

Speleo Spiel 428

September-October 2018



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Front Cover: *A master photographer at work. Annie Crochet models in Grottes de Vallorbe, Switzerland.*

Photo: Philippe Crochet

Back Cover: *Another in our irregular series on cave gates. Hirlatzhöhle, Austria.*

Photo: Janine McKinnon

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

On 13 September Members from the Tasmanian Police Service, Ambulance Tasmania and Southern Tasmanian Caverneers collectively received the 2018 Australian Search and Rescue Commendation awarded by the National Search and Rescue Council. This was for the rescue of Isabelle Chouquet from Midnight Hole in July 2017. The presentation was in Darwin and Alan Jackson received the award on behalf of the awardees from STC. These were individual awards to each of the members of STC who participated in the rescue.

The thing that really amazed me was that we received a PROFESSIONAL award, not the one normally given to volunteers/civilians when they are recognised for similar acts. I was very proud for us all for that accolade. It recognises our skills and training, and the professional way that we all performed during the rescue. STC in general should be proud that our skills and competency are respected in the professional rescue world for it is as members of STC that we all gained those skills.

We owe a special thank you to Damian Bidgood for not only applying for this recognition but also for specifying the type of award the STC participants were to receive, which was exactly the same one that the Taspol SAR team members, and the three Ambulance Tasmania members, received. Thus it was a recognition that we all worked collegially together to effect the rescue.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) reported the awards on their Facebook page, which was nice. It also provided amusement for their slight inaccuracy, see if you can spot it: “Members from the Tasmanian Police Service, Ambulance Tasmania and Southern Tasmanian Caverneers received the 2018 Australian Search and Rescue Commendation for coordinating the challenging rescue of a woman who’d fallen 200 meters into a cave and suffered a broken leg. Their incredible teamwork is an inspiration for search and rescue operators around Australia”.

On a final note, it may have been the individuals involved who received the award however STC as a club will be remembered for this remarkably efficient, fast and competent rescue. May we never have to repeat it.

Read more here: <http://ow.ly/t0ro50iRUcW>

Stuff ‘n Stuff

- The working bee at the gearstore on 5 August to pack and sort the new rescue gear was very industrious. There were seven of us and work was completed in time for the promised Dumpling lunch, courtesy of Geoff Wise (which was delicious). Rope washing and cutting was also undertaken, so that is 600 m of new rope, specifically to be used for rescues, ready to go.
- I have put a big ad for it in this *Spiel* (again), however for those that don’t read that far, please remember the upcoming ASF conference being held in Devonport from 30 December 2018 through 4 January 2019. That covers New Year folks, so even if you aren’t keen about presentations, or activities offered, then the New

Year’s party is worth coming for surely! Here is the website (again) if you want to check it out: <https://asfconference2019.com/> Here is the facebook page if you are more focussed that way: <https://www.facebook.com/31st-ASF-Conference-2018-19-The-Darkness-Beneath-390345841414306>

- There has been a makeover done to the club constitution. For those fascinated by such bureaucracy the new version can be read on the club website.
- The social night slide show held at the Culberg’s in late July was an outstanding success. There were so many respondents that the books had to be closed. We were squeezed in like sardines ... well, we would have been if it had been held at our place, or anywhere less palatial than the Culberg’s. I think at last count 30 adults and 3 children attended. The food and chat attracted people, no doubt, but it was Stefan Eberhard’s slide show that really pulled them in, I’m sure. We were not disappointed. It was a very professional presentation with stunning underwater video of the exploration dives under the Nullarbor from the late ‘70s until this year. Anyone who didn’t come really missed something worthwhile.
- You’d better make sure you are seated for the next bit of news. We actually have a bit of a forward programme happening. Here it is:
- Third Tuesday of each month – random pub gathering. Nat Pausin will announce the venue sometime prior to each session via Facebook page and list server. Feel free to suggest a venue to Nat.
- 20 October – Valley Entrance-Exit Cave through trip – limited spaces (six total), might be full already – basically horizontal caving, but a long day out – contact Serena Benjamin
 - 25-28 October – Mt Cripps (near Cradle Mountain) with Savage River Caving Club – easy small caves, delightful forest, more about socialising and ‘wilderness’ than epic caving – contact Alan Jackson
 - 23 November – Quiz Night –a fundraiser quiz night for the club – contact Alan Jackson or Nat Pausin
 - 24-25 November – annual search and rescue exercise (underground Saturday, clean up Sunday) at Ida Bay – contact Andreas Klocker
 - 1 December – rope testing session at Glenorchy Police station – come break some ropes for the fun of it – contact Alan Jackson
 - Xmas-New Year period (exact dates to be confirmed) – massive Irish invasion – JF expedition – details are vague at this stage but contact Alan Jackson or Andreas Klocker if you want to join them.
 - 30 December – 4 January – ASF Conference in Devonport. Pre and post conference trips happening too. Check the website - <https://asfconference2019.com/> (yes, it gets two promos).

Trip Reports

JF-237 Niggly Cave: "Like a Ninja"

23-25/3/18

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Ben Armstrong, Stephen Fordyce, Petr Smejkal

There is a good chance this trip report will be briefer than my usual essays. It's been 4 months since the trip and it's well overdue. Still, trip reports are important, especially when things of interest are found or jobs completed.



Petr and Ben gleefully pack Fraser's microphone in the pootube for the trip down the cave. I doubt it came out in the pootube.

Photo: Stephen Fordyce

Despite the disappointment of the previous Niggly dive trip (where the Business Class Lounge was discovered and wouldn't go), there was some enthusiasm remaining for knocking jobs off the Niggly list and even checking out the small new sump discovered by the support crew on that trip. Andreas was away being hardcore in Mexico and the camera crew were banned so we could have a small, streamlined, no-nonsense trip of serious list ticking.



The best bit about cave camping is that you can decide whether to brush your teeth or eat chocolate before going to sleep.

Photo: Stephen Fordyce

The trip to, into and out of the cave has been well and truly covered in previous reports. The camping likewise, although a special mention for the dinner Ben cooked. It only had 3 ingredients, in roughly equal proportions - but salami, cheese and powdered mashed potato never tasted

so good.

This trip we loaded up with bolt climbing and survey gear, and put both to good use. The mini impact driver in particular was awesome for installing bolts - saving a lot of energy compared with spannering.

Here's the list of achievements:

(All) Found the small sump previously described and pushed leads on the left side (looking into the cave) of the wide flat passage heading to Mother of God. The sump connected with others, and was uninspiring but fully surveyed. This section of the cave named "The Undercroft". The furthest upstream point looked like a sump with actual dive prospect - but we didn't get to properly push sideways from the very start of the main passage, so further stream sections may be found. Given it's almost certainly coming from under/around Mt Niggly, it wasn't all that exciting.

(Petr, all) Explored the rockpile streamway (before reaching Mother of God) and found what is presumed to be the inflow from Growling Swallet, this section named the "Like a Ninja" streamway. Exciting times had, some with rising water - see later section. Most was surveyed - enough to see it diverging from known passages and very exciting.

(Steve) Also noted the large passage on the main thoroughfare to MoG goes into rockfall and upwards (marked below as "End of Bigness") and might be worth a poke.

(Petr) Checked Al Warild's bolt climb up next to the waterfall - an impressive (20 m?) way up, but an agonising 1-2 m from the top but with no decent rock anywhere to finish it. Maybe one more look, and then retreat - leaving a hanger/cord in case anyone else wants to give it a go sometime in the future. It's got at least 1 rebelay.

(Ben) Start, finish and survey the bolt climb up the hole in ceiling of Beyond-The-Waterfall passage. The climb up through the hole leads to a big aven with a funnel for a floor (the hole Ben climbed up). It was checked thoroughly for leads and no joy. The rope was left in place so we can replace it with a cord next trip.

(Steve) Start bolt climb up steep mud/rock ramp on home side of waterfall, ~15 m vertical progress made. Steeper than it looked - still heading towards a dubious-looking hole in the ceiling.

(All) Pushed Beyond-The-Waterfall passage, utilising plug & feather (steel wedges in a drilled hole) to gain an extra 10-20 m. More serious digging gear required for further progress. Survey completed. It's heading AWAY from the main cave, to intersect with the Like a Ninja/Growling streamway, parallel with but about 10 m above the drainage from the waterfall.

