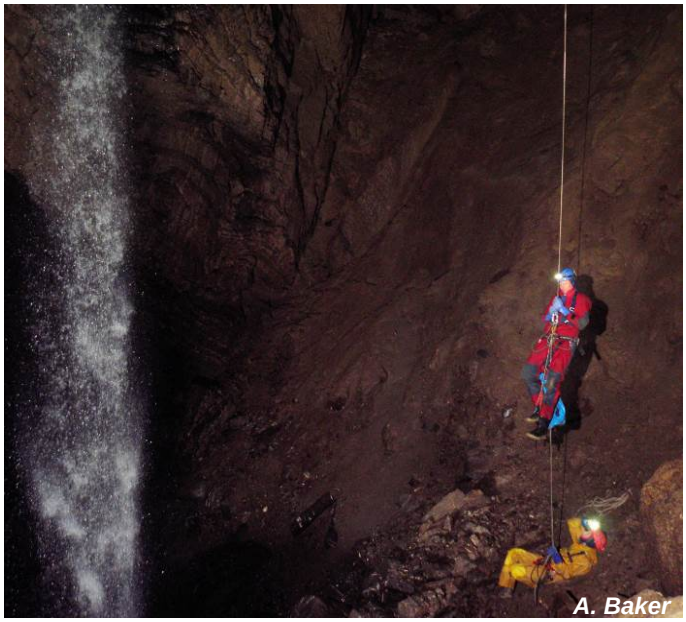
Alan Jackson

1 December 2015

Party: Andrew Baker, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Andrew Perry

The NSW Cave Rescue lads were down in force having a week of jollies before the rescue practice session in KD on the 5th. Some went to Niggly while the A-team (effectively three Andrews and an Alan) bottomed KD.

Despite being the first day of summer, it had rained a lot during the night. The stream was up. Everyone got very wet. We left the cave rigged to the rock-pile below the 'Dry 90 footer' for the rescue exercise and went home again.



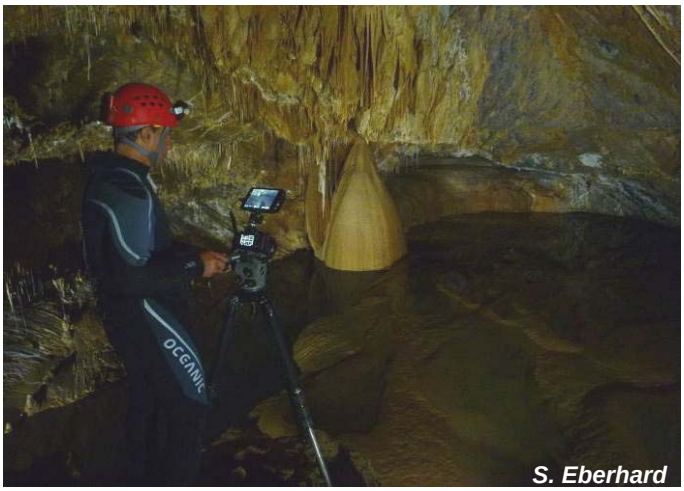
Andrew Perry makes a start up the last pitch beside the waterfall.

Other Exciting Stuff

Bookend Trust Sixteen Legs Filming Project Update

Stefan Eberhard

Over the past eight months a score or so of filming trips for the Bookend Trust have been undertaken to caves at Ida Bay, Junee-Florentine and Mole Creek, including: Exit, Mystery Creek, Bradley Chesterman, Wolf Hole, Growling Swallet, Junee, Kubla Khan, Genghis Khan, Croesus and Sassafras Caves. The filming trips, coordinated by Stefan with cameraman Joe Shemesh (Stormfront Film), have captured some unique and very spectacular high definition footage of caves, cave fauna and cavers in action. The filming project has received terrific help with gear transport and acting from STC and NC members, especially Serena Benjamin, David Butler, Ric Tunney and Janine McKinnon. Doug Thost captured some great drone footage of cavers descending into Growling Swallet. The Parks and Wildlife Service have been very supportive of this Bookend Trust project, including authorising the filming in restricted access caves and assisting with accommodation, equipment and in-cave help.



Joe Shemesh filming in Croesus Cave.

The most recent filming efforts have focused on Mole Creek and the big lighting challenge of filming the massive chambers in Kubla Khan. This challenge has only been made feasible by using LED lights and a Sony Alpha 7s camera with a remarkably wide ISO Sensitivity up to 409,600! The relatively lightweight and portable gear configuration means that everything for a day's filming can be carried by a small caving party of three to six people, depending on the cave and the number of lights needed. Our first attempt at filming the mighty Xanadu chamber, some 300 metres long and 50 metres wide, dynamically revealed a team of cavers traversing the full length of the chamber and dwarfed beneath the Khan and Begum formations. We are still working on refining this stupendous big shot for the big screen and plan a return trip in January or February. Additional locations we hope to film over the next two months include Devils Pot and For Your Eyes Only in Junee Cave. Other locations on the wish list include Cauldron Pot and Growling Swallet. Anyone keen to assist in this very exciting project please email: stefan@subterraneanecology.com.au

Joe Shemesh filming cave fauna in Sassafras Cave.

