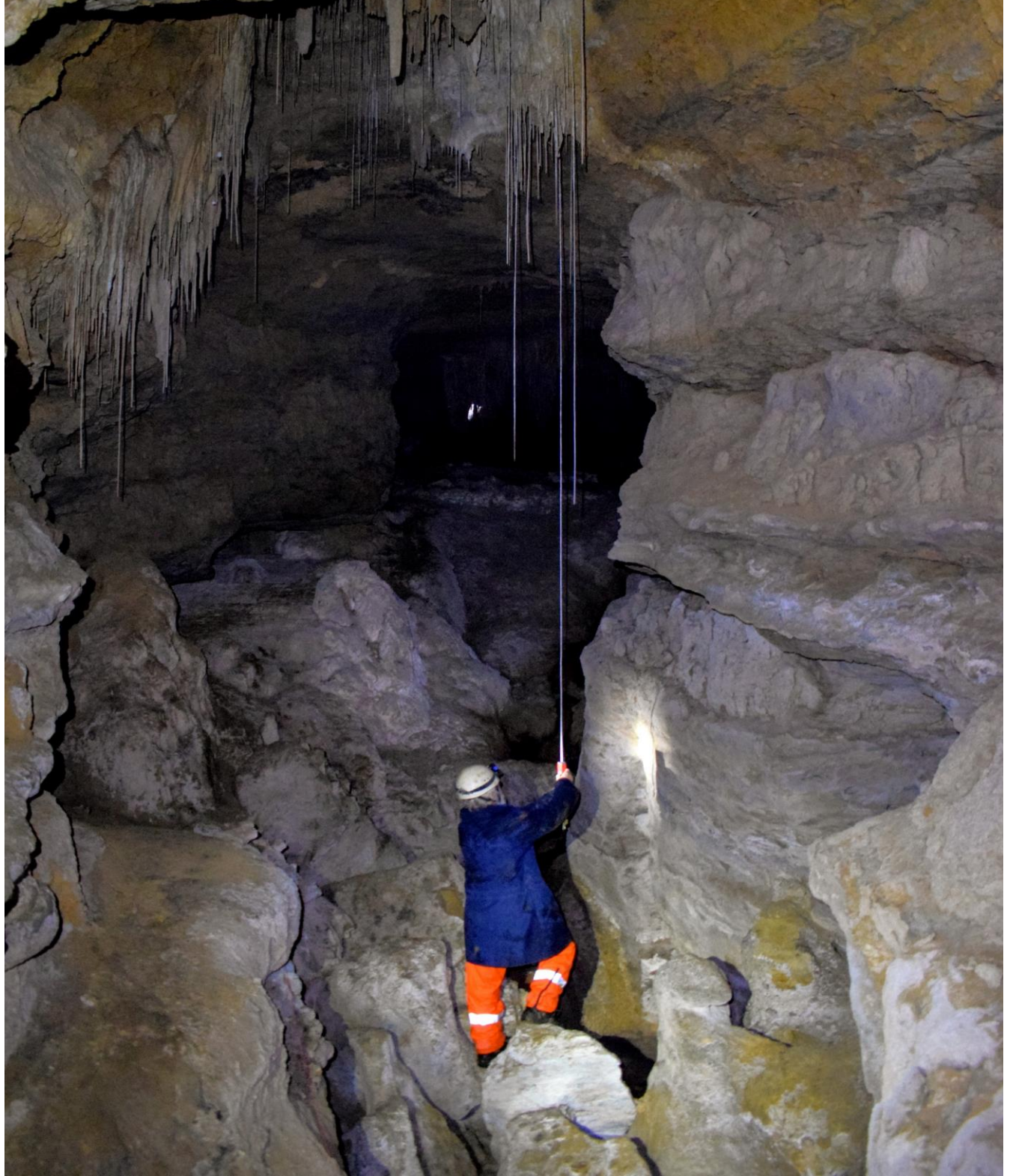


Speleo Spiel 435

November-December 2019



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Front Cover: *Paul Darby measuring the big straw in Philrod Cave with a Disto*

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Back Cover: *Hickmania and egg sack, Mt Cripps. [I couldn't pass on using such a great shot –Ed.]*

Photo: Yoav Bar-Ness

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

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Editorial

Another caving year is rapidly approaching its end. It has possibly not been as active a year for the club as some other recent years, but having both the JF and IB areas, our primary caving regions, closed for much of last summer had quite an effect on our endeavours. A wet winter has further reduced caving opportunities, or maybe that was just enthusiasm by many of us to get seriously soaked. On that note, there is an interesting (I could say amusing, but that would be cruel) account in a Niggly trip report in this issue of what happens to “Camp Niggly” when the rain falls particularly enthusiastically. I had to turn my “empathy circuit” off when I read that one. What a miserable afternoon that must have been.