(Steve, all) Surveyed a bunch of the big stuff on Topodroid/DistoX for better 3D viewing, experimenting with the process, and to some extent with tying in. Not sure if I'll bother with much more, but it was an interesting exercise.

"Like a Ninja" - new streamway discovery

We'd actually planned on going to Mother of God passage and looking around there - possibly even going right to the end for final surveyfest I want to do there. But we didn't even make it to Mother of God (probably just as well, given the rising water!) because we got distracted. Somehow things had never felt right - there was more water in MoG than there had been further upstream when we first hit the water, sliding down the muddy chute with etrier usually installed. But Stefan had insisted that's the spot where he'd seen dye coming in from Growling.

Petr's previous dye detector experiments had been a bit confusing, but enough to give him a hunch. So just after we had negotiated the up-chimney, horizontal crawl and downclimb on the way to MoG, he disappeared upstream.

Ben and I followed eventually (or he yelled back to hurry up) and it became apparent that something was happening. We leapfrogged each other as leads went and didn't, and at one point 10 minutes of digging and rock shifting was required, but we got through. Another time a sacrificial lamb had to go waist deep in the stream to get through an awkward section and shift rocks from the far side to make a dry way through.

It was a bit desperate and probably got more so as it went along (with a few wrong turns and confusion in rockpile),

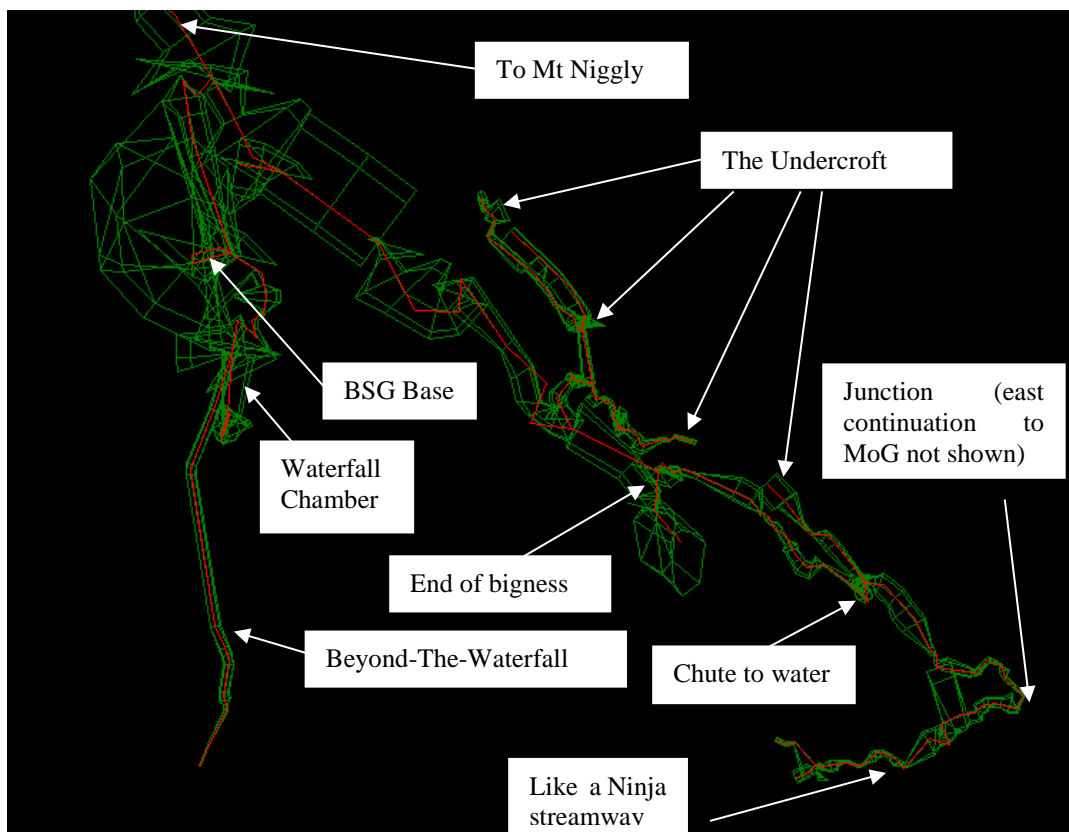
but very exciting, especially when I went back for the survey gear and started plotting - TopoDroid showing us in real time the new passage beautifully diverging from the original streamway. Ben reached what he described as a sump at the furthest point but I was too busy catching up on the survey to get that far (it ended up mostly surveyed). Coming back to see where we were, Ben remarked "I don't remember having to lie in the water to get through there" and it nastily dawned on us that the water levels had risen markedly in the last 15 minutes. We beat a hasty retreat through what turned out to be a chest deep immersion with 25 cm airspace through the committing section of the main thoroughfare to Mother of God (normally knee-deep with maybe 80cm airspace). Interesting to note the main Niggly streamway had stopped flowing (while the Like a Ninja streamway was flowing a lot) - presumably it was backed up against a dam. We didn't hang around to see if it would get higher, beating a retreat to camp, and the higher sections of the cave for the rest of the trip. This is very exciting - giving an improved chance (however slight) to connect Niggly with the Dreamtime Sump dive I completed in Growling several years back.

To be continued on the next trip ...

Epilogue: one thing didn't fit - Stefan's recollection of where the dye from Growling was first spotted. A call on the way back and bam - he was sure it was at the base of a climb down to the stream, but realised it was in fact the second one, exactly at Like a Ninja. Nirvana was achieved.

Survey as Recorded (plan view):

(survey continued to the campsite on the far side of Mt Niggly)



JF-341

26 May 2018

David Bardi

Party: David Bardi, Dan Mitchell, David Myles, Tony Rooke, David Rueda Rocca, Ciara Smart, Sandy Varin, Djuke Veldhuisd.

The weekend was successful before it had started ... we had managed to catch our flight for a change. Now we would have to go caving ... no excuses.

The plan for the weekend was to re-dive the sump in 341. From experience, we had learnt the hard way, never trust just one person when they say an underwater lead doesn't go (*Ah, I can show you a good collection of sumps I have found "no go's" that you can check then - Ed*). People look at things differently and what one person misses, another may find, and this was the case with the sump in 341.

We had always intended two recon dives in the 341 sump. Dan Mitchell had a look the previous month but had reported that he had found no way on underwater. However, there was a possibility that he hadn't noticed. A boost into a small hole in the ceiling of the sump entrance may result in a dry bypass. It was time for another look ... just to confirm.

Dan, Sandy and Dave B set off from the Giants Table early Saturday morning. The plan was for this group to get a head start of the support group who would follow two hours behind in order to minimise "dry caver sump freeze" whilst waiting for divers. Their job would be to help portage all the dive gear out of the cave and help with the derig.

As Dan, Sandy and Dave B set off from the car, motivation was low. Expectations were not high, after all, Sandy was going to dive a sump that had little prospect of hope for a "way on". Lucky packs were light with only two wet suits and some lunch.

The descent, climb, crawl, slip and slide to the sump was the usual trudge. Sandy donned her dive gear, Dave his wet suit and Dan stripped off to his underwear and donned his booties and down jacket. The plan was for Sandy to do a quick dive to confirm "no way on" underwater and then to return to the entrance pool where Dave and Dan would boost Sandy up into a small hole Dan had spotted last trip.

Much care was taken to avoid silting the sump as the stream flowed upstream. The steep sandy descent to the stream just up from the sump was tricky to negotiate without creating a landslide of gravity-induced moist grey sand. But, with the aid of an installed hand line on a stake of PVC pipe, hammered into what looked like the best spot to descend, the three of us cautiously picked our way to the stream and assisted Sandy into the water for her dive.

With two small 3 litre cylinders, Sandy would be gone for only a short time. Dan and I stood on some rocks in the

stream chatting, waiting her return. However, 10 minutes turned into 20 and 20 minutes into 40. She had either found a way on or was significantly out of air. Contingency plans started to enter our minds as time approached 60 minutes.

