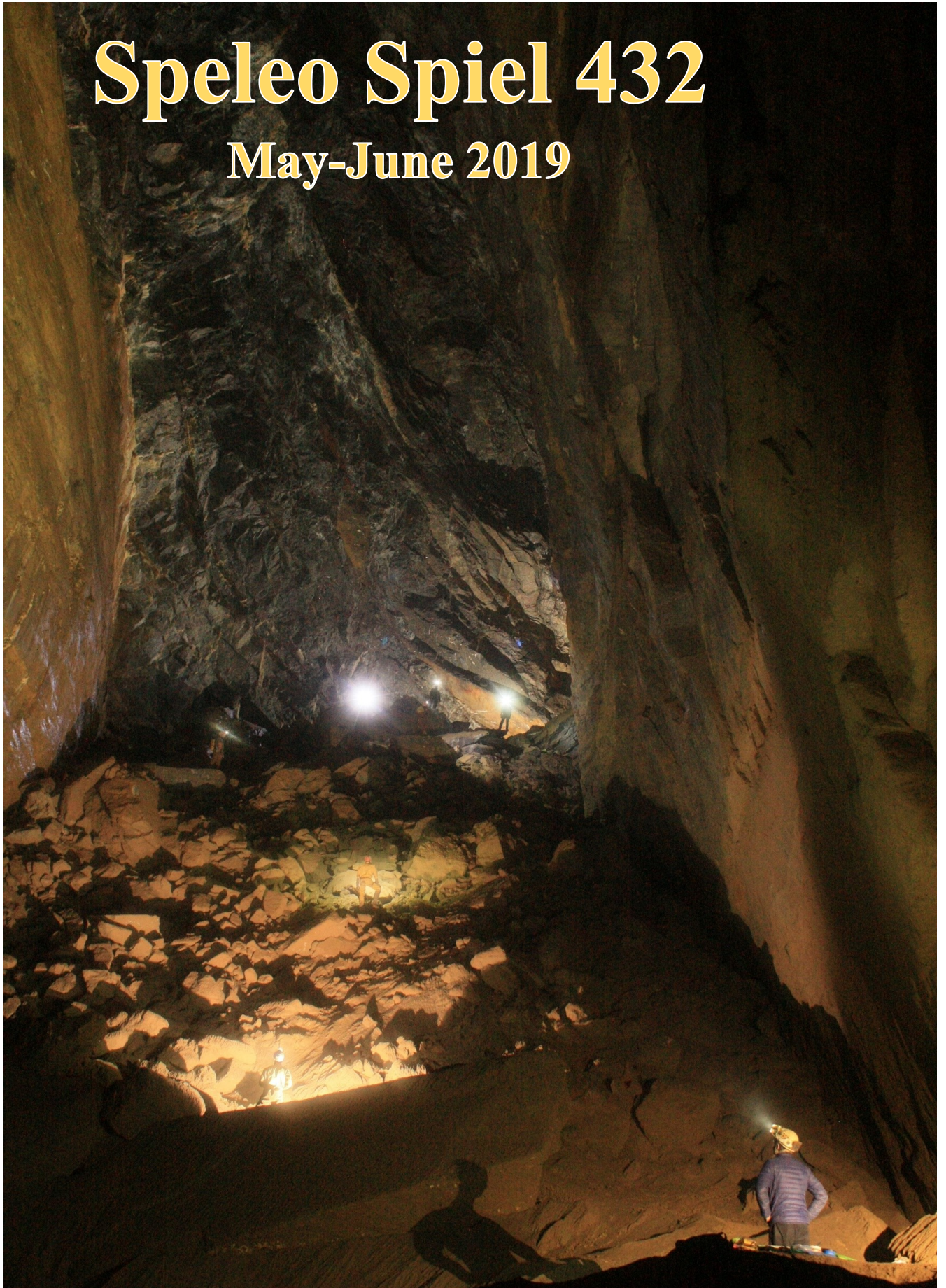


Speleo Spiel 432

May-June 2019



STC Office Bearers

President: Chris Sharples
Ph: 0408 396 663
Chris.Sharples@utas.edu.au

Vice President: Stefan Eberhard
info@subterraneanecology.com.au

Secretary: Phil Jackson
Ph: 03 6243 7038
pmjackson@dodo.com.au

Treasurer: Russell Fulton
Ph: 0427 956 297
FultonRL@bigpond.com

Equipment Officer: Alan Jackson
Ph: 0419 245 418
alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au

Librarian: Greg Middleton
Ph: 03 6223 1400
ozspeleo@inet.net.au

Spiel Editor: Janine McKinnon
Ph: 0427 889 965
jmckinnon@caverneer.net.au

Search & Rescue Officer: Alan Jackson
Ph: 0419 245 418
alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au

Webmaster: Michael Packer
Ph: 0427 039 198
IamMichaelPacker@gmail.com

Front Cover: *The 50 m high rockpile known as Mt Niggly looms over base camp*
Photo: Stefan Eberhard

Back Cover: Alan's new hero *Gabriel Kinzler* (left) and Alan Jackson covered in mud after explorations at the bottom of *Niggly*
Photo: Stefan Eberhard

STC was formed in December 1996 by the amalgamation of three former southern Tasmanian clubs: the *Tasmanian Caverneering Club*, the *Southern Caving Society* and the *Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group*. **STC** is the modern variant of the oldest caving club in Australia.

Speleo Spiel

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Editorial

Of course, the big news this issue is the connection between Niggly and Growling Swallet achieved during a dive by Stephen Fordyce in late May. Congratulations go to him and the team for this significant discovery.

You would have to have been out of all communication to have missed the media frenzy that ensued. I was in Western Australia and heard all about it loud and clear and a friend in California contacted me about it. It is amazing what is achieved when there are media and public relations professionals involved in the promoting of an event. The press releases appeared almost as soon as the party surfaced from the trip and they were very professional articles. Professional quality photos aimed at appealing to public interest were also immediately available for distribution. Professional contacts mean interest in interviews, of which there were trip participants ready, willing and eloquent at hand. The Thai cave rescue last year will probably have increased the interest in caving and cave diving too.

It is too soon for trip reports to be included in this *Spiel* however you can relive some of the 15 minutes of fame.

All this attention can only be good for the image of caving and cave diving: no-one had died, no-one was rescued, and the results were all good.

Stuff ‘n’ Stuff

- Congratulations to Petr and Lucy Smejkal on the birth of their second child, a daughter this time, Emma. I look forward to seeing her start SRT training in a few years.
- Further congratulations are in order for one present and one past member of STC. OZTek is an Advanced Diving conference held every two years in Sydney (for Australia). It is big. It has exhibitors’ stalls, speakers, a gala dinner ... and awards. Over 2000 people attended this year. Ryan Kaczowski won (Australian) Tech Diver of the Year. This is no small recognition. There are some amazing tech divers out there. Stephen Fordyce received the (Australian) Emerging Explorer award, somewhat prescient. We should all be very proud of both of them.



Stephen Fordyce- Emerging Explorer Award.
Photo: David Bilbow

Ryan Kaczowski - Technical Diver of the Year
Photo: David Bilbow

- ASF has finally joined the world of social media. In a small way, true, but it’s a start. There is an ASF Facebook page which can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/asfcavers/> and an associated ASF Facebook group, found here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/657102894727638/>. So, go forth and spread some of that dry STC wit to a wider audience.
- Ola Löfquist, our representative in Sweden, has been involved in a fascinating expedition in home territory this March. **Expedition Bjurälven**. This is cave-diving exploration, however many more participants than just the divers are needed to get this show happening. Because the flow rate in their caves is much too high for diving at any time other than winter, all exploration of underwater passage must be done in winter. That means over-snow access to the sites, air temperatures frequently in the -20°C to -30°C range, ice-covered surface pool entrances to the cave dives and water at less than 1°C. They have produced some excellent video, which can be seen here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2mlgicl>
- The gear store has moved to Alan Jackson’s place. Lots of old, redundant and rubbish-stuff has been dispersed amongst the club members who like to gather. It’s amazing what you find shoved in a back corner when you move house. Here is an example: *Old film canisters, why would you keep these?*



The store is much more compact now.

- There has been a breakthrough in a Mexico caving expedition Andreas Klocker was participating in. Here is a summary of the Facebook post by Teddy Garlock. Full post on STC Facebook page. *Zeb Lilly and I made the final push into sump 2 with support from our entire team (Andreas, Gilly, Jon, Steve, Adam and Alejandra). We surveyed 1300’ (394m) of passage on the dive today, bringing our weekly total to 2150’ (652m). The cave is incredible, the passage is huge and very beautiful.*



Photo by Jon Lillestolen.

Trip Reports

Surface Bashing (near JF-365 Satans Lair)

28 April 2018 (*the date is correct - Ed*)

Stephen Fordyce

(*I wasn't sure if this should go in trip reports or the archive section of this Spiel - Ed*)

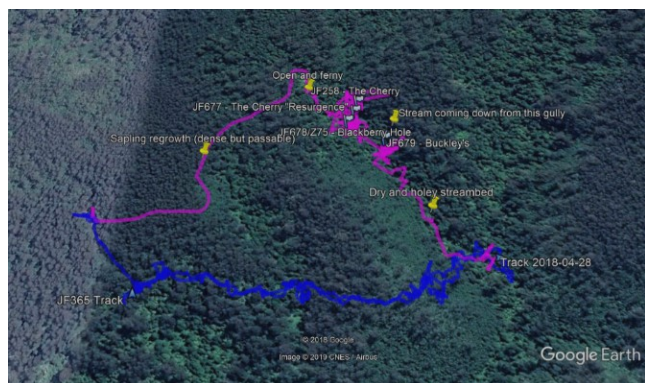
Party: Stephen Fordyce, Dan Mitchell, Djuke Veldhuis

This report is a bit belated (*understatements don't get much better than this - Ed*), but it contains some important stuff to record about a seldom-visited (and already administratively confusing) part of the JF, before it's lost to memory. It details the findings of the morning Satans Lair was rigged (report in *Speleo Spiel* 430) by the party that went the long way: up, around and then down the gully to Satans Lair.

This was also the weekend before Alan (Jackson) and Gabriel (Kinzler) derigged Satans Lair and did some surface bashing and tagging of their own, before tidying ours (report in *Speleo Spiel* 426, the last two paragraphs being the relevant bits).

While we followed the main gully, we did try to spread out and check the surroundings with some thoroughness. No other features were noticed.

A complete version of this report, including GPS locations, KML files, screenshots, and other information, will be submitted to the STC archive for inclusion in JF-365 folder, and other places as appropriate.



Overlay of JF-365 Satans Lair area. Magenta track is our route while surface bashing, blue track is the track to JF-365. Yellow pins describe non-karst features.

We hoped to locate and check JF-258, locate/check/tag Z-75, and follow their gully down to do likewise for any other worthy features. There were four features worthy of a tag.

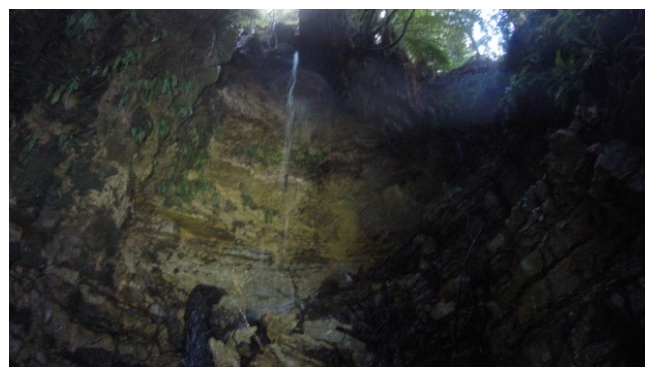
JF-258 (re-tagged and then untagged by Alan, the-number-shall-not-be-named): The Cherry

All responsibility for this name lies with Dan. It matched previous descriptions well, was right on the contact, before the terrain plunged steeply and a hole of dimensions 5 m deep and 6 m wide. Small waterfall (see picture) plunging in from the top, disappearing into uninspiring little rifts

down the bottom to apparently emerge further down the hill, at JF-677.



JF-258 The Cherry looking south (with Dan & Djuke installing the now removed tag) Photo: Stephen Fordyce



JF-258 The Cherry looking north (piddly excuse for a waterfall). Photo: Stephen Fordyce

JF-677: The Cherry Resurgence

Perhaps 20-30 m downhill (at this point, a line of cliffs or almost cliffs must be negotiated) from JF-258, the stream reappears from a rift. Some checking was done, nothing was inspiring, and the apparent relationship to JF-258 didn't help enthusiasm. A tag was placed, largely to help explain the relationship and to prevent any time being wasted by future visitors.



JF-677 The Cherry Resurgence showing tag location and nearby steep terrain. Photo: Stephen Fordyce

JF-678 (JF-Z75): Blackberry Hole

This was obviously Z-75, matching both location and description. A significant if gently sloping doline, maybe 10 m deep, at the end of the gully and accepting the stream. The tag was affixed to a rock wall near the bottom, which was well choked with logs and vegetation, and no sign of any cave or draft or excitement. BYO excavator next time! Blackberries had sadly taken over a considerable amount of the bottom of the doline.



