Speleo Spiel 430

January-February 2019

Newsletter of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc. ISSN 2208-1348

Front Covers: *Now how do we undo this lot? Cave rescue exercise in Mystery Creek Cave, November 2018 Photo: Gabriel Kinzler*

Back Cover: *Geoff attempts to distract the shark with a bunch of tasty steel bars. Rope testing 2018 . Photo: Gabriel Kinzler*

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.

STC Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated

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Issue No. 430, January-February 2019

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Editorial

2019 has started with a caving bang. The long-anticipated ASF conference run by Northern Caverneers and held at Reece High School, Devonport, started the new year in style. It was extremely well organised and ran smoothly throughout, at least from the point of view of attendees, which is all that matters. There were a lot of excellent talks, and the pre- and post-conference caving went very well, by all accounts. 51 caving trips were run, which is an amazing achievement for a small club. The organising committee are to be commended for their achievement. Reports for trips run by STC members are in this *Spiel*.

As I write, the bushfires throughout Tasmania, and particularly the Gell River fire from our point of view, are of great concern. I can't remember a summer with so many dry lightning storms. The Florentine Road is closed at Maydena until further notice, and this totally halts caving in the JF. All remote tracks are closed, which includes Southern Ranges track and Exit track, so there goes the IB area for caving as well. Let us all hope these fires are stopped before they reach the Florentine Valley and that none start that will take out Marble Hill and the Southern Ranges. From a broader perspective these are tragic times for the Tasmanian bush and alpine areas. Is this a taste of times to come?

Stuff 'n Stuff

- For those that didn't attend the ASF conference in Devonport over the New Year a few snippets of (sometimes club bragging) information follow:
- **Firstly**, the prusik challenge; a 30 m prusik done on an "endless loop" rope, which was suspended from the ceiling of the Gym. There was a male and female category, nothing else (no "seniors", which upset this editor to no end). The results are posted later in this *Spiel* in an article on the conference. I won't spoil the surprise however just in case you miss it, STC, in **overall** times, got 1st, 2nd and 3rd! Interestingly (or co-incidentally really) there were 22 seconds between both sets of times. The other STC participants did very well too, check out all the times.
- **Secondly**, Gabriel Kinzler blitzed the photo competition. He won multiple awards, 7 in total, in both the novice and general categories, and also best in show. Winners were determined by public votes.
- **And again**, special mention of the video that Fraser Johnson presented. It was really good. *Push Day* (posted 11 January on *Tartarus* Facebook page) You can see it here: https://tinyurl.com/yadgz2lh
- **Elections to the ASF executive were held** after the council meetings. For the first time since anyone can remember there were more nominees than positions. Four positions became vacant, and two of these individuals stood for re-election; Bob Kershaw and Graham Pilkington. They were re-elected. Roderick Smith (MSS) and Janine McKinnon (STC) were also elected as the new members. The other bit of Executive news is that the General Secretary role (held by Bob Kershaw for about the last decade) has transferred to Sarah Gilbert, and the Treasurer (Grace Matts since time immemorial) has transferred to Bob Kershaw. The times, they are a changin'.
- **Continuing the trend**, and adding a photo or two to break up all this print, the conference dinner had a theme. Bedrock (get it?). The Flintstones. For those of you too young to remember, google it. Some amazing costumes appeared. Most (but sadly not your editor) got into the spirit of it all and came in fancy dress. The organisers had even created a backdrop for photos, a couple of which I include here.

Northern Caverneers; the organising committee

Jess Bayles, the convener, and son. What a wonderful image. Photos: "ASF committee-so unknown"

- An archaeological dig is underway in **Alan Jackson's** shed. Any old timers want (most of) the original loxin eyebolts from KD? Build a wind chime to remind you of the good old days when cavers were hard? Create a perpetual trophy for "best caving in cotton overalls" award? Weld up a gavel for STC presidents to maintain order at meetings? Contact Alan if interested (*Alan wrote this ad, obviously- Ed*).

Trip Reports

JF-365 Satans Lair

28-29 April 2018

Stephen Fordyce (yep, a fairly belated one)

Party: Dave Bardi, Stephen Fordyce, Dan Mitchell, David Rueda Roca, Sandy Varin, Djuke Veldhuis (honourable mention to Liz McCutcheon who was crook and wisely elected not to leave the warmth of the Giants Table cottage)

Satans Lair had been on the radar for a while, and was thus picked as the target of a mainlander invasion weekend. Being the only significant cave in its area, and situated above a blank part of the master cave between Niggly and the giant Junee dolines, it was all the more exciting for not having been visited more than a couple of times (the last approx. 10 years ago) and with old trip reports (*Speleo Spiel 269* - quite a hilarious report) alluding to a secret pitch and section only partially explored.

Other recommended reading includes the rigging guide (*Speleo Spiel 364*) although an updated version is included in this *Spiel*, and the 1983 map drawn by Stefan Eberhard (*Speleo Spiel 190*). Our feedback would be to take a drill and use it frequently! (*Ahhh!-No!-Ed*)

With a party of six and a wet cave to be rigged, we split up - Sandy/Dave and DRR would attempt to follow and re-mark the track, then rig the cave. Steve, Dan and Djuke would skirt around the top and come down the gully to check and tag known (and unknown) caves. By then the cave would be rigged and we would convene at the bottom of the cave. If there was time for either party, we would do more prospecting. There will be a separate report for the surface bashing/tagging exercise.

The final bend in the road marking the start of the track was obvious. We ended up parking 50 m away at the end of the road because it was nicer for getting changed and for rental cars. The start of the track wasn't obvious (*because it hasn't been visited for a while-Ed)* and we all bashed around for half an hour looking for it. Key clue: head north-east of the GPS point and expect to climb up the ~1 m ledge in your way and then head gently uphill. Wandering around the flat area and going downhill won't be useful. It's hopefully better marked now anyway, but I have a GPS track recorded if needed.

It took the rigging crew about 2 hours to follow and re-mark the ~600 m track to the cave (and about 40 min once we had it established), and they left the rest of us a kind note saying they'd gone underground at midday. The track is mostly in sapling regrowth, which can be quite thick, very steep in places but sometimes pleasant walking. You know you're nearly at the cave when you hit ferny flats and can hear water - follow the sound to the cave.

We had brought all the gear recommended by the rigging notes and were glad we hadn't skimped on tapes. The anchors were mostly naturals and somewhat exciting (*we aim to make caving exciting and interesting - Ed)*, with some rub points, etc (*? we never had a damaged rope in there – Ed)*. This was admittedly a bit daunting for new generation cavers who have been suckling on the teat of lightweight drills and bolting the crap out of everything (*oh, the temptation to comment – which I will ignore – Ed)*. We had a drill and ended up installing two concrete screws for the final/main pitch. See the separate/updated rigging notes for more detail on the rigging.

There hadn't been any significant rain that week or on the day, but the cave was still very wet - comparable to "the wet way" in Khazad Dum, which I did recently (*Yes, you should be there when it is "wet", it's quite exciting - Ed)*. The first free-hanging pitch (about 3-4 pitches in) we got soaked - later this was slightly improved by a better redirect. The last pitch we also got soaked both up and down - first time any of us had used the hoods on our PVC suits (we were spectacularly glad we weren't wearing Cordura). Some of the climbs were quite exciting and we rigged hand lines, and the rockpile/squeeze mid-way down (turning into a terribly awkward pitch head) was surprisingly tight and nasty.

We (Dan, Djuke and I) checked around the top of this mid-way rockpile chamber thoroughly for leads, heading up through a horizontal slot to a small decorated chamber. No leads were even remotely promising. Apart from this chamber the cave was mostly very narrow and steep, with occasional slightly wider sections. In this respect it is quite similar to other JF caves (Niggly, Porcupine, etc.) in having a relatively recent streamway path worn through until it emerges into bigger underlying passage.

Dan enjoys a gentle shower. Photo: Stephen Fordyce

The surface bashing team caught up with the rigging team on the last few pitches and waited around getting cold while they bodged the last few anchors and went down the last drop. We then spent a while longer fiddling with the rigging some more before heading down also. The final (very wet) pitch dropped 22 m into a big rockpile chamber and the water disappeared down a small hole nearby. A cursory examination of the large, extensive and uncharacteristically pretty rockpile chamber(s) was completed before we resolved to give it a better go the next day.

We bailed out and were back at Maydena by about 10 pm.

Sunday we all trooped back in and with a pre-rigged cave were at the bottom in about 30-40 minutes. Due to some miscalculations, the crowbar was carried in and out of the cave each day and not used, and the bolt climbing kit was carried in and out on Saturday, but not brought in on Sunday when we found a possible use for it... Fortunately the prospective mutiny was averted by the consumption of humble pie (not as good as Serena's cake), and later atoned for by the penance of ascent-with-heavy-bag.

The rigging was tweaked a bit, while Dan and I were to rig and check at the bottom of "the Secret Pitch". On reaching the bottom of the final pitch, you can turn left (away from the terminal stream drainage) and with the ceiling 8 m above you, you can climb up and into a wide, flat rockpile chamber of impressive proportions. At the end of this chamber are some formations, some desperate leads that we pushed with no success, and a fragile paper note dating back over 50 years! (one of the Bob Cockerill trips).

Pretties up near the Secret Pitch

Photo: Stephen Fordyce

From the bottom of the final pitch, if you turn right and go past the stream drainage under a ceiling just above your head, it is possible to climb up through a window into a larger chamber with a lot of decoration. In the far right corner, there is a tight upward squeeze through flowstone which leads to another chamber with much better decorations - 3-4 m straws, stals, a lovely little pool, and a flowstone ridge at the top. From the top right of the ridge you can see back down to the way you came up, but to the top left of the ridge is "the Secret Pitch". Incidentally, I gingerly went through the lovely little pool to a sizeable chamber on the other side - no leads apart from some uninspiring voids in the ceiling.

Dan and I gleefully rigged off some chunky formations and headed on down into excitement (also, a flat floor with minor streamway). The feel was that we were still well above the main streamway drain but maybe there would be a back way to get us further down. We headed right/down the slope and checked a few pinching holes before discovering one which either connected back into the main chamber or was a whole new section - sadly, we later confirmed it was just going back to the main chamber. I noticed a small stream entering the main chamber in about the right spot to be the stream at the base of the Secret Pitch.

Following the minor stream uphill we turned the first corner and were into undecorated rift passage similar to what we'd come down. Lo and behold, there was an obvious horizontal passage about 1.5 m x 1.5 m up the top of a steep slope about 8 m up. Attempts to climb up were made, but it was way too sketchy. The bolt climbing gear had been left out of the cave and made us wish we'd had a quick check-out down the Secret Pitch the day before. Although this lead appears to be on a similar line to the large rockpile chamber, it seemed to be a more recent inflow and wasn't really worth the effort to push.

Sharing the final stream drain with the stream, quote from video "note to self: do not come back here!"

Photo: Stephen Fordyce

Dan and I returned to the base of the main pitch, where the others had just about finishing fixing the rigging. Since we brought the thing and weren't coming back, I grabbed the DistoX and phone-with-Topodroid and did a survey of the bottom section (the only part I didn't survey was the bottom of the Secret Pitch). I very much doubt anyone will be wanting to add the survey in the coming decades, but there are some notes in my GoPro videos about station numbers and the like (apparently "0 is at tape, other is on bulby thing in middle of chamber"). The others came down and had a good look around in the meantime.

While the rest of the group were heading out, I took the opportunity to get back into the drain hole where the main streamway goes (I'd spent a while moving rocks the day before). You can see through a 10 cm x 20 cm window a deep pool, but I couldn't quite get feet into it, let alone anything else (and this while lying in the stream). The pool ate all the rocks that fell into it, so appears to be quite deep. The water flowing in has carved out a channel in the mud with embedded rocks, so it looks like what's left is pretty solid - I didn't even bother with trying the crowbar. The flow would almost certainly go under rockpile as well. I even took a video to remind myself it really wasn't worth going back for. Alan later visited and confirmed the apparent hopelessness.

