

Speleo Spiel 427

July-August 2018



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Front Cover: *Serena Benjamin, apparently meditating. JF-341, Junee-Florentine.*

Photo: James Barnes

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.



Speleo Spiel

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Editorial

I had thought that I might be in danger of having nothing to write for this editorial. Then along came an “almost” cave rescue on 25 June. Luckily the caver involved made it out of the cave with assistance from his party but it was a close-run thing. In this issue Ben Armstrong gives a clear account of the trip, and an honest review of his decisions as trip leader. Alan Jackson has a report of the call out and planning for the rescue. It is an informative and interesting read, as you would expect from Alan.

This was almost the third rescue in southern Tasmania since March 2017. All were the result of human error, not equipment failure or natural events. The previous two incidents have been thoroughly analysed and no doubt much private discussion has followed this latest event. We all make mistakes, in life and caving, but learning lessons from others’ misfortune is a great way to reduce the likelihood of making them oneself. In this instance, as is often the case, it was a series of poor or questionable decisions made by all members of the party along the track, from planning to caving, that resulted in this near potential disaster (it could well have resulted in death from hypothermia). It may seem obvious to we cavers here in southern Tasmania, but as we can all get a bit blasé it behoves us all to take the following points seriously: Make sure you know the current fitness and abilities of all members of your party, hopefully by personal experience of caving with them, but if not, from a VERY reliable and reputable referee who knows what the trip will involve. Don’t underestimate the conditions you may find in a wet cave here in winter; dress accordingly and have spare clothing, gloves, balaclava etc. plus plenty of food, and be prepared to use them! Keep an eye on all your fellow party members and turn the trip if someone looks like they are getting cold, very tired or will struggle on the exit, particularly on a vertical trip (going down is much easier than back up!). Know who you will call if you need help, and hopefully have an emergency contact person organised. These are all common-sense precautions but any one of them is easy to forget or undervalue.

Here’s hoping we don’t have another incident for a long time.

Stuff ‘n Stuff

- You should all have heard about the soccer team of children that became trapped in a flooded cave in northern Thailand. The decision to enter the cave when the wet season had started is a discussion for another time and place. The effort that went into the successful search and rescue is impressive and inspiring.
- Alan Jackson is planning a return trip to Mt Cripps karst area. This is a stunning part of the state and well worth a visit. He plans to join with Savage River Caving Club (SRCC) again this Royal Hobart Show Day kinda long weekend (Thursday-Sunday) 25-28 October. All others welcome. Paul Darby (SRCC) can provide local knowledge and possible cave related “jobs”. Contact Alan if you are interested.
- It’s probably time again for a shout out about the ASF conference being held in the north of the

state this Christmas/New Year period. It would be nice if a reasonable number of us supported the northerners and went along. Caving trips up north will be available and it will be a very easy way to see some of the stunningly beautiful caves northern Tasmania has to offer. There is an advertisement for the conference at the end of this *Spiel* with contact details. Here is the website to make it easier for you: www.asfconference2019.com

- Field trips related to the conference, and private caving trips too no doubt, will be happening down south. In preparation track clearing working bees will be happening in late Spring. Tony Culberg is coordinating the trips. These will be advertised. All cavers benefit from improved tracks, and they are fun days out in the bush, so come along and help.
- Alan Jackson is back at the helm of the ASF magazine, *Caves Australia*. What does this mean? It means that the magazine is back in production, after it failed to materialise when he last stopped running it. So think about supporting him by sending him some copy.
- There is a bit of a shake up going on at the ASF (note previous item). Two new commissioners have been appointed:

Brian Evans has been appointed Convener of the ASF Australian Cave Rescue Commission. To quote the ASF; “This commission aims to promote and provide rescue training to cavers Australia wide, and to build knowledge of safe caving practices and self-rescue techniques. Also to help facilitate training in each state and the purchase of rescue equipment”. This might actually start happening now after years of a silent void. Emails will even be answered.

Any enquiries direct to: acrc@caves.org.au

Ric Tunney has been appointed Convener of the ASF Grants Commission. Again to quote ASF “This commission aims to support ASF members in a wide range of projects related to caves and karst. Several categories of grants are available including: conservation, research, education, conference attendance and exploration”. Something should actually start happening on this front too now.

Any enquiries direct to: grants@caves.org.au

This is following the election of our own Sarah Gilbert to the executive at the last meeting. Sarah is now living in Adelaide, and has joined Flinders University Speleos (FUSSI), so it isn’t all nepotistic on our part.

Watch this space for more thrilling developments in the soap opera that is the ASF.

- If you have any cave-related snippets that you think we will all find interesting, or need to know, then send them to me, the editor, please. I am always looking for copy for this section. My email address on page two of every issue of the *Spiel*.

Trip Reports

MC-44 Honeycomb Cave. Rescue practice.

14 April 2018

Tom Porritt

Party:, Paul Darby, Lyndsey Gray, Annabel Hunter (novice), Janice March, Tom Porritt, Cath Stark, David Wools-Cobb.

The weather was cold, with frequent drizzle.

First up was the Michie Phones. We looked at, and inside, the little devices, and then ran 100 metres or so of wire and practiced operating the phones.



How does this thing go together?

Photo: Tom Porritt

Next was an introduction to the Petzl Nest rescue stretcher. We examined the stretcher, strapped Cath into it, picked it up and carried it a few metres before putting it down and releasing her. We repeated the exercise with Annabel.



Moving a stretcher is hard work

Photo: Tom Porritt

Janice wanted to see how the stretcher worked in an awkward squeeze. So we found a small loop of passage and strapped Janice into the stretcher. With some forward thought, we positioned handlers in the passage and passed the stretcher with Janice in it around the corners fairly easily. We then removed the stiffening ribs from the stretcher and repeated the circuit around the awkward loop. It was easier with more flex, but still some support

for the patient.

Some of us set up a light weight tent as a heat tent inside the cave. With two people and two candles the temperature inside came up significantly (to 19°C?) in about 30 minutes.



Janice trying not to set the tent alight as she puts the candle in

Photo: Tom Porritt

Others set up a small Tyrolean where Lyndsey in the stretcher was hauled along and up, then lowered vertically down.

For me it was interesting, as before this, I had only heard of Michie Phones and this fancy new stretcher. So I got some hands on experience, and my rope hauling skills needed a refresh.



Practicing a Tyrolean, obviously

Photo: Tom Porritt

JF-463 Constitution Hole – Righting past wrongs

19 May 2018

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler

With the Kubla distraction essentially finished it is time I started catching up on some southern surveys. Constitution Hole is top of the list (if you don't count Thailand and Vietnam ...). After the initial bout of exploration there were only two spots which weren't

documented properly: the deepest point and some stuff half way down Hang Glider Chamber/Pitch. The former was important, the latter less so.