Then, the customary bubbles breaking the surface sound, accompanied by the obligatory brief flash of light of a returning diver broke the silence. A sigh of relief by Dan and Dave as Sandy yelled out, "it goes".

As we excitedly enquired about Sandy's dive, the sound of voices in the distance was heard, the rest of the team arrived prepared to de-rig and haul gear. No need, the cave would stay rigged for more exploration. A brief respite for the dry cavers before turning around and heading out with only one small cylinder in tow, whilst the dive team did the usual "faffing" and stowing of gear above the sump for a future dive. An uneventful exit and back to the Giants Table at a respectable time.

So, what did Sandy see during her dive and beyond the sump you may be ask? She reported a short dive of only about 10 m in length, in clear water, before breaking the surface in a moderate-sized chamber with a rock collapse. She had removed her gear and begun to pick her way through the rock pile before deciding to return.

She explored under the rock pile but became concerned that the rocks were too loose and unstable for solo exploration beyond a sump. She then tried exploring above the rock pile, but once again, decided that a fall could compromise her exit, so she decided to retrieve her gear and head back to the crew waiting for her return. Sandy believes that it is possible to pick a path through the rock pile.

Dan and Stefan will return in August to pick up where Sandy left off. Will the new progress break into master cave or will rock fall prevent further exploration? Stay tuned for future updates.

Pepper Pot Plateau Master Cave, Florentine Valley: Senior's Day Out, With Carer

15 June 2018

Bill Nicholson

Party: Karina Anders, Rolan Eberhard, Phillip Jackson, Bill Nicholson.

After a leisurely start Jacko and I found our way (stumbled) to Pepper Pot Plateau where we had a brief conversation with Rolan and Karina down the shaft of JF-676. A cup of tea later and we joined them via JF-443 and into the labyrinth we frolicked, Jacko surveying and the rest of us checking out leads.

Most of the leads were looked at (overstated) and a dig started (a mere scratch) and about a third of the known system surveyed.

The dig will continue and a lead near JF-442 through a partial collapse looks promising, this may be around 15 metres from JF-218. Another cup of tea, or was it two, and a surface frolic filled in the rest of the day.

Pepper Pot Plateau Master Cave, Florentine Valley: Non insaniedum sed uvat

JF-442, JF-443, JF-676

28 July, 2018

Bill Nicholson

Party: Phillip Jackson, Bill Nicholson

Climbing up through the regrowth, fighting back the pain of injuries acquired though caving of decades past, (male cow poo), at a time when beanies weren't worn under helmets, ladders were the go and SRT was in its infancy, gloves were something to use for fighting and twenty hour trips were the norm.

I digress, it was a very pleasant morning, a cup of tea and underground we frolicked, surveying the remainder and checking out the last two leads.

Surveyed cave length came at 83 metres, a wee bit short of my estimated 200 metres, blame it on the bifocals and those leads will require someone smaller and more agile than us.

With a bit of time to spare we started a surface dig not far away and that will continue, as well as the dig in the Master Cave.



Photo: Bill Nicholson



Let's play "where's Jacko". Lucky he was wearing that white helmet or he might have lost himself.

Photo: Bill Nicholson

Return to JF-236 Bunyips Lair

28 July 2018

Andreas Klocker

Party: Serena Benjamin, Andreas Klocker

From a dye trace (*Spiel* 376, page 13) we know that the waterfall flowing into JF-236 Bunyips Lair is next seen at the bottom of Niggly, in the Mother of God Passage. Even though previous efforts have concluded that the cave is plugged at the bottom of the entrance waterfall, I thought we should give it another look to see if we can dig through that and find a second (very wet) way into Niggly.

So with packs full of digging gear, drill, and a few ropes we first headed up to Niggly. Someone must have been up this track since I've been here last - the track was marked with flagging tape more excessively than the runway at Los Angeles airport at night time. Maybe bushwalkers? Well, if it is any STC member, please come and see me for some navigational training. We'll start with walking along the Florentine Road without veering off into the bush by accident. And if anyone needs some free flagging tape in the future, please take some off this track!

After reaching the Niggly entrance canyon we then turned right and first bumped into what we think, according to trip reports, is JF-239 (*Spiel* 262, page 11). We couldn't find the tag, but also didn't want to replace it with some other tag number so we just GPSed it (as JF-239 in the club GPS). Serena also dropped the ~7 m of entrance pit to a mud floor, but the cave doesn't go anywhere.

We then continued to Bunyips and got excited (...NOT...) by all the snow melt flowing into it. Whatever, I used the power of chemistry to make a big boulder, blocking the rifty pitch head with the water fall flowing down it, a bit smaller. I succeeded but we decided to come back when the water levels were down to drop this pitch. According to trip reports it is plugged at the bottom of the waterfall, but we all know how many of those dead ends are now going cave (just think of JF-207 Voltera or JF-633 Ringhole...). We'll need to come back.

We made it in time to the Possum Shed to enjoy more caffeine, i.e. a short and soft trip.

JF-341: Threefortyone Conservation and Route Marking Project

4 August 2018

Gabriel Kinzler

Party: Stefan Eberhard, Anna Ekdahl, Gabriel Kinzler

Another conservation and route marking trip in a series of recent outings to JF-341, before the upcoming dive push. We continued installing reflective markers all the way to the sump, cordoned off a few more sensitive areas, added some rigging and re-rigged some of the tricky climbs, and filmed additional interviews at the dive base for the *Tartarus* film project. Stefan completed his set of diving equipment and laid it down in preparation for the dive trip the next weekend. The dive gear left in situ from the last dive trip in May was all okay, although recent flooding had submerged the gear and rope on the climb down to the stream way. Further tidying up of route marking and replacing flagging tape with string line remains to be completed in the very large well-decorated end chamber beyond the sump.



Gabriel Kinzler taking recycling that extra step

Photo: Stefan Eberhard



Stefan admiring some rigging (probably not). Send me a letter to the editor if you spot the fudge here.

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

JF – 341: 3rd Dive Push Trip

11th August 2018

Summary by Stefan Eberhard

Party: Stefan Eberhard, Daniel Mitchell, Alan Jackson, Serena Benjamin

The main objective was for two divers to dive through the 9 m sump and continue exploration of the air-filled stream passage beyond the point reached by Sandy Varin on the last dive trip 26 May. A second objective was to further investigate the prospects for establishing a dry connection into the passage beyond the sump; considered likely from earlier investigations. A voice connection was established between the divers in the stream passage and cavers in the large rockfall passage above, approximately 50 m downstream of the sump. Some digging would be required to make the connection navigable. Downstream from this point a large obstructing boulder was levered out to enable continuation and the stream passage was explored through more large, muddy and unstable boulders to a wet crawl and a second sump beneath collapsed boulders. All leads noticed were explored, including some slippery muddy climbs into upward trending tubes, however no other continuations were found. The second sump appears to be the best prospect for continuation, however this section is flood prone and exploration is probably best undertaken when water levels are lower and the dry bypass of the first sump has been established. The overall linear extent of passage explored beyond the first sump was roughly estimated to be around 100 metres. The passage is trending SE-NW, more or less along the strike of the rocks, and directly underneath the eastern wall of the large rockfall passage. Much of the 3 hours exploration beyond the sump, including the dive, was recorded in 4k video using a helmet-mounted Go Pro. Time underground was 10 hours. Most of the dive equipment remains in the cave, including two tanks with 130 and 180 Bar pressure. Follow-up explorations are planned.



Stefan with some of the dive kit. Same challenge as the photo opposite, see if you can find the trick.

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Diver's Trip Report

Daniel Mitchell

The biggest breakthrough in recent 341 trips was on 26 May, when Sandy Varin successfully passed through sump one.

Due to work commitments involving a fair bit of travel in the recent months I had concerns about my level of fitness for this trip.

There were two objectives for this trip:

(1) The main objective was for two divers (Stefan and Daniel) to go through the sump and continue exploration beyond the point reached by Sandy on the last dive trip;

(2) To further investigate the prospects for establishing an alternative dry route between the large dry chamber above the streamway and the streamway itself. This may then provide a dry bypass route over and around the sump. The ultimate goal of the 341 project is to hopefully find a navigable connection into the Junee Master Cave, which likely lies within 400 m linear distance from the current explored end of 341.