JF-678 Blackberry Hole, showing tag location, and (hopefully) giving an idea of the size of the doline (looking downstream, at the saddle marking the blind end of the gully). Photo: Stephen Fordyce

JF-679: Buckleys Swallet

This "cave" has two chances of being successfully pushed - Buckley's and none (challenge issued, I look forward to being proved wrong by some smart-arse in the future). From JF-678 we continued down the (now dry) gully until reaching an intersection of gullies, with the other providing a small stream with actively flowing water. This disappears roughly at the intersection and as a potentially useful reference point for surface vs subterranean streams, was tagged. Following the Buckleys water/gully up to the contact might be interesting (and possibly even an unprospected area).



*JF-679 Buckleys Swallet, showing tag location.
Photo: Stephen Fordyce*

Between JF-679 and Satans Lair was all dry gully with no stream (the water going into Satans Lair is from the other gully), although some notable depressions and apparently mini-dolines are in the streambed. Nothing we deemed worth tagging though.

JF-341

8 September 2018

(The historical articles just keep coming - Ed)

David Bardi

Party: David Bardi, Stefan Eberhard, Alan Jackson, David Rueda Rocca, Sandy Varin

With Stefan and Dan having confirmed on their last trip that the cave goes beyond the sump, it was time for us to return to tackle the sump they had discovered at the extent of their exploration. From Dan's video, the sump we had to negotiate looked tight, as Dan tried to get a feel for the entrance by easing his upper torso into a small entrance pool. The plan would be for Stefan, Dave and Sandy to dive this second sump whilst Alan, Gabriel and David Rueda Roca would attempt to enlarge the voice connection squeeze made with the divers from stream level, beyond sump 1, to the dry cavers above in the terminal chamber.

Alan and Gabriel set off ahead of the divers after a morning rendezvous at the Giants Table, after the usual "faffing", never to be seen again for the trip. The only evidence that they had indeed been in the cave was a note left on top of our pile of caving gear, where we had kitted up into our dive equipment. It stated, "au revoir suckers". A parting gift from our caving colleagues.

Alan and Gabriel had spent several hours trying to enlarge the narrow passage which descended to the streamway running beneath the final chamber in 341. A dry bypass of sump 1 would ensure that others, not just divers, could participate in future exploration. However, the task was challenging and progress slow in the tight, restrictive, semi vertical passage. After a couple of hours of hard work and probably much cursing, Alan and Gabriel decided to call it quits for the day. Another effort in the future would be required to make the connection.

Meanwhile, Stefan, Dave and Sandy began the kitting up process for their dive after the usual mundane jaunt to sump 1. The plan was to dive through sump one and repack the diving gear into caving packs. Then haul the packs up to the start of sump 2, approximately 20 minutes of streamway grovelling from sump 1. Dave would then dive through sump 2 and briefly check out what lies beyond.

At some point during gear up, Dave and Sandy realised that they had taken their neoprene hoods out of the cave on a previous trip and had not consulted their non-existent notes to see what exactly they had left in the cave previously. I'm sure I heard Steve Fordyce chuckling in my head, as pay back for the countless times we had ridiculed his pedantic note-taking over the years. Stefan decided to loan his wetsuit vest, which included a hood and his spare hood to us and wait for our return with David Rueda Roca.

The short dive through sump 1, de-kit and repacking of gear into packs beyond sump one was quick. The journey upstream of sump 1 was initially tedious, with slippery mud slopes which needed to be climbed in order to avoid partial rock collapses in the stream. After a short distance, the stream could be followed without the need to ascend mud slopes.

Arriving at sump 2 and examining the entrance closely, it seemed that there was enough of a gap between the water level and roof to perhaps roof sniff the sump. After a couple of attempts, Dave managed to negotiate the sump as a roof sniff. The final stage of the sniff was tight, needing to be negotiated by being on his side. Dave's loaner wetsuit vest from Stefan didn't fair too well, with a large rip in the chest area from being snagged.

After the roof sniff, which took some time to negotiate, the way on opened up into nice streamway passage. In places it was easier to swim in the shallow water instead of stooping. In other places, walking in the stream was easier. After pushing on for what was approximate 150 m of passage beyond the roof sniff, a large chamber was encountered with much rock fall. The way on wasn't obvious and after a quick look, it was decided to head back as we had been gone for some time.

The exit was uneventful. Excitement was high as we were already looking forward to a return trip to find a way on and explore beyond the large rock pile chamber.

The Hastings Connection

November 2018 – February 2019

Gabriel Kinzler

Parties (aggregated): Serena Benjamin, Anna Ekdahl Gabriel Kinzler, Ola Löfquist, Chris Sharples

There hasn't been much love for Hastings in recent times, yet a small group of indomitable cavers have been revisiting the area on a regular basis in the last year, far removed from the usual scene of frantic Tassie caving. After the discovery of H-32 Discordance in February 2018, Chris had been left yearning for a return to another discovery of his (and Ian Household's): H-5 Chain of Ponds. His scheme involved a few hours walking up Hot Springs Creek valley from the tourist car park all the way up to the cave, which features a 15 m pitch entrance, then several hundred metres of horizontal passage for a pleasant stroll.



Chris in thoughtful mode, maybe. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

This cave has previously seen less than a handful of trips. We were also to check out a 10 m shaft nearby (also found years ago by Sharples and Household but never explored), plus or minus some blundering around looking for outcrops, as well as tagging new and old entrances.

Hot Springs Creek itself is a good walk through some very nice forest, remarkable in particular for a little gorge cut through an old glacial moraine.



Serena ventures forth. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

What should have been accomplished in one trip took a total of three, as we kept being slowed down each time by our curiosity being piqued by new features in that area, with Serena discovering a very draughty and promising hole, yours truly getting stuck in another not-so-promising-nor-inviting cavity for 45 minutes and Ola Löfquist uncovering an even more intriguing series of dolines along the unconformity.

We had planned to visit H-5 Chain of Ponds on our first outing (17 November 2018), but touring an old cave, as pretty as it is, doesn't hold as much excitement as exploring brand new stuff. We thus got distracted checking that 10 m shaft, now named H-33 Disappointments Lair: the entrance is found at the bottom of a large doline, approximately 10 m deep and 15 m wide. It contains spacious passage with one 4 m pitch at the entrance and then slopes steeply to a depth of around 17 m. There it meets horizontal stream passage with a small flowing stream. Approx. 10 m length of spacious horizontal passage is blocked upstream by boulders and it narrows too tightly downstream.



Group of happy cavers, bush wandering

Photo: Ola Löfquist

At this stage, we no longer had time to explore H-5, so turned for home only to discover a new stream sink entrance below and east of H-5 (dry when explored). It features horizontal passage approx. 1 m high and wide at the entrance, extends at least 10 m, gradually narrowing; no end to be seen, but it

becomes tight. It was named H-36 Aroma, from a very peculiar smell of decaying vegetation washed in on the cave floor. We returned on 23 December 2018 with Ola, who had just arrived from Sweden, and a firm commitment to really look at H-5 this time (Chris wanted to demonstrate that caves of significant size were a real possibility in this area). We did so, but not before discovering another series of promising sinkholes and entrances on the way, which Ola took the opportunity to name “the Swedest Series”. This time we gritted our teeth and pressed on to H-5, arguing that the new holes would still be there later.

The pièce de résistance eventually came in the form of Serena’s aforementioned draughty hole, now tagged H-35 Downward Slide: for months, it was speculated by Chris that this entrance, a small steep passage opening on an 18 m shaft receiving a small stream, would in fact lead to the top of the waterfall found in the main chamber of H-5. Looking at the map of H-5, this new entrance did appear to be perfectly aligned between a stream sink uphill (previously untagged, now H-34 [unnamed]) and H-5 itself, downhill. Determined to prove his theory, we came back on 17 February 2019 with a couple of ropes, and Serena had the honours of taking the plunge. She came back up reporting a vertical pitch landing in a pool at the top of a second pitch, but also deplored a lack of rope length which would have allowed us to descend the subsequent 17 m shaft. Chris and Anna Ekdahl then went down in turn and came back up bearing the same conclusion.

When it was my turn to go, not expecting much else, I nonetheless decided instinctively to drop down the second, drippy pitch. It took all the nerve I had abseiling from Serena’s naturally rigged rebelay and using my weight to stretch the rope as low as possible, around one metre above the bottom of the second pitch, barely landing my feet next to some string line on the floor (*lucky you aren’t shorter - Ed*). Despite Chris’ predictions, my brain wasn’t ready to compute these signs of human activity and it took me a few seconds to realise that I was, indeed, inside H-5. The connection was made. My first time connecting new passage to an already known cave and it is such a weird but gratifying feeling. I’m just sorry I robbed Serena (the discoverer) and Chris (the theoriser) of that opportunity.



And they are off and away ... exploring

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

The action is far from over in Hastings though. With Florentine Rd still closed mid-April, Ola’s series of dolines to inspect, and a new mission assigned to us by Pax regarding HX caves, we are sure to grace the region with our relentless presence in times to come.

Western Australian Promenade – Nullarbor / Margaret River / Eneabba

March 2019

Gabriel Kinzler

Parties (aggregated): Gabriel Kinzler, Alice Manzonni (CAI Palermo), Ian Collette, Weidi Koh, Brett Wiltshire, Bert De Waele, Daniel Lansom

Last month, I embarked with my friend Alice, a caver from Sicily, on a long road trip which would take us from Adelaide to Darwin along the entire Western Australian coastline. We first stopped for a copious hors d’œuvre at Cocklebiddy, my first venture into the Nullarbor. My caving experience being limited essentially to Tasmania, I wasn’t quite sure what to expect, but what I found at the entrance lake was awe and serenity, as well as slight gaiety, trying to picture generations of cave divers bustling around, including a few from STC. Being so remote yet knowing that some of my friends had been here many a time before was a very special feeling.



Cocklebiddy Lake, always a beauty...at least on the surface

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

However, it was the good people from WASG who really made our trip worthwhile from a caving perspective. Ian Collette and his peers rolled out the red carpet for us, in spite of our relative anonymity. I announced our visit only days in advance, but that was enough for Ian to organise permits, gear, vehicles, accommodation and additional guides. We met close to Margaret River at the club’s hut, a comfortable shack just minutes away from the nearest caves. After a meal at the local pub and a disrupted night (a bunch of bogans – is that a politically correct thing to say? – made a ruckus during the night and tossed a severed roo head on the ground, possibly as a threat (*I saved you all the unpleasant photo of this but it was sent to me, so proof exists - Ed*), we headed into the stunning Boranup Forest.

Strong’s Cave is a horizontal streamway cave with only minimal vertical extent, but it is truly beautiful and has been well protected over the years. Unfortunately, the water has long disappeared, with only slow-growing tree roots and a few drip holes accounting for moisture.

The ground being sandy makes for interesting formations though, with collapsed and subsided chunks of flowstone showcasing horizontal steles in a very bizarre display, and the omnipresence of tree roots, some hanging over 10 metres from the roof, reaching straight into the ground. Strong's Cave also contains calcified bones and what has been judged to be the longest straw in the world.



A lovely bit of flowstone. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Kudjal Yolgah is another restricted cave. There, I encountered a problem I have not had before (except in abandoned mines): low CO₂ levels. With no CO₂ sensor handy, Ian lit a few matches to show us the difference a few metres in elevation can make. Alice quickly got light headed and so it was decided to call it quits. As a consolation, Ian led us to another cave, Golgotha, which, like many other caves in the region, has been used for tourism for years and is thus more or less trashed. Today, it is used for research, with an experiment currently underway: the cave contains a weather station and many drip sensors for ... science.



What is it with boys and matches?

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

The next day in the Witchcliffe area was just as frenetic, but centred on more vertical caving with our second guide, Weidi Koh. First we went to the very popular Bride Cave, offering speccy photographic and abseiling opportunities, then to Mordang Dar with a group of Parks representatives looking for a new cave to cram tourists into, followed by Arumvale Pipe and Deep Dene. The latter would have been the most photogenic cave I'd ever seen if only it hadn't been completely massacred during its time as a show cave.

One week later, we reunited with Ian and were introduced to a new group of cavers, some of which I had previously met at the ASF Conference (the advantages of attending really

became obvious on this trip). This time we met three hours north of Perth, in the Eneabba region. Naked under my cotton overalls and the scorching sun, I descended into what has to be one of the most unique and unfathomable caves in the entire world, going by the name of Aiyennu. In the words



You know you are not in Tassie with a roof like this

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

of our own Leigh Gleeson (*Southern Caver*, Vol. 10 No. 3, January 1979): "One of the strangest caves in the area is Aiyennu (A.N.U.) Cave which must surely possess one of the classic entrance forms found anywhere in Australia [...] The doline is at that rare stage of development whereby the 1 metre to 2 metre thick roof has not collapsed yet, there are about 100 holes already in it, many of them just large enough for someone to fit through them. The roof is thus like a very thin Swiss cheese. One enters by dropping a ladder down one of solution pipe type holes. If you elect to stroll across the roof of the chamber care must be taken not to step into a void."