The deepest point, pushed very early on in the piece, was explored but not surveyed. The crew had fed me some excuse about it being muddy and they were concerned about ruining my DistoX. I don't know what their excuse for not writing a trip report either was; useless. While selecting ropes for the trip I had to rely on a vague memory of conversations and some video footage Mark Euston had taken during exploration (which I hadn't seen for six years and can't find on file). I tried to extrapolate likely pitch numbers and lengths from the half-arsed survey data that did exist.

First surprise was finding hangers on the bolts on pitches one and two. A good effort by Petr and Andreas back in 2014 when they 'derigged' it, clearly. The stainless ones weren't looking too bad but the alloy ones were a little worse for wear.

The tight passage to pitch three was more awful than I remembered. I'd not been down the 27 m pitch three before; it was very pleasant, other than the knot crossing required. Pitch four followed soon after and was a hideous tight rift to start with. Bolt placements were a bit low but manageable. 10 metres down a broad ledge was reached and I looked around to see what they'd done to negotiate it for the following 16 metres of pitch. I could find no bolts but it looked like they'd placed a sling around a big chockstone/bridge off to the side. I didn't have enough rope for a rebelay so I whacked in a short concrete screw on the far wall instead and redirected. Another knot crossing was required (this pitch was bigger than I had allowed for) and we touched down beside the calcified skeleton (quoll?) with no more rope and a hunch that there was a short pitch still to come.

The passage was tight and muddy from this point. I recced it and confirmed a ~4 m pitch further down. The options were go home again with nothing achieved or pull out the knife. I cut ~7 m of rope off the bottom of P4 and tied a tape on to make sure it didn't boing up out of reach when I let go. The rigging for P5 was basically non-existent (I'd remembered this from the video). I placed a short concrete screw on each side and slithered on down. It was an utter mud-fest down the pitch. The main stream was encountered and it was flowing quite strongly and backed up as a result. It required a stomach-deep wade to negotiate – oh joy. The survey commenced at the upstream sump (about 15 metres along) and was quite entertaining in the muddy conditions. We surveyed back to station 58 at the top of pitch three. While Gabriel ascended P3 I checked out the side rift at the bottom of P3 – it only went ~20 m before crapping out in a tiny straw grotto. I assume that the largish passage dropping in near the top of P3 is the connector to the fragile 'out of bounds' passage back between the bottom of P2 and the traverse to Hang Glider area.

We toured to Hang Glider on the way out, noticing more bloody hangers on the bolts. We stripped the two from the approach but couldn't bothered going back to get some rope to allow us to reach the rebelay just over the lip. Presumably the bolts on the rebelay further down the pitch have hangers on them too. Next time. We derigged

and headed for home in the failing light.

I'm undecided whether I want to return to check the couple of things half way down Hanglender. It would be good to go get some bloody hangers. Maybe.

On a positive note, Gabriel only threw one item down a pitch on this trip (a hanger on pitch 3). He's clearly improving. He throws rigging gear, I throw tantrums – we each have our own skill set.

JF-4 Khazad-Dum

2 June 2018

Alan Jackson

Party: Ben Armstrong, Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler

The glue issues that stopped me bolting the wet route this time last year had been largely resolved so 'p-hanging' of the final pitch in KD the wet way was back on the cards. I wanted winter water levels to ensure I chose good bolt placements to avoid raging waterfalls.

The plan was to get it rigged most, if not all of the way. We would go the 'Wet Way' from the entrance to make the commute more sporting. I tasked Gabriel and Ben with rigging while I supervised Anna on what would be a true test of her skills on very technical rigging in cold, wet, noisy conditions. Gabriel decided to replicate Andreas and co's efforts from a year and a half ago and only use every second set of anchors. After a bit of abusive shouting I sent the rigging team on its way with the advice that using the rigging guide I'd handed them at the start of the trip might be helpful.

We reconvened at the bottom of Animal Pitch. Ben and Gab were sent on to rig the first three small lower streamway pitches and to dump excess gear at the top of the second while Anna and I started our ascent. Our ascent went slowly but smoothly with the occasional bum shove required to help Anna negotiate reachy sideways rigging. We only had to wait ten minutes or so at the car for the others, who had achieved their mission.



Anna Jackson, on a different KD trip (I have no other photos). For the carefully observant, sent me an email to explain why. Let's call this a competition, shall we? Alan (Jackson) will no doubt get it in 2 seconds (sigh)

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

JF-4 Khazad-Dum

9 June 2018

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Petr Smejkal

This trip was for drilling. Water levels were pretty much the same as the week before. We moved quickly through the cave, with a little optimising of the rigging on the way. Inexplicably my bag detached from my harness between rebelay on Animal Pitch and plummeted over 20 metres. With three spare batteries for my drill and Andreas's drill (with four spare batteries) in the bag, I was a tad concerned for what I might find. Of course the bag had come to rest right under the raging waterfall for added saturation benefit. I inspected the contents gingerly and was relieved to find that the only damage appeared to be a tear in the side of my cave pack, a total blow out of the dry bag all the drill stuff was in and a surfeit of water washing through everything. Bullet apparently dodged.

At the lower streamway pitch 4 ('Chute' pitch) we investigated options for avoiding the stupid traverse to the ledge. The opposite wall/side of the waterfall was clearly a better way to go but we agonised over whether to start high or low. The approach to the high route was annoyingly awkward and would require three new bolts (one for approach then two for y-belay over the drop); the low route would only require two new hangers and kept the sporting element of traversing the rushing water chute, which is always fun. We decided on the lower route and I placed two concrete screws to get over from the water. The water levels were annoyingly 'medium' which made the curtain of water stretch the full width of the ensuing passage – we got wet.

The next pitch is traditionally rigged off naturals. But the naturals are low and the slippery ~70 degree slab of rock you descend is crap. We experimented with a concrete screw y-belay high (on the left wall) which would still descend the pitch on the same crappy slab but with a much more ergonomic take off and positioned to allow the use of feet on the slab instead of knees and toes. It was delightful.

We had a bite to eat and some respite from the noise in the Brew Room and formulated a plan for the last pitch – I'd rig to the bottom and drill back up while Petr would drill down from the top. Instead of following the water, as we had the last time we were here, we would start at the little upper window I had spotted belatedly. This worked well and a redirect a few metres down looked like being all that would be required to get us right down this first ~15 m drop (avoiding the two rebelay we'd used last time to get around the corner and out of the water). But half way down the pitch I was getting uncomfortably close to the water so I popped back up to the second of the original rebelay and re-installed it. Near the base of the first drop, just above the pool perched on the lip of the next drop, I discovered a lovely natural thread for the redirect which saved me from having to find the unmarked concrete screw hole from the previous trip as

well as save a p-hanger installation. Excellent. I then rigged to the final rebelay, dangling over the large basal chamber.