2015 Search and Rescue Exercise

Alan Jackson

Phase 1 – 28-29 November 2015

Participants: Ben Armstrong, Yoav Bar-Ness, Serena Benjamin, Mike Brewers (NZ ring-in), Zach Brown, Stephen Bunton, Rod Burton (NSW Cave Rescue), David Butler (NC), Patrick Eberhard, Stefan Eberhard, Sarah Gilbert, Alan Jackson, Stephen Jacobs (NC), Andreas Klocker, Janice March (NC), Al Warild (NSW Cave Rescue)

Andreas and Al had conspired again and organised a refresher for the skills we learnt in October 2014. For the sake of any newbies (and the old hands with memory loss) we started with a basics session on Saturday followed by a 'move the patient around the cliff face' on Sunday at Freuhauf, South Hobart. The memory loss was not as widespread as it first seemed, with few complications and rapid (for a rescue) set up and travel time. We were ready for phase two the following weekend.

Stretcher acrobatics at Freuhauf Quarry.

Phase 2 – 5-6 December

Participants: Andrew Baker (NSW Cave Rescue), David Bardi, Serena Benjamin, Mike Brewers (NZ ring-in), Stephen Bunton, Rod Burton (NSW Cave Rescue), Stefan Eberhard, Sarah Gilbert, Dan Haley, Alan Jackson, Stephen Jacobs (NC), Andreas Klocker, Janice March (NC), Andrew Perry (NSW Cave Rescue), Sandy Varin, Al Warild (NSW Cave Rescue)

The top section of KD was chosen for the in-cave exercise, since it is robust, dry, securely bolted and provided a range of tricky obstacles. Doubting our abilities, we chose to only go as far as the bottom of the rockpile after the Dry 90 Footer pitch. Team One was charged with transiting the patient from the start point to the top of the big pitch; Team Two got from there to the top of the scramble climb up before the big pitch; Team Three got from there to the other side of the scramble down (over the drops to the 'Wet Way'); Team Four got the small climb below the Flattener, through the Flattener and the 18 m pitch/spiral staircase climb/traverse/thingy to the base of the four metre pitch. We had figured getting from there out to the entrance was not going to be achievable in the time we had.

KD carpark pre-exercise briefing – lots of crossed harms …

The usual shenanigans of sorting out teams and gear started at 9:30ish and was as mildly chaotic as one would expect. Team One was venturing underground by 11:30, closely followed by everyone else. Assessing obstacles and hatching a plan progressed into fighting over drills and other precious resources. Al then calmly pointed out all the stuff we'd overlooked and improvements were made. Miraculously, the stretcher was loaded (with the unlucky Dan) and ready to roll just after 3 pm. The first three legs went beautifully and Dan was out of the stretcher enjoying a late lunch at 4 pm. Sandy was then strapped in for the next few legs. There were a few operator errors on this section which caused annoying delays but an hour and a half later the stretcher was at the bottom of the four metre pitch. It had taken several hours less than we'd anticipated, so we were all very proud of ourselves, but not enough to decide to tack a few more legs on to the end of the day. We packed up and headed out.

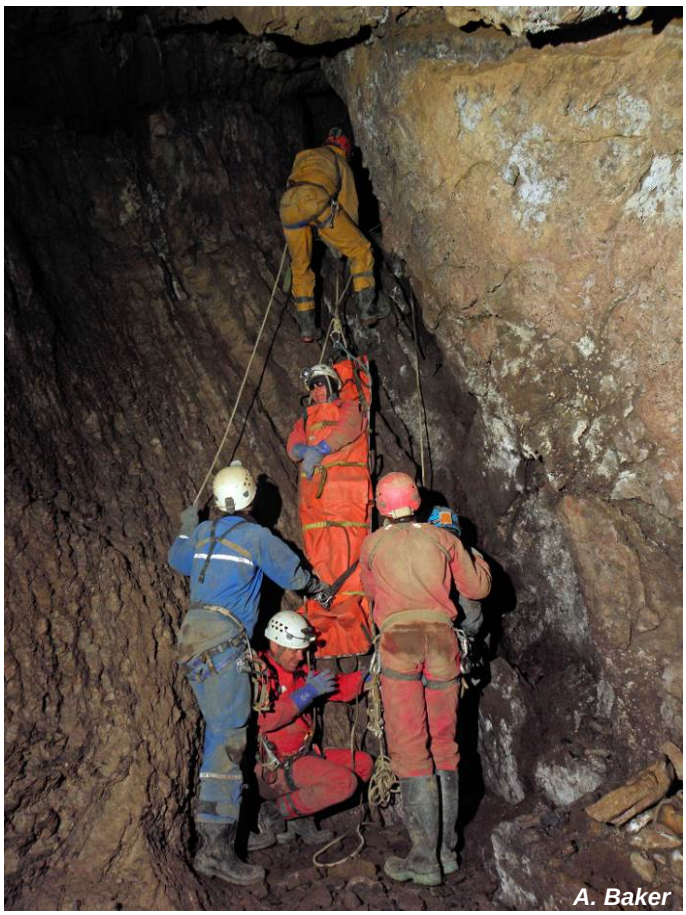
Sunday was a gear sort and washing party at Andreas' house.