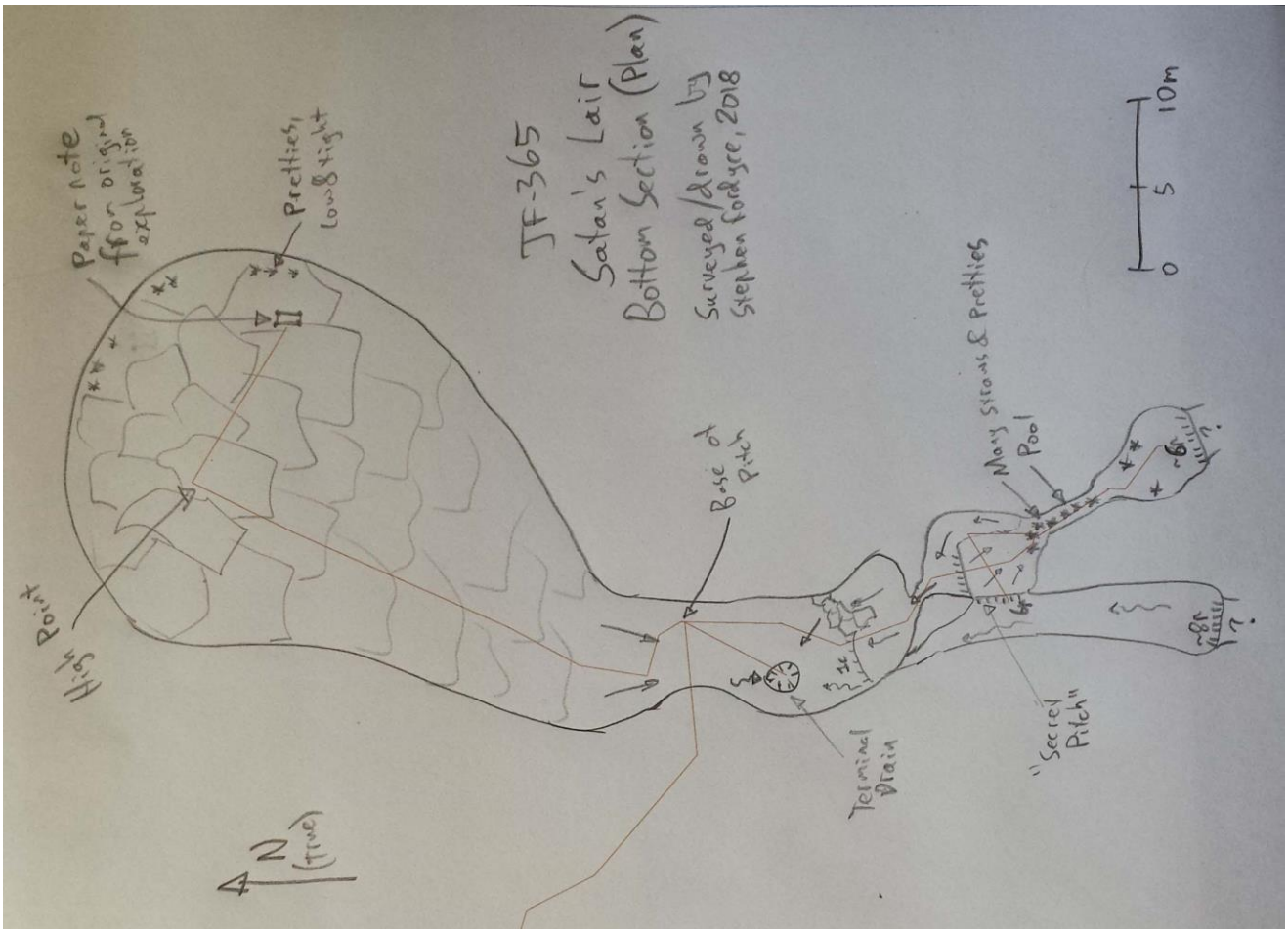
I redeemed my earlier sin of bringing too much gear into the cave by picking up the pack with D/S's forgotten drill in it and followed the others out of the cave, coiling ropes and leaving them at the top of the pitch as I went. Gabriel had volunteered to bottom and then derig the cave, an offer we were happy to accept. At least the ropes won't need much washing - there is very little mud in the cave, and we got dirtier on the walk back than the actual caving exercise.

The rest of the crew were so eager to watch me undressing that they left all sorts of interesting things behind and

hightailed it back to the car. I had a pleasant solo walk back and then some frantic packing under duress of abandonment, as we had flights to catch. It was a big weekend but a great and productive time with a fun group. We managed not to scare (or horribly maim) Djuke on her first Australian caving experience and I'm sure she will be back.

Honourable mention to Dan, who managed to get lost literally (luckily) within cooee of the road, and didn't run out of things to say any time in the entire long weekend.

Final word by a certain Spanish caver: "I do not know why such a cold and wet cave is called Satan's Lair - hell is a hot place, like Adelaide!". Ye of faint heart have been warned (*No, last word is the privilege of the Editor. It's a lovely cave, you guys are just Gen X &Y mainland wusses – Ed).*



Steve's sketch map

IB-((2²)²)² Zenziznezizenzic – The revenge of the machines

8 December 2018

Geoff Wise

Party: Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Geoff Wise

I should have realised it would be a bad day for technology. As we drove down to Ida Bay my phone was going nuts with text messages from the network monitoring system at work. Obviously there was a power outage in Burnie, but nothing critical was down so no need to worry about it at the moment.

The plan for the day was to do one or both of the little jobs I had in the Valley Entrance area, pushing IB-256 and relocating Side Door (IB-190), confirming where it connected to Exit. We wandered up and over the hill and down the VE track until we hit the gully that leads to VE. Janine took the opportunity to clean up the track marking on the way. We then headed off track towards IB-256, a cave that was originally located on the great roaming morning tea where the initial investigation was stopped by the need to dig out a squeeze. I'd visited it again a few years ago when Milos and I dug the squeeze and dropped a pitch. A tightish rift/pitch was still to be pushed.

We eventually made it to the impressive headwall that runs down the gully to the entrance of IB-256, geared up and headed down the 3 m climb. The squeeze was shorter than I remembered, I placed two screws on the left wall which would make getting off the pitch into the squeeze easier than last time. A redirect on the opposite wall part way down helped avoid some moonmilk on the wall and the rub. The rift/pitch headed off almost directly below the first pitch. I rigged the rope off a chock stone and worked my way down., it was a series of steps leading to a short vertical drop. There were not great rigging options and it was too narrow to get the drill in position, I eventually got a tape around a bit of rock and we got down.

There was a bit of horizontal passage here, a nice aven off to the left and the remnants of some critters. I followed the passage a short distance before it got too small. There was a draught here, although not howling. Not enough to scream Exit was on the other side.

I calibrated the DistoX and gave it to Janine to do instruments. After three legs I looked at the readings and realised that all the slope angles were 38.9, even the ups and downs. I had a look and the angle wasn't changing at all when I moved the disto around so I tried recalibrating and there was more weirdness. That was enough mucking around, annoyed I committed the cave to memory and we headed out.

Back at the surface we decided that Side Door would leave us a very long day so we headed back, going straight up the hill rather than back via the VE track. We came across an impressive doline that looked like Thun Junction but we couldn't find the tag. On closer inspection the 'entrance' was too small to get in and we realised it wasn't Thun Junction after all.

Back at the car, I turned on my phone and realised the issues from this morning had continued throughout the day. A couple of hours and several phone calls later, I managed to avoid an evening drive to Burnie to deal with more trouble-making machines.

JF-35 Gormenghast JF-36 Growling Swallet

Saturday 15th December 2018

Serena Benjamin

Party: Serena Benjamin, Andrea Castano, Jardine Hansen, Gabriel Kinzler, Joshua Phillips

The Niggly party were doing a long trip underground and this trip was organised to aid Petr in some of his experiments.

Serena modelling this year's "off the shoulder" caving underwear fashion. The girl has style.

Warning: do not attempt this if you want your underwear to function as intended.

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

After advertising it as a beginner's trip I was surprised at the number of people who were keen. My vehicle was taking an unexpected holiday so four of us piled into Gabriel's, meeting Andrea (a Spanish caver visiting Tasmania for three days) in Maydena. A pleasantly mild day which we started by visiting the entrance to Growling where I released some green (*Dye tracing – Ed)*.

Next was Gormenghast, reached after a fairly easy walk which was not as overgrown as expected. The cave itself was fun, lots of climbs, not too wet and some really nice formations at the bottom. More green dye was released before we turned around and headed out.

A nice and not very taxing day out which is just what I needed.

All that went in came out, and smiling too. The test will be if we see these beginners again??? (*well, probably not Andrea anyway, if he/she was only a visitor - Ed)*

MC-202 Herberts Pot

19-20 December 2018

Alan Jackson

Party: David Butler, Rolan Eberhard, Alan Jackson

It's been quite a few years since a trip report for Herberts Pot has been penned. This cave was once a popular destination for local and visiting cavers but various events resulted in the land owner of the day closing access. A few years back Rolan Eberhard and his cronies managed to secure public funds and bought the relevant bits of private property to secure the cave for integration into the Mole Creek Karst National Park. It has sat idle for a few years while the will and means to facilitate recreational caver access was mustered. A 'Cave Zoning Statement' under the 'Cave Access Policy' is currently underway with the intention of laying the framework for future recreational use. It's been so long since anyone has been to the cave that the memories of the few still active cavers who visited the cave in the 1970s and '80s are pretty hazy (*Yes, I can attest to that – Ed)*, so the first step in the process is to get to know the cave again so informed decisions about how to best manage and conserve it are possible. This trip was the first in the familiarisation process.

The main aim of the trip (from my perspective) was to sort out the rigging for the ensuing trips required to assess the cave. On the first day we plodded in slowly, photo and video documenting interesting stuff on the way in. At the first pitch (~25 m) we considered our options then rigged it on temporary concrete screws. (Not sure I'd trust the three spits we found, one with a manky hanger still in it.) Further down the cave the various 'handline climbs' were assessed (no bolts were deemed necessary). We also headed up the main streamway to the Upstream Waterfall to assess protection of the climb associated with it. We decided that naturals would suffice here too. On our way out we replaced the concrete screws on the main pitch with five glue-in eye bolts. We also left ropes on most of the climbs and the pitch.

The second day we returned to load test the bolts (they all passed, thankfully).

In early 2019 Parks, DPIPWE/Parks and cavers will undertake a series of trips to set the ground rules. If any STC members are interested in being involved then they are invited to express an interest (*already have - Ed*). I will say, however, that these aren't tourist trips for jollies (you'll get your chance to do these in a year or two when the bureaucratic process has run its course and recreational access is, hopefully, restored).

JF-14 Dwarrowdelf to JF-4 KD Exchange

27 December 2018

Janine McKinnon

Party: Serena Benjamin (part way**),** Janine McKinnon, John Palmer**,** Tony Rooke**,** Adam Spillane, Djuke Veldhuis

This was a pre-conference trip and part of a multi-team excursion into this system. Our team was rigging down JF-14 and heading back up KD the wet way, but leaving all the ropes in-situ. Easy peasy!

All went smoothly down Dwarrowdelf with me rigging. Serena turned back at the bottom of the 55 m pitch, as she had planned. The rest of us were all sitting on the top of the rockpile in the bottom chamber two and a half hours after starting into the cave. We had lunch with a view, and watched the party arriving down the other side…and watched them arriving…and watched them arriving. It was like watching paint dry, but with a better light show. They appeared to have some rigging issues, and then a rope 5 m too short for the last drop from the rebelay came down, so tying another one on and all passing the knot added to the full-length feature, with a front row seat. One of their party had serious problems getting past the knot, looked exhausted and was partly under a waterfall. For a short while we thought we would be doing a rescue. We were actually just starting to move towards that when he managed the manoeuvre and dropped to the floor.

Two hours after arriving in the chamber we started up the other side. Adam was sent up first as he was the only member of the group NOT in a plastic suit. He was very cold. I told him to head up as far as he wanted, including out of the cave if he wished. Just follow the water!

We had a smooth trip up this route, briefly met Adam waiting at the Serpentine junction before assuring him of the route to take, and were all out 3 hours after starting up. Water levels were quite low so we didn't get more than damp on the trip up.

JF-345 Ice Tube

28 December 2018

Phil Maynard

Party: Andrew Baker (NHVSS), Gabriel Kinzler, Ola Löfquist, Phil Maynard (SUSS), Petr Smejkal

Ice Tube is a side creek flowing into the Growling Swallet system. Calling it a side creek is like saying that Kanangra Main is a side creek of the Cox's River. Ice Tube is a deep, wet, multi-pitch through-trip, and back in the 1980s when it was explored it was considered one of the hardest classic vertical caves in Tasmania. With modern rigging and vertical gear, and better lights, everything looks easier than in the past, but this is still a major trip, and a good fun day.

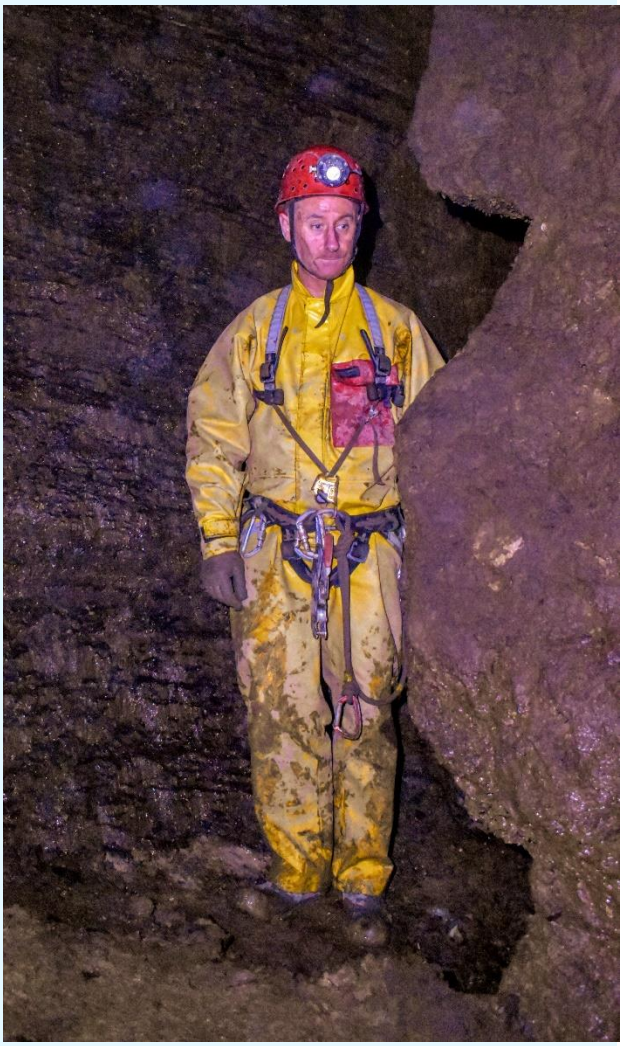
We slogged our way up the hillside from the Growling entrance to Ice Tube in about an hour, through the warmth and humidity. The entrance is an impressive doline with a small creek flowing in, although it seemed to be quite low-flow conditions. We entered the cave by about 10.30am, glad to be out of the terrible Tasmanian heat (note to mainlanders; it really was a pretty warm day).