Still, summer is ahead of us, even if it doesn't look that way as I write this. There are several caving projects that will be continuing over the summer, and hopefully lots of fun caving trips, plus new projects and explorations that will add to the mix. So, get out there and go caving. I might even be inspired to follow my own advice.

Summer is a good time of the year for beginners' trips, so that the poor newbies don't suffer too much, and get hooked into caving before the masochism really kicks in. It would be good if people ran some trips. As I'm sure I've said before, beginners now are the insurance for the club's future.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you all in 2020.

Stuff 'n' Stuff

- The first of the movies about the Thai Cave Rescue is about to hit our screens: *The Cave*. Here is a trailer: <https://tinyurl.com/y3vk9gwm>. It made its world premiere at the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) in Busan, South Korea, on 5 Oct, 2019. For a fuller report, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/yxgix9cd>. I wonder how many more movies on this theme will be coming out in the next year, and will they have monsters?

- On the same theme, Richard Harris and Craig Challen have had their joint book on the rescue published. It is their personal experience and perspective on the event. A book review will be coming in the next *Spiel*.

Australian Cave Animal of the year 2019.

At the 2019 Convention of the National Speleological Society in the USA, the sticker received a merit award and the Caver's Choice award in the Symbolic Emblem Salon. Our poster and bookmark duo received Best of Show in the Posters, Postcard. Brochures division of the Graphic Arts Salon.

In Tasmania, the poster won two awards in the Print categories of recent the Diemen Awards, these being for 'Embellishment' and 'Commercial Items' and was a contender for the Grand Diemen Award for Print. How's that for helping to promote cave animals!

Thanks to graphic designer Kelly Eijdenberg (Poco People) and illustrator Sam Lyne for their creative efforts.

Cathie Plowman

International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK)

This will be the biggest and most important speleological event ever. The purpose of the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) is to teach the world about the importance of caves and karst. Public understanding and support of caves and karst is currently very limited.

The International Union of Speleology (UIS) has declared 2021 as the IYCK in a major effort to make the world aware of how caves and karst are valuable to all people. To make this possible, the UIS is calling on all its member countries and other organizations to begin planning a series of public lectures, programs, demonstration of techniques, and other activities for 2021.

The IYCK website is now open at <http://www.iyck2021.org/>.

More details about the IYCK are described in the December 2018 *UIS Bulletin* (<http://www.uis-speleo.org/downloads/uis-bulletins/uisb602.pdf>). They will be updated in the next issue of the *UIS Bulletin*, to be posted around the end of this year. Updates will also be sent through this and other e-mail lists. If you have questions, suggestions, or want to offer assistance, contact us!

George Veni, PhD, Executive Director, National Cave and Karst Research Institute (NCKRI) and President, International Union of Speleology (UIS)

- Erratum:** In the article in SS 434, p 4, by Sharples and Kinzler - **Hastings: Introducing 'H-11 Big Mama' – A new depth record?** a reference to a previous article was quoted as being on page 6 in SS 433. This should have been page 6, SS 432.
- Arthur Clarke** and **Siobhan Carter** were married at Francistown on 29 October. Congratulations to you both.
- Alan Green, a mainland caver who works in TV production, has put together a video for public viewing to encourage young folk to join a caving club. It is aimed at a mainland audience, with quite a bit of canyoning, but it also contains a lot of Tassie footage taken at the ASF conference in Devonport in January this year. It is a professional piece, and very enticing, I think. He wishes it to be viewed widely so download it, have a look, and send it off to anyone you think might find it useful to get some younger blood into the caving scene. If STC is any example God knows, we need it.



<https://youtu.be/KwvaezmX4w>

Trip Reports

JF– 237: Niggly Aborted Bossland Dive Trip

25-28 July 2019

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Stephen Fordyce, Gabriel Kinzler

Alan has already done his usual excellent job of reporting on almost everything on this trip, and this was published in *Speleo Spiel* 434. This report is intended to detail some additional things.