So, what did we learn?

- The techniques are simple, work well and are brilliant – everyone has great confidence that we might actually get someone out if the situation ever arises (though not necessary alive).

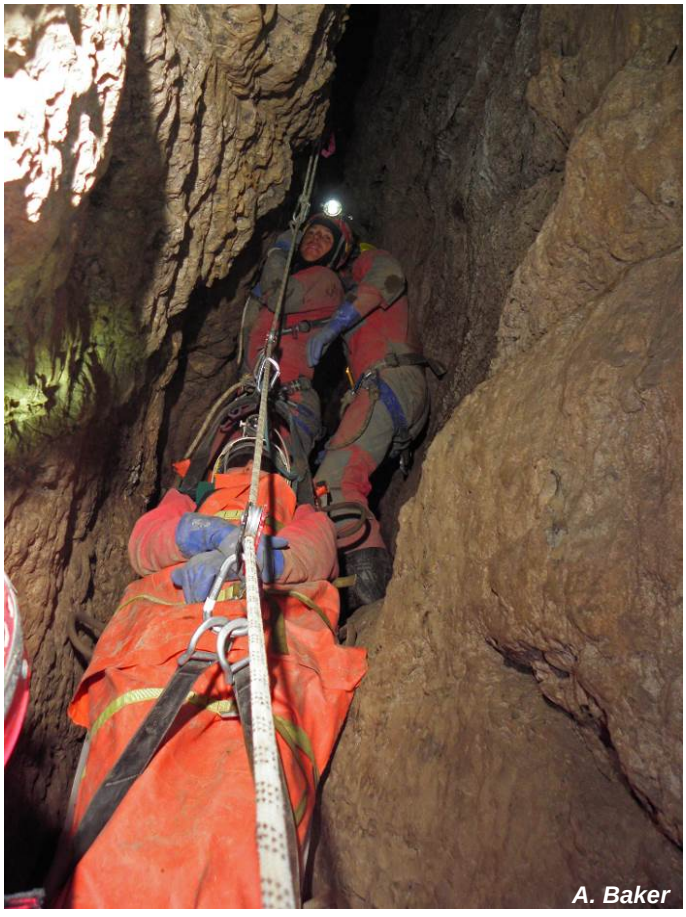
- Relatively simple obstacles (climbs, traverses, 'steps across') are major obstacles to a stretcher and require protection for both the patient and the rescuers (and KD has lots).
- Work out where you think you should put your tyroleans and then place the anchors two metres higher than you first planned.
- We're getting better and faster at it.
- If Sandy is the patient, ensure her arms are secure inside the stretcher so she can't pick-pocket you as she goes past.
- No matter how frustrating it is for the counterweight or haul team waiting while the controller stuffs up the transfer, don't go flat out to make up for lost time when the 'up' call is finally given. SLOW DOWN!
- Al Warild and his NSW minions are dead set legends for coming all this way to help us hone our skills.

Thanks to the NSW lads, our token Kiwi visitor (who loves cave rescues so much he regularly injures himself underground just to be involved in one) for coming over the ditch, Tas Police for lending us some extra (big!) pulleys, all the locals and semi-locals who sacrificed much weekend time to be involved, Andreas for facilitating it all and Al Warild for all his time, effort, expertise, patience and wit. To those that didn't come along: I hope you don't ever need rescuing.



Patient Sandy about to have a close encounter of the fourth kind with Bunty's crutch on the shitty traverse-cum-spiral staircase climb/pitch thingy.

More ropes than the Dry 90 pitch has ever seen before.



Brute Austrian strength propels the patient across the traverse.

Caves and arch at Mars Bluff, Bruny Island

Greg Middleton

ACCESS AND SURVEY

A couple of years ago, on a walk to Cape Queen Elizabeth on Bruny Island, I came across a great arch on the beach at Mars Bluff. It was totally unexpected as I had never seen a picture of it or read about it. To add to the interest, further round the bluff was a high cliff with a short but high tunnel running through the outcrop.

Of course I didn't have my survey gear with me at the time but I resolved to return and survey these interesting features at a later time.

The opportunity arose on 19 September 2014 when I returned to Bruny Island with Ros Skinner – and my survey gear. We walked out to Mars Bluff on the Cape Elizabeth track (see locations on Fig. 1).