I thought you could all view this example of death as it is a little less recent

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

The last leg of our visit took us to an unexplored hole previously discovered by Brett Wiltshire and Ian Collette (who couldn't be bothered to explore it on the same day). Brett was kind enough to let me clamber down the blowing solution pipe in the ground first and I quickly called for reinforcement as this brand new cave seemed to widen. It was filled with a variety of near intact animal remains, some skeletal, some mummified, including an eerie goat carcass. Stockyard Gully and its bat colonies & bee swarms constantly buzzing around their colourful hives kept us entertained and, to finish the day off, we attempted to enter

another gem, Lady Forest. Unfortunately, massive rocks had collapsed on top of the recently installed gate and two hours of digging and removing boulders left me doubting the safety of the entrance (and out of time), so we left apologetically.

Next up, we were supposed to round off our tour of the Western Australian caving scene in Exmouth with another benefactor of ours, Darren Brooks, but fate decided otherwise and it was ultimately rain checked. Two conclusions: WA caves are terribly dry and dusty (but beautiful) and WASG has been amazing and wonderful to us. I wish to thank them again publicly for making those two weekends a really special, fun and enjoyable experience, and for accommodating us and our plans by moving their own plans around. Their efforts were remarkable and always on point, their logistics and general efficiency were amazing and we had a really good time. Please come and visit Tasmania anytime (*again* - Ed) and we'll make sure to return the favour, in our own, moist way.

JF-4 Khazad-Dum (KD) derig

9 March 2019

Alan Jackson

Party: Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Michael Packer, Petr Smejkal

After way too long waiting for the bloody fires to bugger off, permission was sought from (and granted by) the fire management team to access the area to rescue all my rotting alloy carabiners in KD. Thanks very much to Brendan Moodie and Trevor Norris at Parks (Mt Field) and John Webb (Norske) for facilitating this.

Pax and Petr derigged the dry route while Serena relished an extra partial traverse of the track to retrieve her forgotten gloves from the car and I enjoyed the serenity of the forest waiting for her. S and I then passed the time traversing the wet way by wondering why people don't do up carabiner screw gates, why they sometimes only use one of the two bolts at a double bolt rebelay, why they don't pull ropes tight between rebelay loops to prevent flood damage to ropes and why they install unnecessarily long rebelay loops (and rebelay loops when a redirect would be better) and then find themselves having to pass mid-rope knots because they ran out of rope. The two Ps caught up to us other two at the top of the last pitch (we were testing new p-hanger installs, so we had slowed down considerably from the 'lower streamway' pitch 4).

At this point Serena and Petr continued down to go fishing for Anaspides in the sump for Stefan's German shrimp mates while Pax and I endured the horrors of the bolt test rig on a large number of difficult locations. All bolts passed (this was the first time Ramset 801 glue was used, so I was happy with the pass rate). The others returned with their bag limit of shrimp and we started heading out. Pax drew the short straw and lugged the tester and the ropes off the lower pitches, so he had a heavy bastard bag more-or-less right from the bottom. Good lad. The amount of 11 mm used resulted in bulging bags for all of us by the end though.

Things to do:

We forgot to go back and remove the 4x concrete screws and hangers on the traverse alternative above the optional pitch 2 on the dry route (Petr and Pax didn't have a spanner with them and I'd rigged this for numpties using the holes we'd made during the rescue exercise a few years back).

Lower streamway pitch 4 ('chute' pitch) could do with an extra p-hanger where I placed a temporary concrete screw on the last trip (screw was removed on this trip). With attention to detail this can be passed without a rope rub but I have a tendency to vastly over-estimate the skills and situational awareness of other cavers (even supposedly experienced and intelligent ones) so I think this one will need to be dumbed down to the lowest common denominator at some point.

Perhaps the traverse alternative to pitch 2 on the dry route could be p-hangered, but a part of me still resists this.

The Serpentine Route is a balls up and should be p-hangered properly.

A permanent tight traverse line between rebelay two and three on the final pitch the wet way needs to be installed (like the ones on the second pitch the wet way higher up in the caves) to keep you out of the water at high levels and generally make the transition easier. It could be continued to the fourth rebelay also, but not as important.

Project JF-99

17 March 2019

Bill Nicholson

Party: Phillip Jackson, Bill Nicholson.



Always time for a cuppa. Photo: Bill Nicholson

There's something about a bit of a scrub bash on a sunny day through some interesting karst to get the juices flowing, be that mostly sweat with a little cranial activity; the lure of surface exploration and the probability of stumbling into a pot hole or two.

As part of Project JF-99, the quest for a downstream entrance, we decided to take a look at an area north of the north-eastern corner of the Junee Cave Reserve, that more or less being the eastern edge of our search area.

The plateau and the ridge leading up to it are similar to Cave Hill (Florentine Valley) and in particular Pepper Pot Plateau in respect of significant limestone bedrock on the surface. The ridge is dry with thickets of interlocking, mostly dead Dogwood whilst the plateau is only marginally better.

Nothing of any real substance was found on this foray except for a few small choked depressions & some limestone buttresses on the western side of the steep gully to the east of the plateau.

To the north and west of the plateau, at around the 420-450 contour are a number of dolines we plan to check out another day; well that's the plan anyway for now

IB-8: Mini Martin

24 March 2019

Janine McKinnon

Party: Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Fraser Johnston (cameo), Gabriel Kinzler, Janine McKinnon, Greg Swalwell

Fraser wanted photos and video for his project. Alan wanted to take Anna down a big pitch. Greg was a new caver and wanted anything. The rest of us just wanted a nice day out caving. Thus, all desires were met by a jaunt down Mini Martin.

It was a leisurely start as apparently teenagers don't get out of bed early without dramas fathers would rather avoid. So we left Hobart at 8 am. We started the walk from the Mystery Creek car park in two groups around 10 am, and rigging started happening on the top pitch of Mini Martin (MM) somewhere before 11:30 am. The track from the turn-off on



Fraser - the master photographer at work. I wonder what the Crow's Nest O H & S policy says about hanging over a 110 m pitch like this? Despite the self-belay, it's going to hurt if he falls. Photo: Janine McKinnon

the Exit track was still well marked and in good condition, with the exception of a couple of tree falls, one particularly nasty one just before MM itself.

Gabriel was keen to practice his rigging skills and thus gained that job. Fraser took photos from the conveniently-placed log across the pitch. He got some lovely shots and you can see some of them if you go to the club's Facebook page. He'd never planned to go caving that day and so he went back once he had satisfied his photographic objectives.



Anna ready to go. How many other 12-year-olds do you know who go down and up 110 m pitches, with rebelay (in good time)? Photo: Janine McKinnon

We were using a brand new 9.5 mm super static rope. Beal, but a "model" we haven't tried before, Spelenium Gold. It was very fast. Very, very fast. Very, very, very fast. At least for me. I went very, very, very slowly down. Even the Raumer Handy struggled to provide enough friction. A little dirt and use will fix that though.

I took Gabriel and Greg for a short wander to the proximal parts of Western Passage whilst the other three came down. Priorities dictated how long we spent in there, which will be self-evident in the next sentence. By the time we finished that they were all at the bottom of the cave and it was time for scones and jam and (triple thickness) cream, courtesy of Serena. Gabriel's lunch was in a pack Alan was carrying, which was unfortunate for a Gabriel that didn't want lunch just to be scones because the pack failed to come down the cave. There is a serious lesson there about allowing oneself to be separated from one's food.

Alan and Anna went up first, tandem prusiking the big pitch. Serena and I tandemed the big pitch and Greg and Gabriel discussed the possibility at some length and then chickened out and went up separately. Apparently their extra combined weight was the final scare. To be fair, it was an awfully thin rope and their combined weight was much more than Serena's and mine. It's all in the head ...

I was so pleased Serena and I tandemed. It was a delightful prusik; plenty of time to look at that magnificent pitch which has so much variety, time to rest without feeling guilty and not at all tiring because of the rests. I didn't time our ascent (only because I forgot to until half-way up) but it only took the pair of us about 30 minutes, so there is efficiency value in tandem prusiks.

The other two were pretty slick with their ascents, taking around 25-30 minutes each. This was impressive from Greg as he was using a club SRT kit and this was only his third caving trip ever. We definitely do training differently to most in STC. I think there's probably room for an article in that statement. Nothing exciting to report on the walk back and we were all at the cars by 6:30 pm.

And the new rope for prusiking? Brilliant. Wonderful. The best I can recall. I'll have more of that please.

Rigging Notes: These have been printed in a previous *Spiel* (SS 330: 3), however I will reproduce them here for ease of future reference, possibly

Pitch	Rigging Details (All directions facing 'down-cave' except where specified)
Entrance Pitch-110p	110 m rope. (The entire cave can be done with a single 200 m roll of rope; we had a 'shrunk' 200 m cut into 3 pieces (180 m in total)). Anchor off the large tree; rebelay 5 m over the edge using a Y-belay from a bollard (5 m tape required) and one P-hanger. The P-hanger is about 1 m below and 1 m to the right (when on rope) of the top of the natural bollard.
Pitch 2-30p	40 m rope. Tie-back and anchor to a P-hanger at the base of the 110p (on a rock rib, 1 m above the floor), then on rope approach the pitch-head. At the lip there are two P-hangers on the left-hand wall at face-height, Y-belay from these.
Pitch 3-30p	35 m rope. Tie-back and anchor to a P-hanger on the right-hand wall at face height. Descend the right hand groove. Rebelay 5 m down from the P-hanger on the 'arete' to the right (when on rope) for a free-hang.

A Bit More Canyoning

Day 1: Standard Hill Canyon (Minto Canyon?)

30 March 2019

Alan Jackson

Party: Serena Benjamin, David Butler, Alan Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler

I'm not really sure what this canyon should be called. The creek is unnamed but largely drains the Minto Plain area. The spot where the creek joins the Mersey River is directly opposite the western end of Standard Hill (and in kayaking circles this section of the Mersey is always referred to as the 'Standard Hill run'). It doesn't really matter, I guess.

Anyway, this was a return trip for me, having done (to my knowledge) its first descent back in 2012 (see trip report in *Speleo Spiel* 388). Ric and Janine had intended joining us but Janine came down with a severe case of 'man flu' and they pulled out at the last minute (*and I spent the weekend alternating between feeling miserably sick and miserable because I was missing this trip - Ed*). With some space freed up I invited David Butler so the northerners could get in on the action (Machinery Creek must be getting boring by now) and so we had a second car to leave at Liena to test my theory that walking up the Mersey to Liena would be easier than sloggng back up the hill to the start point like last time.

David had a 6 pm appointment in Launceston which, if he missed it, would result in incurring the wrath of Cathie Plowman, so we started early. We met at Liena at 7:30 am, left Dave's car there and drove up Old Gads Hill Road to Olivers Road then on to the unnamed forestry road. I understand this road is colloquially known as 'Shooting Gallery Road' after a policeman was shot in the area many years ago. This road is locked, but I know a bloke with a key. Presumably a key could be sourced from Sustainable Timber Tasmania through official channels. It gets you 4 km closer than walking from Olivers Road.

Once we passed the private house near the end of the road we discovered the south-western slopes of the ridge between the house and the target creek had been very recently logged and we were able to drive (4WD, low range) all the way to the top of the ridge. A very stiff cold south-westerly wind was whipping across the landscape and the shelter of the scratchy, grabby scrub was enjoyed (for about 15 seconds). It's less than a km from the ridge to the creek but it's not

very pleasant going – bauera, cutting grass and other iterations of 'scrub' presented to you on an ever-increasingly steep hill. A few spectacular crashes were achieved by Serena and me.



You could just imagine a hot, sunny day with warm water swims, just like the canyons of the Blue Mountains in NSW, home of canyoning in Australia ... if you don't read the trip report. Note the tiny cavers/canyoners on the left-hand side of the waterfall for scale.

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Last time we did this trip we noticed some ropes across the creek just upstream of the first big waterfall and some flagging tape on the river banks. This time we intersected an old dark blue taped route traversing the hill. It was very overgrown and not really negotiable anymore. It'd be interesting to follow this track and see where it starts, as it could be a good thing to upgrade as an ongoing access.

I might sow the seeds on the online Tasmanian bushwalking forum as there seems to be a never-ending source of enthusiasm from bushwalkers to pioneer and maintain walking tracks to random destinations, particularly spectacular waterfalls.

The creek welcomed us by reminding us just how bloody slippery the rocks were and assured us there'd be no easy metres for the next few hours. We donned wetsuits at the first fall (Fifty Dollar Falls), as it was about 12 degrees air temperature with a stiff SW wind and moderately cold water (with lots of swims, the first of which was ~55 m directly below us). We rigged as per 2012 – over the edge of some trees on river right to the first ledge then set up a gain from the large twin-trunks of a sassafras tree down the rest of the drop. There was a bit more water than last time, making it a bit more spectacular, but this place is amazeballs even in very low conditions. Such a great waterfall. After an invigorating swim to the other side we saddled up and continued on.

We abseiled almost every drop from here on (with the exception of a couple in the middle section as they would have required swimming and we were too bloody cold by that stage to engage in voluntary swims). Last time we'd skirted around the edge of several of the drops to speed things up a bit. Lots of falling over was enjoyed by everyone. We even saw the sun for the short section where the creek trends NE for a bit – otherwise the sun was safely hidden below the hill to the north. The bottom section was as brilliant as I remembered it (despite the chilly swims). We did the last pitch differently (left a tape on a boulder river left instead of going down the water in the middle) which avoided the 'detach from the rope while treading water' problem from last trip, as you landed on a small ledge right on the pool's edge.