The Great Flood III

The first major flood event (“Lake Niggly”) was back in July 2016, where Petr was unable to get off the rope on the Black Supergiant Pitch due to flooding. The aftermath of the second was discovered in December 2018 by a party of NSW cavers including Al Warild – camp had been at least partly washed away sometime since the previous trip (March, 2018) although some things had been above high water mark. The recent flood appears the highest by a long way, and is theorised to have been caused by a belt of heavy rain in the weeks before the trip. The trip before the flood (inc. discovery of Wish You Were Here) was only a month before!

Gabriel and I arrived at the base of the pitches and suspected there might have been a flood. The gear cache on the top of the rockpile (labelled C19B) was damper than expected, and we only noticed later that the blue drybag of aid climbing gear was gone (found at the head of the gully which the final rope descends into). Later examination also showed a small green leaf right on the top of the survey station cairn, indicating flooding up to this point. More leaves on the walls were observed but it was hard to tell the maximum flood height (the water level line on Mt Niggly is a better indicator).

From the Niggly survey, station C19B submerging represents a flood 21.7 m above normal:

- DIY Sump Water level: 392 m ASL
- Camp Niggly: ~406 m ASL
- C19B station: 413.7 m ASL (so 21.7 m above DIY sump tie-off)
- Mt Niggly summit: 437 m ASL

A layer of slippery mud coated the dip leading down and up towards Mount Niggly, and we both fell over multiple times. Coming down the far side of Mount Niggly an ominous high tide line of foam was apparent, and it was soon obvious that EVERYTHING at camp was gone. So, our afternoon plans of doing other things soon became a game of seeing whether we could find enough stuff in reasonable condition to prevent aborting the trip. It took several hours, but surprisingly, everything vital was still present and serviceable, despite being lifted by the water and deposited all over the large chamber. Drybags containing sleeping bags remained perfectly sealed for Alan and me (with minor leaks for Gabriel). Great success.

Another great success was that all traces of our presence at the campsite (footprints, steps, etc.) were obliterated. Annoying for us, but a good indicator that the campsite appears not to be having a long-term impact on the cave.

Yet another great success was the discovery of the “Secret Side Passage” when I was searching for gear. It looks like a dead-end fissure passage with a mud floor, but is worth another look and a survey.

A final puzzling aspect of the great flood was how everything ended up in such diverse places, with the bulk being distributed in clumps:

- A) Much large camping gear left on the slopes of Mt Niggly was lifted and pushed into cracks on the southwest side of Mt Niggly.
- B) Much large camping gear left on the slopes of Mt Niggly was lifted, carried right across the chamber and deposited throughout the large side tunnel which sits above camp level, on the opposite side of the chamber.
- C) Food, stoves, etc. left at the campsite were deposited in the large side tunnel.

(These are marked on the sketch later in this report, which also details other features around the chamber.)



Gear floating in a perched lake in The Side Passage

Very few items were found in/around either Le Pissoir or the Pissoir Streamway (the discovery of which will be explained later). A smattering of small items was found higher up around the slopes of Mt Niggly.

The similar origin but polar opposite finish of the A) and B) groups was perplexing. The traversing across the obvious “plughole” of Le Pissoir equally so (indeed the side passage was checked as a desperate last gasp and yielded nearly half the treasure to our great relief). Perhaps at this level of flooding, only the water at the bottom is impacted by the flow, and the surface flows are very subtle.

The end of the side passage was a lake approximately waist-deep with a few things still floating in it. There were other lakes on the north/east side and gear strewn all along. Normally the side passage is dry, with a trickle of water falling at the end. Perhaps a flowing waterfall could create a surface current towards the end of the side passage.

The passage of the A) group seems reasonably logical – some kind of weak overflow stream going around the west side of Mt Niggly provided the driving force.

I have a considerable amount of GoPro footage showing exactly where things were found, it can be made available to anyone interested.



The Side Passage had a deep lake at the end

The Aborted Bossland Sump Dive

After establishing that we would indeed be staying, the dive gear was to be portaged to the sump and set up for the next day. We arrived at the DIY Streamway to find water levels 30 cm higher and rather more lively than usual. This was concerning after we'd carefully looked at the forecasts and thought it would be pretty right. It wasn't looking good, but fins and reels were left at the sump after a sporting wade, and cylinders were rigged but left high up the bank "just in case".

The next morning, I bid the others farewell and discovered the DIY Streamway to be about 80 cm higher than usual. The gear left at the sump was inaccessible and anyway there was no way diving was a good idea. The faffing of the night before was reversed and the dive gear de-rigged, I got changed out of my wetsuit into caving clothes, and after a wistful look at the sleeping bags, went off to do something useful.