The tide was moderately high when we arrived at the beach. With a little difficulty we managed to get around the outcrop to the location of the tunnel (Photo 1), which we surveyed (Fig. 2), together with the small sea cave adjacent, but we could not safely get further round to the arch. We back-tracked and took the inland track over the bluff and down to Miles Beach on the eastern side. At the western end of the beach we were readily able to get access to the arch (Photo 2), though the wind coming off the sea whipped up the sand and made conditions very uncomfortable. On completing the survey (Fig. 3) we retreated to some shelter for lunch and then walked back to the car park.

GEOLOGY & GEOMORPHOLOGY

The geology of this small area is quite complex and mixed (Fig. 4). Most of the bluff is in an isolated pocket of Permian Minnie Point Formation, a variable fossiliferous marine siltstone and sandstone which is strongly, and almost horizontally, bedded, as shown in Photo 1. While it's common for sea caves to be cut approximately at right angles to clifflines, usually following joints or faults, the tunnel and cave at Mars Bluff run parallel to the principal cliffline, though no doubt following joints. The tunnel is a metre or so above present sea level so presumably relates to an older one, though present levels could probably reach it during storms.

Not far to the east, the Mars Arch couldn't be much different. It's formed from Jurassic Dolerite, fingers of which have obviously intruded the older Permian sediments. The dolerite is completely exposed to present sea conditions but the arch doesn't look as though it's likely to collapse any time soon.

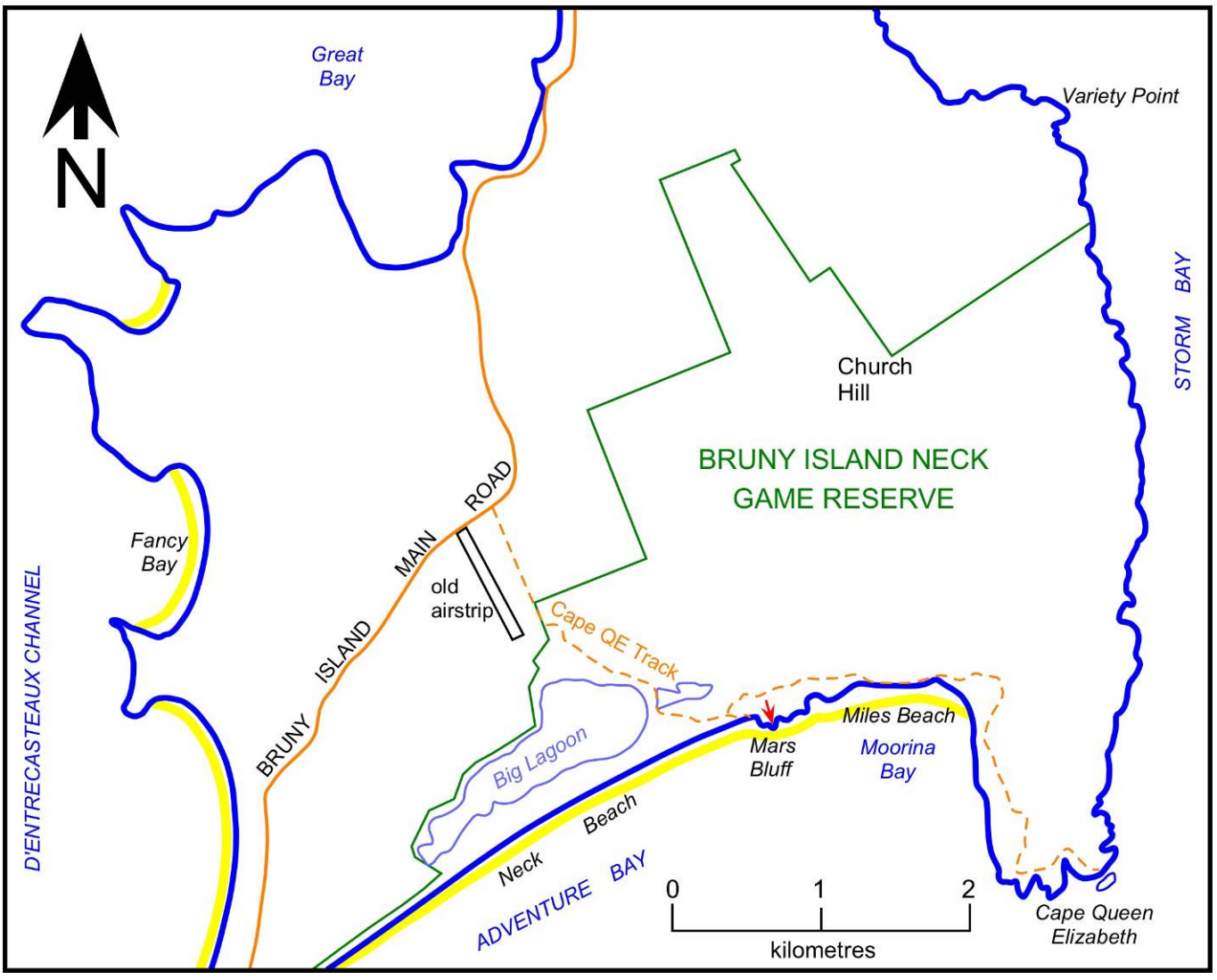


Fig. 1. Showing location of Mars Bluff on Adventure Bay, between Neck and Miles beaches, west of Cape Queen Elizabeth, Bruny Island