I drilled two holes around the nose/arête (to get it an extra foot or two from the spray zone lower down). These were very hard to drill (body position quite awkward). By the time I'd rigged and drilled these two holes Petr had drilled the two at the top of the pitch, one for the first redirect and one for the first rebelay on the first drop. He'd noticed it was now unnecessary to drill a hole for the second redirect and had come to the lip after the pool for directions. Shouting was futile so he came down while I came back up and we met in the middle. While I drilled two holes at the mid-pitch landing, Petr drilled two back up at the top of the pitch (pool lip). We then met in the middle again at the rebelay and drilled a hole each for this 'get sideways to avoid the water' anchor.

On our way out, since we had some battery life left, we drilled holes for the new bolts on P4 and P5 of the 'lower streamway' route. Petr got the two P5 bolts drilled in the same holes we'd earlier made for the concrete screws – we'll rig this the old fashioned way on the next trip until the gluing is done. I started on the P4 holes but lost battery power partway through the first hole. I wasn't fussed, as I knew I had one charged battery left which I now dug out of my bag. Upon releasing it from its protective neoprene sleeve I discovered it was busted to pieces and that there had actually been a casualty from the Animal Pitch bag drop earlier in the day ... doh! It looked completely screwed so I abandoned drilling. Petr managed to finish that hole before running out of batteries too, so we left the cave one agonising hole short of not needing to bring a drill with us on the next trip. Ah well. We buggered off home.

At home I inspected the battery to find that the damage was limited to total destruction of the case but no damage to the cells, circuitry or fastening mechanism. In hindsight I might have been able to carefully clip the battery in and nurse it through another hole. Alas. That battery was ancient (as is the drill) and needs a refurb or chucking away anyway.

Cave Hill, Florentine Valley

17 March – 10 June 2018

Bill Nicholson

Party: Phillip Jackson, Callum Nicholson, Liam Nicholson, Bill Nicholson.

"How much further" came the cry as we frolicked through the regrowth, on the wrong track searching for a cave that wasn't there. But we did locate, or more accurately stumble across, JF-210 and JF-211 so that was one consolation and we did clear the route (pretend dirty word) a little; and the copious cups of tea were most refreshing, which only the older generation can truly appreciate.

Sadly, and maybe with a touch of dementia, it took us another frolic before it became apparent that we were

given maybe incorrect information as to where the track started from. So after more cups of tea we located the correct track and off we went once again frolicking through the regrowth.

And so the story eventually unfolds, plans were formulated over dubious beverages and medications which lead to much more frolicking, track clearing and re-routing to JF-462; Tarn Creek Swallet, where we located some of the local holes and found a number of new ones, of which one has been tagged and named JF-676 Clacker Cave, and the others have yet to be explored. One in particular has a fairly decent draught but that bad boy will require digging and the required cups of tea.

A surface survey was also conducted connecting JF-218, JF-442 and JF-443, and this was done by the esteemed Rutter, Phillip Jackson.

Little did we realise at the time, that is before we clackered, that Clacker Cave was yet another entrance to Pepper Pot Plateau Master Cave, insert raucous laughter. This Master Cave, although presently micro in statue, more raucous laughter, has currently four entrances of which three are tagged, JF-442, JF-443 and JF-676. It has roughly 200 metres of passage over 3 levels, numerous bone deposits and a number of leads.

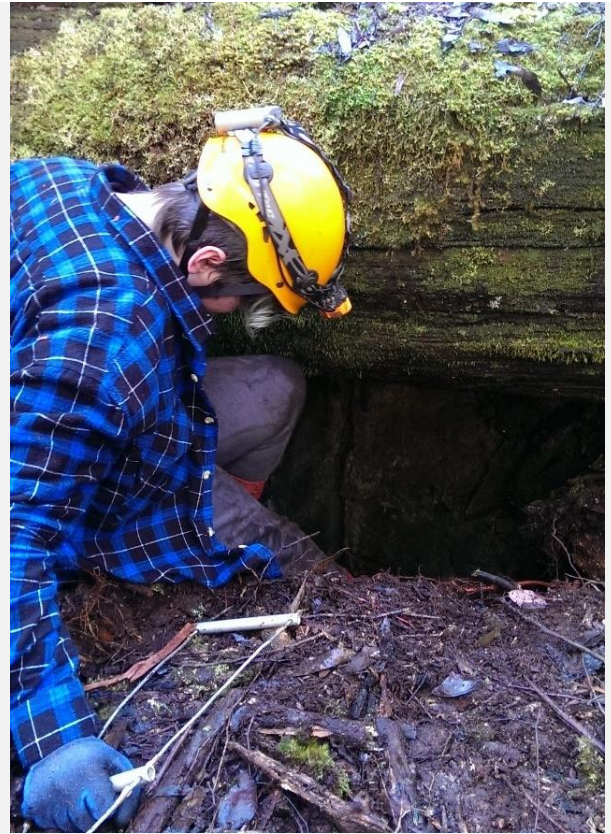
Over the four frolics to date not everybody was able to participate either physically or mentally but none the less, the frolic continues.



An older fart.

Photo: Bill Nicholson

(all caption comments provided by the author -Ed)



A wee fart entering the Clacker

Photo: Bill Nicholson

JF-4 Khazad-Dum: The Hypothermia Scare

25 June 2018

Ben Armstrong

Party: Ben Armstrong, John Oxley, Ciara Smart

Having gone part of the way down KD two times previously, I was keen to take advantage of its rigged status with a “quick and easy” tourist trip to the bottom. I invited along Ciara, a classmate from my Certificate IV Outdoor Recreation course, whose move down from Sydney was partly inspired by the prospect of caving down here. She suggested that her friend John might be interested in coming. Although John had hardly caved at all in Tassie (*and has lived here for many years – Ed*), Ciara had done quite a few trips with him in NZ (*depends where though, if you want to relate it to caving here – Ed*) and vouched for his experience.

When I informed Alan of the plan, he was less than enthusiastic about the idea of taking someone of an unknown ability down a seriously damp cave in winter. To be honest, I was feeling slightly apprehensive about it as well, but figured that we could give John the option of turning around if things got too much for him. When I met him the next morning, John suggested this himself.

The entrance was roaring when we arrived at around 10:30 am. The water was significantly higher than my last trip in (two weeks previously) and I began having a few creeping concerns about the wetness of the streamway

pitches. Inside the cave, communication was limited to shouting, and this was only effective within a few meters.

We made fairly slow progress down the first few pitches of the (relatively dry) Wet Way. Ciara was taking a while on the tricky rigging, however John seemed to be managing reasonably well at the back. My initial caution had abated somewhat and I pushed on to the bottom of Animal Pitch, where I waited for the others. Both Ciara and John said they were faring well and keen to keep going.