The eastern bank of the Mersey was bathed in sunlight but we couldn't get there without more cold swimming, so we hurriedly 'enjoyed' a shivering lunch in the shade and the wind then started up the western bank of the river. It was fairly easy going with only one sporty bouldering move (with a deep wet landing if you peeled off) for about 400 m then the river turned south and we were bathed in glorious sunshine where we thawed out. The next 2 km was pretty easy going as the massive floods a few years ago reamed all the vegetation and soil off the banks, leaving grippy dry bedrock to bound along. Once we came alongside the paddocks with just over 1 km to go it was very tempting to abandon the river but we didn't want to jump onto private property without prior permission. It would be worth chatting to the locals and getting permission to do so in the future. The river option was more enjoyable than the 'back up the hill' option but only because of the flood damage. I'm guessing that in ten years' time the riverside scrub will be back.

We were back at the car around 2:30 pm and on our way home (after collecting my car from the top) not long after. I assume David got home in time and avoided being flayed alive. Devonport return it was about a ten-hour day. Bloody brilliant day out and I look forward to returning next summer with Janine so she can stop whining about missing out this time round (*Oh goody. Whining does have its uses, that's good to know. I need to practice it more then - Ed*).

Day 2: Minnow Falls

31 March 2019

Alan Jackson

Party: Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler

Canyoning is so much fun you often choose to do it two days in a row. I'd had my eye on Minnow Falls off the eastern end of Mt Roland since 2012 but had never got around to it. Since that time a few other groups have also noticed it and it is now a popular (by Tasmanian standards) trip with some bolts and tape anchors. Luxury. I had a copy of the rigging notes from Nick Ward (who, to my and his knowledge, pioneered the route) to make things a bit easier.

There are two routes to access the falls. The old track starts off the high point on Belstone Road (off Union Bridge Road) but it had become very badly overgrown. A couple of years ago some enthusiastic bushwalkers put in a new track off the end of Bottom Road (note that the road names on the topo maps don't exactly match the names on the sign posts in the area, but with a GPS and a map print out you can't go wrong). Then even more recently they cleared the old track and ran a connecting track between the two so a loop could be enjoyed – they're an industrious lot, these bushwalkers. All the comments on the bushwalking forum suggested the Bottom Road track was the most direct and fastest (even though it starts a little lower than the Belstone Road track, so we chose that one. The track starts delightfully, crosses the river to the northern bank on a fallen log (with wire netting attached and a wire hand rail!) then follows the river gently up for a bit. It then veers away from the river and gets steeper, then gets steeper again before joining with the alternative route then descends briefly to the base of the falls. All the various junctions were signposted, tracks well-taped and clear of vegetation – a veritable highway, albeit a bit steep in places. Just before the final scramble over large boulders to the very base of the falls, there's a dry rocky lead heading up to the right of the falls and this is the (VERY steep) route to the top. It is well-taped and has three fixed rope ladders with wooden rungs. These are now quite old (15-20 years?) and in poor condition. The first one looked a bit dodgy but held us all. The second one was broken in several spots and an alternative knotted rope was in place. The third one was broken too but with no alternative rope and it was a bit suss. Some upgrades are required. There's also a 'cave' to traverse (it's dark enough to have to go carefully in one spot) just before you pop out onto a promontory with great views of the main central drop of Minnow Falls. Eventually you reach the top of the cliffs after about 200 m of vertical gain and the track contours south to the river. Just before the river it is easiest to follow the taped route to the left which allows you to scramble to the river whereas the right-hand option requires a bit of short rope work to negotiate some drops over large boulders.

We kitted up in the sun (wetsuits again) and negotiated the first small drop on river left to find the first anchor (shiny new rigging tape with a stainless maillon – Nick had done a trip earlier in the year and replaced most of the rigging as the presumably acidic water draining the alpine peats of Mt Roland was making a mess of non-stainless fixed rigging). A few small drops from here lead to a large single drop to a large perched pool. A couple of 70 m ropes gets you down the whole canyon – we didn't quite have that and some interesting moments were had passing knots, but we made it

in the end! I reckon this ‘pitch’ would be better if a second set of anchors (bolts) were installed at the head of the main drop, as long pitches with lots of rope stretch/bounce combined with lots of bad rubs makes for sad ropes. I’d have taken 11 mm ropes if I’d known the conditions better.

The first main drop was spectacular, with an 80+ degree sinuous snake of water gushing down a rounded channel. A ledge at the bottom allows you to get off rope without swimming. The water temperature was a bit of a shock to us all (it was painfully cold and much worse than the previous day’s trip). It came as a particular surprise to Gabriel, who pulled extra hard on the rope to get the knot to come over an edge and then over-balanced and crashed into the pool. Classic.



I’m sure someone else could do better justice to a caption for this than me. Send your suggestions to the editor.

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Thankfully the glorious sunshine allowed us to thaw on the rocks atop the next drop, which follows immediately after the swim. This is the main fall and is bloody high. I misinterpreted the rigging notes and brought dud rope lengths. The pitch starts on two bolts right in the main channel and a rebelay (bolts) on a ‘ledge’ part way down were said to exist (in a narrow cleft behind the waterfall). I thought the notes told me the total fall was 58 m with the rebelay/ledge 30 metres from the bottom. It was actually 58 metres to the rebelay, then a further 30 metres from there (i.e. an ~80 m drop). Thankfully the spot where I discovered one of my ropes wasn’t long enough coincided with the narrowest bit of the cleft and I was able to wedge myself in while I added an extra rope and passed the knot! All the extra jiggling required to get three people past this obstacle resulted in a badly chewed rope. Again, this drop would be best done on 11 mm rope in its current condition, but even better it could do with an intermediate rebelay (bolts) at a lovely spacious ledge and overhang where the fall transitions from sloping (and very rubby) to vertical (*that looks like a job for next summer then - Ed*).

The existing rebelay is in a pretty spectacular (and bloody cold) spot, jammed in a narrow cleft looking out through the waterfall to the vista beyond. Great place. We pulled out ropes (which came down easier than I was expecting, considering the distance and the rub) and we continued down the next ~30 m. This pitch was quite awkward to descend with a bad start due to poor bolt placement (bolts should be on other wall to remove the nasty rub and difficult undercut manoeuvre) and multiple steps and chockstones below which snagged rope bundles thrown down from the top (i.e.

I wouldn’t chuck them down next time but feed them out as one abseils).

Then there’s a few scrambles (with a tape around a chockstone river left on the first one for a handline or short abseil) and then you find yourself at the next obstacle (and some rapidly disappearing sun to bask in on the right-hand walls). This drop totals around 55 m, starting with a series of short drops into perched plunge pools followed by a couple of larger drops with plunge pools, one of which has a log speared into it just to make hauling out the other side trickier. This was rigged off some tapes and a maillon through a natural thread/boulder jam at stream level a few metres back from the first drop. The bottom pool was shallow enough to stand up in, which was nice.

The last obstacle follows immediately and is a short (~10 m) drop rigged off a tape and ring around a wedged log. Then a quick change and smash back down the hill (with knees screaming at you) to the car. I think it was a seven-hour day (car to car), 8.5 hours Devonport to Devonport but we wasted a lot of time with inappropriate rope lengths and could have shaved 1.5+ hours from that quite easily.

Fabulous place with some epic scenery and drops and I highly recommend it.

MC-14 Lynds Cave

14 April 2019

Janine McKinnon

Party: Anna Ekdahl, Janine McKinnon, Chris Sharples

Serena had headed off home at the (literal) crack of dawn, and so we were a very intimate group.

I had thought it was possible to avoid the few strokes of proper swimming crossing the Mersey River to access the cave. I thought I had not picked the right spot last time. I was wrong. Definitely full immersion required. We had not dressed adequately for this. I shivered the whole trip.

We wandered up the streamway, and with no photographers to slow progress that took 30 minutes at a leisurely pace. We looked around at the back and headed out. Total trip time was 1 hour.

The decorations in the back part of the cave are very good and worth a visit.



Random Lynds image. Photo: Grant Elliott

MC-1 Kubla Khan

13 April 2019

Janine McKinnon

Party: Serena Benjamin, Anna Ekdahl, Janine McKinnon, Chris Sharples

The trip was full (six allowed on the permit), then it was five, then four, then five, then finally four. I was getting dizzy with all the changes. Still, finally we had a group ready to go and on a beautiful morning. There was nothing new or novel to report about this trip. We started in the top entrance at 9 am, last person was back at the car at 3:30 pm after a very enjoyable, leisurely trip. Water levels were very low in the bottom of the cave. The Pleasure Dome was dry.

No dramas or problems and just good company in a great cave.

The lack of serious photographers didn't hurt.

JF-237 Niggly Cave Re-Rig Trip

25-28 April 2019

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Serena Benjamin, Stephen Fordyce, Alan Jackson, Fraser Johnston, Gabriel Kinzler, Michael "Pax" Packer, Petr Smejkal

A good proportion of the rig in Niggly had been in place since Al Warild and co. installed it in late 2015 (3.5 years ago). Although a fair amount of the rope had been replaced and a few pitches re-configured, it had seen a lot of traffic, and been variously described as "worn out", "dangerous", "scary", "uncertain" (and more). The Hilti 6 mm galvanised concrete screws in particular were getting into uncharted territory.

With the nearby bushfires finally under control, we were granted permission to access the road and the cave - to re-rig the cave in preparation for a dive attempt in the Pool of Promise, and the continued pushing of leads in Atlantis. ANZAC Day provided a good opportunity for a four-day trip.

Thanks to a grant from Australian Geographic, 600 m of Bluewater 9.5 mm II++ rope, 100 sets of SS maillons, hangers and new concrete screws were purchased for "The Junee-Florentine Master Cave Connection Project". This gear and as such the new rig in the cave is for the custody of STC (and has already been engraved!). Please feel free to visit.

I did some experiments with washing and preparing the ropes - these will be the subject of another article.

We had got all the organising done in excellent time the night before, so Thursday saw Steve (me), Alan, Pax and Fraser start walking to the cave about 9:30 am. With 60 kg (no exaggeration) of rigging gear plus cave camping and filming stuff between us, it was midday before we were at the cave and getting changed (multiple trips were required for some sections of the track).



Fraser couldn't handle the spotlight.

Photo: Stephen Fordyce

Day 1: Re-rigging

We spent the entire day re-rigging, admiring the virtues of the impact driver and cursing how annoying maillons are - with the final party arriving at Camp Niggly at midnight. Fraser did some filming and tried to decide whether he enjoyed or hated caving. A few different methods of re-rigging were tried - from the Rift of Death (top of 85 m pitch), Pax went ahead with the impact driver, replacing all the bolts/hangers/maillons but reattaching the old ropes. I followed, rigging the ropes (although Alan decided my initial rebelay was too long, and essentially re-rigged the entire 85 m pitch to save that 1 m of rope). Alan had waited until I was at the bottom and he could pull up the rope to leave at the top of the pitch - a practice we carried out all the way down.

After we all helped get the gear through the meander section, Fraser and Pax were sent ahead to camp, to get the home fires burning. Having the dedicated bolt replacer seemed like a dubious benefit because of how long it took to open and close the maillons, so Alan (who was getting cold and bored) was tasked with just doing everything while I stayed back to pull up the ropes. The 105 m pitch was exciting for both of us - with Alan having to dig out his skyhook to reach a bolt hole after the bolt was removed, and I swore blind that he'd attached a rock to the end of the rope because it was so heavy.



Bobblehead filming in the Tigertooth Passage

Photo: Stephen Fordyce

Eventually, we dumped the leftover rigging gear and our SRT kits near the waterfall and hightailed it to camp, eventually getting to bed at 1am after doing a water run to the sump. "Underestimate" was the word of the evening, but we had successfully replaced all the rigging, and later managed to take every piece of old stuff out. Alan finally achieved full appreciation of the impact driver, which saved

a huge amount of energy undoing/redoing the concrete screws (about 70 of them, all on a single 2.0 Ah battery). Yes, we did use all the same holes. Some of the concrete screws were stuck in enough that they had to be removed by hand - providing further reassurance that our combination of equipment/technique were very unlikely to weaken or break those screws.

Day 2: More rigging, and filming

A slow start was made after the epic the day before, breakfast Shapes eaten and plans made. First off, a run to the DIY sump was made - to collect water and the dive weights, then we re-rigged the tyrolean across the waterfall pit, leading to Vietnam and Atlantis. A piece of club 10.5 mm rope was used for the main line, with extra-large SS maillons each end, otherwise the rig was with the standard new gear. A string line was also added for returning pulleys. Fraser finally got some good footage of the tyrolean, but of course wants more - plenty of opportunity for that.

There was a trickle-fed lake in the middle of the Vietnam passage, but feet stayed dry (just) and the team was soon admiring the spacious passages of Atlantis. While Alan ranged about and completed sketches for the survey previously done by Petr and me (thanks Alan), handlines and a rope/garden-hose/cable tie etrier were made and rigged for the climb down to the Pool of Promise in anticipation of the upcoming dive trip. These use SS hardware and will probably be left as permanent fixtures. We stashed the weights ready for the dive attempt, admired the Pool of Promise Passage, and Fraser did some interviewing and other artsy stuff.