Photo 1. (above) Ros Skinner at southern end of Mars Tunnel

POPULARITY

Although the arch doesn't seem to have been given a name (I've called it Mars Arch because of its association with the adjacent bluff) it is obviously recognised and appreciated by many visitors. It is one of the most distinctive and photogenic rock arches that I know. Photos of it figure on many websites, e.g.

Getty images by Andrew Blain: http://www.gettyimages.lu/detail/photo/mars-bluff-bruny-island-high-res-stock-photography/556601597 (both the arch and tunnel are featured)

pintrest.com: https://www.pinterest.com/clydiemae/nature-caves-arches-1/ (an international collection of caves and arches, with the Mars Bluff one sitting among Rainbow Arch in Arizona, Fingal Cave in Scotland and Rakov Škocjan in Slovenia!)

A picture of the arch appears in David Leaman's article in "Leatherwood on Line", 'A rock and a hard place', but it is simply captioned 'Mars Bluff' and not mentioned in the text. http://www.leatherwoodonline.com/history/2005/leaman/index2.htm (The picture is from his earlier book "Walk into history in Southern Tasmania" (1999) where the "fine sea cave and arch in dolerite" are mentioned in the text (p. 82).)

The arch features in "21 reasons to visit Bruny Island": http://www.brunyislandlongweekend.com.au/2015/06/06/21-reasons-to-visit-bruny-island/ a blog hosted by a company called The Bruny Island Longweekend

The arch features (as "archway below Mars Bluff") in a description of the Cape Queen Elizabeth track on "TasTrails": http://tastrails.com/cape-queen-elizabeth/

Qantas (Magazine), No. 269, November 2015, even featured a photo of Mars Arch in a list of "95 Experiences" – "95 exciting, fun, romantic, delicious and family-friendly Australian experiences you probably haven't heard about", one of which was the walk to Cape Queen Elizabeth. [see p.4]