As expected, the streamway was very wet and the modified rigging unavoidably awkward. We arrived at the recently bolted final pitch and I set about finishing off the rigging. I hadn't properly checked in with John since the start of the streamway, but I thought we might as well get to the bottom. John touched down on the floor of the Waterfall Chamber after me. It was immediately obvious that he was quite cold, and as soon as Ciara got off the rope he started back up. His prusiking was slow and hindered by a difficult rebelay. I ascended last and caught up with the other two at the top of the second last pitch. John hadn't warmed up much and was shivering severely, so we helped him into a spare fleece jacket he'd brought along (*why hadn't he put it on when he first became cold?* – Ed), took his pack off him and got moving.

The series of short pitches in the streamway made it apparent just how serious John's condition was. He was complaining about feeling weak, struggling to stand up in his foot loop and had to be physically assisted past a couple of rebelay. He kept wanting to rest, but I was very reluctant to let him, given that we were already moving too slowly to warm up and the streamway wasn't a great place to linger. I began seriously doubting his ability to get out unassisted. By this point Ciara was already on her way up, as she was starting to get cold and I figured it would be more useful to have someone above ground.

At the bottom of Animal Pitch, I gave John my hydrophobic down vest, which (although saturated) retained a reasonable amount of loft. I let him rest for a few minutes, but despite the vest, sugary snacks and some survival hugging, his temperature was still dropping, so I told him to start prusiking.

Ciara (who had exited the cave at this stage) found some miraculous reception on the phone she'd left at the entrance and contacted Alan, who assembled a rescue team and notified police.

I followed John's agonisingly slow progress up Animal Pitch and derigged a 30 m rope from the bottom, with the intention of improvising some sort of counter-balance assist to help him up if it came to that. I realised that attempting something like that would be a pretty desperate move, as the potential for screwing things up and getting both of us stuck was way too high.

Despite his exhaustion, John was beginning to warm up and by the Traverse Pitch he'd regained some of his strength and upward speed, so I left the extra rope behind. He made gradual but steady progress up the final pitches and we emerged from the entrance (where Ciara was waiting) at 7:30 pm, around 9 hours after entering. The rescue squad was called off and we staggered back to the car through the relative warmth of the night.

Review:

Setting aside the obvious lessons about caving with people of unproven ability and relying on the recommendations of others, there are several points I've taken from this little escapade:

1. I was overcommitted. I should have assessed the conditions and the group's capability for what they were and been more open to calling it a day.
2. I was too polite. I should have voiced my concerns about John's suitability for the trip. I should have been more probing about how he was coping on the way down and should have encouraged him to turn around. Being condescending is preferable to being hypothermic.
3. The vicious cycle of hypothermia and reduced speed can be very hard to stop. I should have given John my vest when I first noticed he was cold. I think I remember offering it, but I probably should have insisted (this ties back to the over-politeness issue).
4. Cossack dancing in a trog suit is a great way to stay warm.

An "almost" trip report, so close enough to fit in this section of the Spiel.

Maybe I should add a new section in the Spiel for rescues and call outs, they seem to becoming a popular pastime for the club – Ed

KD Near Miss

25 June 2018

Alan Jackson

A recent trip to Khazad-Dum nearly resulted in a call out/rescue resulting from hypothermia. Here's my take on the situation and summary of what happened at my end. In the end nothing happened and a call out wasn't required, but I figure it could be useful to document what and when things happened to give people an idea what I figured was important so you can give me feedback and make a response better in the future. Hopefully Ben, Ciara and John write something too for us to digest.

I knew Ben Armstrong (trip leader) and Ciara Smart were planning on visiting KD while I have it rigged for bolting. Ben had been to KD with me on at least two occasions in the last two years, including as recently as only a month earlier. I was happy he knew what he was in for and that Ciara was capable. The night before the trip, while collecting the gate key, Ben indicated that Ciara had invited John Oxley on the trip. I expressed my reservations, indicating that while I'd not caved with John and hadn't seen him for years my gut feeling was that he would find it very challenging. I reminded Ben it would be bloody wet and cold (he'd not previously negotiated the bottom of the fourth lower streamway pitch ('the chute') where total saturation in the curtain of water

below the pitch is unavoidable in winter water levels). I made a flippant comment (a bit too vicious to quote here ...) about John's likelihood of encountering a problem and left Ben to figure it out.

At 1753 I received a message from David Rueda Roca informing me there was a problem in KD, that John had possible hypothermia and to expect contact from Ciara. I started packing my caving kit. Five minutes later Ciara called me using the Messenger app. Ciara was located at the KD carpark. The call quality was poor and we aborted the call after a minute. During the call she indicated that she had insufficient mobile reception to make a standard call. We reverted to communicating via text messages on Messenger. In a nutshell, Ciara had left the other two 'about 7 pitches' down (cave rigged 'the wet way', so mid lower streamway somewhere). John was moving very slowly, extremely cold/tired. Ciara was getting very cold too due to extremely slow pace. Ben had told her to head out at her pace and raise alarm for potential rescue. She indicated she was hopeful John would get out under his own steam, just very slowly and that she didn't consider it safe for her to re-enter the cave due to her own coldness. I advised her to stay put (in comms range) with the exception of heading down to unlock the Junee Quarry Gate (Ciara advised the gate was already unlocked), to fire up the car and get the heater cranking and that I'd get the ball rolling at my end but wouldn't make a decision to leave Hobart for another hour. [Effectively this was a redundant comment, as it would take at least that long to get a team mobilised anyway, but I figured it indicated to Ciara how I rated the situation.]

At 1804 I called Sgt Damian Bidgood (Police) to see what he thought. He didn't answer (turned out he was on a chopper doing training).

At 1809 I sent a message to the STC email list server and the STC Facebook page which read:

"Please people be on standby for possible cave rescue in KD. Pack your kit if your [sic] in Hobart area and are available. Email or message me if you're available."

I'm still gutted about that "your/you're" error, but saving lives is more important than grammar (sometimes).

I tried to keep it general (no names or what the problem was), as it wasn't important at the time. I did think it was important to name the cave so any available people knew they were packing for a very wet and vertical cave. I received numerous responses over the next twenty minutes (from locals, Victorians and even New Zealanders).

At 1811 I called the Police radio room (131444) to put them on notice. I provided details of the situation to Sgt Nick Cooper. He would place the SAR team on standby.

At this point, this is where being the central coordinator gets frustrating. While trying to mentally and physically prepare you start getting harassed by everyone else – both cavers and Police. Some people responded well with simple indications that they were available and getting ready (good on you). I'll single out two individuals to whinge about: Andreas, in the UK for work and therefore not in any position to be particularly useful, sends me messages asking what's going on (I ignored this one);

Fraser indicated his keenness to help but also asked what the situation was, that he was still up for the next weekend's trip and mentioned it'd be great if we could get some footage of any ensuing rescue (FARK! I ignored this one too). It is very handy to have a PA in this instance and Loretta stepped up (just like she did during Isabelle's rescue). Loretta handled non and semi critical comms while I packed gear. She sated Andreas's curiosity when he sent a second message asking what was happening. Others rang and kept it brief.