The weekend weather was cold with snow down to 1000 m on Saturday and then predicted to be down to 600 m on Sunday. The day was fairly dry with only a small amount of drizzle for the walk in.

We geared up under the large, sheltered entrance slab and headed underground. The trip down was quick and easy with the rigging from previous trips already in place, and some improvements added by Stefan and Alan. There have been extra hand lines installed over particularly exposed and greasy areas. Also Stefan's conservation work has delineated routes through sensitive areas including the spectacular dry crystal pool with its unusual "volcano" structures. His recent installation of reflective track markers has made navigation easier and keeps us on one discreet path. The reflectors have allowed the removal of loads of unsightly flagging tape. A great improvement.

The group made reasonably swift progress through the cave. The few sizable open, moderately-decorated chambers are a nice reward for the few less-loved sections such as Klingon Way, a canyon/ravine covered with very slippery clay, and also a couple of snug vertical squeezes.

Our gear store above sump one used on previous trips had seen some enhancements with a very useful ground sheet to allow divers to gear up out of the mud. My last and only dive in 341 found me to be very cold within 20 to 25 minutes in the water. This time around I came better prepared with very warm gloves and extra insulation under my wetsuit.

Divers departed the high gear stash to descend the muddy slope toward the streamway and sump around 1:08 pm. The dry cavers, Alan and Serena, also set off into the high dry passage above the sump.

The thin 1.5 mm dive line installed through sump one by Sandy is still in excellent condition, considering the walls of the sump have sharp edges, abrasive walls and ceiling and reasonably high flow, and there had also been recent

flooding of the sump chamber. Sump one is approximately 9 metres long and slopes downward at around 35 degrees with a short levelling of the ceiling before a more gradual rise out. The visibility of the water was reasonable this time around for a downstream dive. My extra layer of insulation on this dive was not offset by the extra weight carried. Both divers were just a little too floaty, with four weights and one fin each we were able to kick shuffle off the ceiling. Water temp approx. 6 degrees with added snow melt.

Once the dive tanks were stowed on the far side of the sump, divers were free to explore downstream from the sump beyond Sandy's footsteps, which seemed to progress around 30 m. This required a little bit of climbing to get above and over some rock collapses encountered.

Voice communication was established around 40 metres along the stream way in an area on a clay platform several metres above the noisy stream. We were then following streamway on our hands and knees to walk and crawl downstream below a ceiling approximately half a metre high in 35 centimetres of water. Along the way there were several narrowings, short swims and boulders to negotiate but essentially a fairly good downstream run for the first 35 m or so. Soon the streamway disappeared below a large collapsed slab ceiling. The hand removal of large wedged boulders did not provide access around the most open left side of the stream.

We backtracked a short distance. Then doubled back and headed upwards over a boulder stack into a sizeable chamber above the stream, 20 m long and 5-6 m wide. A rock collapse at the far end of this chamber had a small peephole that appeared promising. We managed to pull down one key boulder safely and relatively easily with the use of a tape and two strong divers. Good teamwork! Soon we were back down the streamway via another greasy slope. The stream then narrowed with deeper and faster flowing water for another 30 or so metres through a tunnel chiseled out of black/brown soft and crumbly limestone, more difficult to light up. We enjoyed the turbulent flow and the occasional surprise hole in the floor! I was extremely excited to be exploring virgin cave passage for the first time.

Soon the ceiling lowered and the walls narrowed. Within 3 metres of this narrowing a very large slab lay across the stream. The stream continued below the slab through a passage of very crumbly limestone. With my body jammed in this slightly wider end alcove, below the surface the water continues through a tube that measured 1.3 m wide and about 1 m high, (measured with reasonable accuracy with my spread legs under the water!). This appears to be the only way on, and for now we'll call it sump two.

With the dive gear some distance back, and time ticking on, it was time to head back.

The return trip saw us reach the dive gear within 12 minutes or so. We kitted up to dive back through sump one upstream, with much better visibility. Soon we were walking back up the 20 m of streamway to then climb the greasy heavy clay bank towards home – the gear stash.

Stefan and I returned to the gear stash at around 2:50 p.m.,

greeted by happy and energetic dry cave team with hot soup on offer! A very welcome warm meal. Some filming was done before we changed into our caving gear and headed for the entrance.

Getting ready to exit the cave, now that the adrenaline and excitement had abated, I realised I was extremely fatigued and alerted my team members. I was challenged by the return trip, with especially heavy legs, and feeling mentally exhausted. My team members were most supportive and patient as we made our exit. I now realise just how much energy we consumed in basic dry and wet exploration. Whilst exploring for new leads and swimming/crawling and climbing I was unaware of the drain this placed on my mind and body.

On returning from the cave in the night I did anticipate snow on the exit however we exited it into a fairly clear sky with only moisture falling from the trees as we followed the tapes along the return track.

It was great to see the reflections of the vehicles after our 40 minute walk. Hot showers were much enjoyed.

So overall, the trip was a great success. We achieved our objectives and now have plans to create a dry bypass around sump one, and to then go forward and push sump two as we move closer to the Junee Master Cave. So there shall be more trips to 341 to come!

Thanks to all involved for a very enjoyable weekend of caving.

Dry Caver's Report

Alan Jackson

While Stefan and Dan embraced the snowmelt, Serena and I filled in time by checking for a dry sump bypass from the passages above. On a previous trip Stefan, Serena and I had pushed a few tight bits between the area of the sump and the great big chamber looking for a way down. At one of these spots we had heard a running stream below and we figured it might be beyond the sump. This spot is located near survey station 224 (note that none of the survey stations referred to here are labelled or marked in the cave). On Jeff Butt's (JB) map this station appears to be located about 20 m downstream from where the sump is drawn, so seems like the right spot (the sump is reputedly ~9 metres long). To our surprise, upon arriving at the spot within five minutes of waving the divers off just before the sump, we could hear them talking to each other. We shouted a fair bit but the combined effects of the rushing streamway, the divers wearing hoods and not anticipating having to keep an ear out for shouting at that location meant we couldn't get a response from them. So we moved further along to look for more potential connections. Shortly after the station 224 area you descend a muddy slope, cross a flowstone-lined channel with oodles of water running through it then ascend another muddy slope (this is the feature clearly drawn between stations 226 and 227 on JB's map). The water sinking point is impenetrable. Between stations 227 and 228 we left the trogged route and headed down slope to the left wall to check for other holes. A tight two metre

climb down between boulders led to a lower passage about 1 m wide jammed between the bedrock left wall and steep mud slope on the right. Back under the tight climb down (to the NW/upstream direction) a short muddy slope led to a low flat opening with a drop on the other side. It was draughting. It was just too tight to fit through. While we pondered its potential Dan called out clearly from down below; he had negotiated the sump. We had a shouting conversation and confirmed that he'd only just surfaced. So maybe the survey is wrong, or the sump is longer than 9 m? This point is almost 50 m past the upstream end of the sump according to the map.

Serena and I pushed lots of narrow muddy rifts SE of the voice connection point looking for an open way down but found nothing. On our way out I pushed the voice connection hole a bit harder and I wasn't far off fitting through but the presence of a slippery slope to a drop of maybe 4+ metres on the other side put me off. There was a loose block in the roof which I could have probably dislodged with my feet but I was mindful that there were two divers down below. It wouldn't take much work to open it up with the right tools.

Serena and I then continued to probe the left wall on the way to the big chamber but with nothing overly exciting found. The only bit of the big chamber I'd not had a reasonable look at was the right (southern) wall back at the start of the big chamber, so I negotiated a route through all the crazy mud and decorations. At station 108 I investigated the bifurcating side passage indicated on the map. The branch heading SE was a smallish ascending tube with flowing moonmilk floor (generating friction was a challenge). It was evident where the previous explorers had stopped and thrown in their question mark in a pathetic display of defeatism. I continued on and reached the top of the moonmilk water slide, at which point the passage then descended but turned into a tall rift rather than a rounded tube. The down route crapped out fairly quickly but a climb up the rift headed into continuing passage with a mud false floor. A short low spot stopped me (easy digging of mud on floor but it needed something more than hands). I couldn't quite decide if there was a draught or not. It is worth a return.