The pitches start within 100 m of the entrance, and continue regularly all the way down. There are no long walking sections, and no rock piles or squeezes. It's like a Kanangra canyon, only darker. Rigging: all of the pitches have been set up with double bolts, a chain and a ring. There are traverses out to the belays on most pitches to keep out of the waterfalls.

Petr set up the rope through the ring, and then set up a single-rope Y-hang belay to the bolts. Everyone abseiled single-rope except for the last person (Andrew took this on) who had to untie the Y-hang and then set up a pull down before abseiling on the correct side of the rope. It was all a bit involved and time consuming, but it's a lot safer than just having everyone try to pick the correct side of the rope to abseil on (*which we should all be able to do, shouldn't we? It's not rocket science, I have done it the "standard" way for decades with even beginners without incident, and we are meant to be vertical cavers, HOWEVER recent history has proved otherwise, so idiot proofing prevails – Ed)*. We had a 60 m and a 40 m rope, so for the big pitches the ropes were tied and we descended the shorter rope.

The roof seemed to stay up as the creek plummeted down multiple pitches, so the small entrance passage became an enormous chamber with meanders continuing forward out of sight. We were having too much fun to stop for food, so we continued down pitch after pitch (*Tassie trick; each person eats when they have waiting time for themselves – Ed*).

One of the last big pitches (about 40 m) had an ugly, sloping ledge 12 m off the bottom. It was covered in boulders; a perfect place for a rope jam on the pull-down, and that's exactly what happened. Pulling the rope didn't work and attaching lead ascenders didn't work. After cursing the cave for a bit, Petr made a climb about 4 m up a wall to the side and pulled at the rope from a different angle. Eventually the rope was persuaded to move and we were able to continue. We still had big pitches to go at that point, so we couldn't just cut the rope or leave it behind.



Are we having fun yet?

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

The final big pitch is a wet one, and drops you onto a big flat chamber floor. Below that was a huge (14 m? – Ed) drop that Andrew started to rig. Turns out, what we needed to do was rig four metres down and swing to a small ledge - the big (? - Ed) drop goes to the sump and doesn't get you out of the cave. From the ledge, we squashed ourselves and our packs into the famous set of rifts and crawls, known as Fallopian Rift (*and don't forget Mothers Passage in there too! – Ed)*, which eventually deposits you into the main river of Growling Swallet.

I was tired by this point. Andrew had been carrying the 60 m rope and he was tired by this point (*I could make a pithy comment here about southern Tassie cavers vs mainlanders. After all, they've only done a bit more than the "going down" bit! Just falling really. Easy peasy. Alan when editor would have said something pointed... but I'll resist the urge – Ed)*. The others were ready to blast out of the cave, so we slogged up the river after Petr. If you've been in Growling, you'll know that there is a major piece of the route where the river can't be followed. Instead, an intricate series of upper-level passages bypasses a major sump. This route is partly rock pile, partly rift and partly stream passages (multiple catchments) (*Necrosis – Ed).* There's also the infamous Herpes III squeeze, which smells of rotting socks, and a bunch of fixed ladders which haven't been upgraded since I first went there in 2001.

We made our way through all of this and exited the last rifty squeeze, into the passage that deposits you back into the main river. This is a mud-floored walk through passage - except not for us! The winter floods have excavated the mud from below, and we were confronted by a chasm across the floor, 6 m long and with the sound of the river about 4 m below. I think Petr was convinced by this stage that the cave had a grudge against him. We climbed on a mud-bank around the right-hand side and slid back to the floor on the other side of the chasm. This is a serious problem for trips into Growling; the mud bank we used as an escape path is probably going to follow the rest of the mud into the chasm sooner or later.

From the point where we hit the river, it's a very pretty climb through waterfalls to the main entrance of Growling Swallet. Stopping for the odd photo, we were in out in the evening sunshine by about 7 pm. It was still warm and humid, and there was not much flow compared to the other times I've been there. Thanks to Petr, Gabriel and Ola for hosting us mainlanders and giving us a trip through one of the Tassie classics.

ASF conference 2018/9

30 December 2018 – 5 January 2019

Gabriel Kinzler reflects on his personal experience of the event

The 31st ASF Conference marked its first return to Tasmania since the 25th edition, which took place in Dover in 2005. Being staged in Devonport this time around, the Northern Caverneers were the club organising and running the conference, with Jessica Bayles the convener.

It was the first time I attended a proper conference, which means I have no benchmark to compare it to. However, I can confidently declare it a great success, in unison with echoes from other punters and the organisers themselves. I for one did not get bored a single minute (yes, the lack of excitement is my standard metric). Young guns like me would normally long to go out and "cave cave cave", but the conference was a welcome and pleasant break after a relatively busy year.

The organisation and logistics of the event were seamless, with amenities, catering and services judiciously provided to every attendee. The choice of the venue, Reece High School, was very fitting: beyond the practical aspects, it really did feel like being back in school (in essence: science, banter and bullying -*bullying? - Ed*).

Camping on the school oval Photo: Steve Milner

A very useful official website was created for the occasion, with many people working behind the scenes. Numerous quality talks were given by various key players of the Australian caving scene (including some of our very own), with the less verbose individuals being offered a chance to give "lightning talks" (*some of these didn't quite fit the "less verbose" category! – Ed*). The conference was rich in scientific observations and statistical data, enlivened by glorious photography and movies, amongst which Fraser Johnston's fantastic short film *Push Day*, following STC explorers down Niggly Cave. I won't touch upon the politics and bureaucracy, as I didn't take part in the council meetings. STC's presence was strong this year, in contrast with our traditionally unsociable stance. Keeping my distance from the hot debate on the merits of adhering or not to the ASF, I will nonetheless underline how important I feel it is for our club to join the global effort displayed by all the others at such events, at least as far as social interactions and scientific contributions go. There is this feeling of belonging to a greater family of cavers in Australia that needs to be cherished, and I think showing up, playing our part and being proactive is beneficial to all parties involved, at every level of the hierarchy. And who doesn't like a touch of healthy competition?

To be relied upon at any talk-No-one likes the front seats

Photo: Steve Milner

Of course, it wasn't all just sitting around looking at slideshows and stuffing one's face with food and the not-so-occasional glass of wine: plenty of activities had been planned by the organisers to break the monotony, including caving, canyoning, kayaking, mountain biking, touristing, and a slate of fun competitions, namely the Speleo Sports (obstacle course), the infamous Prusik Challenge (which STC crushed in good fashion), a photo competition and a trivia night.

On the last day of the conference, we were treated to the "Cavers' Dinner", a Flintstones-themed dinner party serving as a closing ceremony, where prizes would be awarded to the winners of each competition. Two things to note: a majority of the guests played ball and did dress up (more or less convincingly), which was a nice surprise; and the photo competition turned into a farce of which I largely benefited. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining and I felt honoured to receive such praise for the pictures I entered, but I shouldn't have won in 7 (seven!) categories with only three photos, which one could argue were far from being the best of the bunch.

I would recommend some tweaking of the categories and the voting system for the next edition.

Last but not least, the event was adorned with pre- and post-conference caving trips, both down south and in the Mole Creek area, which shall be reported separately. A cave rescue exercise also took place at the Mole Creek Quarry, which went well but at a slow pace in the scorching Tasmanian sun, explained by the decent share of beginners amongst our troops. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Irish expedition (aka 'invasion') that occurred in the JF before and during the conference: many were hoping their twenty-odd members could make it to Devonport to share their vast international and local experience. Alas, mitigating circumstances stopped that from happening despite their willingness to join.

I personally wish to thank every participant in any capacity for all their efforts. The list of acknowledgments would be too long to fit in here, but I think Jess Bayles deserves particular praise for her fabulous work this year. Thank you all and see you at the next conference.

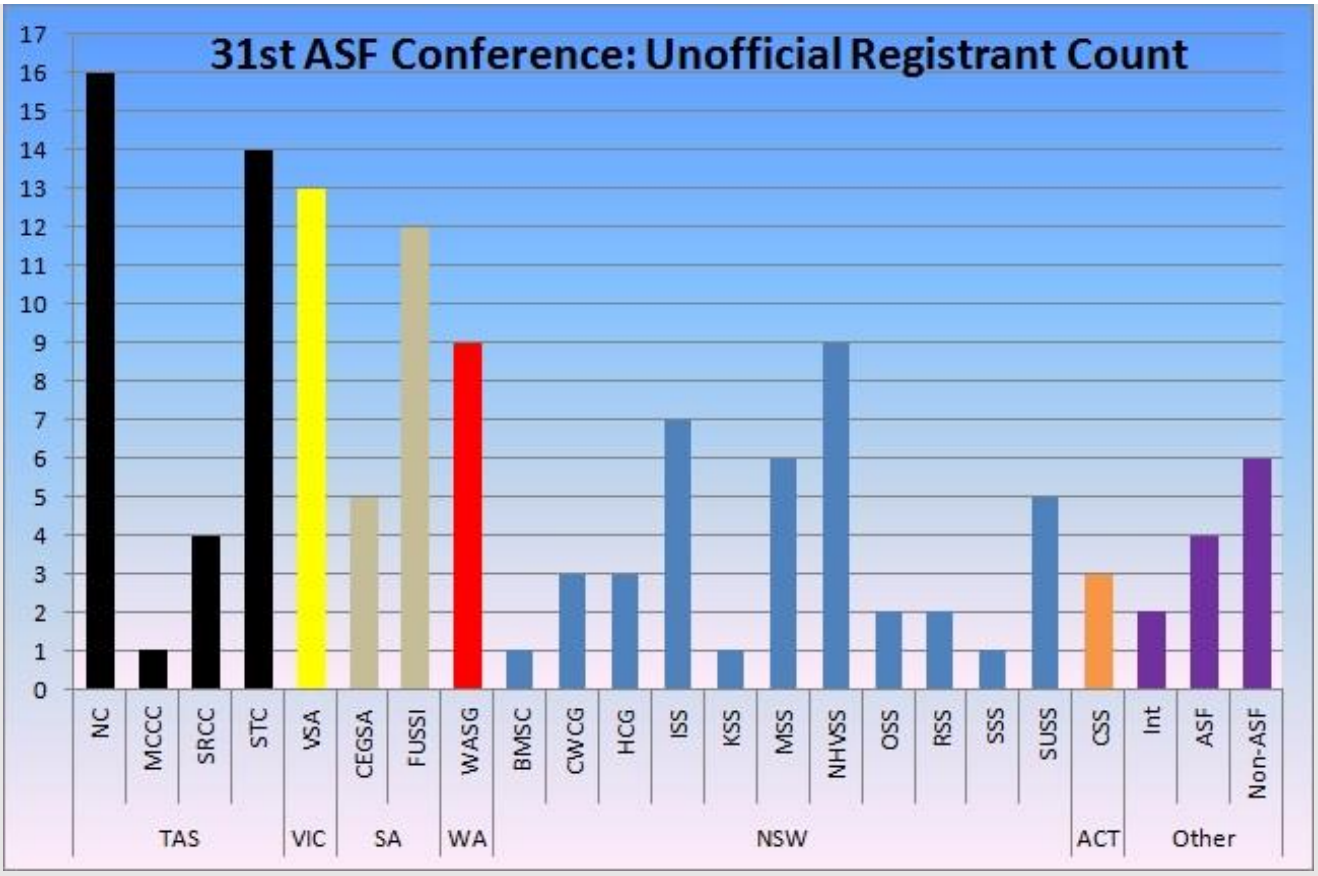
Rope rescue practice session.

Photo: Tom Porritt

31st Asf Conference Prusik Challenge Reece High School Thursday 3rd Jan 2019

Rope Height 30 mts

Name	Time	Club
Alan Jackson	1.39.39	STC first mens
Serena Benjamin	2.01.25	STC first womens
Gabriel Kingzler	2.54.84	STC
Janine McKinnon	2.23.28	STC 2nd womens
Tom Porritt (Rope walker)	3.25.83	STC
Sarah Gilbert	3.18.71	FUSSI,STC
Janice March	3.54.47	NC
Eleanor March	3.24.21	NC
Eric March	4.04.37	NC
Andrew Thomas	3.18.88	WASG
Laure-Anne Thierrin	2.49.79	WASG 3rd womens
Greg Thomas	2.53.59	WASG 3rd mens
Gregoriy Tsaplin	2.41.35	WASG 2nd mens
Brett Wiltshire	3.03.83	WASG
Abhijeet Anand	5.15	DNF with 40 to go VSA
Silvana Iannello	7.13.34	VSA
Ola Lofquist	4.02.86	Int
Alison Irvine	4.07.66	Chillago
Deb Hunter	4.27.51	MC
Steve Milner	4.01.44	CEGSA
Alan Caton	4.05.94	RSS
Anna Ossig-Bonanno	3.35.67	MSS



Source: non-exhaustive data aggregated from the "Conference Handbook", 31st ASF Conference

Post conference Cave Rescue Practice

6 January 2019

Janine McKinnon

A day at the quarry near Mole Creek was organised as part of the post-conference field trips. Around 20 cavers took time out from their post-conference caving to take advantage of the training opportunities offered.

