# Speleo Spiel 414

May - June 2016

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

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**Front Cover:** Guy, Erin, Emilia, Ana and Ben in Mystery Creek Cave. Photo by Petr Smejkal

***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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*Newsletter of the*
***Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated***
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## Issue No. 414, May - Jun. 2016


## CONTENTS

## Editorial

After successfully managing to produce one *Spiel*, I feel confident that they should appear regularly from now on. It's been a bit of a steep learning curve with all the little things that can go wrong, both on your own computer and when you send stuff from one person to another electronically. Where the hell do these cybergremlins live and why do they eat carriage returns and frig around with your formatting?

My only whinge is that if you want to send me photos to illustrate a trip, send me a few good ones. Don't put 200 hopeless ones into a Dropbox and expect me to look at them without swearing. Best I don't know you can't work a camera!

The last *Spiel* was easy with much of it taken up with the Office Bearers' Reports. I'm glad I held over some stuff for this edition notably Greg's report on Mt Wright Arch. Petr seems to be leading the activity stakes, especially training beginners but there is a gripping account of Janine's cave diving exploits. *Stephen Bunton*

## Stuff 'n Stuff

**WONDERSTRUCK CORRECTION**

On p. 183 of my book *Wonderstruck*, I describe Diana Davies as 'non-caving', when in fact she was an active caver and an office-bearer for many years in the Tasmanian Caverneering Club. I apologise to Diana for this error and I encourage people who have bought the book to make the correction.
*Nic Haygarth*.

**Another Apology**

The Editor missed Albert Goede and Ron Mann off the membership list published with the last *Spiel*. He'll circulate a new list sometime soon.

**100 years of National Parks.**

The Centenary of National Parks in Tasmania was officially celebrated at Mt Field on 23 April with an event incorporating the annual Fagus Festival. Community groups were invited to attend and this included the skiers and us cavers. Yoav did the liaison and along with Sarah, Serena and myself who attended, we pulled off a pretty good day's public relations. Three and a half thousand people turned out, twice what was expected. Not all of them visited our stall but of those who did quite a few admitted to having been caving, most speaking about it very much in the past tense, including Matt Cracknell! Quite a few kiddies thought it would be "Kool". A few wives suggested it to their spouses as "Something you could take up, love!?" which was a bit disturbing considering the advanced age of quite a number of them! We had the usual ones who were revolted by mud, spiders and bats but generally we involved all of them in some sort of interesting chatter. A number of people had been caving on the mainland, in the UK and the US before settling in Tasmania. A few people knew John Webb at Norske Skog, some knew Max Jefferies and spoke ever so highly of him.

Andrew Hughes of Bookend Trust turned up and talked about this year's expedition, which is thankfully, not cave-related. Someone admitted to riding trial bikes with Ken Hosking.

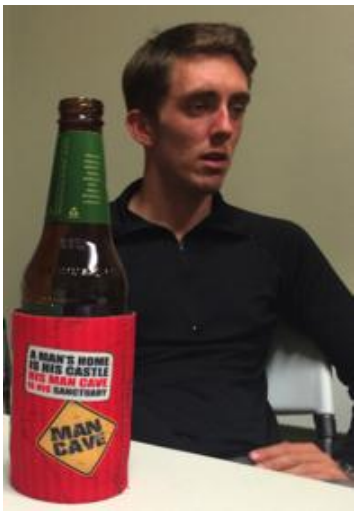
The highlight of the day was meeting Sally Salier who was present with the Wildcare group. She introduced herself as the

***PR person Sarah Gilbert with Sally Salier at Mt Field.***
**Serena Benjamin.**

Sally of Sallys Folly in Kubla Khan and she recounted the exploration of that section of the cave once the flowstone wall was climbed. Someone mentioned that they had been 100 m down a cave at "the cornice" – the snowdrift that forms above the Golden Stairs above the Lake Dobson carpark - but this is bullshit because it's all featureless dolerite. Thanks must go to NPWS who supplied a nice banner and the Bookend Trust / Sixteen Legs Project who supplied us with a nice poster, both of which were conversation starters and are now a part of the accumulated STC paraphernalia. Should we ever decide to do PR again these are now in the gear store. *Stephen Bunton*

**Strange Sub-culture.**

This club meets at the Civic Club on the same night as a few other clubs with equally strange interests. Besides observing how other enthusiasts meet, the stubby holders provide a rare insight into aspects of life above ground. At the April meeting Grant Rees managed to score a most appropriate one.




**Stephen Bunton**

# Trip Reports

## The Slip Area, Wherretts Lookout

***Alan Jackson***

**18 October 2014**

**Party:** Stephen Bunton, Alan Jackson, Benjamin Jackson, Michael Packer

Don't adjust your sets – the trip date is correct.

I've been sitting on this trip report for nigh on two years as I was under the illusion that I'd pull my finger out and finish what we started that day, which in itself was an attempt to finish what Andreas started in January 2014, which was in turn something TCC started decades ago. Having just spent some time trying to work out what the state of play is with recent JF number tagging I decided I'd better get this published to avoid confusing people in the event my plane falls out of the sky into the Mediterranean in July.

I won't go back to the really early days other than to say the area either side of the landslip on Wherretts Lookout was combed numerous times in the '70s and '80s with lots of holes found but only a few of them tagged and properly documented. Then in the '90s Rolan came along and assigned a thousand JF-Z numbers to every hole he noticed that didn't have a tag on it. In January 2014 Andreas and co blitzed the area during the infamous Klockerfest JF bonanza. Like all big caving sessions with lots of people involved inevitably the bickering over who should write which trip reports eventually fades and various things just fade into unpublished obscurity. Admittedly some aspects of this period are best forgotten, i.e. Dickon Morris. *Speleo Spiel* 400 contains all the trip reports from this period. Day 6 of Klockerfest is conspicuous by its absence and this is the day the slip Z caves were hammered. Lots of Z caves were investigated and tagged and thankfully some field notes were kept, albeit pretty shite ones. Table 1 summarises what was done that day.

I decided it all needed tidying up and that it was a suitable activity to undertake with a 2.5-year-old child strapped to my back (Loretta and Anna were overseas at the time and I was having caving withdrawal symptoms). Pax and Bunty tagged along too.

We headed up the slip, passing the Niggly turn off, continuing until we reached a bluff of limestone in the gully floor with some small holes and draughts. It was JF617. We took a photo of the tag and general surrounds, sketched it etc. and moved on. A little further up the gully was an impenetrable swallet (of the slip stream), under a massive fallen log and limestone boulder. Since this was the main sinking point of the slip stream we decided this was much more likely to be Rolan's JF-Z81 'The Slip Swallet' (Andreas *et al*. had though JF617 was Z81). We tagged it JF647 on a limestone block over the top of the sinking point. Bunty, in typical fashion, managed to put the tag upside down. *(So that it can be read by old people, with bad knees, just bending over and not having to get down to it at eye-level. Editor)*

Further upstream, in the vicinity of a small waterfall over limestone, we followed the GPS and headed onto the northern flank of the stream to locate JF621. Photos and flagging tape etc. ensued. We then continued up to the contact and located JF620, JF619 and JF618 and became thoroughly confused about assignation of JF-Z numbers to these features. Bunty checked out JF619 and sketched it and Pax did the same for JF618.

To the east (north?) we stumbled across JF263 (a relic from the good old days) and photographed the tag location. Twenty metres or so east of JF263 we located a 9 m deep narrow slot. We dug it open a bit and shuddered at the idea of descending it (very tight). Ben was pretty excited so we let him drill and hammer a tag in place – JF648. Bunty also sketched this "cave". Not much further along we arrived at JF622, its very Tolkienesque entrance with a large myrtle draped over the top *(precipitated the name Lordoftheringshole. Editor)* and then JF623 a tiny bit further along. Both were photographed and sketched. The heavens then opened and the thought of flogging through the forest in the pissing rain with a two-year-old on my back whinging scared the crap out of me so we abandoned the mission, heading straight down the slope till we picked up the Niggly track and headed for the road.

***Ben Jackson hammering away at the entrance to JF-648.***
**Alan Jackson.**

The intention was to go back again, sort it all out once and for all and then publish a conclusive report on all things Z cave-related. Alas, it didn't happen. So here's the next best thing. At least I can rest easy at night knowing that JF617-630, JF647 and JF648 are all mentioned somewhere in the formal records now. They're all in the GPS too.

**Reference**

EUSTON, M. 2014 JF-620: Klockerfest Day 15 – Z-cave with a breeze. *Speleo Spiel* 400: 21

| **Cave Description (Klockerfest origin)** | **JF number assigned** | **Other notes** |
|---|---|---|
| Diggable; very good draught; more draughting entrances ~5 m downhill | JF617 | Suspected to be JF-Z81 [but AJ suspects otherwise – see later] |
| Choked doline; no draught; Z cave between JF263 and JF-Z40 | JF618 | |
| Boulder choke leading to choked pitch head | JF619 | Suspected to be JF-Z40 |
| Very good prospect; 3 m climb into boulder stuff, 2 m climb, go under yourself, squeeze pitch head, 4 m pitch, 1.5 wide rift, steeply sloping mud floor, 5 m pitch into medium-sized vertical-walled chamber | JF620 | This cave was returned to and surveyed (Euston 2014). No final map ever produced though. Survey data in archive. |
| Human-sized hole going into a very narrow rift; very little draught | JF621 | Field sketch made |
| Big entrance; goes nowhere | JF622 | |
| Grotty entrance | JF623 | |
| Very good prospect; drops into ongoing rift towards downhill | JF624 | Field sketch made |
| Dig if you dare! | JF625 | |
| Three connecting shafts; can climb down two of them; final 5 m needs ladder/ropes; floor is full of debris; two small holes in opposite corners that could easily be dug | JF626 | Field sketch made |
| Downclimb 4 m to small room; chokes on right but goes to rift/room on the left (9-10 m) | JF627 | |
| Decent waterfall going into very small hole; boulder choke; water pools at bottom | JF628 | |
| Biggish hole; drier than previous two; angling right; boulder floor | JF629 | |
| (Pub time!) Deep pit; good prospect; big dry hole, couldn't see bottom; boulder floor | JF630 | |

***Table 1. Summary of Klockerfest Day 6 caves investigated. The features are described (and tagged) starting at the slip and heading east, towards Niggly Cave.***

## Mt Wright Arch GH1-2, Vale of Rasselas

***Greg Middleton***

**6 January 2015**

**Party:** Greg Middleton and Kevin Kiernan

**BACKGROUND**

A few years ago, Ross Ellis, Editor of *Journal of the Sydney Speleological Society*, sent me a copy of a couple of pages from *Walkabout* magazine, 1 November 1946, which reported on a walk to Mount Wright on the western side of the Vale of Rasselas, part of the Gordon River valley. The pages of which I was given copies (pp. 37 and 38) didn't include the title of the article or the name of the author, but I've since located it in a library copy (Laird 1947). The report included a photo with the caption reproduced here (Photo 1).