We then headed back to the kit up spot and enjoyed some fine dining for half an hour until the familiar clanking of dive bottles heralded our heroes' return. We set to making movies of naked shivering men then headed for home.

Caving at Eurospeleo 2018, Mostly not.

Janine McKinnon

A brief account of our caving in Europe this past Summer follows.

We registered to attend Eurospeleo planning lots of caving during the meet. Luckily other caving opportunities popped up during our holiday or it would have been a very disappointing affair. Not to mention (but I will) the frustration of hauling SRT kit across the planet and not getting to use it.

1. Grottes de Vallorbe, Vallorbe, Switzerland

12 August 2018

Party: *French speakers:* Isabel Chouquet (of Midnight Hole rescue fame), Philippe and Annie Crochet (French cave photographer of much repute - and his wife/model), Patrick Deriaz (who I discovered is the only person from an overseas association that I email *Spiele* to). *German speakers:* Two stray Swiss Germans who came along and couldn't talk to anyone but Patrick. Us - the McTinneys.

This was a photographic trip for Philippe, combined with some repairs to infrastructure near sump 2 that Patrick had scheduled. The rest of us were tag-alongs.

This cave is a very well know tourist cave with areas beyond the tourist section, which is where we were headed. It is unremarkable, with a few climbs, dirt floor, lots of mud near sump 2 and some pretties somewhere we didn't go. Sump 1 can be bypassed easily, so that's how we managed to get to sump 2.



All this ironmongery just to avoid getting wet to the knees. Really, one does wonder a bit.

Photo: Patrick Deriaz

The interesting thing about this cave, from an Australian caver's perspective, is the infrastructure. The amount and industrial nature of it. I had thought, from our experiences in Eastern Europe, that heavy duty cave engineering by cavers was only done in those countries. I was wrong. Pumps, piping and all the paraphernalia required to drain a sump was stationed at sump 2 for that purpose. Divers planning to push beyond sump 3, which is only 30 m long

but 58 m deep, need support to get their kit to the sump, so draining sump 2 for Sherpas is their solution. They have also placed some heavy duty, keep feet dry, solutions over puddles. Amazing really.

So, Annie and Philippe took very slow, perfectionist photos. We went off to sump 2 for a look, and we all attempted to communicate, somewhat successfully.



Amazing how skilful photography can make an ordinary bit of cave look stunning. Photo: Philippe Crochet

In French fashion, we had wine for lunch (although possibly they don't do this all the time) and Ric got to carry Annie and Philippe's share half way back through the cave to where they were stationed doing their thing.

Lots of sitting waiting for photographic perfection followed. The results were pretty wonderful though, I must say.



This first sump is now bypassed

Photos (above and below): Philippe Crochet



This large chamber took a long time to photograph.

2. Le Gouffre des Follatons, Vallorbe, Switzerland

14 August 2018

Party: Janine McKinnon, Laure Gauthiez Putallaz, Ric Tunney

This is a large system with a few entrances. A through trip is possible, of approximately 8 hours I think, with quite a bit of crawling, which is very rain dependent and sumps out quite easily. We didn't like that option much, for both reasons. Thus we were taking a vertical one with about 190 m of pitches, arriving at a large horizontal development, and reversing course. The cave is permanently rigged.

At the bottom of the pitches is a crawl for about 30 m. This sumps in rain. The pitches are dry unless it has rained a fair bit, the water down the pitches contributes to sumping the crawl when high enough. It had been raining all the night before and as we walked to the cave. The pitches were somewhat damp. It was going to rain all day. With limited knowledge on what is required to sump the crawl we opted for a short one hour tour at the bottom, rather than the several hours we had planned. This was a pity as the floor of the passage beyond the crawl was a magnificent example of rock sculpting. I really regretted leaving the camera behind!

There was twice the volume of water down the pitches as we headed up. We had a short respite from the rain as we changed at the car but it was raining heavily as we drove away. The internet connected water gauge in the cave (yes, they have one) showed it rose significantly throughout the rest of the day.

Good call I think, but disappointing for the caving opportunity lost.

For those of you versed in French, here is a link to the report Laure wrote for her caving club newsletter of her traverse in the cave in April 2017. Alternately, there are a few nice photos included in the report to look at.

<http://www.speleo-lausanne.ch/myblog/index.php/gouffre-des-follatons-avril-2017>

3. Hirlatzhöhle, Hallstatt, Austria

18 August 2018

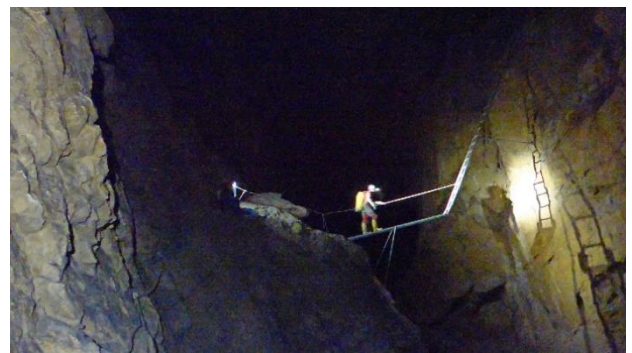
Party: McTinneys, Barbara (Wetti) Weiland, Peter ?

Wetti is an Austrian caving friend that we have caved with in Austria before. She offered to take us on a trip into this massive system before Eurospeleo started. This system is in the Dachstein mountains and is the longest in Austria, with 105 km of passages. There is only one known dry entrance (with a sump entrance somewhere too), which has a spot that is only 1 sq m, although others are suspected and being actively searched for. A British

expedition (with Madphil Rowsell, for those of you who remember him) was planning to camp on the top of the Dachstein the following week and spend two weeks searching for entrances. Nearly all the exploration has been uphill in this system, which is a bit of a rarity.

The entrance turned out to be a small hole in a cliff about 100 m vertically above the valley floor. It is gated. The gale that rushed at us as we crawled through that 1 sq m section was incredible, and apparently it was a quiet day, drafting wise. It reminded me of the Hinkle Horn Honking Hole in Nettlebed in New Zealand. This cave would be much worse with a greater temperature differential though (like in winter, or a hot summer's day).

These caves tend to be relatively young, compared to ours. The walls are quite bare, with lots of breakdown. The floor is compacted dirt or mud. We wandered in the single-track route for an hour and then took the right hand branch at the first junction. This was mainly because we wanted to see camp 1, and particularly the ladder across a 60 m deep rift that had been installed. The multiple ladder climbs (instead of pitches with ropes) sounded amusing to do too. It was almost all uphill. Strange for us.



Now that's how you apply engineering to a caving challenge! Photo: Janine McKinnon

Wetti pointed out the plaque that has been placed near camp 1 where a friend of hers died on a caving trip she was on a couple of years back. He dropped dead suddenly with a heart attack as they approached camp after a long day exploring further into the system. He was in his 60s. She also pointed out where another friend died when the wall he was aide climbing collapsed. We here in Tassie have been very fortunate so far.

On the way out Wetti and Peter decided they would have a (very brief) skinny-dip in a bath tub sized pool in the rock floor. The temperature of the water was only a couple of degrees (the cave was 4C). I was (just) quick enough to get photos (they were very fast with that bath!) but consideration for the reputations of others prevents me from publishing them here ... also, possibly, some doubts I have about the laws on the publication of full frontal nudity in a family magazine. Ric and I declined their invitation to do likewise as we are too wise to fall for that sort of peer pressure.

It was a very enjoyable day underground with the ladder rift traverse a highlight. How they got it in there amazes me.

4. Kühlloch et al, Feldkirch, Austria.

24 August 2018

Party: Dietmar Allhuter, Barbara (Wetti) Weiland, Janine McKinnon, Alexander Wendel, 4 Fins and some English, and who knows who else. A total of 12 cavers.

Wetti and Dietmar were the guides for this (**first, and as it turned out, only**, of our) Eurospeleo caving trip. All trips had guides. No trips were available “freelance”, without guides. The trips had lots of cavers. At least 10 punters plus the two guides. The harder, and most SRT, trips had filled up within a day of opening the website to bookings, I was told by one of the organisers. We failed to book in time to get on any of those trips. So, this was the best I could book onto. Ric decided he didn’t want the wet crawls apparently on offer here. He went walking instead.