Fraser on the tyrolean, enjoying caving for the moment at least. Photo: Stephen Fordyce

Finally we were ready to start on some new stuff - we made a beeline for the undescended pitches on the far side of Atlantis and started rigging. This area was grand and confusing, so named "Kings Landing". Fraser decided that for the moment he didn't like caving, and Pax was happy to accompany him back to camp, so Alan and I finished off the rig - a series of short, connected drops which ate up a lot of rigging gear ("House Baratheon"), in 20 m or so of vertical to get back to base level in a sizeable chamber with large sharp rock in the middle ("The Iron Throne"). Upstream, the water came out of an ominously terminal mud wallow, but Alan found a higher-level crawly bypass, "Tyrions Escape", where a handline was later installed to help with getting up to it. Downstream from the Iron Throne, the water was presumed to flow to the junction with the Pool of Promise Passage water, but not actually checked.

Tyrions Escape led to a ~8 m pitch "The Castle Wall" and back to the stream, in a chamber with an entering shower I suggested was "The Rains of Castermere" but Alan preferred to call "La Douche". We'll see who wins that one ... Uninspiring narrow/crawly/wet/slimy passage continued upstream, so we called it a day and figured on survey/pushing the next day.

Day 3: Pushing, surveying and day trippers

Saturday was a daytrip for Petr and Serena, who would be joined by Gabriel on the way in and Fraser on the way out. They left Hobart very early and made excellent time with light loads, in order to make the planned rendezvous of 10 am at the waterfall. Imagine our surprise, when the happy campers were woken at 9:30 am by the fresh crew eyyyo'ing from the top of Mount Niggly. In a series of unfortunate events (Fraser snored with the decibel equivalent of a 747, the rest of us wore earplugs, there was only one watch with an alarm, I didn't hear it) we were mostly lying awake wondering if it was nearly time to get up, but a long way from being ready to go caving.

Some amount of faffing later, Serena and Petr were working on the undropped pitch ("Tywins End") underneath the summit of Mt Atlantis, while Alan, Gabriel and I started surveying our rig from the previous day. Fraser stayed at camp to recharge for the climb out, and Pax headed back to make a start out with him, choosing to head out a day early with the beginnings of an ear infection. We found out later that Serena and Petr had no joy at the bottom of Tywins End, but were successful in doing a climb ("Cersei's Tower") above the House Baratheon pitch, gaining a short amount of passage and ending in another climb, which they left for another day. Both leads will need surveying next time. They started heading out about 2 pm, carrying a heroic amount of old rigging gear and caught up with Pax and Fraser to exit the cave together and get back to Hobart around midnight.

Meanwhile, in a mixing of metaphors, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli continued down the passages named in the Game of Thrones theme. We made a good team, with an excited Gabriel taking point - negotiating the way on through a tight and meandering streamway reminiscent of the Tigertooth Passage, but much better lubricated. He picked survey stations for me to shoot with the DistoX, while Alan brought up the rear sketching passage detail, and making wisecracks. Beyond The Rains of Castermere/La Douche, the streamway passage trended slowly upwards, with some unpleasant crawling bits, but mostly sideways walking. This was ironically named "The A1", or "The A1 Superhighway", or perhaps in keeping with the theme - "The Kingsroad". At one point, The Kingsroad does a very abrupt 180 degree turn, possibly named "The Switchback" (or something more Game of Thrones-related). Another key feature was a waterfall of approximately 2 m height.

After what seemed like forever, the meandering streamway started to show signs of being just a little bigger, and some breakdown was encountered. Gabriel found a way through and into a large chamber at the base of an aven 20 m high and with small inlet stream ("Highgarden"). This didn't look like an easy climb and the water was coming out of a small hole at the top - possible, but a fairly desperate prospect. Back across the top of the rockpile was a restriction so tight that helmets had to be taken off ("The Schism"), but which lead to another sizeable room with a floor of mud and

rockfall sloping steeply but gracefully upwards ("Marjaerys Chambers").

Gabriel and I both had a good poke around at the top of the slope and Gabriel found a way on, into another room with a rock that looked like a rhino horn, so this room became "Bronns Bedroom". A side lead that I pushed went through a rather loose and scary squeeze of dolerite into ongoing upward passage named "Bucks Luck" as a nod to my upcoming nuptials, and my excuse for making the trip. The main lead continued into another chamber with aven and inlet waterfall called "Virgin Sacrifice", where to Gabriel's (well-controlled) dismay, I called the day on the basis of hangriness. What's left of the stream passage continues ...

We made good time back to camp and spent the evening in pleasant relaxation, munching our way through an extra-large block of chocolate which expired in 2017. We had added 95 new survey legs, 353 m of surveyed cave and had leads to come back to next time - it was very satisfying.

While we enjoyed our evening, the rest of the crew had battled their way up and out of the cave, only to discover a newly fallen tree across the road, blocking their way home. In the words of Fraser: "Petr totally hulked out and started ripping the branches off with his bare hands, he saw it and screamed "*&\$!@ noooooo!!!!". It was the perfect response to the situation".



Alan pronounced himself "surprisingly unbroken" and did a little dance to prove it. Photo: Stephen Fordyce

Day 4: Birthing day

It was the usual slog up and out of the cave, but expecting at any moment to see piles of rope or abandoned bags by the rest of the crew. However, we were pleasantly surprised that we only had one rigging bag to carry out between us (and unpleasantly surprised when it turned out to weigh 25 kg). The stagger down the hill was uneventful (except for when a very heavy abandoned bag of rope was discovered), and the weather cool enough to be able to walk back wearing our caving gear, but without rain.

We met up with the Saturday exit crew to swap stories and wash all the gear that came out. The only original rigging gear left in the cave is the rope up Al's waterfall climb, and the short one up Petr's climb in Mother of God. Even Dave and Sandy's dynamic rope came out. The trip was a spectacular effort by everyone involved and hopefully this rig will last until the project is finished and continue to give good service to STC members in other projects after that.

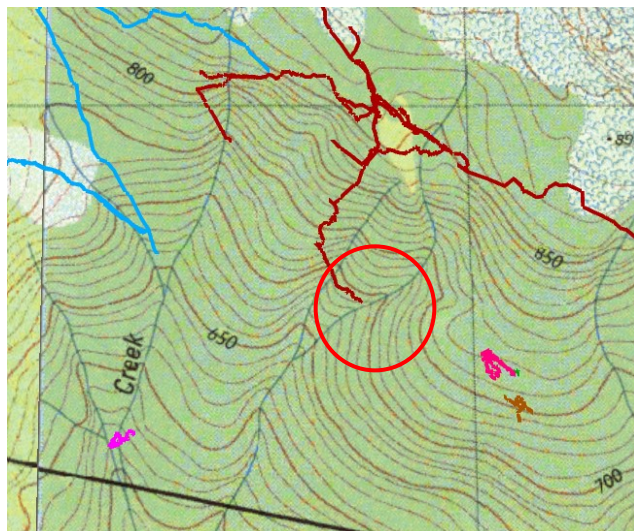
Survey

It was great to have Alan along as an enthusiastic sketcher (and he was quietly impressed with the speed achieved with Topodroid paperless surveying), who has insisted he will

enjoy drawing up a map of the new sections. Many thanks Alan.

Before we started, Atlantis was heading straight for JF-398 Boulder Jenga, with a 650 m horizontal gap and not much in the vertical, but the Topodroid plot revealed quite quickly that this was distinctly unlikely - instead The Kingsroad was (after a lot of wobbling) heading towards JF-270 Tachycardia! There were a number of smallish inflows, but none were enough to be the full Boulder Jenga stream, and mostly coming from the wrong side and too high. The current end of exploration in the Game of Thrones extension of Niggly is about 50 m above base level, and definitely above the bottom of Tachycardia. However, with a missing draught and stream in Tachycardia, there is still the chance of a connection mid-way up - the current gap is about 350 m.

Here is the current state of play:



Niggly Cave overlay - Game of Thrones extension (red circle). Nearby caves include Growling Swallet (blue), Boulder Jenga (magenta, bottom left), Pooshooter (brown), Tachycardia (magenta, near Pooshooter)



Old ropes out and clean (another 120 m length not shown!)

Photo: Stephen Fordyce

Notes on water

The BOM forecast for both Maydena and for Mount Field was for 15-20 mm of rain most days, and snow above 500 m on Friday (this on top of little rain the previous week or so). We kept this firmly in mind and fortunately most of what we had planned for the trip was above base level. The Game of Thrones extension did not seem to change in terms of water levels, perhaps as a hint that it drains less surface catchment than the other parts of the cave.

Still, some other water observations were noteworthy:

Day	BOM observations	Our observations
Day 1 (Thurs 25th)	1.8 mm rain to 9 am	Midday: - Boulder Jenga creek was fairly normal. Afternoon: - Tigertooth water fairly normal - DIY sump/streamway fairly normal
Day 2 (Fri 26th)	11.2 mm rain to 9 am (snow forecast down to 500 m)	Midday: - Water in PoPP significantly deeper and faster than last seen (at end of dry summer). Ankle deep at Atlantis Junction - Pool in Vietnam was shin deep and fed by an inlet trickle
Day 3 (Sat 27th)	14.0 mm rain to 9 am	Morning: - Snow had fallen but had mostly melted by ~8 am, at least up to the cave entrance - DIY sump/streamway fairly normal Evening: - More water in Tigertooth than usual - Much more water in PoPP than yesterday (nearly over gumboots at Atlantis Junction) - Stream could be heard from camp if we were quiet - Trees down/damaged
Day 4 (Sun 28th)	15.0 mm rain to 9 am	Morning: - Stream could be heard from camp if we were quiet Afternoon: - Tigertooth stream fairly normal - Boulder Jenga creek very swollen and brown, and with foam indicating it had been higher. - No snow visible, even on high peaks - No rain falling

It seems like a significant amount of snow fell on Friday, which then melted on Saturday, and the pulse began to go through the master cave within a matter of hours, and lasted at least 12 hours.

While the water at Atlantis Junction was up a bit, there wasn't any sign of major flooding, and being able to hear the stream from camp may indicate a healthy flow rather than a backing up. Perhaps (as indicated by previous floods), the choke point is much further downstream in the master cave, and the system can absorb a brief pulse of snowmelt quite happily, with a lot of extra noise and flow but not much rising. Not that it's worth gambling much on.

Re-rig notes:

A proper rigging guide will be made when the cave is de-rigged for the final time (nobody thought to check lengths before we undid all the knots for cleaning), but meanwhile:

- The entrance pitch, and the pitch preceding the Tigertooth Passage are unchanged from previous guides
- A ~200 m piece of rope was begun at the Rift of Death, and rigged in one continuous piece down the 85 m pitch, then the short drop into the hole in

the floor, as a safety line out onto the traverse, and down to the start of the intermediate meander.

About 50 m was left.

- Another ~200 m piece of rope was begun after the intermediate meander, and rigged continuously down the wet pitch, across the traverse, down the 105 m pitch and the last ~20 m pitch, with about 30 m left.

The concrete screws were of some concern, as it was unknown how they would be after so long installed. Most when examined afterwards were not particularly rusty, and at least looked like they were good for plenty more - none were horribly scary. I have coloured the heads of the new screws red (with texta) so we can tell when they were installed, and spot any old ones which had been missed, in obscure sections of the cave. By the time we rigged the new sections, there was only about 60 m of the Bluewater 9.5 mm rope left! This has been left down the bottom in case it's needed.

JF-341 Threefortyone

4 May 2019

Party: David Bardi, Stefan Eberhard, Jason Goldstein, Gabriel Kinzler, David Rueda Roca, Sandy Varin

After a long period of being unable to visit 341 due to summer fires and road closure, it was time to try to gain access to continue exploration from the last trip in November 2018. Once road access was granted, a two-pronged assault plan was formulated. The dry team consisting of David RR, Gabriel and Jason would continue with the digging assault that Alan had started on the September trip last year. The dive team consisting of Dave B, Stefan and Sandy would head to the furthest point of exploration and try to bypass a rock which was blocking the way on. All of the recent passage discovered last year would be surveyed as well.

Dive team report - David Bardi

After reaching the gear-up area above sump one, the two teams bid each other farewell. The usual dive through sump one was executed, this time with two light packs of equipment needed for the exploration. After dekitting dive gear in the new section, it was wisely agreed that surveying should be conducted as the first task. With a dry Disto in hand, the three divers worked like a well-oiled machine surveying ... until the Disto stopped working after only six shots. A bit of fiddling proved futile and as our body heat seeped out of our wetsuit, the team decided to abort the surveying and move onto task two at the end of the cave.

As the dead Disto was stowed, a voice close by and the faint noise of tumbling rocks could be heard. Just around the corner, the dry team had broken through from above and the teams now engaged in conversation. Gabriel's boots could be seen dangling from the hole above. He had even visited the chamber we were in before struggling back up the muddy slope to the newly opened hole.

After a quick chat, the dive team pushed on to the end of exploration that had been achieved on the previous trip. The usual struggle through the sump two roof sniff, followed by the letter box squeeze and the birth canal vertical squeeze, was enjoyed.