By that evening, water levels had dropped to 40 cm higher than usual and I was able to retrieve the dive gear from the sump. On the plus side, most of it now didn't have to be carried out!

Tidying Up Mt Atlantis Leads

Figuring that trying to find the others in a section of the cave I (and possibly nobody) had ever visited was a futile exercise, I left a note for them at the entrance to Gotcha and headed for Mt Atlantis. Worthy jobs being the climb (Cerces Tower) and pitch (Tywins End) Petr and Serena had rigged on the re-rig trip in April 2019. These needed various rigging, surveying and derigging.

The Tywins End pitch near, but under the summit of Mt Atlantis was surveyed, sketched and derigged (nothing left). I agreed with the previous assessment that there didn't seem to be any prospect here.

The Cerces Tower climb was a bit more difficult. Cerces Tower is the balcony with stream coming down from it. You look up about 5 m to it from marked station SP125, where the drop along the northern wall goes down the House Baratheon pitch and to the Game of Thrones section. The upward passage from the balcony continues with the small

stream, but it's a ~5 m climb and then another ~8 m by the looks of it. Another bloody up lead written off for now.

The in-place rigging was a bit too scary – I've been spending too much time with Alan I think – but I made it up without dying, did the survey/sketching and then wondered how on earth to get down. Well there is a scary ledge traverse (with a squeeze through a window) that takes you back around to SP126. Suddenly some of the conversations I'd had about this made more sense! There is only a 0.5 m gap to get across to the ledge, but it's awkward and a 5 m drop below, so I left a short rope in place – SRT kit recommended. It's just lassoed around a giant lump of rock – pretty bombproof but use at your own risk.



Mostly-dry sleeping bag: for the win!

More Cave Improvements – DIY Streamway Access

All that tidying took a while, but there was time left in the day and no sign of the others. I updated the note for the others, went back past camp to check the DIY Sump and collect the dive gear and got side-tracked making the main squeeze bigger. A delightful hour or two of grunting and swearing followed, before I was satisfied.

There are ways to get to the streamway much closer to camp (dashed in on my sketch accompanying this report) – we really must re-find and survey these again at some point. It might make getting water a whole lot easier.

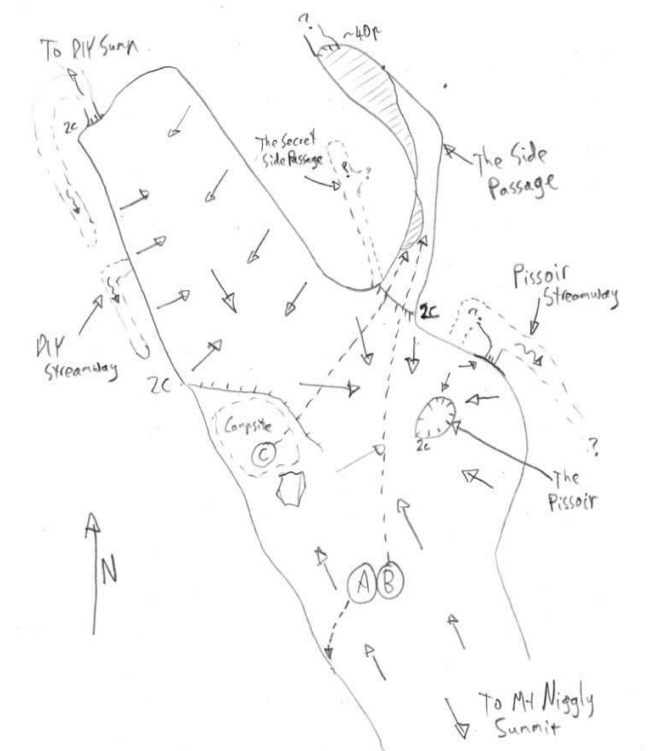
Discovery of the Pissoir Streamway

With the dive gear packed away and stashed above the high **tide** mark on Mt Niggly, this was an opportunity to find a way down to the dratted stream that we could hear from camp with the higher water levels. I've been down in Le Pissoir a few times (after floods!) and a few leads peter out into rockpile with a streamway audible. But if you follow the lowest part of the main chamber to the wall, there is (was) a choked slot which goes down to the sound of water. It took some squeezing and rock-shifting, but I made it down into a big block-filled but going streamway, with rough dimensions 1.5 m high and 3 m wide. Cool! The Pissoir Streamway! Perhaps we could collect water from here (perhaps not).