Photo 2. (below) Ros under Mars Arch, Adventure Bay

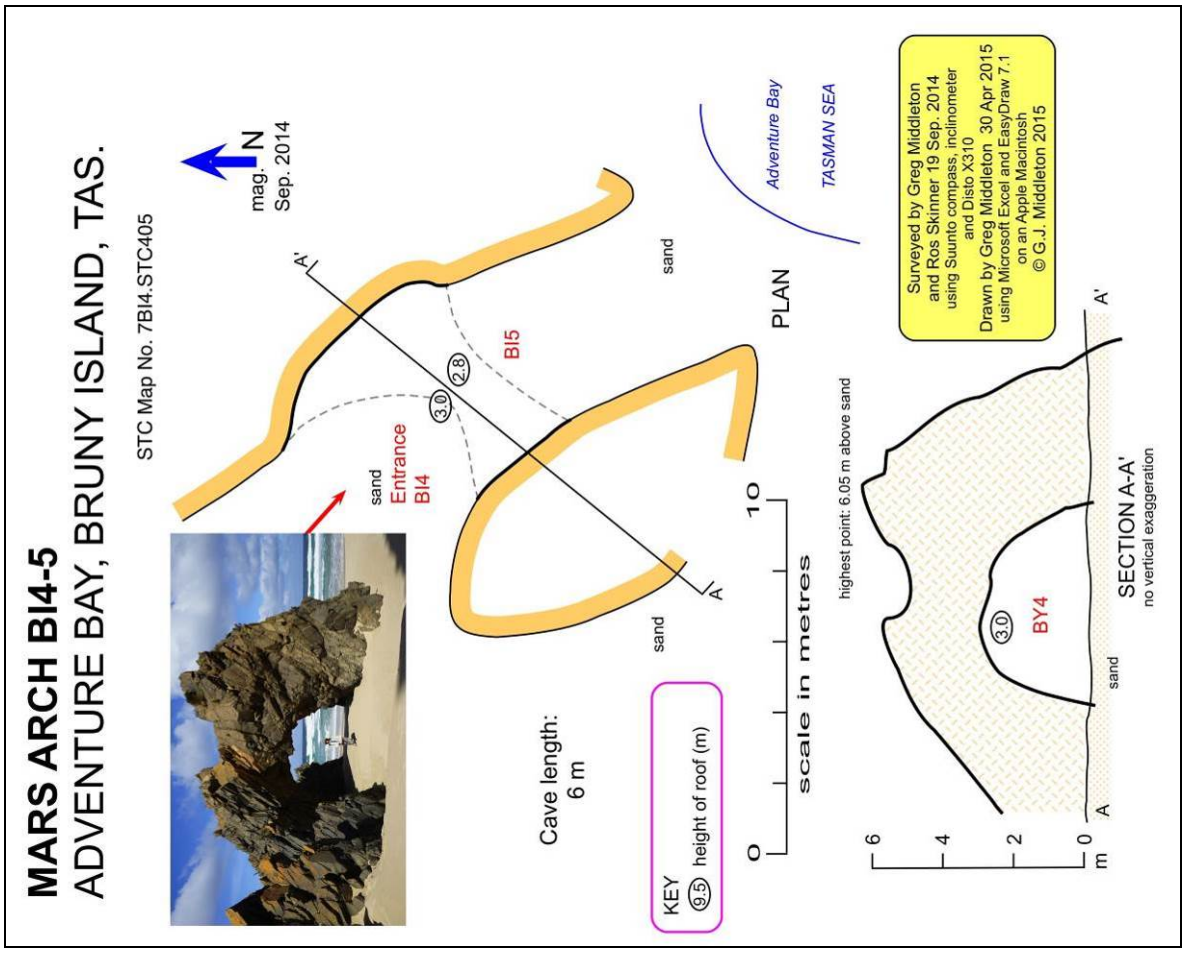


Fig. 3. Plan and section, Mars Arch, Adventure Bay, Bruny Island

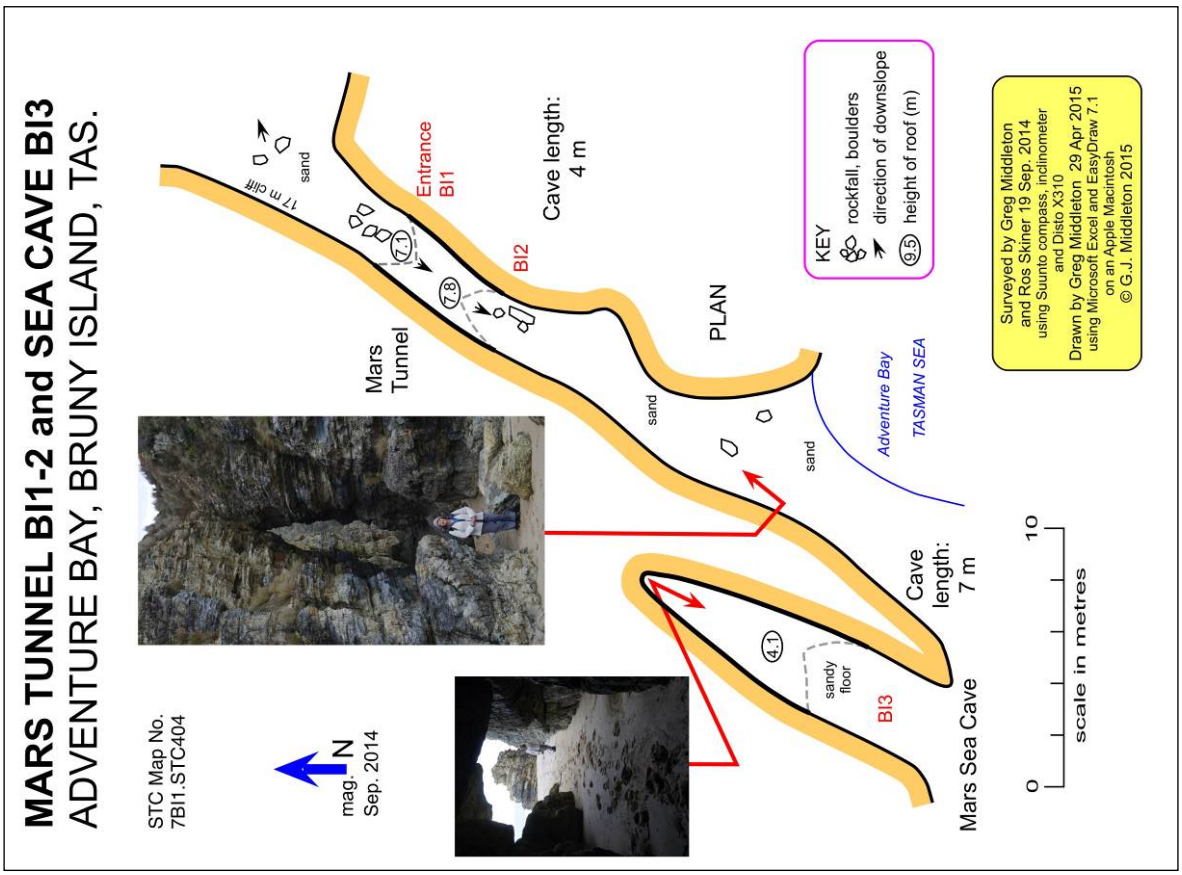


Fig. 2. Plan of Mars Tunnel and Sea Cave, Adventure Bay.