The walkers, Norman Laird, Frank Lillas, John de Bavay and Douglas Steane, were welcomed to the Vale by Ernie Bond, the then well-known "recluse of Gordonvale". The report described their ascent of Mt Wright, its "stratified ridges" which the author assumed resulted from glacial action and the two arches.

Photo 1."***The tops of these mountains are especially attractive to the climber and photographer, being liberally indented with the carvings and gougings of Nature." This illustration depicts one of the two natural arches on Mt Wright. It is approximately 100 feet long by 60 feet high***." **Norman Laird.**

**VISIT, JANUARY 2015**

It took quite a few years but when I eventually asked Kevin Kiernan if he knew about the arches on Mt Wright, he said he had heard reports but never been there. One of his students had heard climbers were planning to install bolts so they could go climbing there. We decided to go on 6 January 2015. I picked Kevin up at 7 am and we drove to the end of the forestry road beyond the Florentine River where the Lake Rhona (or Vale of Rasselas) track starts. Leaving there about 9:30 we followed the relatively new track down Richea Creek to the Gordon, which we crossed on a large fallen eucalypt. We could see the mountain clearly once we broke out of the scrub along the river on the western side (Photo 2) so we followed the old Vale track a bit to the north and then struck out following clear leads to the west. It's easy going through button-grass and patches of heath until the land starts rising. Then it's generally easier walking on the exposed conglomerate slabs than in the scrub, except that the outcrops get progressively steeper, reflecting the dip of the beds (see Photo 3). The geological map (Everard 2008) shows dips from 28° to 45°. The eastern approach has a somewhat saw-tooth form; you clamber up a long steep slab, only to climb down to the next up-slope slab.

Photo 2. ***First view of Mt Wright from Lake Rhona track.***
**Kevin Kiernan.**

While the bedrock appears to be a variety of quartzite, it has pebbles in it that indicate a conglomerate. In fact, according to the latest geological map (Everard 2008) it's "Interbedded cross-bedded quartz sandstone, pebbly sandstone and siliceous well-sorted pebble conglomerate" of Late Cambrian/ Ordovician age, being a member of the Denison Group.


Photo 3. ***Google Earth image of Mt Wright, showing steeply-dipping grey conglomerate on the eastern side.***

We really had no idea where either of the arches were located on the mountain. We just assumed we'd see something as we ascended. As we approached the mountain we saw something we thought looked like an arch, well short of the summit ridge. As we had nothing else to go on that became our goal.

Because of the undulating nature of the slope there were many places where we lost sight of our objective, but eventually we got close enough to be sure we were on the right track. After quite an enervating climb, we reached the arch at 12:30 (Photo 5), went up through it and had lunch on the small ridge above it. Seen from below (Photos 6, 7) it's a massive hunk of rock.

Photo 4. ***Early view of arch (red arrow) high on Mt Wright.***
**Greg Middleton.**

After lunch we carried out a survey of the arch (Fig. 1). While the Disto™ is great for surveying underground, in bright sunshine it is at a considerable disadvantage. Determining exactly where the point is on a well-lit rockface can be very difficult – still, probably quicker and more accurate than a tape (and lighter to carry).

Photo 5. ***Mt Wright Arch from immediately downslope***.
**Greg Middleton.**

Looking at the buttresses from underneath (Photo 8), it's difficult to see what's stopping the huge mass of rock from just sliding off down the steep dip slope, which at that point is right on 30°.

One's overall impression was of a massive and well-proportioned arch, though in a rather unlikely location. It is interesting, if pointless, to speculate whether it's end will come by structural failure or slippage. Not knowing where the other reported arch was, and satisfied that we had achieved our objective for the day, we returned approximately the way we had come – if somewhat quicker. We were back at the car by 16:30. The second arch would have to await another occasion.

Photo 6. ***Mt Wright Arch from underneath is a massive, almost square slab of conglomerate.*** **Greg Middleton.**

Photo 7. ***Underside, from northern end.*** **Greg Middleton.**

Seen from above, it's a somewhat unlikely, irregular span. (Photo 8)

Photo 8. ***Mt Wright Arch from higher up the slope.***
**Greg Middleton.**

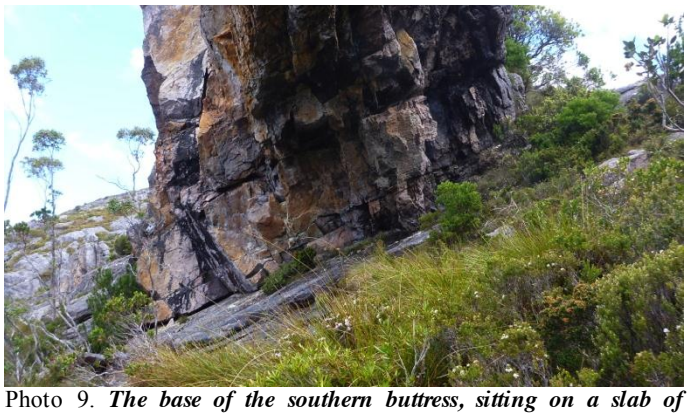


Photo 9. ***The base of the southern buttress, sitting on a slab of steeply dipping rock, looks ready to slide off. The northern buttress is similar only anchored to a rather bigger mass of rock.***
**Greg Middleton.**

**OTHER REPORTS**

The www carries few first-hand reports about visits to Mt Wright, probably indicating it is not one of Tassie's most favourite peaks.

Bushwalker and mountaineer Keith Lancaster, in his report "With the hermit of Gordon Vale" (Lancaster 1947) wrote of a trip into the Vale of Rasselas around Christmas 1947. After enjoying Ernie Bond's hospitality at Gordon Vale, Lancaster diverted on his return walk, to climb Mt Wright. Having attained the high northern point (3370 feet or 1027 m) he continued: "*Resuming at 9.45 a.m., I turned southwards towards the southern peak which looked more spectacular and appeared likely to closely contest altitude honours with the northern peak. Midway across, I located the rock arch on the plateau – a gaping hole showing right through a huge boulder. After some photography, I continued on to reach the top of the southern peak of Mt. Wright (3350'...)*"

This report locates the smaller arch fairly clearly, but doesn't include a photo. Unfortunately we had not read this report prior to our trip.

*The Mercury* carried an (unattributed) item on 29 January 1949, (p. 11) headed "Gordon River elbow" about what can cause rivers to have sharp bends and using the Gordon Bend as an example. In promoting the area for walking and cycling, it suggested Adamsfield as a base from which one could do half-day trips to, *inter alia*, Mt Wright and "the Arch". [http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/26493501#pstart189389 4].

Photo 10. ***The famous natural rocky arch.*** **Anon.**

[http://natureloverswalks.blogspot.com.au/2014/12/mt-wright-7-dec-2014.html].

"Naturelover" climbed Mt Wright on 7 December 2014 and depicted an arch in his/her blog (Photo 10), captioning it as "The famous natural rocky arch"; it barely rated a mention in the text (which was more about the author than the localities visited).

A very nice photo, captioned "Mt Wright, Rock Arch", appears in Matt Brian's "The Irenabyss Gallery" (Photo 11):

Photo 11. ***Mt Wright, Rock Arch*. Matt Brian.**

[http://www.irenabyss.com.au/galleries/thesouthwest/central-southwest/Mt-WrightScan-081117-0001-002-single.php]

The *thesarvo* Tasmanian climbers' website carries a page carrying the heading "thesarvo / 2008 / May / 29 / Cool photos of Mt Wright" which has the text: "The photos are from Stu Bowling from a trip up Mt Wright. Pretty amazing. According to Stu: ' This was fully sick, bomber quartzite rock & [an arch] about 50 m long, 15-20 m above the ground. Cross the Gordon River & up a big hill for 4 hrs its all yours! [b]it of a slog to get there tho. There is also a few other cool boulders etc. on the summit ridge'.

There are three photos of the "Big arch" and one of the "Smaller arch" (Photo 12).

Photo 12. ***The 'smaller arch' on the summit ridge of Mount Wright*. Stu Bowling.**

[http://www.thesarvo.com/confluence/display/thesarvo/2008/05/29/Cool+photos+from+Mt Wright]

A photo of the same arch, from the other side (Photo 13), appeared in an article by geologist Keith Corbett in the RACT's magazine in January 2012 (Corbett 2012).