The amount of water looked similar to the DIY Streamway, but it was not a clean bottom, so hard to tell. A cursory look at upstream went to rockfall, downstream went maybe 40 m before I chickened out due to the water levels. Surveying and a better push were left for next time.

The obvious source of the Pissoir Streamway is the DIY Streamway, which would presumably cross the Camp Niggly chamber under Le Pissoir. The Pissoir Streamway

appears to skirt around the eastern edge of Mt Niggly and (at least hydrologically) link up with the as yet incompletely explored Undercroft Streamway (see report from the March 2018 trip in *Speleo Spiel* 428).



Camp Niggly Chamber and the Pissoir Streamway

However, I wonder if the DIY Streamway actually hugs the west wall, and the Pissoir Streamway is a new one... It should be easy to confirm this next trip.

Gallantry Sump Assessment

The Gallantry Sump is at the upstream end of a significant streamway passage in the Gotcha section, and although the description wasn't enticing, the testimony of an eyewitness diver was needed before it was properly written off. Thus, as a postscript to Day 3, Alan and I headed there (stupidly, without a dive mask). The streamway coming out of this sump is theorised to be from JF-398 Boulder Jenga.

From a passage of generous striding proportions, it was a 1 m belly crawl in shallow water to get to the bit where small underwater passage heads down at an angle, right at the furthest point of airspace. The floor is semi-cemented gravel and pebbles which would be moveable with motivation and equipment. I managed to get some reasonable GoPro footage of the sump and approach, including a still picture which is below. It seems to be a classic flow-against-gravity choke, with a gravel and silt bottom sitting at angle of repose, and dimensions dictated by constriction sufficient for the flow to push gravel uphill and out of the way. The lack of flow from the sump was a bit surprising considering the generally high flow conditions in the rest of the cave, but Alan reckoned the streamway at least was on par with the flow going into Boulder Jenga when we walked past it.

The sump dimensions were estimated at about 20 cm high x 70 cm wide (and that's probably being optimistic) for at least a metre before possibly opening up a bit. I'd personally be tempted to give it a go following a lengthy entrance enlargement session and a pair of 3L cylinders with a further

expectation of having to shift some gravel around while diving, and all the considerations that go with that. Or maybe a larger cylinder between my legs with a long hose to the regulator, and 3L sidemounted cylinder as backup. A bit desperate really – anyone contemplating it should definitely watch the GoPro footage before getting too excited.



Underwater in the Gallantry Sump

Nearby, The Gurgler apparently gives some indication of being a sump bypass for a slim and/or determined caver. This is still a chance, and subject to a few more pushing attempts.

Black River and Growling Swallet Surface Bashing Trip Report

17 August 2019

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Stephen Fordyce, Arantxa Gea Parreno, Tony Rooke, Djuke Velduis

After the excitement of the *Push Day* screening at TMAG the night before, a late start was made on caving activities. Our intention was to do a JF-337 Slaughterhouse Pot to JF-36 Growling Swallet through trip, with a detour to Black River, and even have a poke at Living Fossils if we had time (3 mm wetsuits and other useless paraphernalia were optimistically carried for such an eventuality).

Arantxa was an experienced caver originally from Spain, and after a few caving trips in Victoria, she was excited to see what Tassie had to offer (and with the exception of a few hours late on Saturday, she remained excited). Djuke and Tony were excited to be back, and I was excited to be doing something, anything other than Niggly. Armed with such excitement, the detailed instructions from Alan and Petr were only cursorily read and we blundered about looking for the Slaughterhouse Pot entrance for a silly length of time (none of us had been there) (*I do start to wonder if some people are just committed to replaying the same mistakes over and over...-Ed*).

We did find what is almost certainly JF-39, about 50 m upstream from the Growling Swallet entrance on the far bank – a significant doline with a ~6 m drop, to well below stream level. Tempting to see what's at the bottom at some point, less so after reading previous reports (See SS 197, SS 382). It appears to be at FOS5 survey station in the Growling survey.

I had a GPS, with an eye to recording locations and tracks in a nice package (there are no GPS locations in the STC archive for Slaughterhouse Pot, or any of the other nearby entrances), but 3 months later it makes no sense. A job to be done properly another time (the shame).

So, by the time all that was finished, we went underground at the well-tagged JF-337 entrance at about midday. After the hours (!) of traipsing about, Tony called CBF and enjoyed the nice weather, while the ladies and I got on with it. The trip down Slaughterhouse was reasonably uneventful; the rigging seemed good, although the logbook was full. Thanks to the notes, getting lost was brief and infrequent, although I'm glad we didn't have to try to find our way up through the rockpile.