The plan was to run a stretcher, with a live patient, from the ground, up to the top of the quarry, along the face, and back to the ground. Simple really. Hah!

The Briefing started at 9 am and it was expected we would be all wrapped up by 3 pm. Well, the organisers expected this, I was a bit more sceptical. Correctly, as it turned out.

The first lesson was how to drill holes and place concrete screws, so it was going to be a steep learning curve for some!

We were divided into four teams with mixed skills and assigned our area to rig. The poor quality rock in many places added to the challenge, and there was considerable pfaffing about generally but ultimately the job was done successfully and the patient was back on the ground at 5 pm.

As we were all from different states, had differing levels of skills, and had never all, or even mostly, worked together before I thought it went well.

Opposite are a couple of photos to give you the idea.

Up, up, and away…Photo: Ruth Evans

Does my bum look big in this? Photo: Ruth Evans

Machinery Creek canyon

2 January 2019

Janine McKinnon

Party: About 30! However our party was: Alan Jackson, Mark Corbett, Phil Maynard, Steve Milner, Janine McKinnon, Matt Smith, Ric Tunney

It wasn't as bad as that party number seems. This mid-week conference trip was very popular so it was broken into four groups. My group, led by Alan Jackson, went first to rig the canyon and leave the ropes in-situ. It was a warm and sunny day, however as we started early the sun hadn't risen high enough to shine into the canyon as we went through. Thus the choice a few of us made NOT to wear wetsuits proved a little bold. I just pretended that we Tassies are tough…whilst I shivered. That somewhat blew the image, I think.

This is an excellent trip with everything a canyoning trip needs; swims, waterfalls, abseils and a walk in and out. Oh, except the canyon bit. No real canyon actually. Still, a great day's fun. A short day. Taking one's time, it is still only about a 4 hour trip.

Team #1 about to start down the canyon

Photo: Steve Milner

MC-130 Devils Pot

7 January 2019

Janine McKinnon

Party: Andrew Baker, Alan Caton, Sarah Gilbert, Alan Green, Melissa Hadley, Cathi Humphrey-Hood, Eleanor March, David Mason, Janine McKinnon, Thomas Varga, Ric Tunney

Post ASF conference caving. Lots of punters and varying SRT skills. Only a couple of them we knew the caving skills of, and not well at that.

We had put a description of the rigging, map of the cave and warning about the skills required up on the wall at the conference venue where all post trips were posted for participants to book. Talking with several of them as the caving day progressed, it became apparent that many of them had not read any of this. So it was a good thing we had spoken to them all beforehand in an attempt to ascertain their SRT skills. Still, no dramas ensued, everyone got home safe, and the day was fun and not unreasonably long.

I suppose I should put just a bit more meat on these bones. We spit the group into two parties. One going down the traditional route with Ric, and the other down the canyon route with me. The choice of who went where was based on:

Did we know anything about a caver's SRT skills. If good technical skills were assured then they went down the canyon with me. That gave me two.

Did they use a rack or stop for descending. Racks went with Ric, on the belief that an experienced and competent SRT caver doesn't use a rack in a rebelay cave.

Did they self-select to go down the easy route. That gave Ric two easy ones.

One rack user borrowed a stop to come with me. My fingers were crossed.

So with the groups sorted we started up the hill. I was somewhat relieved to see the first ones at the gearing up area were all my group. So they were fit enough for the job - probably.

Ric's crew weren't far behind. Andrew rigged the first pitch rebelay and then stepped back to take photos. I took over for the rest of the route. All went smoothly down the cave. Ric was at the bottom as I arrived and quickly claimed the prize for winning the race (that I didn't know we were having). However my crew all arrived in efficient time whilst only one more of his did! We then all ate lunch as the rest of his team SLOWLY came down the final pitch of the traditional route. Therefore I feel we definitely won the race (that we weren't having).

Many of us took a tour of the bottom sections of the cave. I found the route to the lower sections on the left hand side blocked by mud. The mud banks in the rift had all changed too. This is a frequently changing cave in its lower reaches, it would appear.

Ric volunteered to go back up the traditional route and one of the others retraced their steps with him. One of mine, David, went up that route to get a full view of the exchange. All the others went up the canyon route. So that was eight up the canyon. I was a little concerned it would end up a LONG exit. Fortunately, although a few of them were quite slow, no-one was a disaster, so it was still fun.

We started down the hill together but were a bit surprised to see one of the cars had driven away before the last of us reached the cars!

I keep forgetting not everyone does things the way STC does. We all wait (other than by prior agreement if there is a several hours gap between returning parties or members) at the cars until everyone is ready to go, and then check all cars start. It can be a real bummer being left behind with a car that won't go.

A short video here: https://youtu.be/4hjmTI6IHs0

MC-1 Kubla Khan

7 January 2019

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler, Ola Löfquist, Darren Mackenzie, Emma Mackenzie

Some pommy caving friends were visiting the state so a permit for Kubla was arranged under their club, Kendal Caving Club. Nothing of great interest to report. A nice trip with good friends acted as a warm down after the conference frivolities.

Many Falls Creek

11 January 2019

Janine McKinnon

Party: Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Steven Kennedy, Liz McCutcheon, Janine McKinnon, Gregoriy Tsaplin, Greg Thomas.

Warning: I may have overdone the photos in this report a bit, but it was just so beautiful I had to share.

The Southwest was burning. The Florentine Road was closed. Post ASF conference caving plans for the JF were in tatters. So, Alan forged a new plan. Canyoning, or to be more precise, a trip down a creek with many waterfalls that he had done several years ago with Gavin Brett but without ropes. The new plan was to do this as an abseil/canyon style trip. It may not be underground but it did involve ropes so that's pretty close to vertical caving in my book.

The mainlanders were all staying at Ida Bay, so they got a head start of something like an hour on we locals for the walk up the Southern Ranges track. Damn, I'd been banking on them to set a slower pace than I knew I'd now face. Alan, Serena and I started from the Mystery Creek carpark at 9am. Alan stayed with us until near the top of the climb to Moonlight Flats where he must have decided he needed a leg stretch, and so disappeared off into the distance, not to be seen again until we joined the others on the other side of Hill One, which is where our route left the Southern Ranges track. We were going down a creek running to the D'Entrecasteaux River.

That's the creek we're heading for, down there

Photo: Janine McKinnon

Off cross country we headed on easy alpine vegetation for a short while, then it was down the hillside to the creek, through the Scoparia, Teatree and Bauera. Good thing I put the long sleeves and trousers in and scrub gloves. Once in the creek the vegetation opened up somewhat, however we didn't get off scot-free as there were several hundred metres of thick overhanging vegetation, and some horizontal scrub, along the creek.

It wasn't all a parkland stroll…

But much of it was.

Photos: Janine McKinnon

Finally, the creek opened up and we found our first waterfall, and it was spectacular. We stood on the lip and looked out over the plains of the D'Entrecasteaux valley WAY below us, and down the sheer, open drop below. It was a sunny, warm day (but not too hot), the bush flies were only a minor nuisance, and all was now good with the world (the scrub) forgiven. We found a rigging point and started down.

Looking out over the drop, it was impressive.

Photo: Janine McKinnon

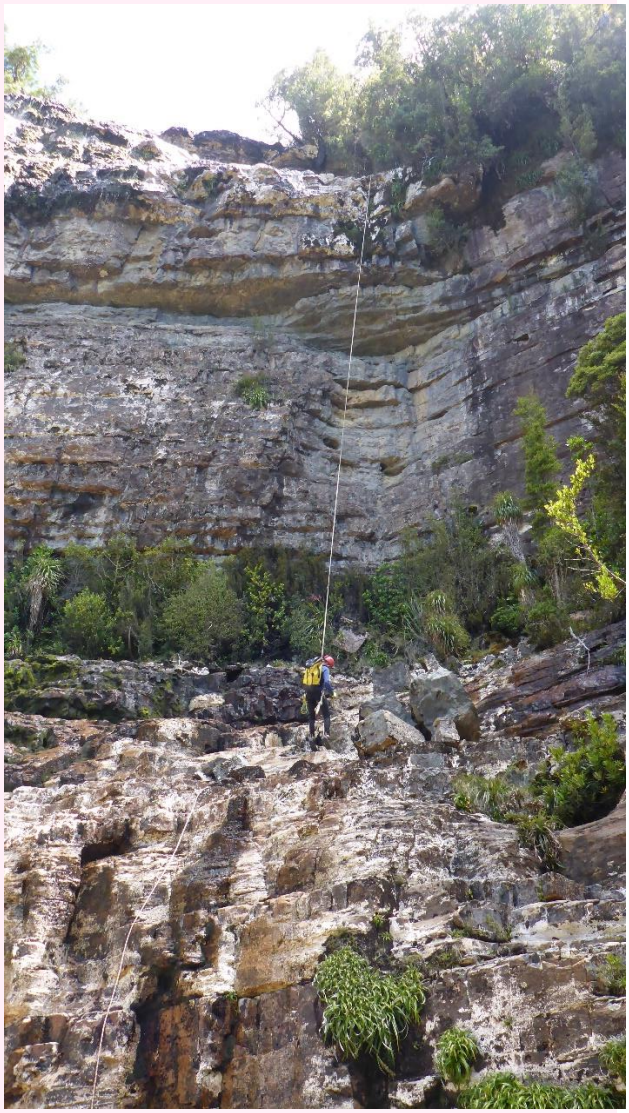
This is the first (known) trip abseiling down this creek, so no information on required rigging or rope lengths were known. Alan had just made a guess from his memory of scrub bashing down beside them on his previous trip. This

made the trip definitely more exciting as we approached each waterfall. A couple proved particularly exciting as we discovered that our 2 x 50 m ropes weren't long enough. Luck, imagination and adaption solved the problems.

What do you do when your ropes aren't long enough for the drop? Get VERY cosy on a VERY small ledge part-way down.

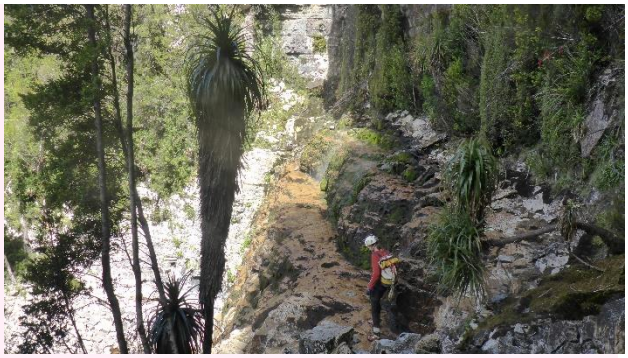
Photo: Greg Thomas

We dropped down pitch after pitch, all spectacular and differing in their characteristics. It was wonderful.



Lucky it was so dry. It would be a wetsuit job in normal flow…but SO much fun

Photo: Janine McKinnon



Some of the ledges were glorious

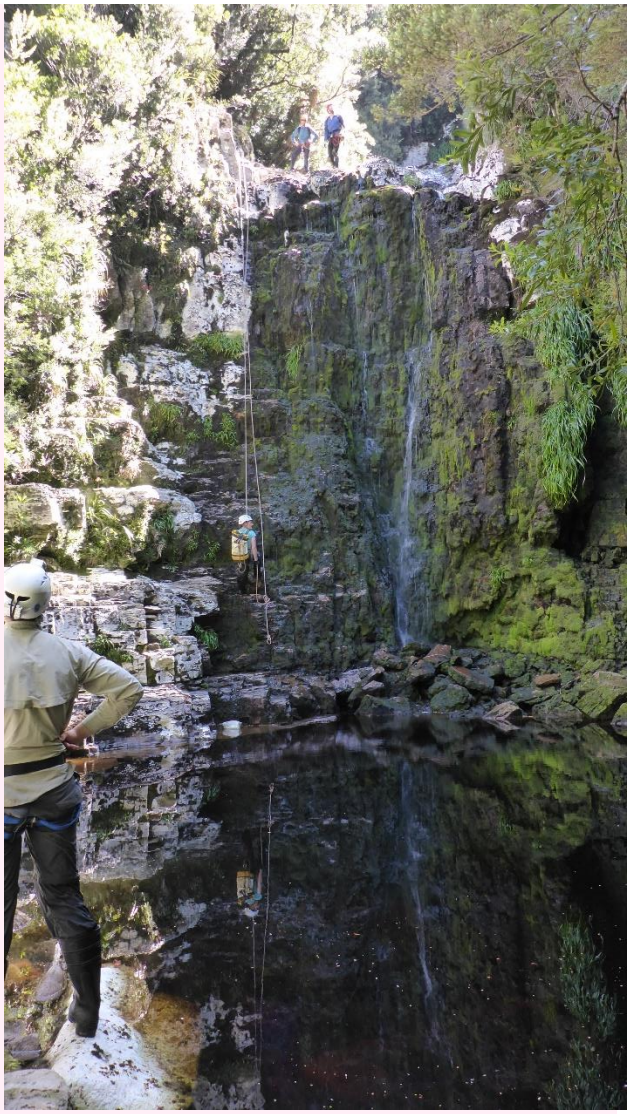
Photo: Janine McKinnon

The day wore on, we were in no enormous hurry, and just enjoying the trip. At around 5 pm we were at the top of the last pitch. This seemed reasonable, time-wise, until I looked at how FAR away the D'Entrecasteaux river was on the plain below…and then found out that is a three kilometre walk down the D'Entrecasteaux from the junction of our creek with the river to Exit resurgence. This might be going to be a long day…

Liz trying not to get wet...unsuccessfully.