Photo 13. "***Author at natural arch near Denison Range.***" **Keith Corbett.**

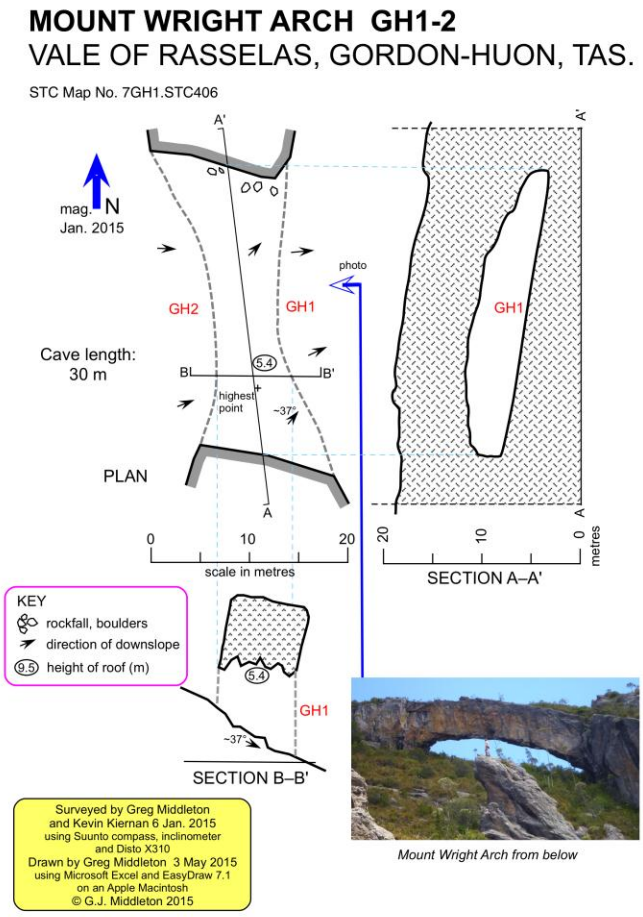



Fig. 1. ***Survey of Mount Wright Arch.***

*(The numbers GH1 and GH2 are the first entrance numbers I have allocated in the Gordon-Huon 'background region'– see Middleton 2015)*

**PLACE NAMES TASMANIA**

Evidently the Tasmanian Nomenclature Board has known about these arches for some considerable time as the name "Wright Arches" appears in its database and the location pretty accurately accords with that of what we are calling Mt Wright Arch [www.placenames.tas.gov.au]. Unfortunately, there is only one arch at this spot so the use of the plural seems a little careless (as though it has been assumed the two arches are at the same location). We'll need to consider what to call the "smaller arch " if and when we locate and document it.

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## IB-11 Midnight Hole Beginners' Trip

***Petr Smejkal***

**26 March 2016**

**Party:** Guy Bannink, Erin Bannink, Ana Gencic, Emilia Gencic, Ben Armstrong, Petr Smejkal

What a great beginner's trip it was! Before going through any details I just want to say six people (four of whom were beginners) managed to get through the cave in 5 hours. The trip also included three of us taking a side trip to Expletive Hall.

***At the top of the 5th pitch*. Petr Smejkal.**

Now for the details: The beginners were Ben who has been caving once before, Erin (probably should not be considered as a total beginner) and sisters Ana and Emilia Gencic who had done SRT training but had no caving experience whatsoever. We met in town and took two cars down south. On the way we stopped at Dover to rest and organised our SRT gear. Then we went straight to the car park and walked at fairly relaxed pace towards the Midnight Hole entrance. When I reached the entrance Guy shouted at us that he forgot his medication in the car. Since he was at the entrance he decided to come with us anyway.

***An unusual photo of three women underground!* Petr Smejkal.**

The ropes we used were 80 m and 34 m lengths. Two days before, back at the gear store I was a bit disappointed that I could not get two ~50 m lengths but in the end the 80 m rope proved to be a great advantage, speeding up our descend considerably. We used the 80 m rope for the first pitch (21 m). Ben got down first and hooked up the 34 m rope into the second pitch (11 m). I went down last. When I reached the bottom of the first pitch the only people that were still there were Ana and Emilia. We pulled down the 80 m rope and sent it to Guy to rig the 3rd pitch (39 m). When I reached the top of the 3rd pitch we sent the 34 m rope down to Guy so he could rig the forth pitch (8 m) and again we repeated this for the 5th pitch (34 m) with the 80 m rope. Thanks to this alternating we

got down to the bottom of the 5th pitch fairly quickly. I rigged the last pitch (49 m) using both ropes and down we went. We packed ropes and SRT and got through Matchbox Squeeze.

Beyond Matchbox Squeeze I suggested we could do bit of a side trip to Expletive Hall. Guy and Emilia decided to wait; the rest of us went left to Plague and Pestilence. All four of us got through this mud haven with just a bit of complaining. We all managed to get over the 4 m climb but Ana decided to wait at the start of the rock pile. Ben, Erin and I got all the way through the rock pile into the Bohemia Chamber. We spent a bit of time looking at the crystals and when we got bored we climbed up to the Expletive Hall. The time was pushing us for the return, so the visit was fairly short.

When we reunited with Guy and Emilia everybody had heaps of fun comparing how dirty we got doing this side-track exercise. (See cover photo). The rest of the trip was pretty much standard.

As I mentioned before the time we spent underground was 5 hours, which is my personal beginner's trip record for Midnight Hole. I also have to say all the beginners on this trip proved themselves to be enthusiastic and capable.

***Crystals in Bohemia Chamber.*** **Petr Smejkal.**

## MC-1 Kubla Khan

## Exploration Dive in Upstream River Alph Sump

***Janine McKinnon***

**2-3 April 2016**

**Party:** Janine McKinnon, diver. Ric Tunney, surface support.

**Day One:** Well, here we were, back in Kubla for a look in another sump. This time it was one in the bottom entrance chamber. The main difference was the noticeable lack of support cavers. No-one was interested. This weekend had actually been re-scheduled from four weeks earlier, due to a death in the family, and no-one had put their hand up for that trip either. *(Most members realise that assisted suicide is illegal in Tasmania – Editor.)*

It would have been a more convivial exercise with a couple of others along, and camped in the hut with us for the evenings, *(Murder is also illegal - Editor.)* but you work with what you've got.

The trip report following is basically the one I wrote for Parks, so it is a bit dry. It is a document of the exercise, though, and as I don't expect a huge amount of interest in the details of the dives, I have just included it pretty much as it was written. *(I hated it so I changed it to first person — hopefully for the better – Editor.)*

Ric and I arrived at the car park for Kubla Khan Cave at 9 am. The dive kit was sorted, with equal weights, into four Aspiring cave packs and then we ferried them to the lip of the bottom entrance doline in two shifts.

The pitch was rigged and at 10.30 am I descended to the rebelay ledge with one pack, and stationed myself there to guide the other packs, as Ric lowered them on a line from the top. This proved problematic, as the sloping nature of the doline stopped the first pack from sliding down to the bottom. It was decided that a more effective approach was for Ric to carry two packs to the rebelay ledge, and then lower the heavier one from there.

***Ric hanging out with some other old bags.*** **Janine McKinnon.**

I proceeded to the bottom of the pitch, carrying one pack and guiding a second. When Ric had lowered the third pack down from the rebelay ledge I ferried the three packs now at the bottom of the pitch down the steps to the doline floor, whilst Ric descended the second part of the pitch, carrying the last pack.

The four packs were ferried, in staged shuffles, to the sump. This was accomplished at 11:45 am.

The water level in the River Alph was noted to be very low.

The sump was inspected for the best approach for the initial dive and the best location for the primary attachment point for the exploration line. The area around the pool consisted of some very friable rock, and a lot of mud. No secure attachment point could be found for the primary tie-off. Eventually a secure rock projection was found approximately ten metres back up the passage, near the flat area to be used for gear preparation.

A secondary tie-off point was created by placing a silt stake into the mud at the edge of the sump pool.

The dive gear was then unpacked and assembled.

**Dive kit:**

- 2 x 7 litre steel dive tanks
- 2 x first and second stage, cold water rated, regulators (Apeks XTX 50s).
- 2 x Submersible Pressure Gauges.

- Razor sidemount diving harness with MTD 9 kg-lift buoyancy wing (BC).
- 3 kg lead weight
- Exploration reel plus back-up reel.
- Emergency reel.
- 7 mm semi-dry suit.
- Hoods and gloves.
- 4 dive lights, one a Scurion dive light (two for emergency use only).
- 3 line-cutting devices.
- Fins
- Mask and spare mask.
- Multi tool with spanners and hexs for emergency underwater repairs.
- Adjustable spanner for emergency underwater repairs.
- 6 x silt stakes
- Survey slate and survey ancillaries.
- 2 x Dive computers (Shearwater Petrels).
- Helmet

I kitted up and started the initial dive at 1:05pm.

The water was clear and visibility very good. There was no discernible flow. Water temperature was 12°C.

I proceeded across the pool and under the wall at its far end. The passage followed a straight path along the same line as the dry passage and the entry point of the sump. I was unable to find any solid rock projections for another line tie-off at a time that I thought one appropriate, so I placed a silt stake in the floor. The passage was still approximately 1.5 m high and three metres wide, with clear visibility, as the large dimensions allowed me to remain off the floor and thus out of the silt.

I proceeded but, after another ten metres, found a silt and gravel bank extending across the passage ahead, restricting the passage to approximately 10-15 cm high although the passage was still 3 m wide.

Without disturbing the silt on the floor I had good visibility, and was able to see beyond the restriction to a steep downward slope on the other side, into a small underwater chamber. I could not see any passage leading beyond the chamber from this vantage point. I spent several minutes inspecting the view into the chamber for possible onward leads, but none were seen. I then attempted to fit through the restriction and failed, but determined that although the roof was bedrock, the floor was gravel and silt, and thus somewhat moveable. Before attempting a more serious effort to deepen the restriction by "gardening" I decided to return to the surface to report the situation and my further plans to Ric.

In my efforts to fit this time I had disturbed the silt on the floor, which reduced the visibility to zero. The silt stirred up had moved slowly ahead of me. Thus visibility beyond the restriction, if I made it through, would almost certainly be zero by the time I got there.

As I was nominally heading upstream, this movement of the silt ahead of me did not bode well for this sump to connect with a reasonable person-sized passage to the present main flow of the river.