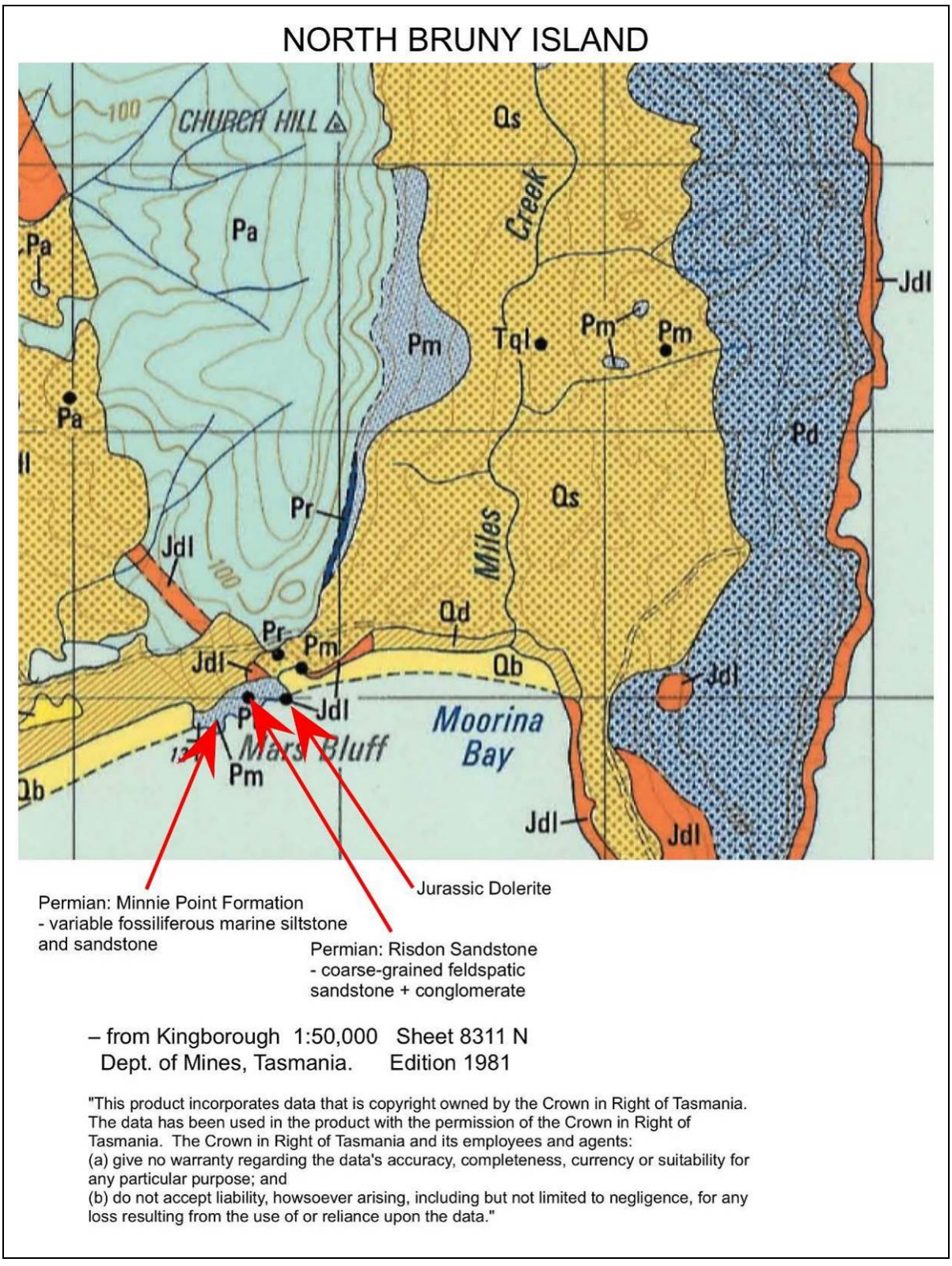


Fig. 4. Geology of Mars Bluff vicinity – from 1981 1:50,000 Kingborough map.

Wonderstruck – treasuring Tasmania's caves and karst by Nic Haygarth

Stephen Bunton

This is a really interesting and enthralling book. Given that some books sit on my bedside table for months, I really powered through this one. *Wonderstruck* is a completely different book to that which I imagined as "Nic Haygarth's history of caving in Tasmania." Whilst incorporating a very comprehensive history of Tasmanian caves it looks at the subject from a non-caver's perspective.

Nic is a consummate historian and author of many books that have brought to life the stories of Tasmanians who otherwise would have faded into the obscurity of time. He is a great researcher and also an excellent writer who makes many references to the classics and to dates of historical interest. Nic is also one of the few people who would have a mental picture of the ever changing multi-dimensional labyrinth of cave depths, the area of mining leases, recreational and cave reserves and the tempo of the times.