This was a small dimensioned streamway cave with vertical bits somewhere, apparently. As it had rained all the previous night, and thunderstorms and rain were forecast for this day, and the cave floods, we weren’t now going to the SRT bits as planned. Thus, all 12 of us started into this crawling and grovelling cave for about 100 m until the first climb, and then turned around and came out. As it was small, and there were 12 of us, this took about 2 hours.

At the end we had our first dropout, a Pom with a hangover who had found our (extremely slow) antics too hard for his delicate condition.

We then climbed about 50 m up the hill and went into another (separate) cave. This involved crawling too, squeezing, nothing scenic and a tiny bit of climbing. There went another hour or so. After this we lost about half the party due to apathy.

The third cave was another 100 m uphill, very steeply. Surprisingly, this proved to be the best by far. We found a lovely little stream in honey-coloured marble, with rock sculpting and pools. A somewhat dodgy climb led to a higher level. This was again only about 100 m long but was at least pretty and interesting. That completed the fourth hour and we then all went for beer and lunch, as you do there.



Not the most inspiring caving but at least it wasn’t muddy

Photo: Janine McKinnon

5. Mörkhöhle, Dachstein, Austria

26 August 2018

Party: Tim Moulds (WASGA), McTinneys, John Paul (JP) Wallace

Funnily enough, we ran into Tim in the foyer at Eurospeleo. Twice. The first time we just caught up with life, very briefly. The second time Tim said he had had an abortive trip (not) into this cave on a Eurospeleo trip the previous day. After the failure to actually get into the cave (for the planned “one pitch and cup of tea before returning” trip) the leader had told Tim the cave was rigged, gave him a map, and said ‘go for it’. Thus we were off to do this trip ourselves.

We caught the train from Ebensee to Obertraun, about a 30 minute trip, then a 5 minute taxi to the cable car, 10 minutes in the cable car and a 5 minute walk uphill on a tourist path. Tim had to be back in Ebensee for a caving bureaucracy meeting at 5 pm, so we only had time for a quick four hour trip.

This cave is a five minute walk from the entrance to the major tourist cave in the Dachstein; The Dachstein Giant Ice Cave. It was easy to find. The first rope was easy to find. It was a straightforward 20 m pitch. Three other pitches followed and a traverse. The rigging got more interesting as we descended. When Tim explained that the guy who had done most of the exploring, and all the rigging, was a 193 cm tall young Austrian male it all made sense. Fun and interesting vertical caving ensued.



Tim showing off his moves

Photo: Janine McKinnon

We were all at the bottom after about an hour and a half. JP and I went for a wander in the small streamway passages at the bottom of the final pitch. Tim and Ric started up. JP and I crawled through various small canyons and returned an hour later to start our ascent. JP went first. We caught the others at the bottom of the first pitch. The rigging was almost as much fun going up as down, but foreknowledge allowed for a quicker solution to the little problems along the way.

We were underground for 4 hours and Tim made it back to town in time for a shower before his meeting.

This was a fun day with just the four of us and made up somewhat for the disappointment we felt over our caving options at Eurospeleo 2018.

Rigging improvement in JF-210 Sesame

18 August 2018

Andreas Klocker

Party: Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal

One of my plans for this summer is to survey the bottom of Sesame, starting at the wet crawl and all the way to the sump, which had been previously explored (but not surveyed) by Rolan Eberhard and others in the '90s (*Southern Caver* No. 59, p.11). Currently our best guess of where the sump is on the map puts it into an exciting spot very close to where one would expect the elusive downstream connection of Niggly to intersect. Hence my other plan for this summer is to push this sump. Nevertheless, the bottom of this cave severely floods and hence any effort beyond the wet crawl should be left for a significantly dryer time of the year than August.

In preparation for this survey and dive, Petr and myself headed down the dry (well ... not flooded but very drizzly) part of the cave to put in a couple more bolts to improve the rigging, since we managed to damage a rope in there previously due to a bad rub. The main vertical section of the cave now has two more rebelay and one more redirect. We then headed down the two small pitches and installed a few bolts on the traverse over a very delicate false floor over an ~10 vertical rift.

We then decided to do a quick tourist excursion further into the cave, but quickly changed those plans when we saw how hard it was raining down the big passage at the bottom of Sesame. We exited the cave quickly and exited to some exciting winter conditions with huge snow flakes falling. And then we even made it back in time to clean gear in Hobart before darkness ... unheard of in mid winter ... trips with just two people are so fast and easy.

All the bolts and hangers stayed in the cave, but all ropes and biners and maillons have been taken out. Time to wait for summer now before heading back into this cave.

Hammer Passage, Exit Cave IB14

16 September 2018

Chris Sharples and Stefan Eberhard

Party: Stefan Eberhard, Chris Sharples

Stefan had mentioned at a club meeting that he wanted to visit Hammer Passage in Exit Cave in the interests of an ongoing project to develop ways of minimising caving impacts, and this less-visited passage seemed ideal to consider the issues. The fact that at Alan Jackson's behest Chris had already obtained a permit for multiple Exit Cave trips on the weekend of 15th – 16th Sept eased the choice of a date, and Chris exercised his (largely imaginary) "permit-getters right" to come along since he still wanted to tick the Hammer Passage box.

It had rained and snowed something shocking at Hastings on Saturday while Chris and Serena led a beginner's trip (featuring Tessa Smith and Greg Swalwell) into the relative warmth and comfort of Wolf Hole, so there was a bit of trepidation about river levels in Exit Cave on Sunday when Stefan arrived at Ros Skinners house at Hastings to meet Chris. Nevertheless, the weather had fined up and we decided to go for it. Although the river just inside Exit Cave mouth was obviously up Chris decided to test the way across at the rope. It turned out to be chest deep but with only a weak current so having in any case made it across one-way he judged it safe (and failing that we knew where the food and gear stash inside the cave is).

The main problem after that was finding the entrance of Hammer Passage. Although one of Stefan's formative early caving trips had been a visit to Hammer Passage with TCC identities Bill Nicholson, Pavel Ruzicka and Rima Truchanas, after the passage of many long years he had forgotten exactly how to find it. However, using the wonderful recently-produced Exit Cave A3 wall-map by Tony Veness and co., we found the entrance to Hammer Passage at the highest level in the enormous main passage, invisible from the normal Exit Cave route in the hazy distance below. This is one of several well-decorated east-west passages right at the top of the enormous north-south ditch, which have been abandoned by the down-cutting of the main cave stream in the very early days (well, aeons) of the present cave's development.



Pretty moonmilk stuff near the high-level entrance to Hammer Passage.

Photo by Chris Sharples.

The first few hundred metres of Hammer Passage is wide and flat with abundant brilliantly white moonmilk coatings and speleothems very similar to those in the Ballroom, but less damaged by trogging. We followed a stringline through this section (likely installed by Ian Houshold during the 1990s) and noticed little damage beyond the string; the worst case being some long deep finger-scrapings in pure white moonmilk that some moron had felt the urge to create, and which may have predated placement of the stringline. The delineated pathways appear to be working successfully, although considerable care still needs to be taken to avoid splattering and smearing of mud onto adjacent formations.



*Stringline in Hammer Passage showing apparent containment of damage but suggesting wider extent of trogging prior to stringline (a **Chris Sharples caption special** - Ed).*

Photo by Stefan Eberhard.

The stringline ended at the entrance to a straight and narrow way leading on to the further parts of Hammer Passage. This has a well-trogged muddy floor in parts, but beyond the short and reasonably low-stress Hammer Squeeze the straight way becomes a bit sportier, with sketchy ups and downs that interrupt one's pleasant contemplation of the scene. Passing the prominent vertical crack of Sibs Extension, we soon turned left at an intersection and then right into the first of the large broad mostly-dry passages forming the back end of Hammer Passage. This area has not been string-lined but trogging seems very limited in most areas. Being on our best behaviour we carefully followed what in many sections seemed to be the only trogged path visible across sediment-coated breakdown boulders with occasional patches of speleothems, grey (manganiferous?) flowstone and mineralised crusts appearing mostly undisturbed.