Whilst I had been performing this first reconnaissance dive, Ric had done surface surveying shots, with a Disto X2, to tie the dive survey into the greater Kubla Khan survey being undertaken by Alan Jackson.

After discussing the situation, it was decided that I would make an attempt to dig out the restriction and check the small room beyond, even if this would be difficult in the anticipated zero visibility.

I returned to the end of the line and spent some time attempting to fit through by pushing gravel aside. Visibility was zero. Again I was unable to fit through. I decided to leave the line and reel in-situ and retreat for the day, to allow the silt to settle overnight. I would return for another attempt the following day when clear water would allow me to assess the situation before making another attempt to fit through this restriction.

I returned to the surface and left the water.

The planned return meant that a large proportion of the dive kit could be left on site for the night. Only the gear that was deemed no longer required, or too delicate to leave in the cave, was packed to go.

Time out of cave: 2:40 pm.

**Day Two**: We arrived at the car park at 8:15 am and started into the cave at 8:40 am. As we were carrying only one pack each, which was quite light, the trip to the sump was quick. The gear had been left assembled the previous afternoon, and I had entered the cave wearing the semi-dry suit to be used for the dive, thus my preparations took little time.

I started the first dive at 9:35 am and the water was clear.

I swam quickly to the silt stake placed in the underwater passage and the reel, which had been left 5 m beyond the silt stake. I moved to near the restriction. I could now see, with good visibility, that the previous day because of the zero visibility, I had been attempting to pass the restriction too far to the left, near the wall. The gap was slightly wider two metres to the right.

I had another careful look at the room beyond the restriction, looking for onward leads. I anticipated that I would have zero visibility if I reached this area. Again, no onward leads could be seen from this vantage point.

I rechecked the dimensions of the passage for future mapping, whilst I still had visibility.

I picked up the reel and started into the restriction at the widest point. I spent a couple of minutes excavating a space wide enough to fit through by scooping out gravel and silt with my free hand, and squirming my body to push sediment aside. I then decided that it would be easier to do this in reverse, and so turned around so as to be backing down the bank. The space was very tight and I had to keep my head on the side to fit the helmet through but I progressed slowly.

Visibility was quickly reduced to zero.

I continued moving carefully, with frequent stops to assess my mental comfort level and the safety of the situation.

After some minutes I broke through and slid down the other side of the bank, into the small room. Visibility was still zero. There was no discernible flow. I placed another silt stake and used this as a reference point for my movement about the space. I spent some time feeling around in the area for a way on. This was problematic as I could see nothing. I determined that there was not a humanly navigable way forward from this room, as best as I could determine in the circumstances. The lack of any discernible flow reinforced this opinion.

As I retreated, I decided to remove the line from the sump, rather than tie it off and leave it at the furthest point of exploration, as is standard cave diving practice. The reason for this was twofold:

1. The easily accessed position of the sump, and thus the possibility that it might be visited by other caving parties. I felt that this would present an eye-sore to visitors.

2. Leaving signs of the dive in place, and in plain view, did not fit within the philosophy of the management plan, to retain the cave as close to a pristine state as practicable.

Survey was difficult in this situation. Distance was determined by counting knots in the line. The bearing was straight ahead from the secondary silt stake. LRUD's were estimated during times of good visibility and the dive distance was 40 metres.

On reaching the surface Ric suggested that I should attempt the dive again, by keeping to the right hand wall. As I had used only a quarter of my air supplies in these previous dives, I re-calculated and determined that I had plenty of gas for another attempt. I immediately submerged again and followed the wall, in moderate-sized passage (approximately 1.5 m high by 1 m wide). I put in a tie off around a rock at the start of what seemed to be a narrowing passage. Visibility was approximately 2 cm. This very poor visibility implied a connection with the area from which I had just returned.

As the passage felt just wide enough to fit into, and I could not determine if there was a wider area to turn around in further into the passage, I decided to enter the passage in reverse, backing my way down. This would enable me to manage the reel more easily and also to retreat quickly and easily when I decided to, if the passage dimensions did not increase.

This passage quickly became very tight. I needed to keep my head on the side to fit the helmet and I needed to have my arms above my head to fit. I was able to pay out the reel effectively this way. I pushed backwards down this passage for some time. The passage was slightly downwards and it was only by fact of the gravels underneath me sliding down, as I pushed, that I was able to make progress. The dimensions of the passage did not increase and seemed to be decreasing slightly.

After approximately twenty metres I decided that I did not wish to continue. There were several reasons for this:

1. It was becoming harder to push through and the likelihood that the passage was not going to remain humanly navigable was very high.

2. The prospect of this passage leading to larger cave was low.

3. As the dive involved sliding and pushing vigorously through the gravel and silt, with me lying on my stomach, the second stage regulator (which was not being currently breathed from) and the power inflator for the BC, were both receiving very rough treatment as they were dragged along the floor beneath me. The probability that they (particularly the regulator) were having silt and stones pushed into them was almost certain. The possibility of gear failure as a result was increasing significantly. The likelihood that I could reach, and fix, a failure of the gear in these circumstances was low. The possibility of a free flow of air from the unused second stage regulator, and thus loss of significant quantities of the diver's air supply, was increasing rapidly. A failure of the BC inflator valve would result in rapid, and continuous, inflation of the BC. This would wedge me in the passage. Reaching the dump valves to release the air would be very difficult in these extremely tight environs.

I had determined that the risk had now passed acceptable limits so I started to reel back towards the entrance. The sliding gravels now made progress more difficult than the inward trip had been. I counted knots as I reeled to determine distance covered.

After a brief break we started packing to exit the cave. We left the dive site at 11 am. The trip out was slow as two people had four packs to remove from the cave. We were out of the cave at 1:30 pm. All traces of the dive project were removed from the cave.

A survey was produced using Disto X2 for surface shots; depth gauge and knot counting for underwater measurements.

**Conclusion:** There remains a very slim chance that the passage continues upstream, in dimensions possible for a person to navigate, either via the small room encountered, or via the narrow passage followed along the right hand wall.

The small room cannot be categorically determined to have no exit upstream as its examination was done by feel, in zero visibility. However the lack of discernible water flow, together with the lack of observed passage from before the restriction, makes it very unlikely that such navigable passage exists. Possibly another attempt in times of high water flow may answer this small remaining query. I do not consider it very probable though.

The small passage along the right hand wall was not followed fully, so there is a small possibility that it can be followed. However it is most probable that a dive along the right hand wall was just paralleling the earlier dives, in the same passage, but just a couple of metres away in the same passage.

The prospects for further discovery are small. I am of small stature and I know of few divers who are smaller. I consider that the probability that another diver could progress as far as I did, let alone further, is low. The lack of flow in this passage supports the conclusion that it is only a backwater of the main stream.

We believe that the likelihood is that this sump is a fossil passage, and receives only limited water from the present main flow of the river. There is evidence the passage is an overflow route for River Alph.

The map is being drawn, and will follow at a later date. It will also be incorporated into the larger Kubla Khan map being produced by Alan Jackson.

A short video can be found here:

https://vimeo.com/162357544

## IB-133 Old Ditch Road

***Janine McKinnon***

**17 April 2016**

**Party:** Phil Croker, Pat Fitzgerald, Janine McKinnon, Chris Sharples, Ric Tunney.

Pat and Phil were back down in Tas for some more vertical skills training and, hopefully, fun practical application of those skills. Old Ditch Road (ODR) seemed a good place to go for the caving day. Ric and I hadn't been there for more than a decade, so it seemed about due for a visit and Chris, who had missed doing this one in his long caving career, was keen for a look.

Pax was our sixth member, but bailed by SMS on Sunday morning. The track was very dry and only had a couple of tree falls, so we had an easy walk to the cave. We started down at 11:30 am.

***Janine rigging*. Pat Fitzgerald.**

My role was to video and rig. Chris was up front with me, and Ric came last, providing his usual "back seat driving" advice, usually after it was useful (his being at the back …).

I had forgotten how poorly placed a few of the P hangers in this cave are, with a rigging comment (on P3) like "If most of the load is taken on the right-most hanger, then the rope hangs free of the lip 4m down." I put almost all the load on this hanger (rope was vertical from it!) and the rope still rubbed on the lip. We had come prepared with a rope protector for this, just in case (yes, good old IRT rigging), and Ric was going to put it on as last down. However on the descent he found a natural for a re-direction, and used that instead. … And why the first pitch is rigged from below the window, with no back up, I don't know. It makes it a challenge for new cavers without a gymnastics background to get on and off

Anyway, we had a smooth, if somewhat slow, trip to the bottom. But that is to be expected when people are still consolidating their skills, and rigging isn't straightforward because every pitch head is different. Also, we were here to enjoy the place, not break records.

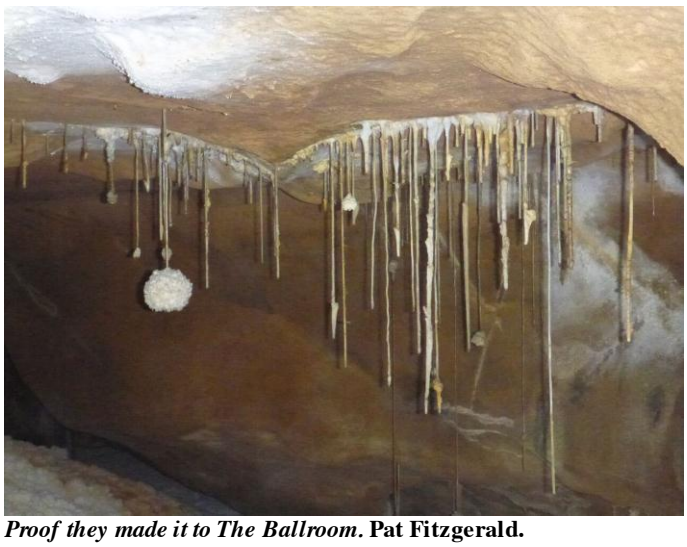
I had also forgotten how lovely the pitches are in this cave.