At 1824 I assessed who had responded and, more importantly, who hadn't. I sent an SMS to Ric, Serena, Janine, Geoff, Petr, Stefan and Lucy (Petr's wife, knowing how crap Petr is at noticing he even has a mobile) telling them to check email and/or Facebook re rescue. I also rang Anna and Han-Wei (I considered them important enough to ring). They didn't answer, but Anna called me back later and I indicated I wanted them ready if available – they were/could be.

At 1830 Damian texted me (from chopper training) to see what was up. I informed him via text where we were at.

At 1838 Ciara messaged me to say she'd now been out for 1 hour 15 minutes and that she'd walked back to the entrance and to the top of the first pitch but there had been no signs of the other two.

At 1846 Const. Josh Peach rang me (he was training with Damian and now back on the ground) to get the low down.

At 1854 John Pratt (I've forgotten his rank) from Police contacted me and indicated he would be the incident controller. He took details again and said he'd keep preparing things at his end and asked to be kept informed of anything happening our end.

At 1901 Ciara contacted me, pointing out it had now been an hour since she'd contacted me. I informed her we'd be mobilising very soon.

During all this time I had been collecting space blankets (single use and more robust ones), sleeping bag, polar fleece blanket, stove, fuel, kettle, foam sleeping mats (most of it all recently purchased and still sitting in my office in North Hobart) and other club rescue paraphernalia (vertical rescue stuff I wasn't expecting to need to use, but I figured having it in my car at the end of the KD road would be of more use than at my office if it proved we needed it later on). I was now ready to go. I rang Gabriel, Pax and Petr at around 1910 and told them to get to my place (I'd collect Petr on the way though) and that we'd head to the cave.

At 1919 I double-checked with Ciara that the gate was open. Gabriel arrived and put his gear in my car when Ciara informed me that Ben and John had arrived in the carpark. Gabriel looked gutted. I rang Pax and Petr to stand them down. I rang John Pratt and stood Police down. I went back inside and watched some TV. Ben dropped by around 2230 to return the gate key and have a brief discussion about what just happened.

Ciara emailed me the next day to say thanks and debrief a bit. Damian rang me mid-morning to debrief and assess how we responded and whether it was appropriate. The next day I found myself in the office long enough to

respond to Ciara's email with some feedback (mostly nice).

So, what did we learn? Did we do a good job? I'm pretty happy, and Damian agrees, that neither the party, Police nor I over reacted by getting things moving straight away. On face value the situation was potentially a death from hypothermia or an accident resulting from a semi-frozen bumbling caver. We didn't rush it but we didn't dally either. I could have rung more people directly and got them going (Janine, for example, didn't become aware till 2030 that anything was going on but she would have if I'd rung instead of texting) but the indirect approach of email and Facebook had raised enough people in the first ten minutes that I didn't think it was necessary to spend time mobilising more troops. The most likely scenario (other than self-rescue) was hypothermia but otherwise ok, so getting a small team in quickly with comfort and warming things was the priority (for two cavers, not just one, as if they had stopped then Ben was going to be getting very cold very quickly too). If I'd thought we needed more people on board and that I didn't have the time to do it AND get myself ready then I would have outsourced it to someone else.

I reflected via email to Ben and Ciara that with the value of hindsight I should have said more forcefully that John shouldn't have gone on the trip. I also indicated that Ciara probably shouldn't have recommended someone for a trip to a cave she'd never been to, in an area she has very little caving experience. Ben is a relatively inexperienced trip leader and is only learning how often people overstate their capabilities before and understate their feelings during a trip. While I haven't talked to John at all about the incident, and hardly know him, I suspect he's probably thinking 'hmm, I knew I was getting cold and struggling but I kept going down even though I have enough caving experience to know that going back up is the hard bit'. For John to have stated he wasn't up to it and needed to turn around would have meant the other two should also turn around and accompany him – no one wants to be the person that kills the trip for the other two. But it's better to be that person than the one who endangers himself, and therefore others, by continuing on.

On responding to callouts – please be mindful that the people coordinating the call out have a lot on their mind and many things to think about and action. They don't need unnecessarily long messages or phone calls to convey whether you're available to help or not. Serena nailed it with her response of 'yes'. It told me everything I needed to know and only took five seconds to process.

Clearly, I need to get all the recently purchased rescue kit to the gear store so it is more accessible to everyone. If something happened while I was out of phone range or not available to get my office unlocked then that's going to cause delays.

Thanks to everyone who put their hand up. It's comforting to know that when the shit hits the fan there'll be an angry mob of mop-wielding cavers swooping in to clean it up.

JF-4 Khazad-Dum

30 June 2018

Alan Jackson

Party: Stefan Eberhard, Alan Jackson, Fraser Johnston, Janine McKinnon, David Rueda Roca

This was meant to be the gluing trip. Fraser and Stefan hijacked the start of the trip to get some *Tatarus* filming done. I took the opportunity of a slow start to place tags on the bolts on the recently bolted 'Wet Way' route. The installation manual says every bolt must have a tag on it confirming it has been tested and the date of that test. Generally, I've been listing the 'Master Hanger Number' (MHN), the installation date and the testing date. Listing the MHN means someone who identifies the anchor as possibly defective can report it as 'bolt ##' instead of 'um, I think it was the left bolt at the second rebelay on the third pitch ...' The tags are nice and obvious (white and about 30 mm square) and have some retro-reflective material stuck to them, so they're now so easy to spot that even Gabriel might find them all.

The filming went well. Stefan set up bright diving lights at the base of the main waterfall pitches before people abseiled. Stefan filmed from below while Fraser took footage from the top and part way down (*see STC Facebook page, 30 June, or look here on a public FB page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/waterfallssoftasmania/> if you aren't on our FB page . Again- posted 30 June.– Ed*).

The footage I've seen is excellent but it was even better live – seeing the waterfall and pitches completely illuminated was magnificent.

At the bottom of Animal Pitch we left the film crew to their own devices and headed on. At lower streamway pitch four ('chute' pitch) I drilled the hole we'd run out of batteries for last trip. At the last pitch Janine and David went for a tourist of the basal chamber (*and up to the bottom of Dwarrowdelf – Ed*) whilst I drilled an extra hole at a rebelay at the half way point and tidied up a bad rub below the other hole drilled on the previous trip. I then set about gluing but soon discovered a vital part of the applicator gun had unthreaded itself and was missing. I tried bodging it with string but couldn't get it to work. I lost my shit for a bit (not even roaring waterfalls could drown out the swearing (*I can verify that. I would have thought though that if one was going to ascribe gender to an inanimate object then this one would be male - Ed*)). We made for the entrance (me still VERY angry).