The book deals with context. The exploration of Tasmanian caves is set against the attitudes of the era and therefore it has to deal with the Victorian age of exploration and exploitation, the mass tourism and herd mentality of the day ... 400 people in Wet Cave at once! The ongoing mining and forestry (tree mining) activities and governments that pander to the red-neck attitudes of the Tasmanian public ... that still endures to this day.

Yes, this book is different because it is about "treasuring Tasmania's caves and karst".

The heroes of the book are the people who bought acreages around cave entrances and those who acted as cave guides and managers. The villains are the exploitive industries and complacent governments. Nic praises the bureaucrats with some vision of conservation and particularly those that worked within government departments. I am glad that the various publications like *The Forest Practices Code* and the *Sinkhole Manual* are mentioned.

What isn't mentioned, however, is the secretive and selfish nature of the manner in which they conduct their explorations. I fail to see how exploration of caves is more virtuous if it is undertaken by a government official than a member of the public like myself. The subsequent difference is that I publish my findings in the *Spiel* whereas their exploits are recorded in some governmental official secrets file. Nic admits that he didn't have time nor space to delve too deeply into cave politics and this is good.

In a treatise about treasuring caves and karst there is a disproportionate emphasis on things like the magnesite karst of the northwest. This was topical at the time Nic was penning the last chapters of the book; he stopped writing about new stuff about four years ago. Both the karst and this bit of writing is pretty uninspiring really, yet there is no doubt this area should be preserved for its uniqueness. The book adequately makes the point that the conservation impetus in Australia is mostly seen from the point of view of biodiversity rather than geodiversity, which is rarely considered. Whilst Australians do value cute little creatures they are more inspired by landscape.

Most of our national parks preserve stunning landscape and have lookouts to showcase it. Caves are hidden and therefore harder to appreciate but universally tourists visit show caves ... then treasure them.

So how do I treasure caves and karst? Because Nic is looking at this subject from a historian's viewpoint, one outside the caving fraternity, this book made me rather introspective. I love going caving and try hard to protect the caves I visit, although some of my practices are more than a bit dubious. We justify exploring, surveying, drawing maps and "finishing off the cave properly" as being good for conservation but I haven't really been involved in any significant cave conservation issue. When a new cave is discovered I can't resist the urge to have a look for myself. I do however have some restraint. I haven't yet been to Shooting Star. In fact when I first went to Kubla Khan I thought "I have seen it now. I don't have to go again". However, I have been back a dozen times. Not as many times as Dave Wools-Cobb who gets a one-line mention for all his cleaning exploits. I guess caving for conservation is like fighting for peace or fucking for virginity!

I am glad that Nic records Trevor Wailes as saying that "we are a sporting club" and Alan Jackson's go-hard mentality. It is interesting that Jeff Butt never made it to print. His contribution was so small compared to the Eberhards, Trevor and Alan. (ASF really fucked it up with that not giving him a posthumous Edie Smith Award because that might have created a precedent – actually it created another weirder one!)

One of the great strengths of this book is the choice of photos, especially the old ones.

It was good to see a nice photo of Edie Smith.

Alan Jackson's drafting of the maps is great although some are traced from other sources that aren't acknowledged. They have a consistent, quirky style (they are unsmoothed) but they convey the required information adequately and yet still hide all that sensitive location data. I won't elaborate on this and don't get me started on ASF and ACKMA. Both get brief mentions but they seem to be mostly missing in action in this book. I could write a thesis about this too but it does emphasise yet again the book is about Tasmanian history and not really about cavers.

To some extent I also see myself as somewhat of a historian. I am very keen to write trip reports to record our exploits. Occasionally I try to put our endeavours in some sort of perspective but it is still from the narrow focus of where we shone our lights. I just don't think a book by cavers about cave-exploration would have had the universal appeal of this publication, and therefore its sales would have been limited to a few hundred. I hope Nic sells more than that! For me though the book does not really sell the excitement of caving or the more exciting cave exploration. It's a bit too matter of fact to really capture the mood of running down a virgin passage, pushing a tight squeeze or dropping a rock down an undescended pitch.

After pre-sales at the ASF CaveMania Conference in January 2005, where publication seemed imminent, it then looked as though the project was nearly dead in the water. I blamed Arthur's reverse Midas touch, where every golden idea is reduced to base metal. Nic assured me that was not the case and that Arthur more than anybody invested the time to inculturate him into the ways of speleology. I am grateful therefore for Arthur's contribution and that he is duly recognised for this.

In the acknowledgements there is also a list of the names of the people who bought the book pre-publication. This was a really nice touch.

You can tell this book was a labour of love because unfortunately, Tasmania's best historian is also its least celebrated and possibly poorest. I wouldn't want to eke out an existence on the sale of such obscure titles but I am so glad that Nic Haygarth does! Thanks Nic for a great book.

The VRA Cave Rescue heroes monitor a death-by-tyrolean situation at Freuhauf Quarry during the 2015 SAR exercise warm up