The only (slight) real glitch was the rope for the bottom pitch. We were following Jeff Butt rigging notes, which is always a bit dangerous with rope lengths. I should have known better, I know, but I had a 34.5 m rope for a pitch where he said we needed a 35m rope. I thought, if I rigged the Y-hang at the pitch head with tape, we would have plenty of rope to reach. Famous last words (almost)! I got to the rebelay and looked down. I could see the end of the rope waving some (unknowable) distance from the floor … and I hadn't put the rebelay in yet. I thought we were stuffed, but I decided to put in a classic Jeff Butt rebelay (very, very small loop) and drop down to see how far off we were. Maybe a tape at the end of the rope would work?

Luckily, the rope was actually only half a metre from the floor. So we were good to go again. How the 35 m rope he said was needed would reach, using it for rigging the Y-hang too, I don't know. Some people's metres are different from others I guess. My mistake for not adding a "Jeff Butt fudge factor" really! Everyone got to play at passing a short loop though, which you could see as good training. Maybe.

***An apprehensive looking Phil Croker.* Pat Fitzgerald.**

We were planning an extensive wander around in Exit Cave, but as we were taking longer at this than Ric and I had thought, we cut this part short. We went straight down to the river (which was very low), had lunch, and then walked downstream to the main passage, for a quick view of the size of the place, and then up to The Ballroom for a wander through. This makes a nice circuit from the bottom of ODR.



***Proof they made it to The Ballroom.* Pat Fitzgerald.**

The plan now became Ric up first, then Phil and Pat and Chris, with me de-rigging last. The others would head straight out and Chris would wait at the top of the first pitch to take some rope. As it was, because Ric waited at the top of each pitch for Pat and Phil, we bottled up a bit and I caught the party at each pitch head.

We were all out by 6:30 pm.

It was a balmy evening (after a warm, dry day), the moon was full, and we had a lovely walk back to the cars.

A short video can be viewed here:

**https://vimeo.com/163882698**

Note: We have done updated rigging notes (See page 20) with more realistic rope lengths.

## JF-345 Ice Tube Advanced Beginners Trip

***Petr Smejkal***

**17 April 2016**

**Party:** Ben Armstrong, Benjamin Gaskell, Grant Rees, Petr Smejkal

At the last STC meeting I advertised a beginner's trip to Growling Swallet. The original plan was to do one of the classics, the Slaughterhouse Pot through trip.

As the trip date got closer the number of possible participants reduced to five of us. All the beginners on my list were experienced with SRT already and so I started to entertain the thought of visiting Ice Tube instead. At that stage the final plan wasn't set. On Thursday I picked up enough gear to enable us to undertake either possibility depending upon the decision we would make on the day.

On the Sunday morning only three of the others arrived at my place; Grant, Ben A. and Ben G. That was an even smaller group than I expected so Ice Tube seemed the more likely option. On our way to Eight Road we discussed our options and we decided that if the water level was low enough we would go through Ice Tube. As it was the water level at the entrance to Growling Swallet was low, so Ice Tube it was.

***The happy faces of Grant Rees, Ben Gaskell and Ben Armstrong having made it to the Growling Swallet main streamway.***

**Peter Smejkal.**

We walked for exactly an hour from the car park to the Ice Tube entrance. I rigged the first pitch and let Grant to go first so he could rig the following pitch and speed up our progress. We remained in this formation for the rest of the trip. Every time I pulled a rope down one of the Bens passed it to Grant.

All went smoothly until we got into the Fallopian Tube. Ben A. got a bit nervous while crawling through the rift and because he was banging his helmet against the walls so frequently, the cover of his battery pack worked loose. When I said "Ben, don't move your head!" his reaction to this was a sharp head turn and saying "What?" and the noise of a falling battery pack cover followed.

The rest of the trip was without drama. Again I appreciated Alan's effort in taping the way through Bronchial and Necrosis. Thanks Alan.

***Grant and Ben at the bottom of Maelstrom Pitch – the top of Never Forever Pitch, taken from the entrance into Fallopian Tube.***

**Petr Smejkal.**

We got out after sunset. We had spent eight and a half hours underground. Not too bad for a beginner's trip!

## JF-211 Sesame Cave

***Alan Jackson***

**1 May 2016**

**Party:** Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Michael Packer

We had a soft day planned to tidy up the resurvey of the upper levels of Sesame. Andreas rigged down JF211 while Pax and I did a surface survey between the JF210 and JF211 tags. We found the JF211 tag on the large log that spans the entrance. We didn't need sketches but in the interests of training Pax in important life skills we made him do book and make redundant sketches too. He did a good job.

The pitches were tight and awful (nothing new here) and we surveyed through to the big cairn (SES26 in the re-survey) then turned left to sort out upstream Sesame St. We found what had

been found before and surveyed it. Suspecting Steve and Sandy's efforts from January 2015 were unreliable we also re-re-surveyed from SES26 down to the top of the first pitch (SES35) just to check.

We couldn't muster the enthusiasm to resurvey Nematode Crawl (a decision I regret now). Pax exited that way to avoid the tight pitch head while Andreas and I derigged. We headed home at an outrageously early hour with very little to show for it other than some survey notes and a rapidly swelling knee (it turns out even an easy caving trip isn't compatible with my current bout of bursitis).

Upon entering the survey data I was crushed to find that the data didn't remotely match the January 2015 stuff (where we'd collected duplicate data) and the closure error on the entrance survey loop was diabolical. We will have to return to give Nematode Crawl another blast to sort it out. Some people should be shot.

## JF-229 Welcome Stranger

## Geriatrics Day Out

***Alan Jackson***

**7 May 2016**

**Party:** Pat Culberg, Tony Culberg, Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Kane Parsell, Ros Skinner, David Wilson (and his son, Ian)

Anna tried valiantly to keep the mean age of the group low but the odds were stacked against her. This trip was a community service effort with an opportunistic beginner thrown in and a chance to negate Anna's accusation that I never take her caving. The cave was still there and we didn't break any hips, so one can only assume the trip was a success.

## JF-387 Porcupine Pot

***Ben Armstrong***

**8th May 2016**

**Party:** Andreas Klocker, Ben Armstrong and Jarman Mogler

Through some clever marketing, Andreas managed to convince me, and my fellow happy-go-lucky newbie Jarman, to accompany him on a "simple beginners" trip to Porcupine Pot, with the aim of rigging it in preparation for a dive next summer.

We left Hobart at 8 and arrived at the entrance around 11:30, allowing for half an hour of navigational faffing about and car based scrub-bashing. The entrance was slightly slippery and awkward but we got down the first couple of pre-rigged pitches without any trouble. After a very short climb and walk we arrived at the first unbolted pitch where Andreas got to work. This pitch ended up at about 15 m. Two short pitches later we arrived at a nasty looking vertical squeeze right above another pitch. Accessing the pitch head was somewhat awkward but gravity greatly assisted once we were on the rope. Jarman also assisted by unhooking me from various inconveniently located spikes. After a couple of tiny pitches we reached a short section of climbing, then descended a few more pitches for good measure, the longest being about 20 m. At this point Andreas realised he only had one bolt left.

We could see a large chamber that had an old taped cairn in the middle of it, but reaching it involved an impossible-looking down climb. Andreas found a steep passage that headed downwards, so using the last bolt and a natural we descended by sliding down the slope for about 10 m. We emerged at a boulder pile, inside a smaller chamber that was apparently either underneath or adjacent to the chamber with the tape in it. The gaping black holes below indicated that there was still a fair way to go to the fabled sumps. After a sugary lunch we started ascending, leaving the ropes in place.

All went smoothly until we reached the nasty squeeze. Following some overly-optimistic comments, I went first. Despite being right at the pitch head, it was impossible to use the rigging as a handhold due to the chest-width tightness of the slot. It was also impossible to use a foot sling, as the hand jammer was up against the knot and there was bugger-all in the way of natural footholds. After much swearing, obnoxious grunting and pessimistic commentary I wormed my way up and out. Luckily for my ego, Jarman and Andreas didn't fare any better.

We ascended the remaining pitches with only minor awkwardness and stumbled out into the night air at 7 pm.

Andreas will be back with more bolts!

## JF-387 Porcupine Pot

***Stephen Fordyce***

**21 May 2016**

**Party:** Andreas Klocker, Stephen Fordyce, Dave Bardi, Sandy Varin, Michael "Pax" Packer

**Preamble:**

JF-387 is of interest in the first place because it has master cave at the bottom. This master cave has been dye-traced to Niggly Cave and thence to the main resurgence at Junee Cave. There is a gap of several kilometres between downstream Porcupine and upstream Niggly, so there has to be some good stuff in between. Upstream of Porcupine is a bit of a mystery, as there is a lot of water, and the caves that have been traced to feed Porcupine (ie. Burning Down the House, Rainbow Cave and Udensala) don't supply anywhere near as much water as flows in this cave.

Sadly, or perhaps as usual, the access to the master cave involves a particularly nasty obstacle, this one being a very low belly wriggle for 75 m in rather copious amounts of fast flowing water. Getting to base level is mostly vertical, with a series of short (3-20 m) pitches with annoying pitch-heads and then a climb down the main rockpile.

Porcupine was explored fairly intensely back in the 1980s and mostly surveyed, with most of the effort concentrated on the master cave section, which eventually terminated in sumps both upstream and downstream. A map was never drawn but the survey (of "most" of the known cave) and sketches are in the archive, and some thoughtful person has already plotted it. A 7-page history written by Trevor Wailes was the source of much useful information.

One of the unsurveyed sections included a significant inflow stream and "sump" thought to be water from the terminal sump of JF-35 Gormenghast nearby.

Andreas had declared this a new project and commenced rigging it previously. Our trip was the first recent trip to reach the stream at the bottom. The way down is basically dry.