Arriving at the obstacle rock in the stream way, at the limit of exploration, Stefan settled into a comfortable reclined position to observe Dave and Sandy set up to work on the problematic rock. Sandy shaved just enough of the obstacle so the team could slip over the rock and continue slithering down the stream. But, after negotiating another tight restriction just a few metres past our digging spot, a wall of impenetrable rock fall blocked the way on. No other option existed except to call 341 finished in terms of exploration beyond 341.

A weary dive team surfaced from the cave at 3 am for the 30-40 min trudge back to the car. Relieved that we now knew the outcome one way or another of the current project, yet disappointed that we hadn't broken through to master cave that probably lies beyond the impenetrable stream way rock pile.

Further trips now lie ahead to finish the survey, remove dive gear and derig. An estimated 300 m of new passage was discovered but will be confirmed in the future.

Dry team report - Gabriel Kinzler

After leaving the divers, a short toddle took us back to the area suspected of connecting with the newly discovered passage past the first sump: a concealed, draughting, muddy slope with a drop on the other side, located between stations 226 and 227 on Jeff Butt's map (*see SS428, p. 10*). On a previous trip, Alan Jackson and Serena Benjamin had established voice contact with diver Dan Mitchell through that feature, and on a subsequent trip in October 2018, we made additional yet slow progress chipping away at rock.

Determined to fertilise the egg, I got to work with faithful companion David RR as my assistant of the day, while Jason went on touring the big specky chamber further on. After removing a decent amount of rock at the choke point and creeping down the increasingly narrow slope inch by inch, I finally managed to break through, swiftly jumped on a munter-hitched David and slid through the narrow gap, aided by some mightily lubricating mud.

The other side was a 45° slope covered in said mud, with very few features to grab or stand on (a problem I'd discover on my way back up). At the very bottom of that slope I immediately found pieces of string line: as expected, it was the actual emergence point of the sump. I had a quick look around the stream, found a cairn left by the divers, then struggled back up my human belay. Shortly thereafter, Dave, Sandy and Stefan emerged from the sump, we conversed amusedly, and they carried on with their own mission. It felt like making a quick cameo in someone else's movie.

Before leaving, I got rid of another big blockage in the floor to make future crossings more comfortable and installed a set of two bolts and hangers on the right-hand side of the narrow slope in order to rig a Y-belay. A 20 to 30-metre knotted rope is enough, bringing an ascender is not imperative, but possibly a welcome aid.

I do realise it isn't an ideal bypass of the sump (especially with a pack), but it works upon reasonable effort, and it opens a real way for dry cavers to enjoy what could previously be witnessed only by a select few. Unfortunately, now that proceedings seem to have halted, it does feel like a lot of work for nothing. But for me personally, it was extremely valuable experience to garner. And who knows, maybe we'll see something the divers didn't, when we return one final time?



Hot soup fixes everything.

Photo: David Rueda Roca

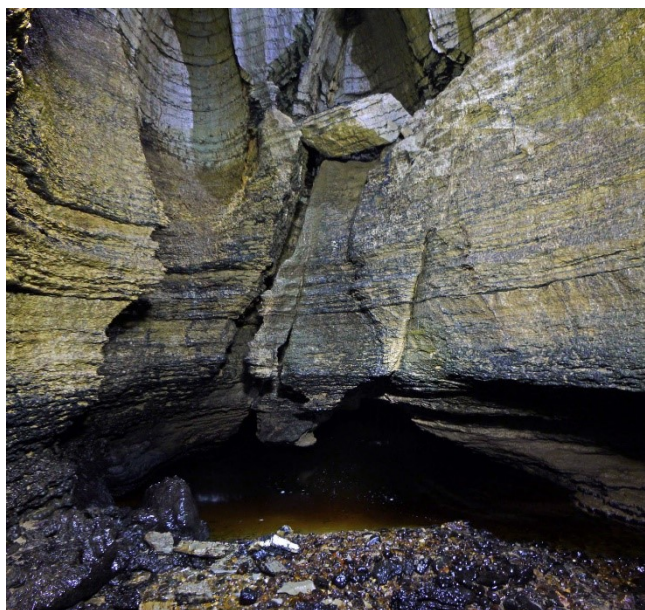
IB-14 Exit Cave. Sump assessment.

9 May 2019

Janine McKinnon

Party: Rolan Eberhard, Janine McKinnon, Chris Sharples.

Rolan and Chris had found a nice-looking sump at the far end of Mystery Creek Passage a week prior to this trip. Despite the poor prospects for a navigable connection seen from the Mystery Creek end of the known water connection they thought this was worth a look. I was along this time to scope the potential dive. It is a lovely-looking sump pool, so really, there is no reason not to give it a go and see how far passage I can fit through goes. So, we will be back with all the gear later in the year.



Some clearer water would be nice. Photo: Chris Sharples.

JF-36 Growling Swallet

10 May 2019

Serena Benjamin (*the mistress of brevity*)

Party: Serena Benjamin, Gabriel Kinzler

BEGIN Foray through Slaughterhouse Pot conducted STOP Earthworks near gate and lack of key impeded progress STOP Rattled down the cave STOP Gabriel embraced rattling aspect STOP Cave pack temporarily misplaced STOP Stop misplaced STOP New sediment bank near Windy Rift reached STOP Two bolts and two ropes now handlines and traverse lines STOP Water levels low STOP Cave exited in good time STOP Stopped STOP

IB-10 Mystery Creek Cave

11 May 2019

Bill Nicholson

Party: Philip Jackson, Kirsten Laurie, Bill Nicholson

The aim of this frolic was to give Kirsten a taste of Tasmanian caving and in that we succeeded. A number of hours were spent poking, contorting, climbing, sliding and much more, with dry feet. A cup of tea along the track at the creek on the way out rounded off a quite pleasant day.



Pity about the graffiti. Photo: Bill Nicholson

June Florentine Meanderings

19 May 2019

Bill Nicholson

Party: Kirsten Laurie, Bill Nicholson

I have a mate, yep that's right ain't no spelling mistake, and he wants to check out a cave entrance, problem is that it needs to be wheelchair accessible; so with the June Resurgence in mind as a possible, we took a look and assessed it as do-able with a manual chair, rope and a plank or two.

Next with a view to introduce Kirsten to the joys of Pepper Pot Plateau and if time permits a poke down The Master Cave we headed up Crisps Road. There is a fine line between meandering and loitering apparently, but none-the-less Kirsten checked out the entrances to Tarn Creek Swallet, Clacker and Pong Caves. An interesting array of fungi was seen and photographed and a grouse day in the bush was had.



Loitering well in hand. Photo: Bill Nicholson

Other Exciting Stuff

FROM THE ARCHIVE

SS 362, September-October 2007, P 13

Here's a bit of fun for you all. You can't go past an Andy McKenzie trip report for entertainment. He can even be informative at the same time.

The Poms, they really do love a good dig.

The sharper cave identifiers amongst you will recognise that this "cave known only by a number" subsequently became significant enough to gain a name. Dissidence. So as well as being amused by this report you can be reminded of the inauspicious start to the life of this great cave.

JF-382 – more digging

Andy McKenzie

16 September 2007

Party: Rowan Langford, Andy McKenzie, Trevor Wailes

Another argument with Alan pursued... "What do you mean you're spending the weekend at your daughter's birthday party? We have a going lead?! Get your priorities straight ya loser..." Well that was Jacko out...

There was no way I was gonna be happy carrying 3 heavy bags with capping, bolting *and* digging gear, plus personal caving gear, no way. I learnt at an early age not to carry a heavy pack; it gets you fit if you're not careful. I needed Sherpas. Crackers – aka Matt Casanova was with the missus, Bunty was un-contactable and Sabrina was "house sitting." Who the hell was gonna carry bags...? Ahhhh TREVOR!

"Fancy caving Sunday Trev?"

"What time you starting? I'm not keen for an early start..."

"Well what time suits mate?"

"10:30, not earlier."

"Excellent, I've got 3 bags to carry..."

"How ya gonna carry 3 bags, youth?"

So Trev was coming, but wasn't gonna carry a bag... Damn. Only one person left to ask, the missus - Rowan...

"Got an awesome lead for the weekend love, really interesting. Could be the start of the best cave in Tassie. Do you fancy a trip out on Sunday? Excellent. Ill get some kit sorted for you and pack a bag..."

Well that was the team sorted, me, Trev and Rowan. Next problem was a drill; mine wasn't due in Taz till Thursday or Friday week, so I had to ask Alan. I won't bore you with the full details of that conversation but it went something like this...

"Ill lend you the drill, but Andy, you have to realise that if my drill shared a birthday with my daughter, it would be a toss up of which party gets the best clown..."

Sorted! A going lead and an inspiring team of only genuine Englishmen and woman on this trip! What more could a boy want?

We set off onto the hill and with Trevor's knowledge of the Florentine we found 382 immediately.

382 was first explored in the 80s but was abandoned at a tight rift. After identifying the rift the week previous, Alan and I had left a slightly bigger rift with a howling draught. The problem we had had was shoring up the abundance of mud that was sliding down the steep slope and blocking up the hole.

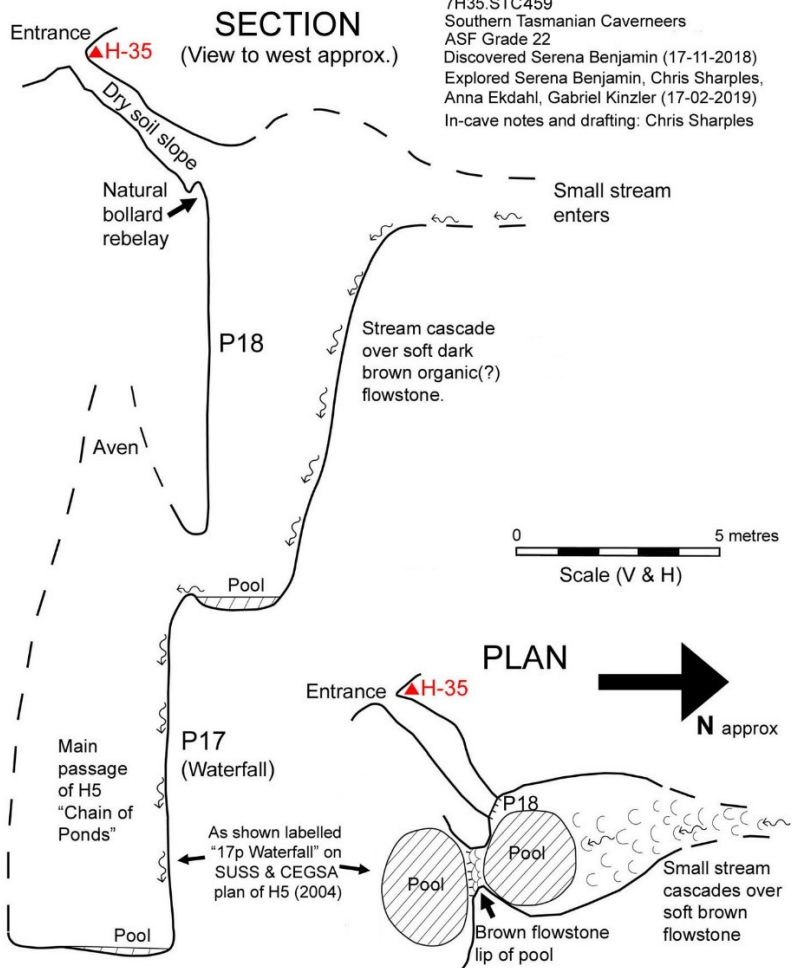
With Rowan sat in the sunshine, Trevor started hauling buckets and swift progress was made. After quite a bit of work it became possible to push all of the mud down through the hole into the large descending passage that is visible on the far side. Happy as Larry in a groveling dig, I began to get enthusiastic as the wind ripped through the cave...

The longer the digging went on, the deafer I got, and the colder Trevor got. So returning to the sun to check on Row, he left me to my own devices. After using all of the battery power, I had opened up the rift big enough to stick my head through. The passage on the other side is around 6 feet wide and 25 high, descending steeply. The rift is about 15 feet from the floor of the passage, meaning that on the other side there is either a climb down or a ladder drop. Pissed off there was no-one to hold my hand I had a go at getting through. It was body tight and pretty committing. The problem isn't so much getting down, but getting out again afterwards, the rift being at an awkward angle. I tried again, no luck, I was just too masculine...

Disappointed that I had eaten all the pies, I shored up some mud on the slope and stacked up the digging gear. This cave boasts a great location and good potential. If it goes, it will either increase the depth of Serendipity or go into a new system. It only needs a little more work to open up so that access is easy.