The swim a bit later made this somewhat superfluous

Photo: Janine McKinnon



And the fun and beauty just kept on coming

Photo: Janine McKinnon

I lost track of how long it took to walk from the base of the last waterfall to the river junction, but it was not quick. To give you an idea the light was starting to fade and this is high summer (dark 9 pm-ish). We lost light part way down the D'Entrecasteaux River, which made my decision to carry a head light on the trip 'just in case" very prescient. Luckily everyone else was either wearing their caving helmet as their canyoning helmet or had a light.

Not many pitches to go now…and the swim JUST before the last one

Photo: Janine McKinnon

Note the person coming down the ledges.

Photo: Janine McKinnon

The slog back from Exit was a little tedious I have to admit. I wasn't really fit enough for this trip, particularly with this bunch. I spent the day chasing most of them really, but it had definitely been worth it. Alan and the greyhounds disappeared once they had the scent of home at the cave (with permission) and we last few chugged our way up the hill, ticking off landmarks in my case as we passed them.

The leggy brigade arrived back at the cars at 11:15 pm, and we tortoises at 11:45 pm, although we did have a 15 minute delay at a tree fall (5 minutes of which was a chocolate break, but who's time-keeping), so it wasn't quite as sad as it seems.

Now that my knees are working again, and my face has stopped being numb where I smashed the side of it into a log on a fall on slippery rocks (that was a first, I'm happy to say), I can declare this was a totally awesome day. Everything was as good as it could be from the weather, through terrain, to the company.

Thanks all for such a memorable trip. I could do it again sometime…with forewarning to get fit enough to breeze it in next time.

Other Exciting Stuff

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Here's a couple of trip reports from fairly recent times. The second one illustrates that you always need to be prepared for anything when you go caving! Both are from Speleo Spiel *377*

MC-18 Soda Creek Cave

Alan Jackson

20 February 2010

Party: Stephen Blanden, David Butler, Alan Jackson

I was stuck up north for work so I tapped into the Northern Caverneers grapevine to see what was going on. Steve and David were heading to Soda Creek Cave (down near Liena, past King Solomon tourist cave) to continue a survey they'd commenced in this cave about five years earlier! The flat 100 m walk to the entrance was a welcome change from recent Niggly trips. Soda Creek is an overflow cave (essentially no running water in there except during winter rains when it becomes a raging outflow – during which it sumps in several locations). The entrance could be mistaken for a man-made adit. A couple of hundred metres in we located the final station from the previous survey effort and commenced our surveying.

There were various sections of deep standing water (almost nipple height in the first one!) Despite these pools of water the going is pretty spacious and easy which made for relatively pleasant surveying. What made it really pleasant was that I wasn't taking book and wasn't ultimately responsible for drawing up the survey at some stage in the future – what a relief it was to simply read the instruments with all care but no responsibility. Several more hundred metres later we reached the final section which sumps out in winter – again we were up to our belly buttons in water. Shortly after, the nature of the cave changes somewhat; the lower levels are full of gunk and muck from floods and one has to climb up into upper levels. We stopped the survey here and tried to find the way through. David had been on the initial push trips in this section 10-15+?? years previously. A series of tightish ups and downs over large gour pools ensued, always with the draft rushing past. We struggled to find the way on and thought all was lost until David pushed a narrow climb and found himself in what he was looking for. Steve and I didn't join him – we'd retreated to more spacious, comfortable climes before David got through. David returned a while later confirming he'd found his way to the 'end'. Apparently there is a ~30+ m aven there which they tried aid climbing during initial exploration. We'd covered a fair distance already and most were cold thanks to the full body immersions and howling draft.

The nasty job of surveying the tight stuff was postponed till the next trip in another five years!

JF-337 Slaughterhouse Pot – JF-36 Growling Swallet through trip

Alan Jackson

17 April 2010

Party: Chris Chad, Ken Hosking, Alan Jackson, Adrian Slee

Just a beginner quickie to the Sluthouse – I'd been promising Chris I'd take him somewhere half decent for a while now. The underground portion was easy and out of the way by early afternoon. We then stumbled across a ~40 year old couple from Glenorchy, Kelly and Glenn Gray, on the track about 20 m from the GS/McCullums track junction. Kelly had broken her right ankle.

We did the mental arithmetic and figured it'd be at least 4 hours by the time the cops got there and did their thing if we just walked out and raised the alarm, so we whipped up a stretcher out of two sassafras saplings, Chris's trog suit and ~25 m of rigging tape and 9 mm rope (plus some general clothing for comfort). We lashed her down with various odds and ends (cowstails, pack haul lines etc). The five able-bodied blokes then hoofed it out to the carpark. It took us about 2 hours with many rest stops – with no extra people to rotate lifting duties with, it was pretty hard work.

Kelly was in surprisingly good spirits the whole way, with only the occasional scream of pain when we accidentally hooked her leg on passing trees …

Glen only had about 8% vision and didn't have his license, so Ken drove their car back to my place in Moonah where Kelly's parents were waiting and they transferred her to hospital. She had surgery on her fibula (which she had clean snapped off at the base) the following Monday.

All's well that ends well but it could have been a very tricky situation had we not just happened to wander through. With Kelly crawling at about 1 metre per 30 seconds, in extreme pain, she would have struggled to make it out to the car at all. Glen, with his 8% vision would most likely have become lost while walking out alone to raise the alarm (and then still had to manage the drive to Maydena). They were lucky, we were only too happy to help out and they were very appreciative – I've received several calls from Glen, and Kelly's mother, expressing their thanks. They hope to make it to the May meeting to say thanks yet again, with maybe a little beer under their arms …

JF-365 Satans Lair Rigging Guide

Ric Tunney & Stephen Fordyce (05/2018)

from Speleo Spiel 364

SF General comments: our party was more used to rigging off bolts or concrete screws and although we reached the bottom following this guide, we felt many of the natural anchors to be borderline (especially on the final and longest pitch). We added 2 6x60 mm concrete screws for this pitch (to be removed - don't rely on finding the holes again).

P1 (8 p) 17 m rope. Bolt 2 m to left of tag. Rebelay to bolt 2 m down. If wet, there are lots of places for redirections to move the rope away from the water. Use rope as a handline below the pitch itself. First bolt is a lean out over the pitch - allow an extra 5 m of rope at the top as an optional safety line to a nearby tree.

P2 (14 p) 22 m rope. Belay from bolt LHS at lip of pitch, with backup to flake on LHS 5 m before bolt. Rebelay on bolt on LHS 4 m down and out a few metres. In wet conditions, a redirection around a boulder on far side of pitch 5 m further down will hold the rope further away from the water, but it is not necessary for a free-hang. Redirect highly recommended!

Rock-pile. A 6 m handline may help in the rift at the bottom of the rock-pile.

P3 (8 p + 12 c) 25 m rope. Belay to bollard at lip with backup to trace around flake RHS at base of previous handline. Redirect with tape around rocks to go around corner at base of 8 p. Easiest to do the whole lot as a pitch.

6 c Free-climb

4 c Free-climb

5 c A short handline around bollard at lip helps with the top 2 m of this climb.

P4 (6 p) 12 m rope rigged from jug LHS, with backup to thread at floor level LHS 3 m back.

P5 (9 p) 12 m rope. Belay to jug LHS at head-height at lip, with backup to trace around block in roof 3 m up. (Approach this from further back up streamway.) Or just use the jug as a redirection.

P6 (22 p) 30 m rope. Belay to small bollard LHS just before lip, with backup to flake RHS 4 m back. Traverse ledge and rebelay to bollard RHS, giving a free-hang to bottom. This pitch can get wet. We were uncomfortable going down a 22 m pitch in the water off a less than ideal single anchor, with backup 4 m horizontally away. There is a bollard of sorts and a flake (both on RHS) which was initially rigged to give a Y-hang (but the access line looked ominously like it would pull at least one of them off). We played it safe and installed a concrete screw as one of the anchors for the main drop. Beware a rub point just below the anchors - needs protection. We got completely drenched both up and down - and the rock did not look good enough anywhere for a decent rebelay to stay out of the water.

P7 (10 p) 13 m rope. "The Secret Pitch" To find it, once you hit the big cave, follow it south (past where the stream flows into the choked hole) and up a rockpile slope, then through a tight upward squeeze in flowstone into the very pretty room with 3 m+ straws. Top of the pitch is at the ridge in this room. Tape around large stal at top (not small one) and another tape around bulbous bollard for a Y-hang.

Notes:
1. All directions looking downstream.
2. Bolts are 8 mm x 90 mm 316SS Powers Throughbolts.
3. Hangers have been removed except for top bolt. (Thread was slightly damaged by a rock hammer when installing bolt, so it was thought best to leave the hanger in situ. Hanger is a 4 mm thick Fixe 304SS, so it should last a while.) 3 x 8 mm hangers required.
4. Not all cavers will need the handlines.
5. A few tapes, etc will be needed for rigging. Required for most anchors and redirects - take at least 10, including some long ones.

6. Recommend taking some rope protectors (3-4) if rigging off the natural anchors described, as it was very difficult to avoid all rub points. The final pitch is particularly nasty for this.

Cave Rescue Exercise 24 November 2018

A montage

All photos not otherwise specified by Gabriel Kinzler

The three photos above don't do justice to what a wet, miserable day it was above ground.

Fun? Of course it is

The initial group gathering in the entrance chamber

There were many interesting rigging opportunities

Sometimes you just need a break

All going well

Up, up and away. Or maybe just "along".

Photos don't lie, they say. I could swear Alan is wearing a cod piece

Why am I thinking about spider webs when I look at this?

Now that just looks plain awkward. Is it a brave, or foolish, person who volunteers to be the patient?

Claustrophobia not allowed. Oh, that's right, we're cavers, we don't know what that is.

There's always a place for a good old stretcher carry

Ready for launch…they think

That's one chilled and placid patient

It's all action stations…for most

Gabriel should be in at least one photo. Blue Helmet guy. Photo: Stefan Eberhard

Time for a rest. Many hands still make for hard work.

Photo: Stefan Eberhard

Rescue Exercise Report

24 November 2018

Andreas Klocker

The real cave rescue in Midnight Hole almost 1.5 years ago, and the cave rescue in Thailand earlier this year, must have made cave rescue exercises popular! We had ~40 individuals signed up, mainly cavers from all over the place (including the mainland), and some Police SAR officers and SES SAR members. Sadly several dropped out (*including the Police SAR- Ed)*, in particular members of the NSW cave rescue squad who didn't make it past Sydney airport due to a sand storm (and having booked their flights with Crapstar...not the best way to get to any rescue or rescue exercise on time...they should know better). Nevertheless, 29 people faced the worst Tassie weather can offer and headed into Mystery Creek Cave to simulate a stretcher rescue from the back end.

It was nice to see that several years of practicing has paid off. We had comms set up in a short time, and the five teams working on rigging in different parts of the cave did a great job applying what they have learnt over previous years to set up several tyroleans and a vertical lift. And once the stretcher started moving from the back end of the cave it kept moving at a good pace until it arrived at our comms station where we had planned to finish the exercise. Most of the rescue rigging worked out great, with only minor hiccups which were quickly dealt with. And we even finished at a very reasonable hour.

It has been great seeing how people improved over the last few years since Al Warild started to teach us cave rescue fundamentals at Fruehauf. Thanks a lot to everyone who came along and made this weekend fun and successful!

And now for the Pièce de Résistance

This is an excerpt from the STC Facebook page. The comments are captions for these photos.

Alan Jackson Stefan in need of a hug as usual.
Chris Sharples No, Alan suffering messianic delusions, obviously!
Chris Sharples This pic is such a comment-magnet!! A beauty Gabriel!!
Chris Sharples The pic should go on the front cover!
Andreas Klocker I think Alan is trying to describe the size of his ego ;)!
Philip Jackson Pastor Alan Jackson leading the Hillsong choir.
Philip Jackson "Tachychardia is this much deeper than Niggly Cave."

Gabriel Kinzler Jacko is correct on this one, Alan was just showing off his best moves, such a diva. "Aim for the stars, Stefan."
Stefan Eberhard You're rigging is great Alan but your yoga needs a bit more work.
Trevor Wailes Mario Lanza-: Little boys are cheap today, buy two, give one away. Standing up or liojkfgd.!!!!.....
Just clap he'll like that (*makes no sense to me but that's what he wrote – Ed).*
Stefan Eberhard Have you forgotten Freuheuf already (*See front and back covers of SS 429 - Ed)*?