**Summary:**

The objectives and achievements of the trip included:

- Find the way to the stream at the bottom and familiarise ourselves with the easily accessible (i.e. on the good side of the "horrible crawl") parts of the cave. Completed - the way down the rockpile and most of the explored passages were well cairned.
- Explore and check leads in the less-visited (and unsurveyed) parts of the cave, have a look at the Gormenghast sump and contemplate a return trip with dive gear. Completed - some awesome new stuff found, several other interesting leads, and a whole lot that needs surveying. The sump was written off as too desperate.
- Survey missing stuff. Not completed - due to issues with the survey gear. Honestly!
- Assess or attempt the horrible crawl to see what it was really like and more importantly see what the master cave beyond was like. Completed - it wasn't totally horrible, and the master cave was spectacular, with an impressive amount of flow.

**The Detail:**

Saturday began with exciting times - checking out Alan's gigantic knee, negotiating "the carwash" with Andreas' car and one member of our party realising they had forgotten their gumboots on arrival at the parking spot. The walk is pretty short and easy, but getting down the doline to the cave entrance was an interesting choice between a slippery log and a slippery mud slope, as a result of all the rain during the past few days.

Andreas and co had already rigged most of the cave so we made pretty good time, although stopping in a few bits to fix up rigging and generally make things more comfortable - it looks like quite a few trips may be required before it's over. This included an etrier at the most diabolical of the pitch-heads, which sort of helped on the way up. After negotiating the awkward pitches and downclimbs, we popped out at the back of a large (maybe 30 m diameter, 10 m high) rockpile chamber. Actually, the last couple of bits of rigging were generally ignored and used as handlines if at all.

It took a small amount of exploration, but with the help of some cairns, we made it to a large flat area in a corner at the base level of the rockpile, as evidenced by a (disappointingly) small stream coming from a smaller passage and heading away along the wall through the rockpile. We had worn SRT gear down just in case a discretionary pitch was necessary, but didn't use it - next time it could be ditched at the bottom. Sandy had a great time exploring an alternative passage and chose to join us a while later.

After some refuelling (and defuelling) and trying to make sense of the survey plot, we headed off downstream to see if it would go to the horrible crawl. Well there was some lovely streamway passage/along the base of the rockpile, much of it very large, and with a few significant leads heading up away from the stream. Part-way along, a larger stream flowed out from under a ledge on the right, making the total flow now much more respectable. Eventually though, the passage was stooping height, and then crawling height and then further commitment would require getting wet.

This is where it turns out that experimentally wearing a wetsuit (even a 3 mm shorty - worn over thermals and under a onesie undersuit) equates to the short straw for wet stuff, and so I was soon face down in the water squealing like a little girl. Some of it was crawlable, some of it you could avoid lying in the water, but in a couple of the lower spots lying in water perhaps 8 cm deep, was required, with head on one side (but out of the water). So the water came about halfway up my sides, but not over my back - it wasn't particularly fun but was bearable after the initial shock. Full immersion of legs to the knees and arms to the elbows was also required.

***The Master Cave just before the low squeeze.*** **Stephen Fordyce.**

Eventually the crawl quite suddenly opened up, and come out behind a rock into the side of a large tunnel with a big stream (much bigger than Growling Swallet the times I've seen it). I have GoPro footage of this if anyone is interested - as an estimate in one section the cross section was perhaps 2 m, and the depth 25 cm, with a flow strong enough to move gravel when I walked across.

I wasn't cold after the crawl, so had a good look around - going to the first rockpile upstream and then the first downstream. It was interesting to note that the bedding plane appears to be on a 45 degree angle, rather than the horizontal that might be expected at base level/master cave. I spent a good while enthusiastically poking around in the downstream rockpile looking for a bypass to the horrible crawl, before making a much longer and less enthusiastic eventual return to the streamway. I think there is some higher level passage in that rockpile that may be worth looking at.

I'm not sure if it was adrenaline or the wetsuit, but I still wasn't particularly cold and the crawl back was still bearable. I headed back to the packs (stopping to stick my GoPro into the inflow sump on the side of the stream) and met up with Pax and Sandy, who reported following some untracked small passages in the upstream section and emerging into a giant chamber. Andreas and Dave were still up there somewhere, so with everyone vaguely accounted for, we headed back in that direction to see what they were up to.

We met in a junction chamber where a smaller stream joined the main stream. Incidentally, somewhere around here the "main stream" split, with the bulk flowing off under a ledge. We think this may come out from the other ledge into which I earlier stuck the GoPro. Andreas and Dave had found the Gormenghast sump and some other stuff, which we were struggling to reconcile with the description and lack of survey. This will probably be a trip in itself. The sump wasn't far (although the stream couldn't be followed the whole way) so we all went to check it out.

The short straw/wetsuit was again drawn and I belly-crawled into a low flattener with the stream coming out. It took a slight

right turn and the ceiling lowered - I stopped before partial immersion became full immersion in a back and front squeeze/roof sniff. A few metres ahead the water came to perhaps 2-3 cm from the roof and it didn't look as though the water was very deep. I could just see the lip of a 2 cm waterfall, but it also looked as though the roof above that was too low to progress. With better prospects in the cave and all over the JF, I pronounced that lead "too desperate" (especially as the theorised other side sump in Gormenghast was dived by the Eberhards and ended in a tight and committing underwater U-bend). If anyone wants another look, it's still not a diving lead, so don't let that be an excuse.

***The crawl to the Gormenghast Sump.*** **Stephen Fordyce.**

We split the party with Pax and Sandy to get some survey done, while Dave and Andreas went to have a look at what Pax and Sandy had called "Notre Dame". I quickly explained that since I was wet, I'd get too cold surveying and needed to keep moving. Thus the three of us ducked into a narrow riff passage in a far corner of one of the rooms and proceeded through a long and winding (it will be a nightmare to survey) series of passages and crawls. There were some pretties here, including what Alan has somehow remotely christened "cave pubes" (it has stuck) which were kind of like a white-haired lump of dirt stuck to a Van der Graaf generator.
We also negotiated "Velcroland", where holes in suits were quickly snagged and torn larger, before emerging into the spectacular Notre Dame. We were surrounded by sheer walls more than 20 m high, with flat mud floors, and in a passage 5 m wide. Sadly it ends after about 30 m at a just-as-shear wall, with a small waterfall coming from above. It's pretty well certain this had never been visited before and we felt very special to be seeing it for the first time.

***"Cave Pubes".*** **Stephen Fordyce.**

Returning to the junction we learned that the survey gear was not playing the game, so an easy decision was made to bail and head for the surface. The annoying pitch heads came into play, and were a real pain, especially with bags - well worth passing them up at least the last bit. Returning with dive gear for the master cave sumps is going to be a real mission! We left the ropes coiled at the top of the pitches, with karabiners removed, and were on the surface after about 8-9 hours in the cave.
On Sunday while waiting for the usual delayed flight, we put together a sketch of what we'd found so far, to help with planning the survey (and tie-in) next trip. Hopefully the survey and perhaps some more lead checking of the upstream section can move to the master cave beyond the horrible crawl.

**Photos:**
Some of the photos from my GoPro are included in this report, and others are on the TFM Engineering Facebook page at:
https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.851242498342568.1073741835.754476911352461&type=3
There are whole lot more other blurry but maybe useful ones, and quite a few videos (i.e. of the flow in the master cave), which may not ever see the light of day. I will keep these in my personal archive.

# Overseas Correspondents' Report

## La 15ème édition du parcours spéléo
## (15th Annual Caving Course)
## Fort de Barchon, Belgium

***Tony Veness and Jane Pulford***

**23 -24 April 2016**

The awakening after a long, wet (and very, very flat) Dutch winter meant it was time to escape The Lowlands, at least for a weekend. Attending the 15th annual caving training course at Fort de Barchon in Belgium, for some pseudo-caving and fruity beer, seemed like an excellent idea to help ease into the European spring. Our fellow Dutch caver, Jos Burgers, had attended this event several years ago and was keen to try it again.

We headed off early on a Saturday morning. Apart from the first ten minutes getting out of The Hague and the last five minutes at the other end, we rolled along on silky-smooth and multilingual European A and E motorways for the duration of the trip. Generally carefree driving at 120 km/h, dodging trucks and campervans in the slow lane and no road kill to speak of. We knew we had arrived at the right location when we spotted cavers whizzing overhead on a 100 metre long zip line above the carpark next to the fort. We followed the sundry trogged-up groups on their way to registration to see what the plan was.

Registration was the usual casual affair associated with dangerous activities. Providing you had five Euros and could

find a common language to work out where to pitch a tent, you were in. No waivers to sign, no disclaimers to read, no proof of competence to provide. Europeans have a refreshing take on risky business and if you are silly enough to dress-up in caving gear and dangle from WWI fortifications, it's your problem if you break a nail or step on a mine.

***Tony and Jos enjoy some European caving training*. Jane Pulford.**

(Note: Jos is in red in the background - Sarah, Serena, Ric and Janine have met him. The caver in the middle is a friendly French-Canadian.)

Trogged up and armed with our route descriptions (in Dutch and French), off we went. We had nine routes to choose from in, under and over the fort. Some long, some wet, some technical, some not so hard. All were ridiculous in some respect, but good fun. We chose Parcours C (as in Calm) and headed underground into the fort. Three hours later we emerged having squeezed, prusiked, abseiled or bridged our way through various ventilation, drainage and electrical shafts and sundry other spaces. The 'calm' description came from spending a long time lying down, slithering through long sections of very low passage. At junctions, the way on was marked with well-worn plastic arrows on the walls.