Not a completely wasted day, but still a lot of effort for little return from my perspective. *Yes, but we did get some awesome footage for Fraser, and David got to the bottom of KD, and I got down the bottom "wet" pitch route for the first time. So a few good outcomes from other people's perspectives - Ed..*

JF-341 Dive trip preparation and filming

7 July 2018

Stefan Eberhard

Party: James Barnes, Serena Benjamin, Stefan Eberhard, Petr Smejkal

As a precursor to this report, and a postscript to Dan Mitchell's dive report in the last *Speleo Spiel*, a second dive was undertaken in the 341 sump during May. Sandy Varin succeeded in passing the sump which proved to be shallow and short, around 9 m long. Sandy explored the continuing stream passage for a short distance and could see at least two ways on through loose rocks. She did not push it further on account of being alone. This is a very exciting breakthrough! (*Yes it is, and a full trip report would be great - Ed*) Hopefully it will lead us closer to intersecting the Junee master cave which must lie only a few hundred metres horizontally from the surveyed end chamber in 341.

The main aim of the trip reported below was to carry in dive equipment in preparation for the next diving exploration trip in August. An additional aim was to shoot some film for the Tartarus Project.



All shiny and clean at the entrance

Photo: James Barnes

On arrival at the Junee Road I discovered to my dismay that I had left my SRT kit at home, probably because I was preoccupied with the dive equipment! Fortunately, this oversight proved a minor inconvenience by using old-school tape and krab methods on the short easy sloping pitches, and sharing Petr's kit on the free-hanging 38 m pitch. The entrance series and entire cave was very wet with lots of water flowing everywhere after overnight rain and snow on the peaks. We staged some film sequences on the main pitch, which looked fantastic with video lights at the bottom shining up through the waterfall as people abseiled down. Petr manned the camera and we staged some more sequences in the spectacular well-

decorated sections along the way to the sump. James took photos, some of which appear in this report. With the cave rigged we arrived at the dive base just above the sump in around 2.5 hours including filming and messing around with SRT kits. We deposited a 3-litre tank, 4 weights, a line reel, underwater survey gear, and my 5 mm wetsuit. The dive gear remaining from the last dive trip, done by Sandy Varin and friends in May, was checked and in good order, just a bit muddy like all gear tends to get in this cave. After a snack we headed back to the pitches and with some creative prusik innovations were back on the surface after some 7 hours underground. A fun trip.

JF341 is unlike most other vertical caves in the Junee Florentine karst in being well endowed with formations, including some large and spectacular flowstone walls and crystal pools. There are also plenty of muddy climbs and crawls which make a trip to the end quite a physical challenge. The cave has suffered some impacts from caving activities over the years, the most notable impact being trampling damage and mud tracking. Some protective measures, including tape barriers and signs, were installed by Jeff Butt and friends in the 1990's. Some of these conservation measures have degraded over the years and are in need of replacement or upgrading. The pink flagging tape used as a barrier has quite a visual impact of itself and detracts in the most photogenic parts of the cave. In addition, there are other sensitive areas of the cave that are unprotected and becoming degraded, and these would greatly benefit from some minimalist string line protection and route marking. Some route marking to assist navigation through some of the complex sections would speed up transit times and limit back-tracking and needless additional trampling and mud tracking. I am planning a return trip in July to start conservation efforts. Assistance from any interested club members would be welcome!

I am very excited about the prospects for a breakthrough via 341. The next diving, survey and exploration trip is scheduled for 11-12th August (divers: Dan Mitchell and Stefan), and depending on the findings of this trip, there will be a follow-up dive trip on 18-19th August (divers: Sandy and Dave Bardi).



Gabriel inspects some of the decorations

Photo: James Barnes

Other Exciting Stuff

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ed -This is a trip report from the Southern Caving Society's magazine Southern Caver (this is not to be confused with the current version which is an occasional publication by STC). This trip report is from Southern Caver Number 57, May 1994.

I thought it apt to re-print now after the almost rescue recently, reported in this issue of the Spiel. Even though these two events are in different types of caves, and have differing scenarios leading to the trip's planning going somewhat awry, there are also similarities too.

Lessons can be learnt, or reminders noted, by both what went well, and what led to the problems in the first place.

Notes: 1. The emergency crossing was only re-installed a few years ago by STC.