At one point a geological mystery presented itself in a concentrated pile only metres wide of rounded Permian siltstone boulders and cobbles which seem to indicate a restricted influx from the surface rocks overlying the limestone, but we could see no obvious feature (e.g., a ceiling shaft) to explain it. At roughly the furthest mapped point in the passage from its entrance we came to a white mineralised mud surface across which we could see no trog marks. Although continuing passage has been mapped past this point, looping back around to Hammer Squeeze, we could not see where the mappers crossed this part of the passage – maybe levitation? In any case we decided to turn back here rather than trog a pristine surface.

Returning to the entrance of Hammer Passage high above the main cave stream, I convinced myself that it had not grown any louder or more turbulent as I had spent several hours fearing would be the case (but reasoning would be unlikely). As it turned out it had only risen a centimetre or two, so that our return across the roped crossing just inside the cave mouth was merely as chest-deep wet and freezing cold with snow-melt as it had been on the way in, a matter which was soon remedied by the one-hour walk back up the hill.



*Far side of Hammer Passage loop. Although easy passage continues here, we could see no trogged route across this delicately mineralised sediment floor so in deference to the little-trogged nature of this area decided to call it a day here rather than create a new trogged route. How good were we?! (Now, you can't say **Chris** doesn't put some effort into his captions, don't blame me for this one! - Ed).*

Photo by Chris Sharples

In summary, the inner sections of Hammer Passage contain many areas of extremely fragile floor deposits, and because it has been less often visited over the years it is in more pristine condition. However, this section will not remain in such good condition unless some kind of route marking is undertaken. Without route marking the best path to follow is not always obvious and every footstep creates an impact. The long-term conservation of Hammer Passage could be significantly improved with further judicious route marking in the sensitive sections beyond the squeeze and would be a worthwhile conservation initiative by STC.



Nice speleothems at the far end of Hammer Passage. Photo by Chris Sharples

Other Exciting Stuff

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Speleo Spiel - Issue 314, June-July 1999.

Splash Pot (JF10): 10/7/99

Party: Matthew Holl, Dave Rasch, Jol Desmarchelier and Jeff Butt.

By Dave Rasch and Jeff Butt

As part of our current work in the area, it soon became apparent that it was time to savour the “delights” e.g. as recorded by Eberhard (1987a, b) of this little hole. Shaw et. al. (1973) did a ~Grade 4 survey down to the bottom of the pitch series (a couple of question leads still remain), but no-one seems to have the data (some deja-vu here); Rolan Eberhard (1987a) drew a memory sketch of the ‘Close to the Bone’ extension, but it is always good to quantify these surveys; so we thought we’d survey the whole lot to do the job properly. Since none of us had been to the cave before, we did have the advantage of not knowing exactly what we were letting ourselves in for, though we had read some trip reports in old Spiels and had a pretty good idea...Dribblespit revisited was the concern!

NB. The number tag, reportedly at face height at the bottom of the entrance pitch is now about 0.6 m above the floor and partially hidden by branches from logs that have fallen in.

The crack team (Dave and Jol, i.e. the smallest of our party) set off first to rig the pitches and come to experience being “Close to the Bone”.

“Close to the Bone” is the obvious streamway continuation below the pitches. No doubt it was known about in the early 70’s when the cave was discovered, but wasn’t pushed due to its ridiculous dimensions. For the most part, it consists of a rift about 4m high and a width that varies from about 1.5m at its widest down to about 30cm in places. It is only just passable-while there may be several heights in the rift in which you can “post” yourself horizontally, the trick is to find the one that continues on around the corner. A number of times we squeezed in for some metres before having to inch back out and look again at a different level. Dave did not find the trip particularly hard on the trog suit-the dimensions were narrow but the walls smooth, perhaps a tribute to excellent hammer work by Trevor and Rolan back in Feb 1987! Jol silently wished many times that he was at home Phd’ing, but never-the-less the regular forcing of his body into ridiculously tight spots did take his mind off his thesis.

Dave and Jol stopped at the top of the lower pitches, partly because we only had one of the two ropes necessary to descend, and partly because of the amount of water descending the pitches. While we were waiting for Jeff and Matt to join us, we climbed out over the pitch head and could see down what looked much further than the 12m mentioned in Rolan’s survey. Dave suspects he was looking down both pitches together as there looked to be a bit of a ledge about 10m down. This ledge was taking the full force of the water and the pitches promised us a total drenching, with little prospect of rigging out of the water. We decided to leave it for another day.

Just a few metres back from the pitches, another stream passage enters through a small window on the right. Posting our heads into this window, we were surprised to see relatively roomy passage. Dave stood up in the passage and walked a few metres, noting it heading upward and corkscrewing back towards but above the pitches. This passage is shown in Rolan Eberhard’s “memory sketch” survey (Eberhard, 1987a) but not mentioned. Dave didn’t follow it far as he felt somewhat “remote” from the other cavers and was a bit worried about route-finding for the return trip. However, while pack hauling made the return trip somewhat strenuous, the small rock cairns we left on the way in to indicate where to climb up in the rift and where down were much appreciated!

Meanwhile Matt and Jeff (with the cruisy job) surveyed their way down, at a more leisurely pace. The cave proved to be more complex than the original survey suggested, with several side passages, and thus our progress down the hole was a bit slower than we envisaged. Matt managed to lose the left leg of his overalls in the first five minutes, and it got worse from there.

The pitch series was quite wet, ‘Shower Pot’ would be a more appropriate name than ‘Splash Pot’ given the prevailing conditions. The pitch series (with some quite nice marbled limestone) is along a narrow rift; the steam(s) form a veil waterfall along the whole right hand side of the rift, and it is either a little bit wet or very wet, depending upon where you are in the rift. Dave rigged the pitches very well; some rigging notes are included below.

Just as Matt and Jeff were about to experience the ‘choicest’ pieces of this cave, Dave and Jol returned (we had been listening to them return for about the last 20 minutes.... this part of the cave is about 1 m/minute territory) and we decided it was turn around time. They had made it to the top of the next pitch that was very wet. Several of the squeezes were ‘helmet off’ ones and they had expended a considerable amount of energy getting to/from the pitch; this meant they were sweating away, whilst we were close to shivering. Dave was keen to ensure that Matt and Jeff experienced the real nature of this cave, and sent us off for a look whilst he and Jol started to head out. Matt, with now shredded overalls went a short distance and decided that enough was enough. Jeff went a little further, through the first squeeze.... and then returned as he felt that was enough of a taste to gain a pretty good idea of the remainder. Since it was time to go, the completion of the survey would have to wait for another (and preferably drier) day.

Our exit was very smooth and straightforward, emerging about 6 hours after going in.

The Grade 5 survey is not yet complete, it goes to the start of the ‘Close to the Bone’ extension and puts the depth here at 93 m (c.f. 95m by Shaw et. al. (1973)) We plan to return to complete the job in due course.

Rigging information (for the sizeable part of the cave)

- Entrance pitch, 11m rope, tied to the taped tree. Various logs over the edge protect the rope from the lip.
- Main Pitch (a 3 step series); we used a 67m rope and had about 12m spare. Two tapes (one on a thread-LHS, the second on a jug-RHS) give a good start, rebelay at -2m off a block takes you to the bottom of the first step. A long tape (8 m) on a pillar on the right (quite wet here) takes you down the second step. Traverse along, over the first ‘blind?’ narrow shaft to the third step. There is meant to be a bolt here on the LHS, but it wasn’t easily found, so a trace on a small projection on the RHS gave a good hang. A deviation (projection, LHW) at -3 m moves one out of the worst of the water (the LHS where the bolt is would be slightly drier, but you can get pretty wet looking for a bolt... A good jug in the hand is worth heaps more than the best bolt you can’t find).