Confusion prevailed back on the surface, where Tony blended into the army of cavers likewise wearing blue Aventure Verticale suits. Time for a new purple suit… After lunch on top of a tank we headed off again. Parcours A (as in Air) was fully outdoors and consisted of dealing with 101 rebelays, swings, redirects, via-ferratas and wire-rope highlines. We enjoyed a pleasant afternoon, with the smell of sausages and Belgian beer drifting up from the canteen. There is always a canteen with beer at well-organised Belgian caving weekends.

We continued on with another mostly underground route, Parcours E (as in Eeek!), which had us rattling around in the upper levels of the fort. We abseiled down ventilation shafts, prusiked up spiral staircases (sans stairs) and clambered around former gun emplacements. A raft was provided for negotiating a flooded passage - a nice surprise and much to our relief. Thoroughly tuckered out, we car camped within the fort compound and enjoyed French wine, freshly cooked Flemish frietjes with mayonnaise, and hot showers before drifting off to the sound of the odd zipliner.

***Tony exits a suspiciously sewer-shaped passage outside the fort.* Jane Pulford.**.

Sunday morning brought a little drizzle as a taste of what was to come. After a car boot breakfast and the customary goedemorgen \ bonjour \ g'day to passing trogged-up cavers, we decided that our final challenge of the weekend was to be Parcours B (as in Best Physical Condition). The route led eventually to a traverse around the fort's observation tower, overlooking the nearby motorway and farmer's sheep. 60 minutes vertical work in a Petzl Fractio was getting somewhat tedious and bursts of horizontal hail did not help the situation. We eventually had lunch inside the top of the tower prior to abseiling down and walking back to the fort.

We warmed up with beers and shopping at the temporary gear-shop (oh yeah!), before retracing our driving route home. We also picked up a few flyers, advertising other caving events across France and Belgium during the coming summer, to stick to the fridge door as distraction from the regularity of Monday to Friday.

We were amazed (as usual) by the demographic of cavers attending Belgian caving weekends. There were groups of teenagers in matching kit, busily learning the skills and running the sausage sizzle to make a few Euros for group gear or travel. We saw parents showing their three-foot-tall children (in mini-suits) how to go up and down ropes in a non-fuss manner, akin to playing soccer on a Saturday morning in Moonah. Crazy stuff indeed!

***Belgian firemen, training at the observation tower.*** **Jane Pulford.**

***Cavers negotiating the via ferrata route.*** **Tony Veness**

***Tony watching the ziplinersduring his lunchbreak.***

**Jane Pulford.**


***Flyer for an upcoming caving training weekend.*** **Tony Veness.**

**References:**

http://www.fortbarchon.be/

http://www.squadbarchon.be/parcours_speleo.php


***Ethics for young cavers.*** **Tony Veness.**

***The unexpected raft - Jos and Tony try it out.*** **Jane Pulford.**

# Other Exciting Stuff

## Old Ditch Road Rigging Guide

***Ric Tunney***

On our recent trip to ODR, we had a little trouble with the rigging. The current rigging guide was written by Jeff Butt after he installed the P-hangers in 2003 (*Speleo Spiel* 316). Some of the hangers could be better sited and the rope lengths are minimalistic.

On the first pitch, the hanger is half a metre down the pitch. This makes getting on and off difficult. There is good rock a metre above the lip. I do not understand why this was not used. *(It would have used more rope - Ed.)*

On pitch three, Jeff says a rub point is only avoided if one hanger takes most of the load in a Y-hang. But this defeats the load-sharing intent of a Y-hang. There is good rock above the hanger to place one hanger above. Even when we loaded the one hanger, we still had a rub, but there was a good redirection to clear the rub. Jeff does not refer to this redirection.

Jeff reckoned a 35 m rope would work on the bottom pitch. Our rope was 34.5 m. We have had experience with Jeff's rope lengths, so to gain a bit of length we took a tape to rig the Y-hang and tied the rope to this tape. I reckon the tape saved at least 2 m; rabbit ears knots consume a lot of rope. So we should have had at least 1.5 m spare at the bottom. Instead, the rope was 0.5 m short of the ground; long enough to work, but only because we used the tape.

The bottom pitch was surveyed in 1987 by Steve Bunton and Stefan Eberhard. They show the bottom pitch as 40 m. From the rope length, it's around 35 m. I find this inconsistency to be curious as both Steve and Stefan are very reliable surveyors. Complicating the situation, Jeff reported rope lengths to be the same as the pitch lengths on the map. Maybe Jeff tied very tiny knots.

| Pitch | Rope | Rigging |
|---|---|---|
| P1 7 m | 14 m (guess) | Climb up to the window off the balcony, hanger over lip RHS. Y-belay from hanger and tape around jug. Back up to stal LHS 5 m back. This backup is very useful to get off rope when coming up. |
| P2 38 m | 38 m (Butt) | Two hangers for Y-belay on wall opposite ledge. Use previous rope to reach hangers. |
| P3 12 m | 12 m (Butt) | Two hangers LHS for Y-belay. Rub point at -4 m; redirection from jug RHS 1 m further down. |
| P4 35 m | 37 m (estimate) | Y-hang from two hangers RHS. Rebelay from hanger LHS 7 m down. (This rebelay is not necessary for pull-down trip.) |

Jeff advised 110 m will do whole cave, but this does not include the backup on P1.
Notes:
All directions are looking down.
Hangers are P-hangers installed 2003.
Obviously, this Rigging Guide is a work in progress!

***Rigging at the top of Pitch 2*. Pat Fitzgerald.**

*(If I were rigging this Y-hang, I would tie the tail of the rope through the left loop of the Y-hang AND the krab that attaches it to the bolt. That way I save a krab in the rigging and... Should the bolt pop due to rock failure or something - it won't! - I don't end up with a chain of three metal loops and the chance that one of the krabs gets weighted across the gate – Editor.)*

## Batu Cave Malaysia

***Stephen Bunton***

These are a couple of photos I took whilst on a one-day stop-over in Kuala Lumpur in 2014. I had previously visited the cave in December 1978 and the changes were profound. The cave is on the northern outskirts of the city and was formerly accessed by local bus. Now days it can be easily accessed from a railway station at the end of a direct line from the airport. In 1978 the cave contained only a few small shrines but now it is overwhelmed with contemporary religious and commercial artefacts.

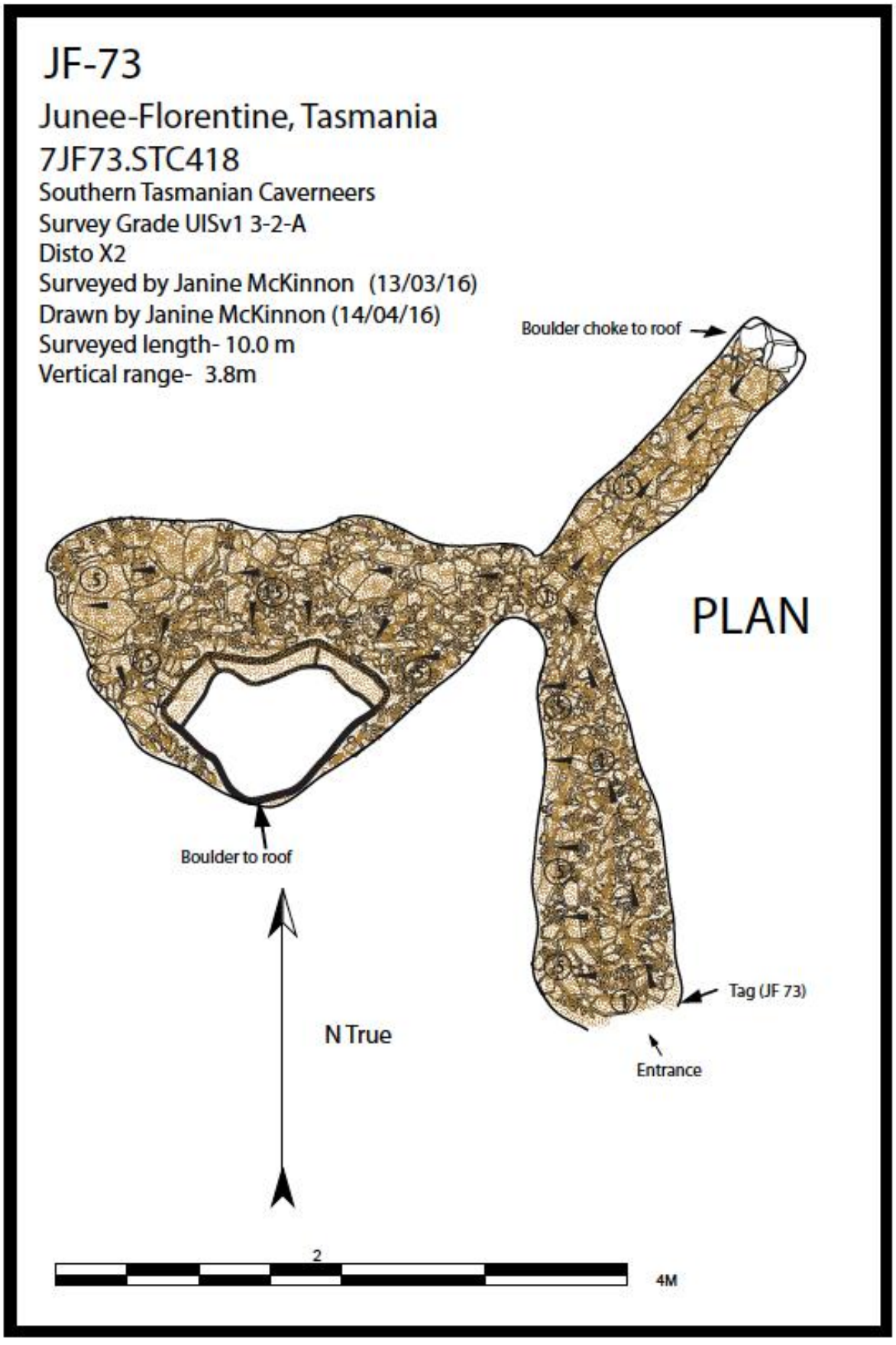
***The long staircase up to the cave entrance The cave is inside a karst pinnacle that contains the cave*. Stephen Bunton.**