An Unusual Polygenetic Cave:

Fishers Tier Cave, Ben Lomond; Tasmania

Adrian Slee[1] and Andrew Stoios[2]

[1] Forest Practices Authority, 30 Patrick Street, Hobart 7000

[2] Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, 15960 Midlands Highway, Perth, Tasmania 7300

This paper describes a newly discovered rift cave complex at Fishers Tier on the western slopes of Ben Lomond Plateau in Northeast Tasmania. The cave is an unusual example of a polygenetic cave developed by fissure propagation; possibly along a thrust fault and modified by the solution and precipitation of carbonate in the form of a large flowstone deposit. It contains subterranean seepage; flowstone deposits and abundant spiders.

The Fisher Tier Cave is located at an elevation of approximately 700 m asl; on a southerly-facing sandstone spur of Dogshead Crag the tallest peak (1070 m) of Fishers Tier a prominent western spur of the Ben Lomond Plateau (Figure 1). The spur features a steep drop off to the valley of a large southerly-flowing tributary of Ben Lomond Rivulet to the east but otherwise is composed of a smooth profile with little topographic relief sloping to a second smaller unnamed tributary west of the cave. The cave is located within a rift that is generally 1 m deep by 2-4 m wide that trends East to West across the 700 m contour of the spur where it gradually dips to the west and the rift follows this downslope gradient. Approximately 145 m of the rift is identifiable on Lidar Derived List Tasmania shade maps. Along the rift lie several "sinkholes" these include the two window entrances into the main cave as well as a small window entrance further to the west of the known cave limits and two 2 m deep entrances to the east of the known cave that are partially blocked by boulders and therefore not explored.

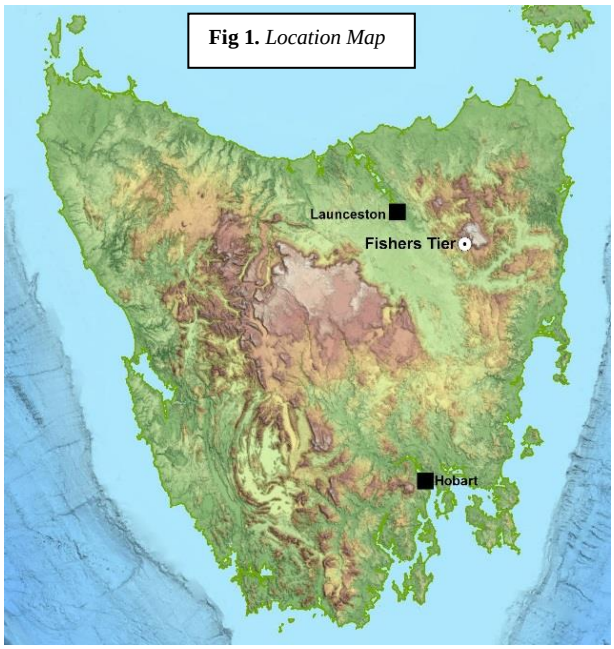


Fig 1. *Location Map*

The cave consists of a single rift passage enterable from two vertical entrances. The main eastern entrance is located adjacent to a large gum tree that is growing at the base of a 2-3 m deep partially overhung rift 6 m long that represents a part of the cave that has partially collapsed. To the east of this rift a low passage continues for a couple of meters before becoming too narrow. To the west of the tree the main passage drops down into ~20 m of walking passage varying from 80 cm to 2.5 m wide and 3-5 m tall trending c.267° W before the second vertical entrance is reached. A narrow continuation extends from the western entrance out of sight between boulders at least a couple of meters. The overall length of negotiable rift / cave is around 30 m and the cave has a maximum depth of approximately 7 m from its upper entrance.

Figure 2: Plan View of the main cave viewed from the north facing downslope. Note the linear passage along strike of the main rift gully and the extensive flowstone on the foot wall.

Fig 2. Plan of Fishers Tier Cave

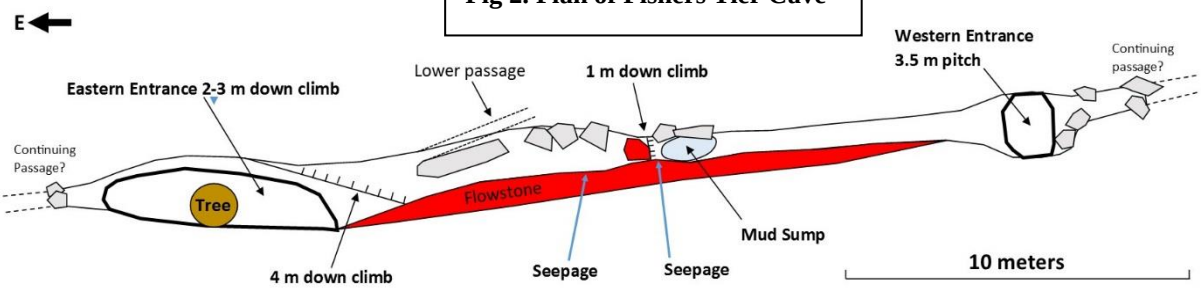
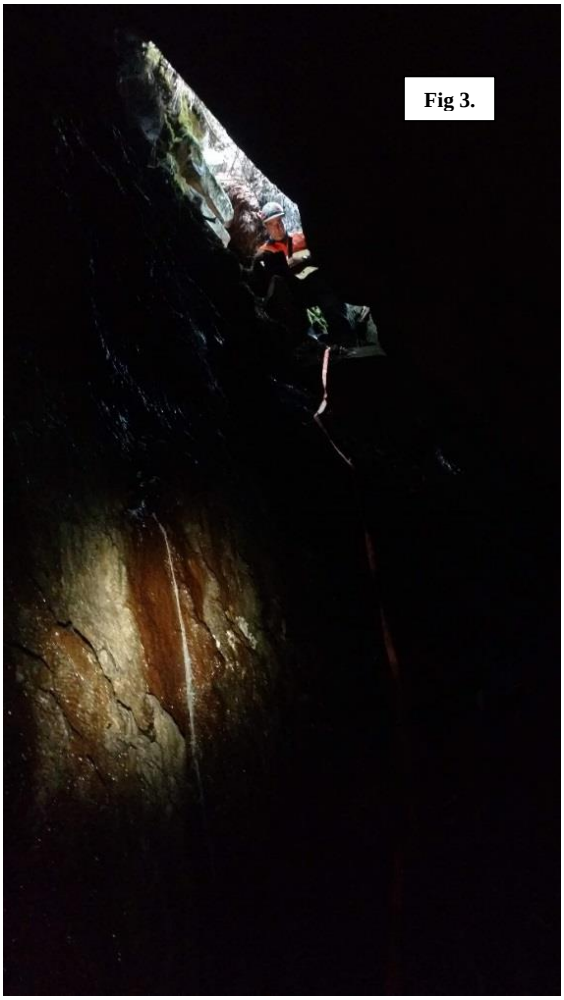


Figure 3: View out of the Eastern Cave entrance showing some of the flowstone wall highlighted by torchlight. Figure 4: Andrew standing below the main down climb highlighting the vertical dimensions of the rift and hanging wall.



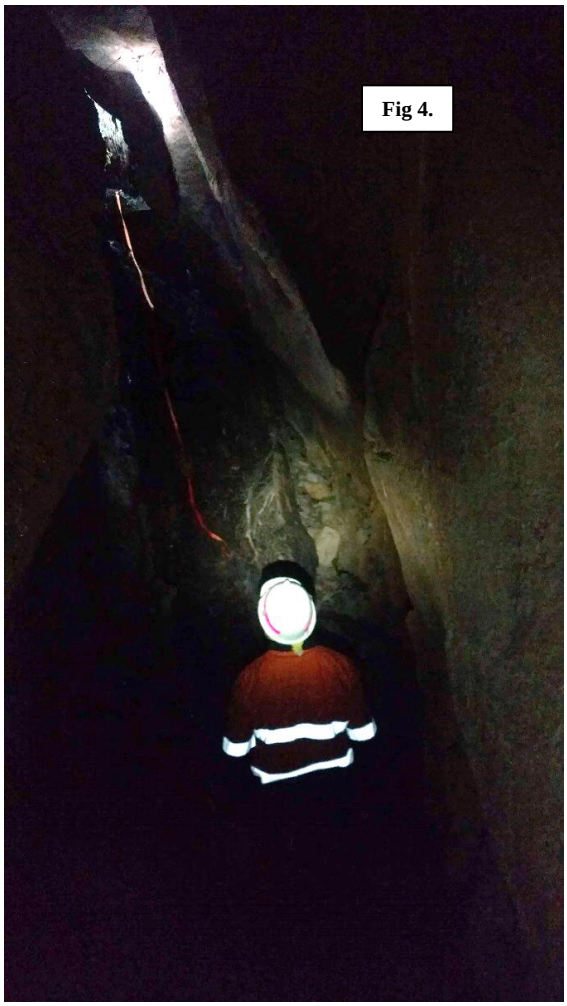
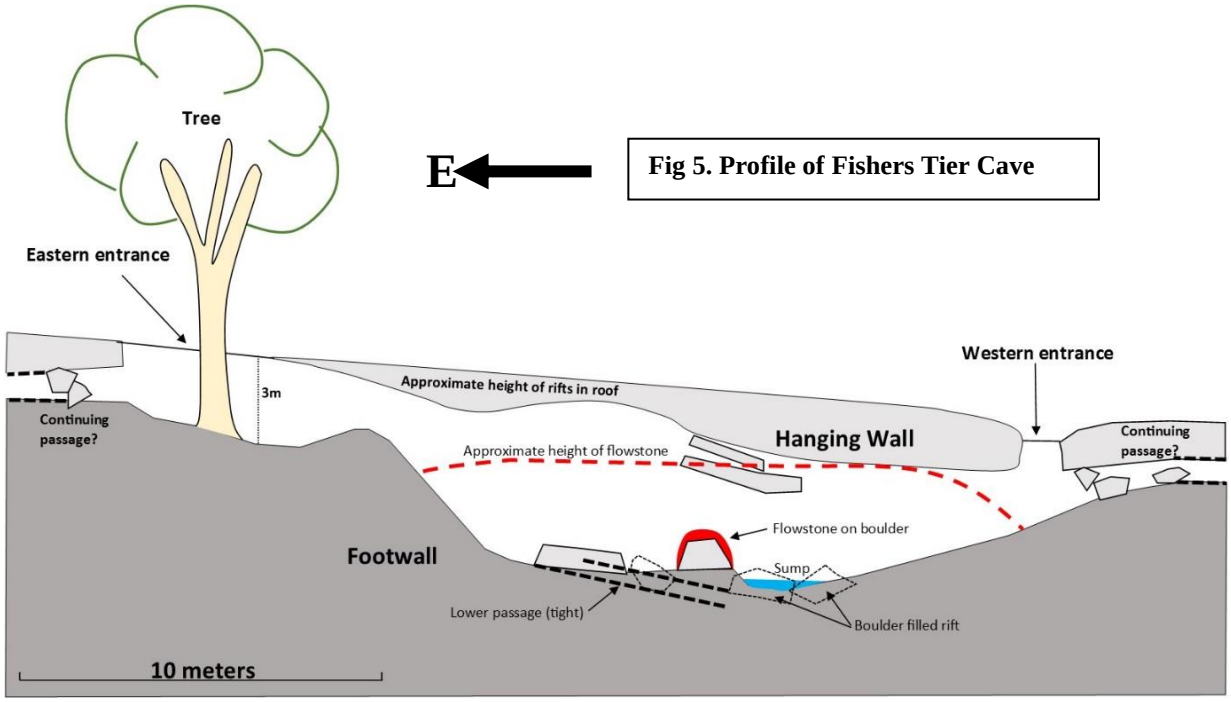


Figure 5: profile of the cave viewed from the north with the higher eastern entrance to the left. This plan was based of approximate observations supplemented by Leica Disto measurements. The height of the flowstone is approximate as the top of the flowstone and any further passage above this height was not observed.