2. In those days the track started at the top of the quarry. There was a 2-WD road to there.

Ida Bay-Valley Entrance-Exit

21/ 4/91

Party: Russell Fulton, Daniel Muskee, Ruth Lanyon, Robina Sharp, Andrew McNeill

Andrew McNeill

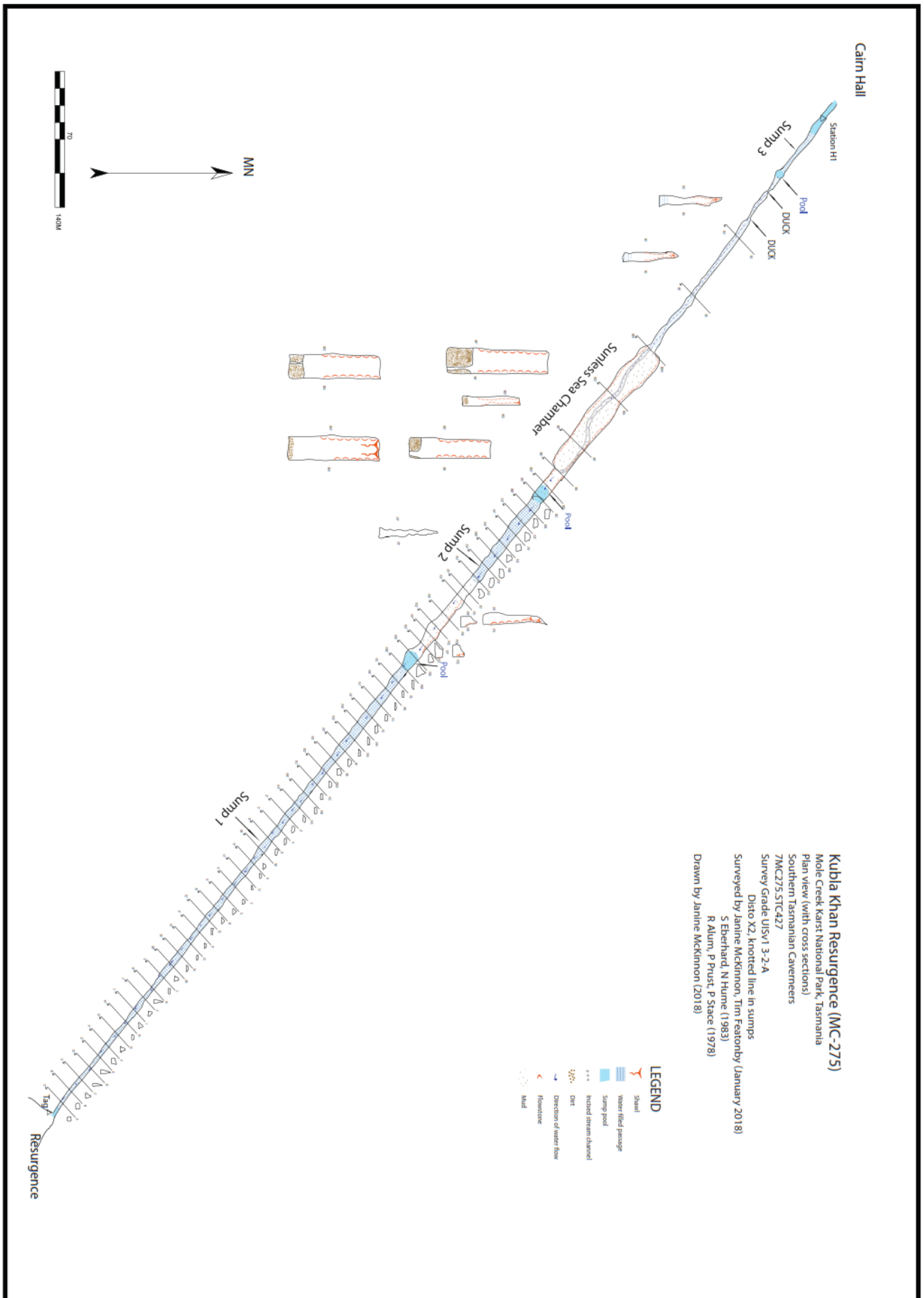
Left Hobart early and arrived at the quarry in quite heavy rain so decided to go to Valley Entrance. Mystery Creek was low and as there was only light rain as we walked up the hill we thought the weather may be on the improve. Entered the cave at 10:50 am. Placed an old ladder on the final drop into Exit then visited the acoustic chamber before heading to the Grand Fissure for lunch. The creek still seemed low so we decided to push on down the streamway and exit via IB86. By the time we passed the Mystery Creek inflow the creek was rising perceptibly. We moved on quickly to the D'Entrecasteaux River junction feeling confident we would get out OK as I had been in the cave in higher water levels and had no problem. I attempted to cross the stream but made it only 2/3 of the way before the water was nearly chest deep and as I hadn't reached the deepest part of the channel I returned, against quite a strong current (unusual, the water normally ponds at this point in high flow). After discussing the options we decided to wait a while to ascertain if the creek level was dropping. After 20 minutes it was down about 3-4 cm and we decided to wait as it would probably only be 2-3 hours before it was safe to cross (the alternative being a return out Valley Entrance which we estimated would take 5-6 hours to get back to the car).

While the others found a sheltered spot and settled in wrapped up in a space blanket, I decided the best way to dry off was a bit of frantic activity and set off on an exploration of high level passages in this area, something

I'd never bothered to do before, finding some quite good formation and several leads to follow up later. I returned to the others and had a brew (I'd brought my Trangia) before finally crossing the creek at 10:30 pm. The water level having dropped approx. 40 cm. We headed for the entrance to find the old emergency crossing was completely un-useable (it had been in a pretty bad way when I last had to use it a couple of years previously) and water levels still too high to cross safely. A retreat was called for and we found a sheltered spot on the large sand bank near the D'Entrecasteaux crossing and settled in for another wait. After a few more hours we were starting to get cold and as the creek had dropped further we managed to cross using a safety line (the water was still neck deep on me). A quick exit was made via IB86 to find the ground outside covered in 2-3 cm of hail, a howling gale blowing and the time at 2:40 am. Following the track out was reasonably easy and we reached the top of the quarry at 3:30 am, where we were met by Greg Jordan and a group of police who were just setting off to look for us. Cadged a lift down to the search base at the bottom of the quarry where we discussed what had gone wrong with the search coordinator, got changed, thanked everyone and then were driven home by Greg, arriving in Hobart at 6:30 am.

Due to a radio problem a search party, including Dean Morgan, who had set off to Valley Entrance were unable to be recalled and ended up doing a through trip, finding the water levels somewhat lower than we had! The fast response of the police was due in large part to Phil Jackson, who having seen the poor weather and knowing I should have been home by 7-8 pm, as we were going to a Divinyls concert, initiated **S+R** procedures earlier than normal (thank you Jacko!).

Once again I'd like to thank everyone who turned out on such a dismal evening.



Yes, it's on its side. But you can see it a bit better this way. Yes, it's still very small but that's because it's a long way.

H-32 Discordance

Hastings, Tasmania

7H32.STC431

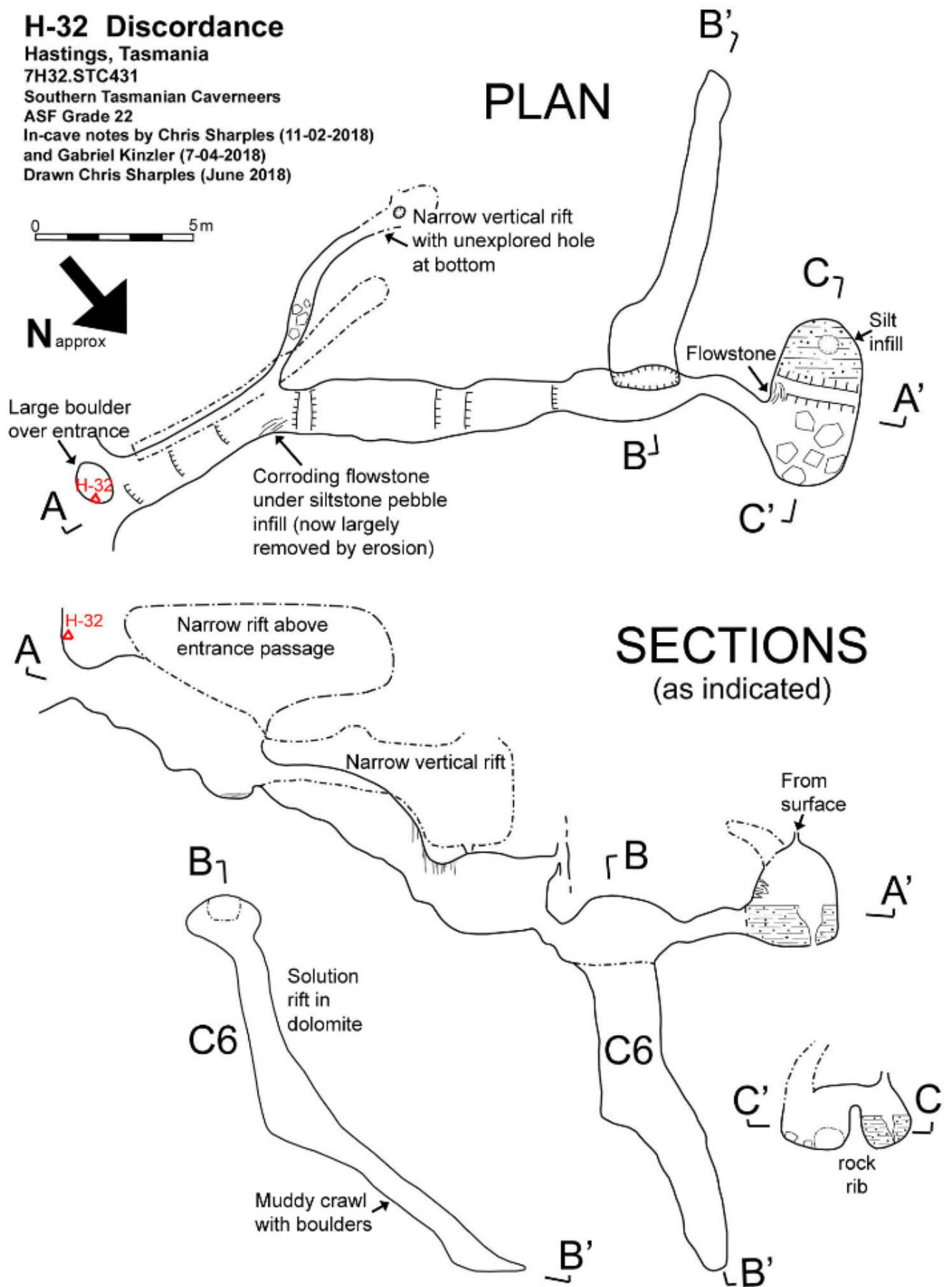
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