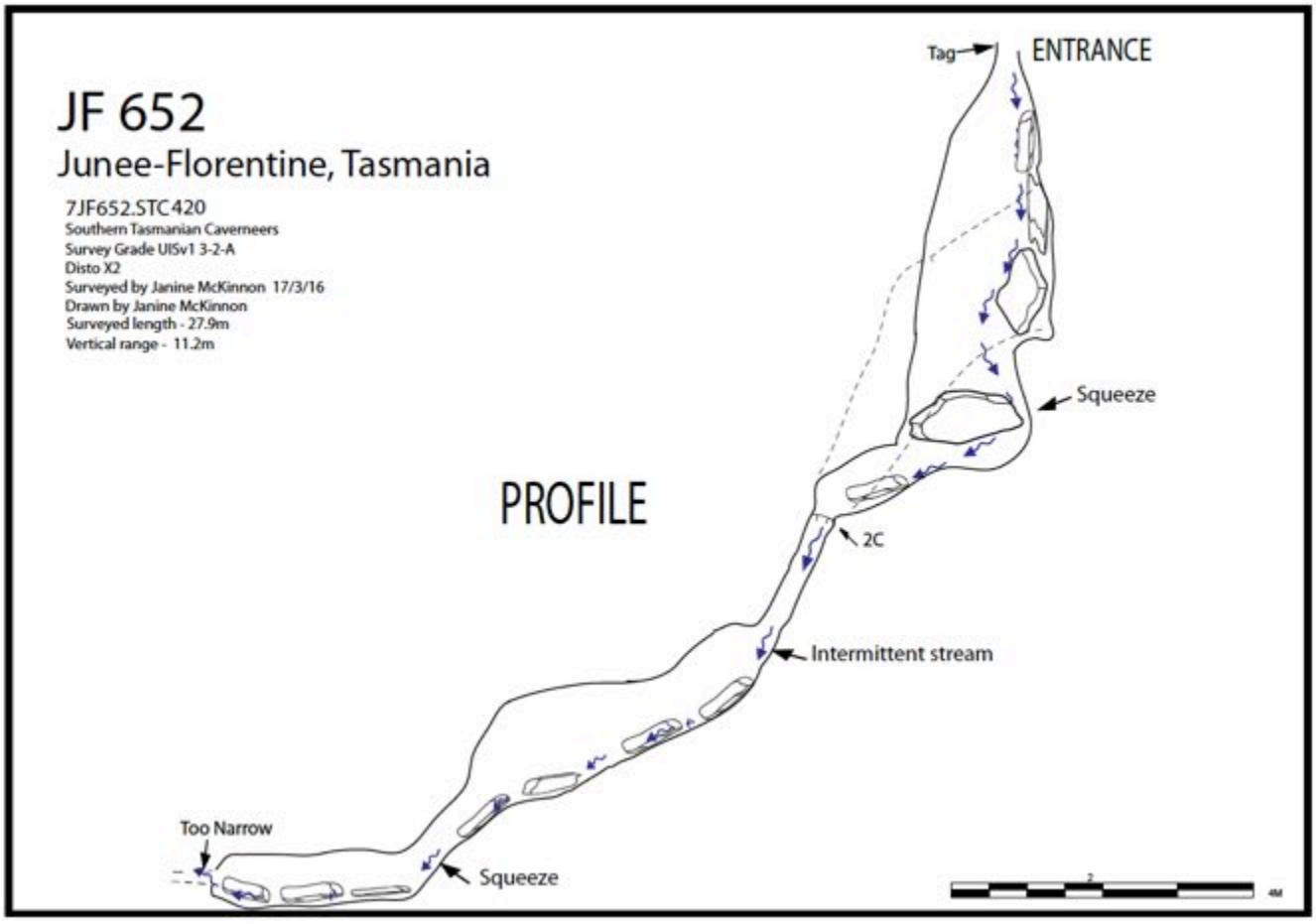
***Erratum for Speleo Spiel 414***

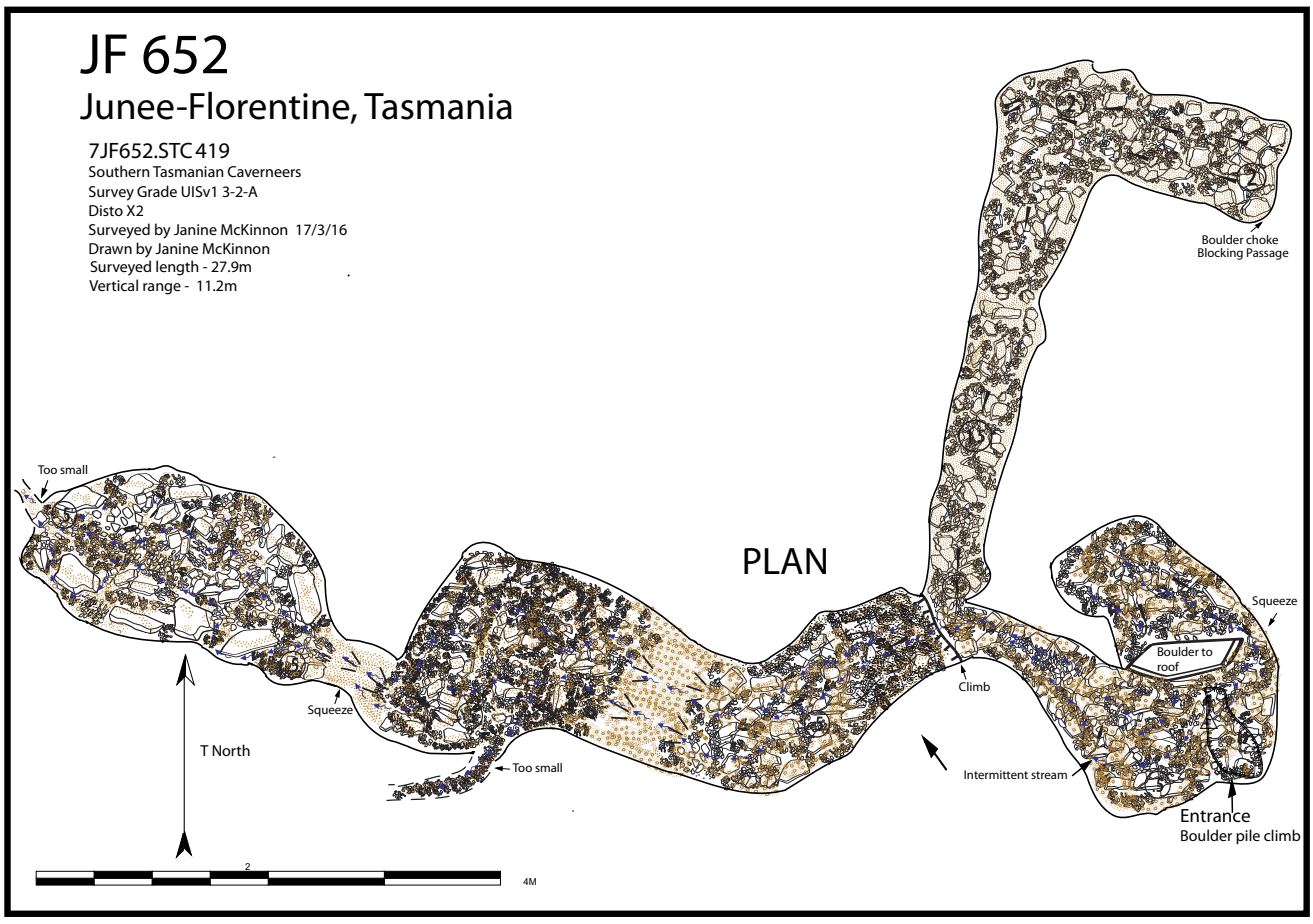
In Sharples & McKinnon 2016, published in *SS*413, a new cave was incorrectly reported as being tagged JF685. This number is incorrect and is in fact JF652. Electronic versions of SS413 on the website and in the master archive (i.e. Ric's copy) have been corrected. In order to reduce the chances of this causing confusion in the future, please delete any existing electronic copy of SS413 you have on file and replace it with the revised version. If you have a hard copy then attack it with a biro on pages 2 (contents), 14 (title block) and 15 (last sentence of report).
Reference:
Sharples, C. & McKinnon, J. 2016 JF-459 Nameless Spring, JF-73 and JF-685
[sic]. *Speleo Spiel* 413: 14-15.

***Shops and shrines inside the cave*. Stephen Bunton.**

## Surveys


JF-73
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF73.STC418
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers
Survey Grade UISv1 3-2-A
Disto X2
Surveyed by Janine McKinnon (13/03/16)
Drawn by Janine McKinnon (14/04/16)
Surveyed length- 10.0 m
Vertical range- 3.8m
Boulder choke to roof
PLAN
Boulder to roof
N True
Tag (JF 73)
Entrance
2
4M


JF 652
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF652.STC 420
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers
Survey Grade UISv1 3-2-A
Disto X2
Surveyed by Janine McKinnon 17/3/16
Drawn by Janine McKinnon
Surveyed length - 27.9m
Vertical range - 11.2m
PROFILE
Tag
ENTRANCE
Squeeze
2C
Intermittent stream
Too Narrow
Squeeze
2
4M


JF 652
Junee-Florentine, Tasmania
7JF652.STC 419
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers
Survey Grade UISv1 3-2-A
Disto X2
Surveyed by Janine McKinnon 17/3/16
Drawn by Janine McKinnon
Surveyed length - 27.9m
Vertical range - 11.2m
PLAN
Boulder choke
Blocking Passage
Too small
Squeeze
T North
Too small
Climb
Squeeze
Boulder to
roof
Intermittent stream
Entrance
Boulder pile climb
2
4M