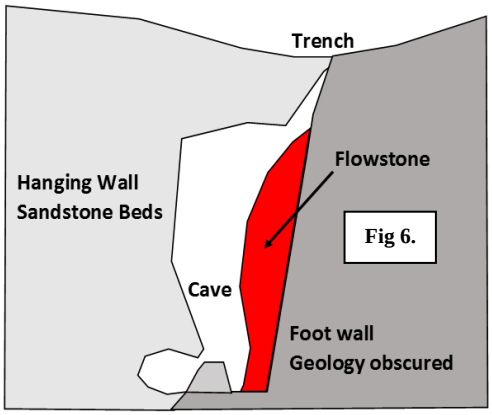
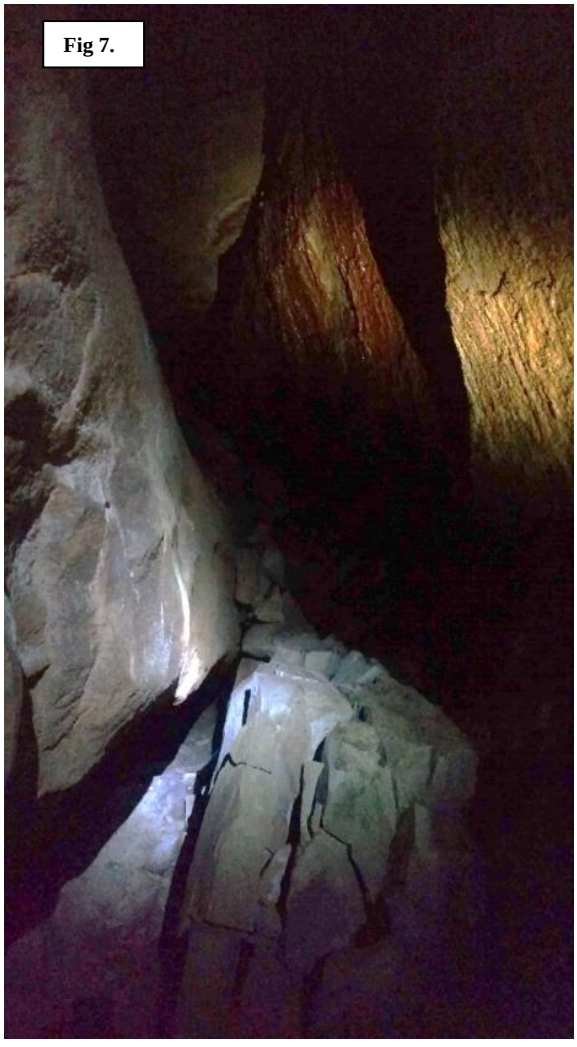


Figure 6: Cross section of the cave at the location indicated in Figure 3. Showing the general structure of the rift and the bulging nature of the flowstone.

Figure 7 (below): Photograph of the same section of cave passage highlighting the contrast between the stark massive sandstone of the hanging wall and the flowstone of the footwall.

Geomorphology

The cave appears to be an accessible section of a rift cave complex formed by the pull apart of the sedimentary rocks at the site along a fault or geological contact. This is clearly observable in the distinctive upslope footwall and downslope hanging wall identifiable in the cave plan. The hanging wall is composed of massive sandstone beds that do show minor evidence of karst in the form of possible rundkarren development and the presence of a lower unexplored rounded passage that undercuts this face that suggests limited karst dissolution of the bedrock. The footwall is almost entirely covered in flowstone to a height of about 0.5 m from the roof and therefore presents a visually impressive contrast to the massive sandstone units of the hanging wall. Two seepages were observed flowing across the flowstone into the floor of the cave before disappearing under rubble adjacent to a muddy sump at the lowest point in the cave floor. The valley of Ben Lomond Rivulet to the south of the cave is notable for containing a block of Permian limestone that appears to have been upthrust from a fault that is expressed in the west of the block, this fault runs up the neighbouring class 3 stream channel to the vicinity of the slopes 200 m west of the cave, the eastern side of the thrust fault has risen in relation to the western side and this appears to correspond with the thrust direction of the cave if we consider an unknown fault exists running at right angles to the mapped known feature.



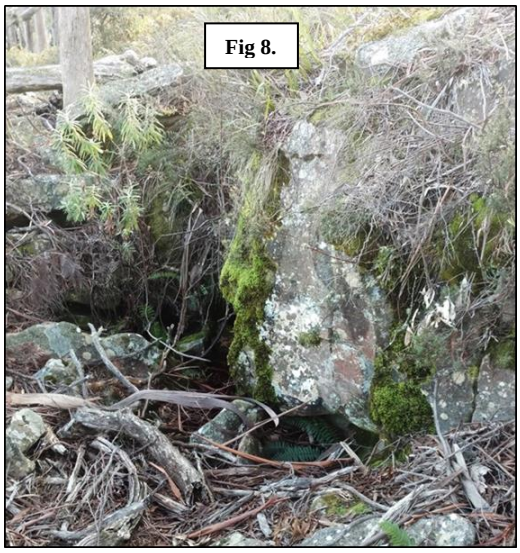


Figure 8: An unexplored 2m deep entrance partially blocked by collapse boulders located 30 m to the east of the main cave.

While faulting appears to be the most likely cause for the initiation of the rift cutting across the contours of the hillslope the presence of running water sourced from an unknown subterranean location that sumps and abundant flowstone suggests that the cave itself has developed partially by karstic processes and may have formed by slow karstic solution of thin limestone units presumed to be present in the footwall along the strike of the fault as well as mechanical stoping and roof collapse of the generally massive sandstone units that constitute the hanging wall evidenced by large sandstone boulders present on the floor of the cave some of which have been covered by flowstone. Further evidence for minor limestone units in the area can be found in cliffs 250 m to the east of the site where thin beds of presumably impure limestone contain small tubes that appear to be dissolution rather than alveolar in origin.

Periglacial deposits in dolerite lie to within 200 m to the north of the rift system and the ridge and cliff crest to the east of the cave features a blockfield developed within massive sandstone. Therefore evidence suggests that for much of the Quaternary this cave complex has been subjected to moderate periglacial conditions and mechanical weathering by freeze thaw and ground ice processes most likely has played a role in cave development.

Fig 9. *Actively forming flowstone structures.*

Speleothems

The flowstone forming the majority of the northern (footwall) of the cave consists of cascades of crème to reddish brown calcium carbonate. Towards the centre of the cave the most active area of flowstone associated with the two inflow seepages forms an intricate honeycomb pattern with many of the internal hollows containing tiny crystals including cave pearls. No traditional stalactites or stalagmites were observed within the cave; however the flowstone has created unusual ribbed decoration and short stalactites formed out of the honeycomb structures (Figure 9).

Cave Invertebrates

Abundant spiders were located at the cave entrance and deeper in the cave. Around the entrance lie many medium sized black spiders that have built intricate retreat style webs. These spiders are replaced by the Tasmanian cave spider within the dark zone where they are abundant. Numerous large females are present up to an estimated 13 cm diameter (Figure 10). However; no large webs or egg sacks were observed.

Significance

Dilation caves associated with tectonic processes are rare within sandstone bedrock in Tasmania, to date the largest and most well documented example is the Diogenes Rift Cave in the Styx Valley that has been documented by authors Sharples (1997), Eberhard (2014), McIntosh and Nasai (2014). This cave features a descending rift passage formed by the pull apart of vertical sandstone beds in a very large slow moving landslide. While its location within a larger rift complex is similar to the Fishers rift cave it does not have distinctive hanging and footwalls with both sides of the cave matching in form. This morphology is suggestive of lateral spread dilation along a structural weakness in the vertical beds rather than a fault as being the likely mode of rift and cave initiation. The Diogenes Creek cave also has no evidence for karst processes in contrast to the seepage and flowstone deposits present in Fishers Tier cave. Observations at the Diogenes Creek cave hint that it may be a relatively young landform owing to the presence of forestry machine tracks from 1945 entering into the area of instability around the entrance.. The age of the Fishers rift cave is unknown while the abundant flowstone suggests a period of stability, flowstone can form at rapid rates in favourable environments. The lack of coarse breccia or other periglacial deposits in filling the cave does, however, hint that this feature may post-date the Last Glacial Maximum when periglacial activity can be reasonably expected at 700 m ASL (Slee and Shulmeister 2015) and is evidenced by the nearby block deposits to the east of the site. These observations therefore suggest that while similar in form the two caves have substantially different origins of formation and therefore may be significant Tasmanian examples of landslide and fault caves.

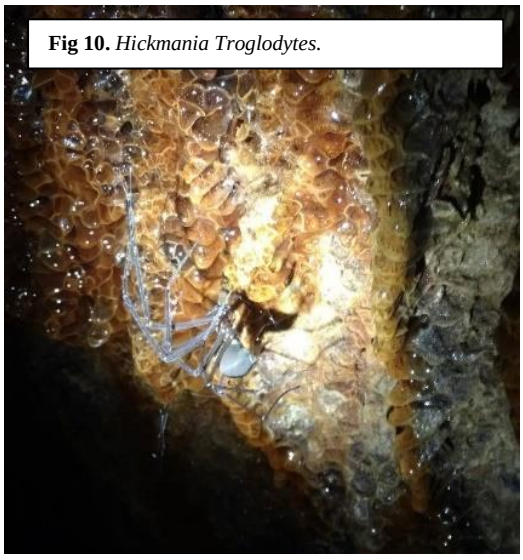


Fig 10. *Hickmania Troglodytes.*

References

Eberhard, R., 2014. *Diogenes Creek Dilation Cave Styx Valley, Tasmania.* Unpublished Map.

McIntosh P, Nasai L and Kyte D., 2014. Two Unusual Caves, *Forest Practices News* 12(2):6-7

Sharples C., 1997. Bedrock Dilation Features at Diogenes Creek, Styx Valley. A Reconnaissance of Landforms and Geological Sites of Geoconservation Significance in the Western Derwent Forest District. A Report to Forestry Tasmania. Appendix 1.0, pp 113-114

Slee, A and Shulmeister, J., 2015. The Distribution of Periglacial Landforms in Australia. *Journal of Quaternary Science*

Rope Testing session 2018

1 December 2018

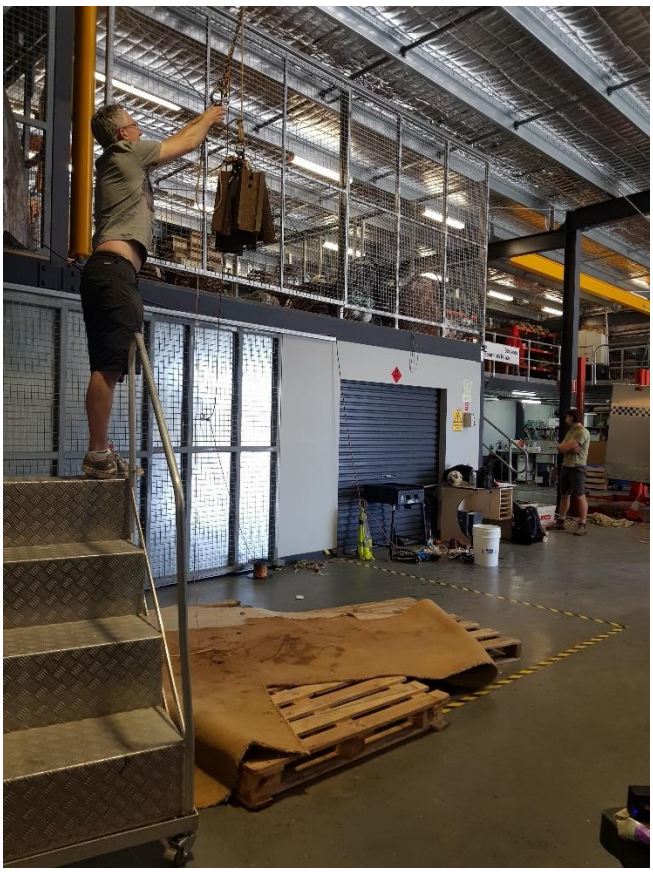
(It's a busy section here in "other stuff" this issue of the Spiel. *We almost need another section. Almost. I wouldn't want to mess with tradition too much, too soon – Ed)*

Here are a few photos, and videos, from the session, held at the usual place, and for those of you who don't go to this exciting event, read the report, Alan explains all.

Videos can be found here:

1. *https://youtu.be/Fd96oXeq6ns*
2. *https://youtu.be/b79FWcv0KTk*
3. https://youtu.be/12c3fqbfX5c

Enjoy. They are all worth watching.



And the facility even comes with a safety marked off area for our drops Photo: Janine McKinnon

Just to give you a different angle on things.

Photo Janine McKinnon

Geoff definitely put in a hard morning's work (opposite) Photo: Janine McKinnon

Rope Testing results 2018

Alan Jackson

In McKinnon & Jackson (2017) we determined that another round of rope testing would be a good idea in December 2018. One year on and we still felt the same way. We did our usual rope breaking thing on 1 December 2018 at the Tasmania Police 'Marine and Rescue' shed in Glenorchy.

The results indicated that our decision to test again so soon was a wise one (and I'm not saying Geoff deserves all the credit – ha, champagne comedy!).

Retire versus 'Light Duties'

Our general approach is if it fails on the second drop then we retire the rope from service. We're considering making an exception this time as the dedicated cave rescue bags are in need of a number of short ropes for load-sharing anchors. The loads on an individual bit of rope in a typical three-way load share is pretty minimal (~200 kg load (bit more on a short horizontal tyrolean) spread over six strands of rope – so lucky to ever put 40-50 kg on any individual strand of rope. They're also unlikely to suffer anything even close to a Fall Factor 1 event, let alone two in a row! This possibly needs more discussion and I'm considering seeing if we can use Tas

Chain and Lifting's rope testing rig to check the remaining strength in some representative K, N and X ropes (static pull till failure test).

Tendon Ropes

We were lured in by the very attractive price of Tendon ropes in the last few years. It appears that it's a classic case of 'you get what you pay for'. While they're about two thirds to half the price of reputable brands like Bluewater, they appear to only have half the life, or less. This would seem to be a false economy so we'll probably return to spending a bit more and see if we can't get 10+ years out of our ropes instead of 3 to 4. A focus on 9.5 mm instead of 9 mm should improve the longevity situation too. Table 1 contains the results.