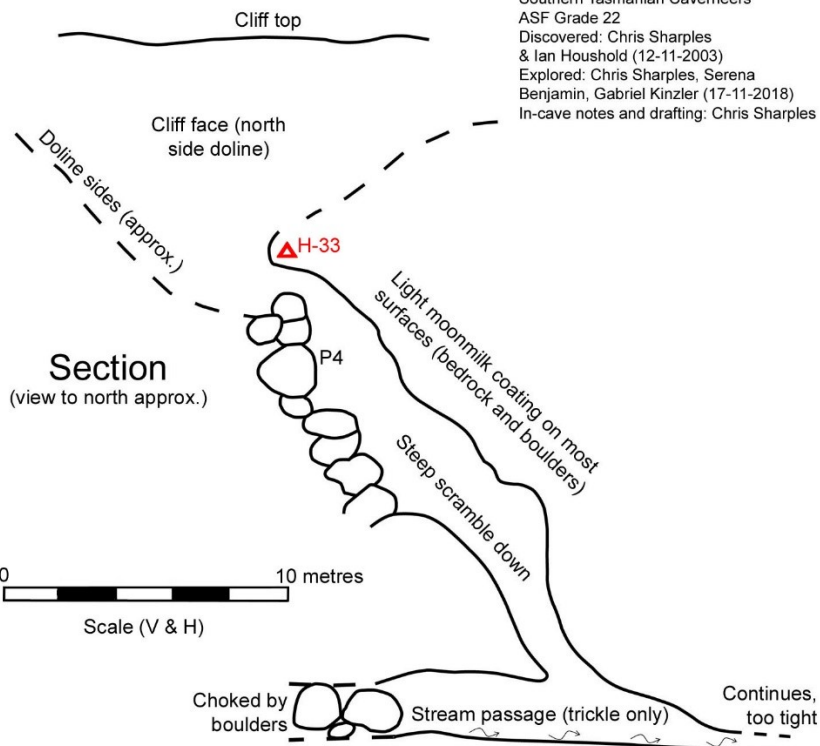
H-35 Downward Slide

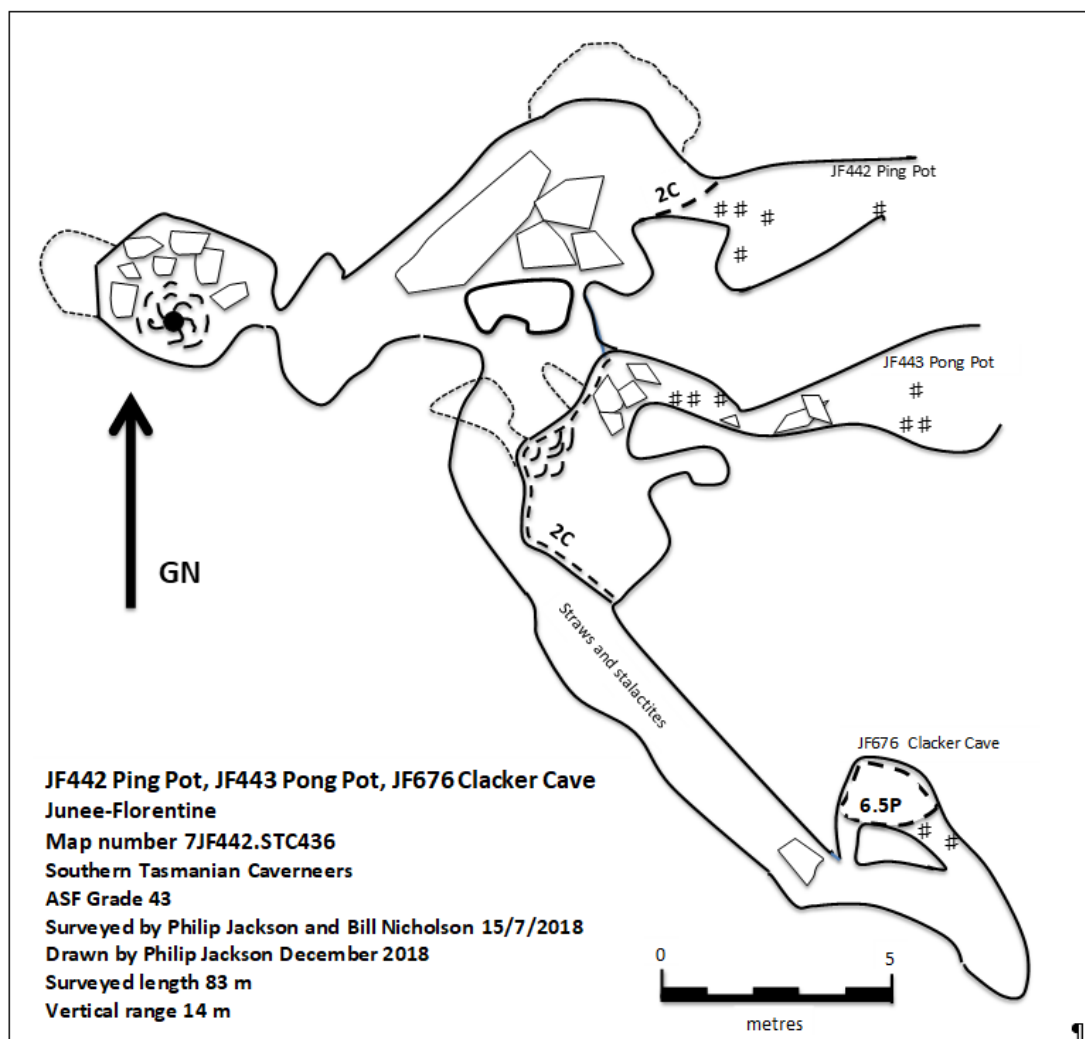
Hastings, Tasmania
7H35.STC459
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers
ASF Grade 22
Discovered Serena Benjamin (17-11-2018)
Explored Serena Benjamin, Chris Sharples,
Anna Ekdahl, Gabriel Kinzler (17-02-2019)
In-cave notes and drafting: Chris Sharples



H-33 Disappointments Lair

Hastings, Tasmania
7H33.STC458
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers
ASF Grade 22
Discovered: Chris Sharples
& Ian Houshold (12-11-2003)
Explored: Chris Sharples, Serena
Benjamin, Gabriel Kinzler (17-11-2018)
In-cave notes and drafting: Chris Sharples





Letters to the Editor

Janine,

I'm just catching up on some back-issue reading and I noticed that you said, on p. 13 of *Spiel* 426:

"Presumably there was an earlier form of Spiels however our archive starts at the first issue of this new series. - Ed"

I'm sorry I didn't get to proof-read that one or I would have been able to alert you to the fact that the STC Archive does contain the earlier or original *Spiels*. (You have to look in the "TCC Pubs" folder.) I know as I scanned them and re-set them myself. They are contained in a document which is in the Archive as "TCC Circulars Nov47-Mar66". As you'll see if you examine this, TCC was pretty casual about what it called its newsletter in the early days. Many were called "Circular" but some were just headed "Tasmanian Caverneering Club". One in Nov. 1960 is actually headed "Newsletter", and then "Tasmanian Caverneering Club" (I had to draw attention to that slip with a [sic]). In December 1960 they published the first "*Speleo Spiel*", to be followed by 5 more. With No. 7 in March 1962 they seem to have forgotten the name and just called it "*The Circular of*

Tasmanian Caverneering Club" again. In May they published another *Circular No. 7* and then in June they didn't even bother to call it a circular and forgot about numbers altogether. Some issues didn't even carry a date so I had to do my best to guess when they appeared - they were not necessarily every month.

In April 1966 it appears new editors took over: Mrs. J. Brabon & Mrs. T. Goede. They resurrected the title "*Speleo Spiel*" and - very correctly - indicated that they had started a new series. I suppose they felt they could not continue the original numbering as the use of the name had been discontinued and even then they may not have known how many *circulars* had been issued and they had become very irregular. The publication carried the letters "N.S" up to No.6 but from No. 7 they dropped the reference to the fact it was a new series. I doubt anyone has referred to it up to your mention in 2018.

Greg Middleton

The editor replies: Well done Greg! What a mess-around. Thank you for taking the time to sort this out, and tell me.

This correspondence is in a similar vein to "Letters to the Editor" so I think it appropriate to place here - Ed.



Australian Speleological Federation
31st Conference
30 December 2018—4 January 2019
Devonport, Tasmania
PO Box 315
Launceston 7250

March 15, 2019

■
■
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

Chris Sharples, Secretary

Dear Chris,

On behalf of the organising committee for the Australian Speleological Federation's 31st conference *The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania*, I would like to thank you and your club for your support. With over 130 registrants over the week and most travelling from the mainland, the conference was a huge success. Participants had many and various opportunities to engage with local tourism activities and outdoor experiences that Tasmania has to offer both during and after the conference held in Devonport.

One of our goals from the outset was to highlight aspects of the North West Coast and the rest of Tasmania and to schedule events to ensure registrants would enjoy themselves. Without local support this would have been very difficult.

We trust that STC members who did attend had a great time: some of them certainly got very dirty during the speleosports and acquitted themselves well on the prusik challenge!

Your club member's assistance with pre & post conference caving was very appreciated. \$200 has been deposited into your account (rope usage/new equipment) as a token of our appreciation. Please advise Treasurer Russell Fulton of this, as I do not have his contact details.

We hope to work with you in future if such an event occurs again but expect in approximately 12 years' time this will be STC's turn.... with our assistance!!!

Many thanks,

Dave Wools-Cobb

OUR BRIEF SPOT IN THE MEDIA GLARE

A brief report was posted on our Facebook page announcing the connection by Stephen Fordyce

The Niggly trip was a spectacular success. Day 1 of 4, the dive connected Niggly to Growling Swallet, and set a new Australian cave depth record of about 395 m. The loop closure error in the connection looks to be a mere 36 m over 5 km!! Days 2 and 3, 1 km of new dry cave was found and surveyed at base level (500 m of underwater and beyond-sump passage also surveyed).

A whole day was dedicated to pushing the (dry) top end of the Business Class Lounge with no luck, but the way on towards Porcupine was found via a horrible sump, 100 m of lovely streamway passage ("Bossland") and a beckoning final sump. Fantastic effort by the entire team: Steve, Alan, Gabriel, Stefan, Serena, Fraser, Petr, Pat, Rolan and Chris.

The Monday after the trip saw a media storm the likes of which none of us had ever experienced. This day will also forever be remembered as "the day Alan's package went viral" (*If you don't understand what this comment refers to then just look at the group photo in the media releases below - Ed*).

An excessively detailed trip report will follow in a later *Spiel*.



You know you've made it when the cartoonist gets involved. The popular club vote has Gabriel on the left and Alan on the right. He must know Alan judging by the dry wit displayed. For the benefit of the far future, there is currently much debate about how high buildings in Hobart and Launceston may be. - Ed

Articles appeared in newspapers and a few radio and TV interviews were given. Below is some of the print media.

All public media can be found here;

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/l2rd1gpvx8wvqyb/AADSIdPj7KsqqgjAmI73dZUAa?dl=0>

All media have been placed in the club archive - Ed

THE NATION

THE AUSTRALIAN,
TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2019
theaustralian.com.au

5

Deepest delight as cavers end quest with record



Stephen Fordyce, left, Serena Benjamin, Gabriel Kinzler, Alan Jackson, Stefan Eberhard and Fraser Johnston, members of the caving team that set a record for Australia's deepest cave

MATTHEW DENHOLM
TASMANIA CORRESPONDENT

A group of cavers has set a record for Australia's deepest cave, and achieved a decades-long quest to connect two of Australia's deepest abysses.

The team of 10, linked to the Southern Tasmania Caverneers, claimed the feats during an expedition to find a link between the Niggly and Growling Swallet cave systems, Australia's deepest and fourth-deepest caves respectively.

Their expedition involved camping in caves near Mount Field National Park, northwest of Hobart, for four days, in a major logistics effort.

By proving the two systems were linked, they established a record for the deepest cave in Australia, 395m, beating the previous proved depth of 389m at Niggly.

However, the expedition leader, cave diver Stephen Fordyce, said the depth record was a "technicality", achieved by using the highest point of Niggly and the deepest of Growling Swallet.

The team saw the greater achievement as connecting the two cave systems, a quest of cavers for decades.

"One of Australia's most perplexing underground puzzles has been solved," Mr Fordyce said.

The group spent about seven hours just lowering gear into the cave.

"We abseiled 250m on ropes and then went across a waterfall on a flying fox, which we had previously rigged up," Mr Fordyce said.

"I then went off and did a pretty lonely and scary dive for 100 minutes. I had to follow the cave underwater — essentially negotiating a maze underwater, while laying guide lines so I could find my way out — to find where the passage connected into the other cave.

"The dive was horizontal for about 250m ... I picked a left wall and followed that a lot of the time.

"Then at times it would get too tight and so you have to go back and around. There were a couple of really low restrictions where I wasn't sure I could get through and I had to really wriggle."

The moment of meeting up with the other cave system, proving they were connected, was special. "It was pretty cool because four years before I did a dive from the other direction and left a guide line there," Mr Fordyce said.

"So I was able to swim up and see the guide line that I put in four years ago, and tie the new guide line to the old guide line and put a marker saying: 'This is the connection point.'"

PICTURES: STEFAN EBERHARD

The cave rock pile known as Mount Niggly looms over the expedition's base camp

MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday 26 May 2019

Explorers break record for Australia's deepest cave



Left Photo team members left to right. Stephen Fordyce, Serena Benjamin, Gabriel Kinzler, Alan Jackson, Stefan Eberhard and Fraser Johnston (Photo – Stefan Eberhard)

Right photo, Diver Stephen Fordyce (Photo - Stewart Donn)

Over the weekend a team of elite explorers set a new record for Australia's deepest cave, taking the underground passage to a depth of 395m.