ASF Grade 22

In-cave notes by Chris Sharples (11-02-2018)

and Gabriel Kinzler (7-04-2018)

Drawn Chris Sharples (June 2018)



Fun and Diversions

FROZEN MOMENTS IN CLUB HISTORY

This month we have the bonus of three photos from the past eras of caving in Tasmania.

All have been provided by Paul Darby. They are all from a Savage River Caving Club (SRCC) trip to Exit Cave in November 1988.



Lyndsey Gray and some of the Exit lovelies.

Photos; Above and below: Paul Darby



(Looks like) Trevor Wailes chatting up the nearest woman (in the person of Jill Roberts). Some things in life can be depended upon. Frank Salt takes pointers. Lyndsey Gray pretending she's elsewhere.



Lyndsey Gray, showing you can find mud in Exit Cave.

Photo: Paul Darby

Note the Oldham (miners) light, construction helmet and overalls. Proper caver's kit was hard to find in Tasmania back then.

Thank you to Paul and Lyndsey for sending me these photos. I think it is important for a club to keep links with its past. It's called Corporate Memory.

Even though these are not photos from TCC/STC/SCS trips.

Tasmania is a small place and the caving community is very small. We are all part of the same community, and we have shared memories, so I am always open to receiving contributions from the other Tasmanian caving clubs.

Send photos to jmckinnon@caverneer.net.au identifying the people, place and hopefully time (aeon at least). Include photo credit where possible. A brief description would be good too.

Time period is from when TCC was founded until five years from current issue.

NAME THIS ENTRANCE

Here are a few cave entrances. Test how good your cave identification is. If you want to impress the rest of us send your answers to me (email address above) and you will get fame and glory in the next *Spiel*.

If you have any photos of entrances then I will happily publish them to test our collective knowledge, photo credit of course.



1. This one shouldn't prove too hard.

Photo: Ric Tunney



3 I hadn't realised this was so long ago (or maybe just Ric looked younger)

Photo: Janine McKinnon

Bonus points to name the cavers in these photos

Last issues answers: **Alan Jackson** had a go at identifying these, and he had a 50% success rate. Frost Pot (LHS-with Heather Nichols on rope) was correct. The other is your editor in Ice Tube.

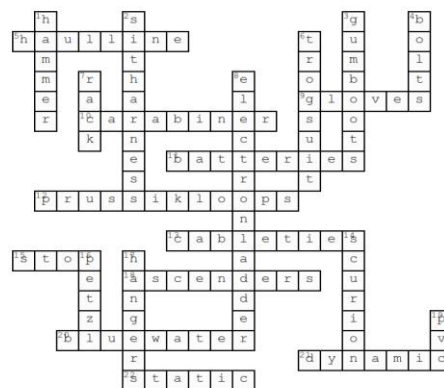
Answers to last issues crossword below:



2. This one should challenge you all, except maybe the subjects.

Photo: Ric Tunney

Caving kit



Across

5. No cave pack should be without this (**haulline**)
9. Michael Jackson got it half right, two is better (**gloves**)
10. fancy cavers shackle (**carabiner**)
11. It can be very dark without these (**batteries**)
12. don't mistake them for a breakfast cereal (**prussikloops**)
13. my cable guy tells me these can be very useful (**cableties**)
15. you can go as well (**stop**)
18. it's hard to get up without these (**ascenders**)
20. American brand of rope (**bluewater**)
21. type of rope for cows tails (**dynamic**)
22. the rope every vertical caver loves (**static**)

Down

1. you can't safely do '14' without this (**hammer**)
2. standing is not an option (**selfharness**)
3. the epitome in cave footwear (**gumboots**)
4. for when naturals aren't apparent (**bolts**)
6. outer wear (**trog suit**)
7. versatile descender (**rack**)
8. flexible, old school style of pitch navigation. (**electronladder**)
14. popular light (**scurion**)
16. a name, a brand, an icon (**petzl**)
17. useful for more than just coats (**hangers**)
19. what plastic suits are made from (**pvc**)

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Puzzle Generator

Sunday 30 December 2018 – Friday 4 January 2019

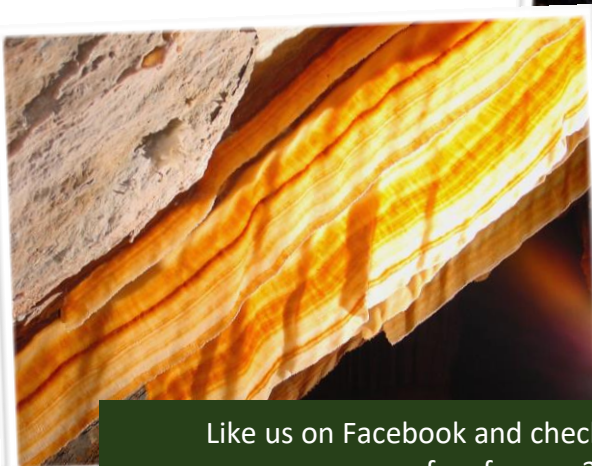
Photo credit: David Wools-Cobb

31st ASF Conference

Devonport, Tasmania



Discover
The Darkness
Beneath
this summer at
the 31st
Australian
Speleological
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