References:

- Shaw P., Nicholas S., Akhurst R. (1973) “Splash Pot (JF10)” and survey. Speleo-Spiel #79, p 7 & 10.
 Eberhard R. (1987a) “A Splash in the Pot is worth two in the Bush-Splash Pot, May 87”. Speleo-Spiel #228.
 Eberhard R. (1987b) “Splash Pot-Another meeting of the Potters and Splashers Society, Feb. ‘87”. Speleo-Spiel #225. ■■

New signs in Mystery Creek Cave

Rolan Eberhard, from what used to be DPIWE, but is now DPIPWE Department of Primary Industries, **Parks, Water & Environment** (Maybe they should just throw Education and Health in there and be done with it) has coordinated the placement of several signs in Mystery Creek cave. He has sent the following notice to inform the caving community:

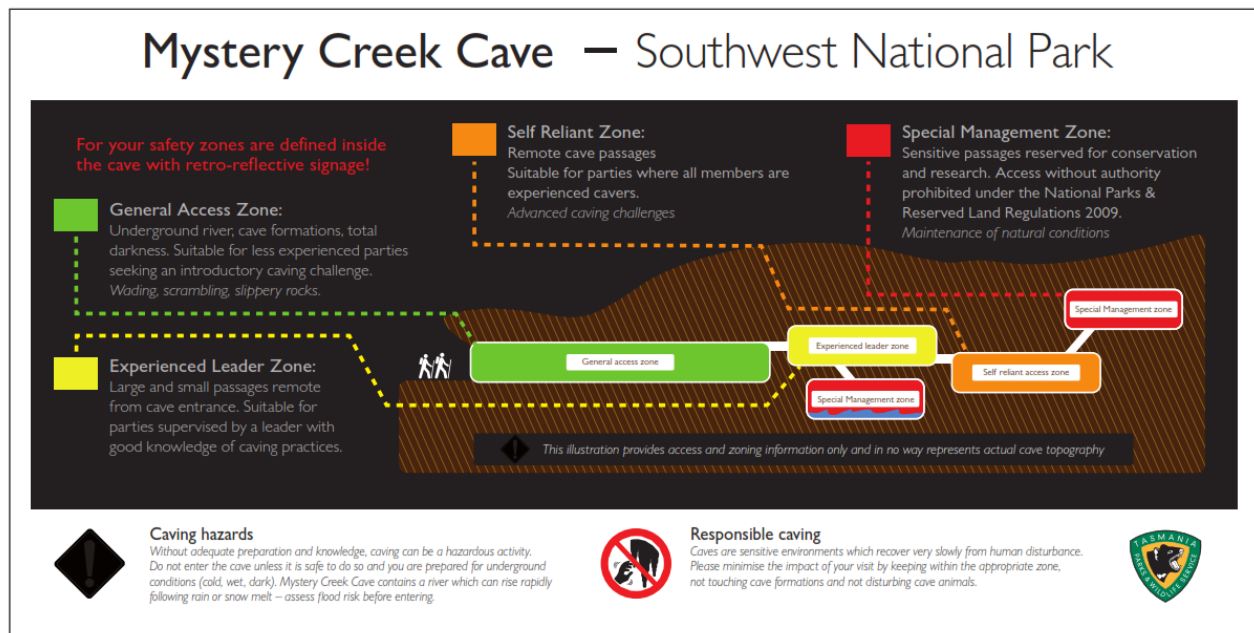
The signs give effect to the Mystery Creek Cave Access Policy Zoning Statement, which established management zones within this popular cave, in accordance with the *Parks & Wildlife Service Cave Access Policy* and the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 2016*.

The purpose of the signs is to ensure that visitors are aware of the zones and to encourage them to stay within the zone appropriate to their skills and experience level.

A panel at the cave entrance explains the management intent of the different zones. Smaller signs within the cave delineate points where a visitor would be entering a different zone if they continue.

Similar signs are unlikely to be required for the majority of other caves zoned under the Cave Access Policy, because these caves are not subject to the same visitor pressure as Mystery Creek Cave.

Below is an image of the main sign at the cave entrance.



1200x600mm



250x250mm white retro-reflective background with retro-reflective zone colours

Fun and Diversions

FROZEN MOMENTS IN CLUB HISTORY



This photo was taken in 1980 on the first exploration of Excavation Pot at Ida Bay.

It was the first cave I was involved in discovering... stumbled on while looking for the upper entrance to Loons Cave. We had to dig to get inside. A single 12 m pitch into a chamber, the way on was too tight.

It shows the gear we used then – ladders, plaited ropes, handheld torch, cotton overalls, leather boots.

Stefan Eberhard

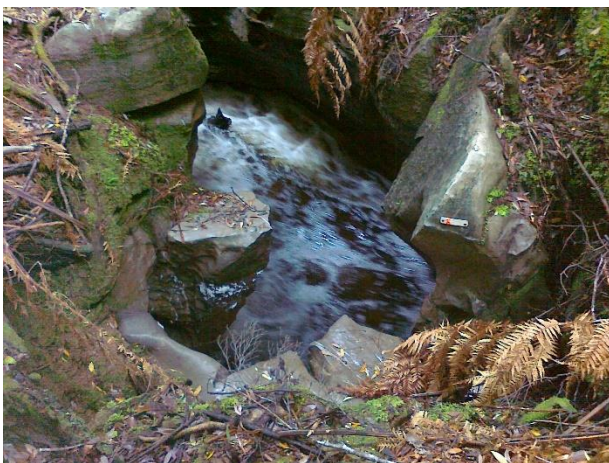
(Left) Indiana Jones, eat your heart out. THAT'S how you wear a rope.

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 couple of 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.



This one should test most of you.

Photos above): Janine McKinnon

Right: Matt Cracknell



This one should be easy...if you've been there

Answers from SS 427: 1. Rocket Rods Pot (Matt Cracknell). 2. Benson and Hedges series (Amy Robertson (L), Serena Benjamin). 3. Wolf Hole (Ric Tunney (L), Dale Pregnell (R), Help, I've forgotten no. three!) **Congratulations to Alan Jackson for getting No.'s 1 & 3 cave names correct. Chis Sharples No 3 Cave name, & Ric.**

Upcoming event

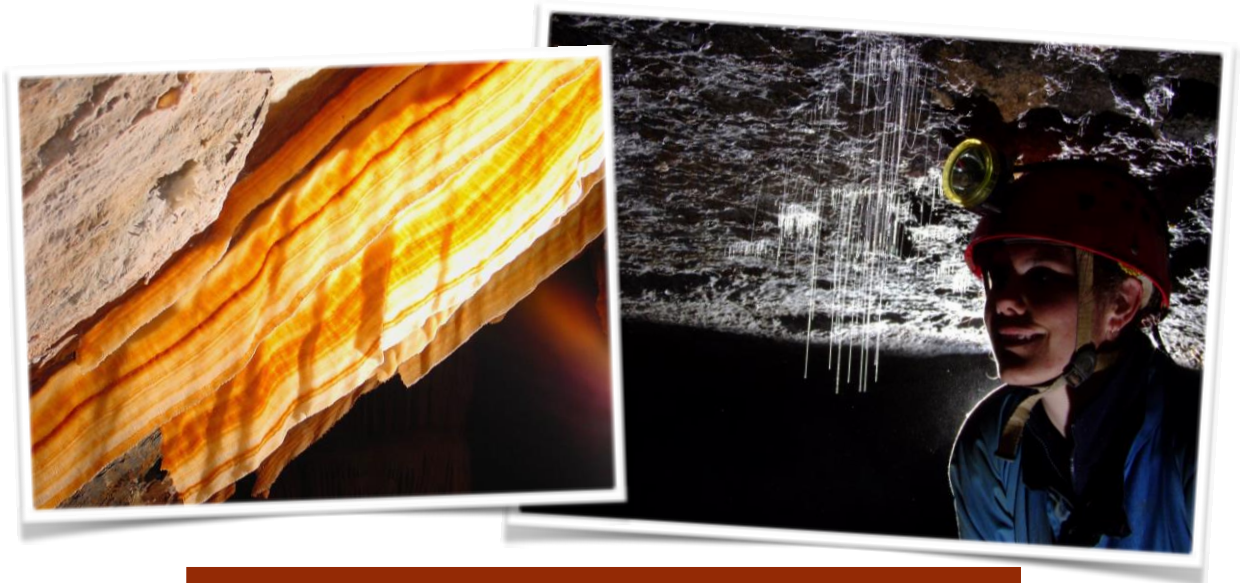
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The Last Page