Cavers from the Hobart-based club Southern Tasmanian Caverneers (STC) spent four days camping underground in Mount Field National Park to connect the Niggly Cave and Growling Swallet cave systems – Australia's deepest and fourth-deepest caves, respectively.

Expedition organiser and cave diver Stephen Fordyce, who was nominated to dive through more than 200 metres of unmapped, flooded cave passages to break the record, said explorers have spent decades searching for a link between the two cave systems.

"One of Australia's most perplexing underground puzzles has been solved," Mr Fordyce, 32, said.

"This discovery is the result of the combined work of generations of cavers in Tasmania, and wouldn't have been possible without a huge team effort."

The caves are part of the Junee-Florentine system, which is home to more than 600 caves and more than 50 kilometres of explored underground passages to date.

STC Vice President and cave scientist Dr Stefan Eberhard said ongoing cave exploration was not only important for building scientific knowledge, but also for better environmental protection.

"The Junee-Florentine caves contain features of great cultural, scientific and conservation value, including archaeological heritage sites, unique species of cave-adapted fauna, bones of extinct megafauna and ancient sediments deposited during glacial periods," Dr Eberhard said.

Divers set record in cave link discovery



TEAMWORK: Gabriel Kinzler and Alan Jackson were part of a group of explorers who set a record for Australia's deepest cave dive, going to a depth of 395m in Mt Field National Park. Inset: Stephen Fordyce high-fives the team after a successful connection.

Picture: STEFAN EBERHARD

DAVID KILICK and SHAUN McMANUS

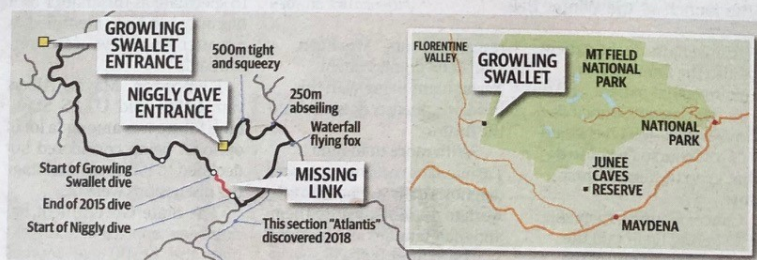
A GROUP of cave divers has set a new record in the process of discovering a link between two of Australia's deepest caves in Mt Field National Park.

The team from the Hobart-based club Southern Tasmanian Caverneers established an Australian-record cave depth of 395m as they found a connection between the Niggly Cave and Growling Swallet cave systems — Australia's deepest and fourth-deepest cave systems.

They spent four days camped underground during the just-completed expedition.

Expedition organiser and cave diver Stephen Fordyce said explorers have spent decades searching for a link between the two cave systems.

"The really exciting thing for us is making the connection



between two already giant and significant cave systems," Mr Fordyce said.

"People have known that they would connect for decades, but actually doing it is the hard bit."

He said the record was achieved on a technicality.

"We've achieved [395m] by taking the lowest point from Growling Swallet and the highest point of Niggly," Mr Fordyce said. "Connecting the caves together, we've set a record, but

we didn't actually go to the deepest point."

Mr Fordyce dived through more than 200m of unmapped, flooded cave passages to find the link. He said it was "pretty technical" work, with a lot of planning involved.

Mr Fordyce said the discovery of the connection was the result of the combined work of generations of cavers in Tasmania, and wouldn't have been possible without a huge team effort. The caves are

part of the Junee-Florentine system, which is home to more than 600 caves and more than 50km of explored underground passages to date.

"Caves are unpredictable, underground obstacle courses — you have little idea what's coming next and you need to have the skills to handle whatever they throw at you," Mr Fordyce said.

STC vice-president and cave scientist Stefan Eberhard said ongoing cave exploration

was not only important for building scientific knowledge, but also for better environmental protection.

"The Junee-Florentine caves contain features of great cultural, scientific and conservation value, including archaeological heritage sites, unique species of cave-adapted fauna, bones of extinct megafauna and ancient sediments deposited during glacial periods," Dr Eberhard said.

"Exploration of these caves is far from complete and much more of this complex and extraordinary puzzle remains to be discovered."

The team included Stephen Fordyce (push diver), Alan Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler, Stefan Eberhard, Serena Benjamin, Fraser Johnston, Petr Smejkal, Patrick Eberhard, Chris Sharples, Rolan Eberhard.

A documentary is being made about the expedition.

Cave dive record set at 395 metres

BY ADAM HOLMES

WITH the support of an expert Tasmanian cave diving team, elite diver Stephen Fordyce has dragged, squeezed, swam and eventually pushed himself to a new Australian cave diving record in the state's south.

At the same time, the team confirmed a passage between Australia's deepest cave, Niggly Cave, and the fourth-deepest, Growling Swallet Cave system, about 395 metres below the surface.

The Southern Tasmanian Caverneers spent four days camping underground in Mount Field National Park and emerged on Sunday having completed the daring feat and exploring kilometres worth of new passages.

Mr Fordyce said, connecting the two cave systems was the culmination of generations of exploration by cave divers.

"It threw a few curve balls and there were a couple of



PREPARATION: Stephen Fordyce attempts a dive in Niggly Cave. Picture: Stefan Eberhard

points where it wasn't obvious where it went, a few low flat sections that I had to squeeze through, and a section that I had to walk over with my dive gear," he said.

"We knew there was a fair bit of water going through so there was a chance a person could fit through."

Mr Fordyce left guidelines

on the far point of the Growling system four years ago, and around Christmas last year they found a section on the Niggly side that appeared to run in a perfect line between the two.

All it needed was for someone to dive the Niggly side and connect the guidelines together.

The caves are part of the Junee-Florentine system, which contains archaeological sites of extinct megafauna, glacial sediments and unique cave-adapted fauna species.

Mr Fordyce said there was always more exploration to complete and the team looked forward to their next significant dives.

Court eviction decision appealed

A SUPREME Court decision which saved a long-term social housing resident from being evicted into homelessness has been appealed before the Full Court.

Housing Tasmania appealed the 2018 decision of Justice Gregory Geason, which effectively meant all public housing tenants would have to be provided with reasons for their eviction and an opportunity to remedy any breach, on Monday.

The case centres around social housing resident Gregory Parsons, 55, who was served a Notice to Vacate his home of 10 years in 2017.

The court heard Housing Tasmania refused to give Mr Parsons any reason for his lease not being extended and, despite being made aware this eviction would make him homeless, Housing Tasmania did not review the decision.

Mr Parsons, who was eligible for social housing due to an intellectual impairment, had previously extended his lease a total of 14 times without issue.

Representing the Director

of Housing in the appeal, Solicitor Michael O'Farrell told the court all landlords have the right to file a notice in accordance with the Rental Tenancy Act to gain possession of their property.

"It's all very well to say there were 14 extensions, the issue is - what were the contractual obligations between the parties?" Mr O'Farrell said.

"The lease had expired."

Barrister Ron Merkel, who represented Mr Parsons, said the context of the Mr Parsons' case needed to be taken into account.

Mr Merkel said, although Housing Tasmania's right to evict Mr Parsons on the basis of his lease expiring may be a genuine reason, it was not just because there were no reasons provided to him as to why he was evicted and because this would cause him to become homeless.

If evicted, Mr Parsons had a "very remote" chance of getting another tenancy through Housing Tasmania, Mr Merkel said.

The Full Court reserved its decision and was adjourned.

— EMILY JARVIE



Stefan Eberhard with Reporters. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler



*Above top, Stephen Fordyce dressed up for the TV.
Above, from left: Gabriel Kinzler, Leon Compton (ABC Radio), Stephen Fordyce.
Photos: Gabriel Kinzler and ABC*



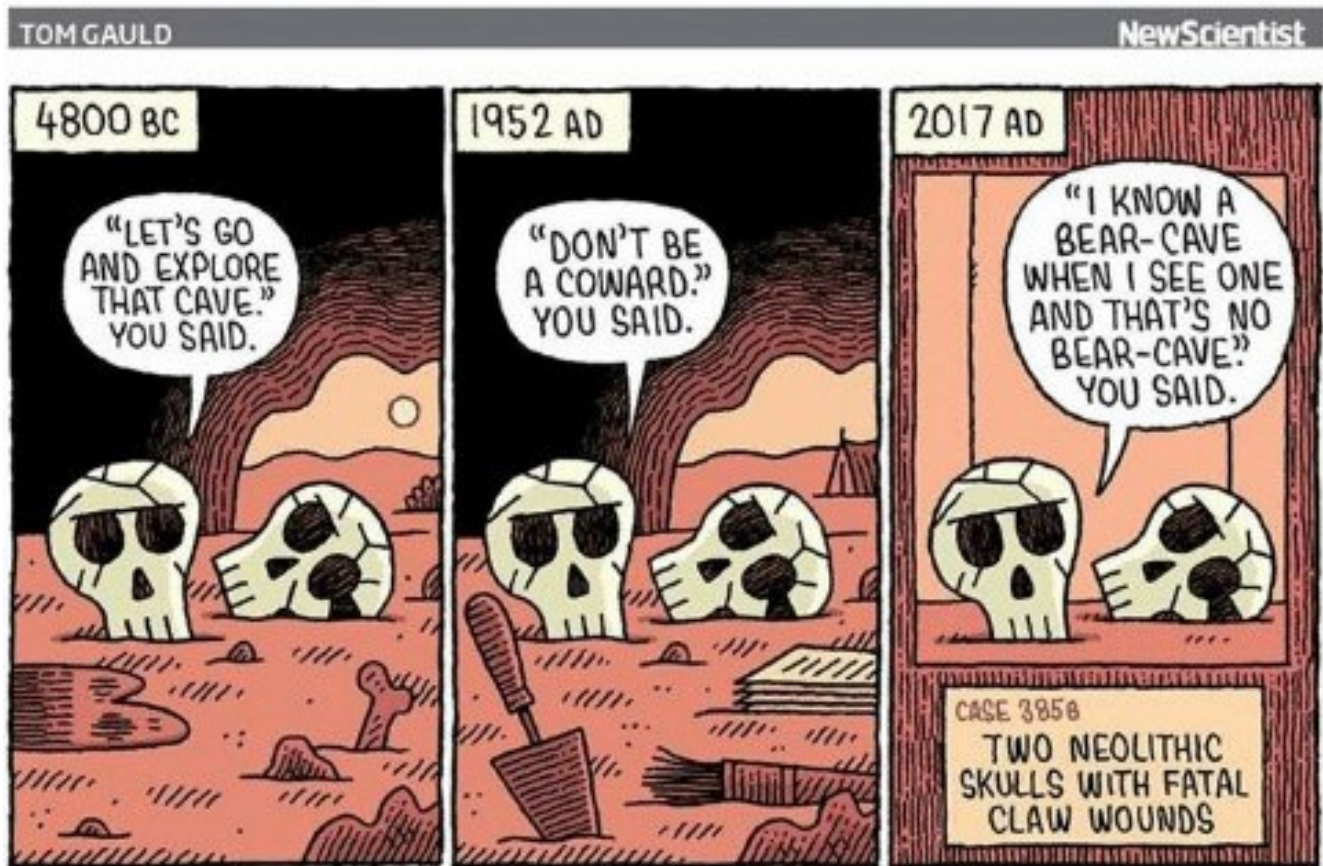
Above: Stephen Fordyce (left) in the studio with Leon Compton

Below: Stephen Fordyce doing some sort of media video!



Photos: Gabriel Kinzler

Fun and Diversions



FROZEN MOMENTS IN CLUB HISTORY

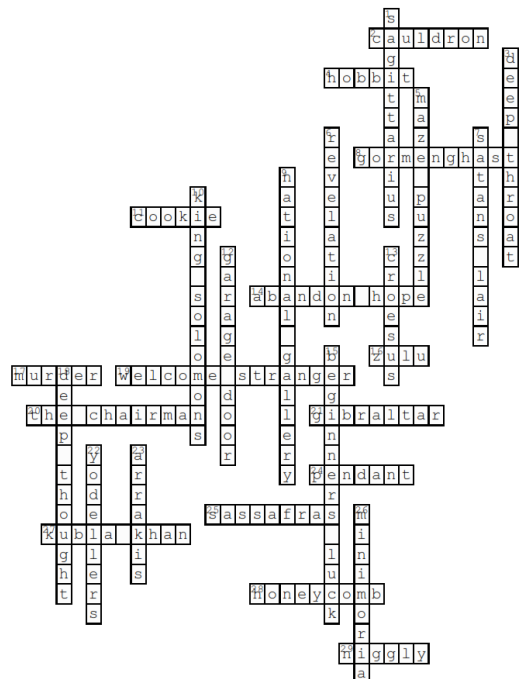


JF-389 Snow Person Pot. 1982.

The naming for this cave is confusing. There are two trip reports for the same trip; the first, by Stuart Nicholas, implies the cave is to be named Snow Person Pot (SS180: 4), but the second, by Rolan Eberhard, clearly names it Snow Man Pot (SS180: 4-5). The database has it as Snow Person Pot. Photo: Stefan Eberhard.

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.

Tasmanian Caves



Answers to last issues crossword. Due to my trickiness I doubt many got it correct. Then I doubt many tried! Complaints to The Editor will soon see how frustrated anyone was (in the form of an entertaining Letter to the Editor).

The Last Page