Acknowledgement

Thanks very much to Damian Bidgood and Tas Police for the use of their shed. Damian attended in his own private time this year. Thanks also to the members who attended and helped make it swift and effective. By the looks of this year's results, we'll see you next year.

Reference

McKinnon, J. & Jackson, A. 2017 STC rope testing for 2017. *Speleo Spiel* 423: 14-16

Table 1. 2018 rope testing results. 'Drop' is a FF1 using a ~80 kg weight. The '2017 failure' column indicates which drop that rope failed on during the 2017 testing (where applicable). 'Recommendation' indicates the author's preliminary thoughts on whether ropes from that reel should remain in active service, be retired or be reassigned to alternative duties.

Rope	Drop 1	Drop 2	Drop 3	Drop 4	2017 failure	Recommendation
B – 9.5 mm (BWII++) circa 2016?	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	Retain
F – 9 mm (Tendon) 2014	✓	✓	FAIL		Failed on 3rd	Retain
F "KD" – 9 mm (Tendon) 2014	✓	FAIL			Failed on 3rd	Retain (see other F entry and notes below)
G – 9 mm (Tendon) 'speleo') 2017	✓	✓	FAIL		No failure after 4	Retain
H – 9 mm (Beal) 'spelenium' 2018	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	Retain
K – 9.5 mm (BWII++) 2007-08	✓	FAIL			Failed on 4th	Retire (or light duties)
N – 9.5 mm (BWII++) 2009	✓	FAIL			Failed on 3rd	Retire (or light duties)
X – 9 mm (unknown – Trevor Wailes)	✓	FAIL			Failed on 4th	Retire
Andreas - 9 mm (Tendon) 'speleo' 2016?	✓	✓	FAIL		NA	Up to Andreas, but I'd say retain
Petr – 9 mm (Tendon) 'speleo' 2016?	✓	FAIL			NA	Up to Petr, but I'd be cautious about retaining.

Lots of 'FAIL' under drop 2, unfortunately.

The 'B' rope is essentially brand new (not 100% sure of manufacture year but has seen zero use), recently donated by Abdel Soudan and Emily Sheppard.

The F rope had two samples tested. The second one ('KD') was a section of rope which was severely damaged in a flood in KD over winter 2017. I expect that the other bit is far more representative of the rope's true condition.

The G rope has gone backwards significantly but still passes muster.

H performed as would be expected of brand new rope.

K has also gone backwards significantly but is quite old and has had heavy use.

N has deteriorated slightly (again, old and heavily used).

X finally performed in accordance with its visual appearance (quite manky-looking with abraded sheath and fluffy bits [not unlike its original owner]).

Andreas' rope has had a very hard life on the bottom (~110 m) pitch in Niggly and was not nice to abseil on anymore. It did ok.

Petr's rope has had a fairly tough life too in Niggly and other caves but failure on the second drop was a surprise.

Cathie Plowman has put a lot of work into setting up this promotion for all things speleologically-related. This is the first time it has been developed for Australia.

Let's all get behind her and support this initiative.

Photo: Bronwen Prazak

Here we are! Cave ecologist Dr Stefan Eberhard and myself (Cathie Plowman) at last week's Australian Speleological Federation conference, where we launched the project to an enthusiastic audience. I am getting great feedback on Cave Animal of the Year and am looking forward to what lies ahead.

Visit the **website** at:
https://tinyurl.com/ybkd2937

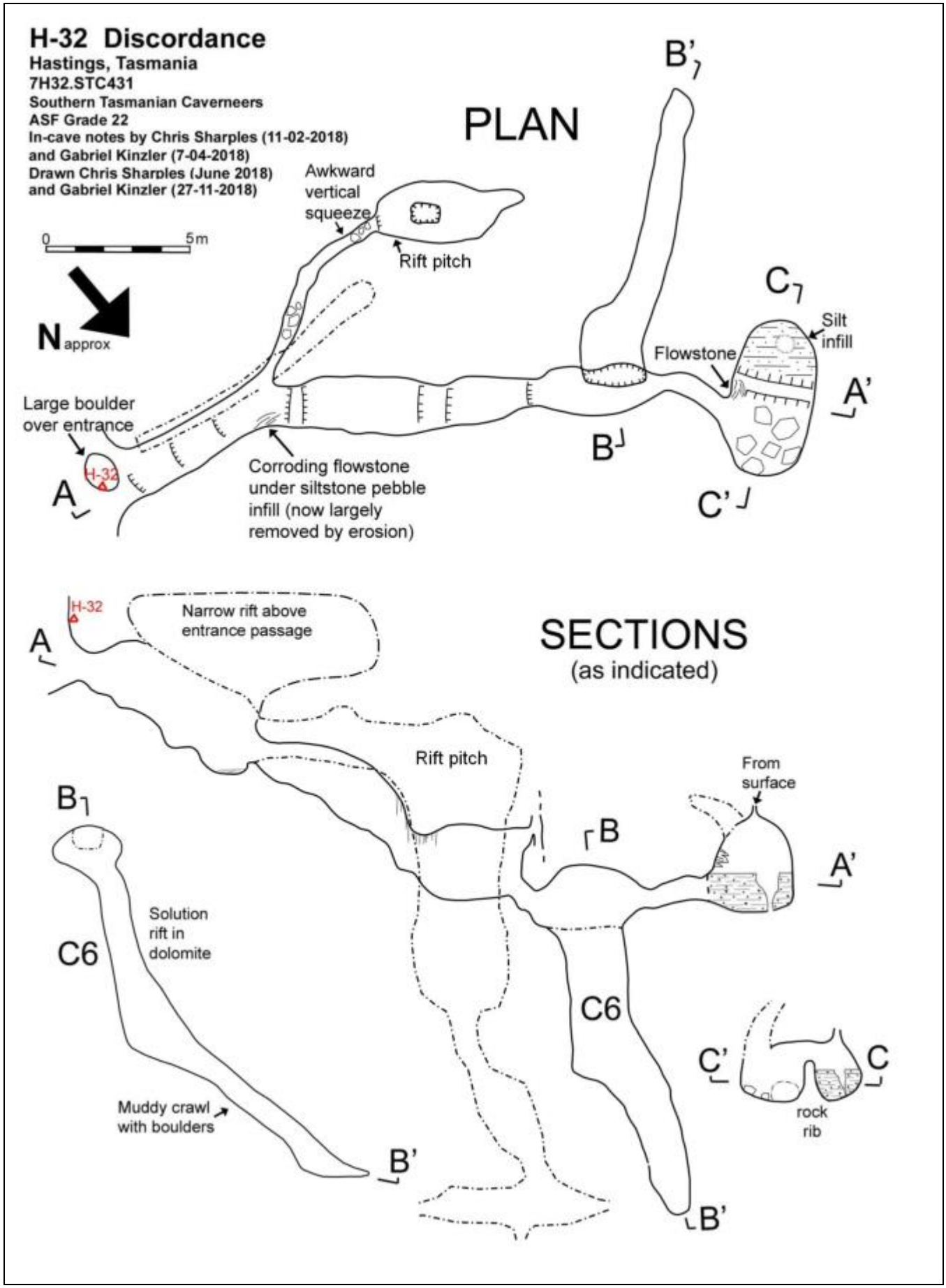
There is a lot of good information on the website and links to related websites.

If you need further encouragement to visit the website, here's something that should inspire you.

Photo: Gary Smith

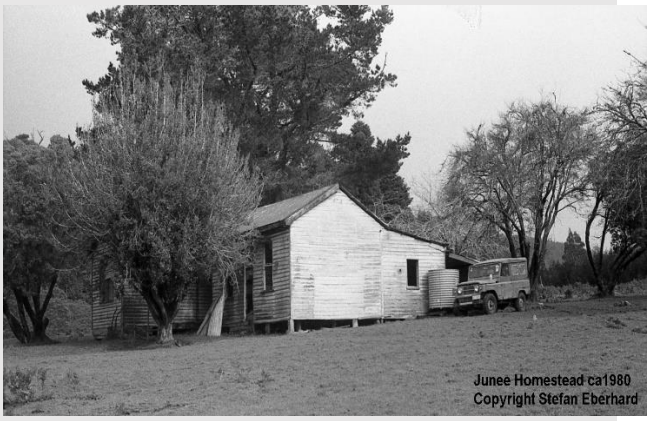
Also visit the **facebook** page for ASF Cave Animal of the Year for more information:

https://www.facebook.com/caveanimaloftheyearaus/


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)
and Gabriel Kinzler (27-11-2018)
PLAN
0
5m
N approx
Awkward vertical squeeze
Rift pitch
Large boulder over entrance
H-32
A
A'
B
B'
C
C'
Flowstone
Silt infill
Corroding flowstone under siltstone pebble infill (now largely removed by erosion)
SECTIONS
(as indicated)
Narrow rift above entrance passage
Rift pitch
From surface
Solution rift in dolomite
C6
Muddy crawl with boulders
rock rib

Fun and Diversions

FROZEN MOMENTS IN CLUB HISTORY



Not quite as flash as "Giants Table", but much cheaper.

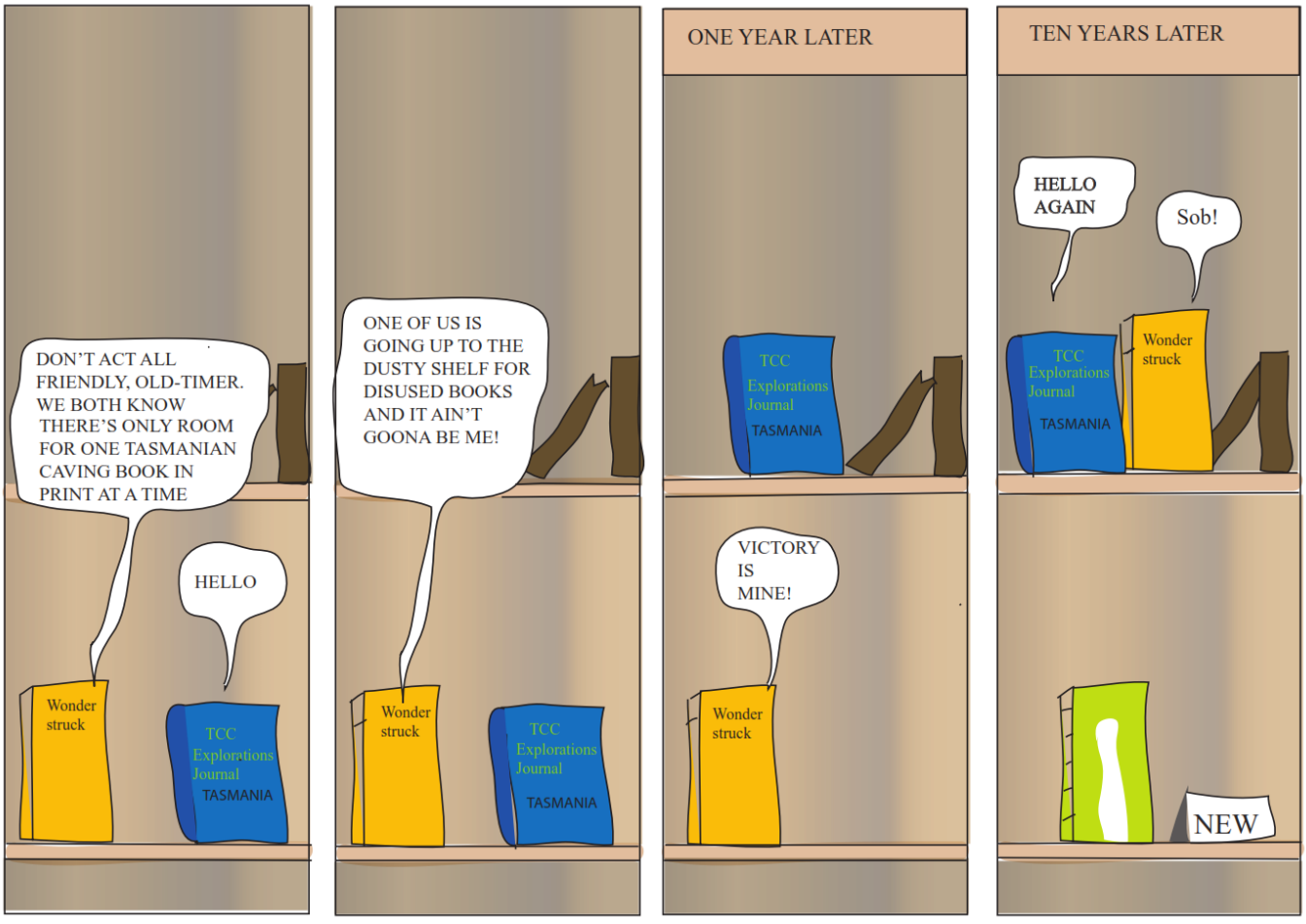
Photo: Stefan Eberhard

The watermark says it all (if your eyesight is good enough to read it): The old homestead along the Junee road that was the caving club hut for a couple of decades, until it was deliberately burnt down during the early days of the "Forestry troubles". I think that is Nick Hume's short-base Landcruiser parked alongside. Someone can disabuse me if I am wrong (yes! Send me a letter to the Editor!)

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.

THE SAGA OF TASMANIAN CAVING BOOK PUBLISHING



Apologies to Tom Gauld in New Scientist.

The Last Page