Wow, Destiny was awesome, clean-washed meandering passage – in Alan's words "BYO skateboard". We found our way to Destiny Pitch and to our surprise it was rigged (with the rope coiled up at the top). I would estimate the rig requires 3 tapes, and a 45 m rope (10 m of which is access line). At least one of the tapes was labelled "2012", and the rope was white with red/blue/black (?) flecks. I think it was Edelrid 9.5 mm, and from the 2015 Coelacanth Sump dive trip report, it's probably Rolan's (but he doesn't remember it).

So, we left the clean rope we had brought and the drill (arrgh!) there and carried on – we left everything as found, and took out what we brought in. At the base of Destiny Pitch the obvious way hits a rockpile (and then turns left before dead-ending). It took much time and cursing before we decided the obvious pink tape back about 3 m from the terminal rockpile was in fact marking the way up a climb that was less dubious than it looked. A handline confirmed this was the way, and possibly another followed as we followed our noses and the directions to Black River Sump (which in 2014-15 become a roof sniff). The orange guideline was still in place and a stash of dive weights was left a bit further back. 4 x ~ 1.5kg threadable weights, 2 x ~ 0.5 kg block weights with clips (for line weighting). A coil of perhaps 20 m of unknown rope was nearby, matching the rope left at the pitch.



Dive weights stocktake.

Photo: Steve Fordyce

It had taken a long time to get to this point and we decided not to press on any further. GoPro recordings of the weights, coiled rope and rig were made – the plan will be to replace and bring them out next time. So, we made our way out along the "easier" main trade route, which I had at least traversed a couple of times, albeit on my first Tassie caving trips for the Dreamtime Sump dives in 2014-15.

The scary ladders and Windy Rift were as annoying as remembered, and Djuke and Arantxa concurred. We finally reached the main streamway to see that it was roaring (as expected), and that the mud floor at this point had further washed away so as to prevent us getting to the rope which Gabriel and Serena rigged previously. Both ends of this need to be secured to good points that will be accessible in future. I was able to bust some moves to retrieve the end of the rope, and then we fussed about having drill issues to partly install a concrete screw on the Windy Rift end to keep the tail of the rope handy. This definitely needs fixing. I think I left an orange tape in there as part of the rig. The main streamway side was in danger of collapsing more as well – I would suggest anyone contemplating a through trip consider a very real possibility they will have to turn around.

Home and hosed, we were back to the main streamway and on the home straight. Actually, we were yet to be either hosed or home – the hosing began as we found our way upstream. And the way was anything but straight. A couple of the committing bits were definitely not as I remembered, and with sheets of spray and pouring water, I wished for more light battery for route finding. (*The main flow pathway does change its route from time to time – Ed*). We were thoroughly doused and rather over it. Djuke managed to find a second wind when she realised that she'd actually been to this point before, and displayed some admirable British joviality, while Arantxa sensibly conserved energy and I tried to remember if the climbs really were meant to be that hard (they were).

In the end we made it out, and I hightailed it back to Slaughterhouse to pick up the GPS and the new STC SatText, to call off the cavalry, which Petr was soon to be sending in. All agreed it had been a character-building day, and at least 4 hours of sleep were required before another adventure the next day.

I better mention that we had checked the weather forecast, snow load, main entrance/gauge rock on the way past, and had consulted STC tribal elders before deciding to attempt the through trip in winter, and with high water levels. We also had more warm gear than usual in dry bags (as well as our wetsuits) in case we got stuck. The possibility of a long slog back to go up Slaughterhouse was planned for, but in retrospect this would have seen the party stretched to the limits of their endurance. (*Going up Slaughterhouse isn't as hard as you might think – Ed*). The combination of high water levels and lack of familiarity along the main streamway were time consuming and uncomfortable. It would have been far better to go in and out the same way on the day, to save time and energy on route finding on the way out.

JF-1 and JF-342

18 August 2019

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Stephen Fordyce, Arantxa Gea Parreno, Tony Rooke, Djuke Velduis

After the moderate epic in Growling Swallet the previous day, an easy Sunday was on the cards. I had wanted to check out JF-1 for a while and this was a good opportunity. JF-1 is at much lower altitude than most other entrances and well below the contact. It's also on relatively flat ground and has an impressive entrance. It had a terminal squeeze that might yield to an effort. A 15 minute (400 m) walk from the nearest road was the clincher.

Sadly, this turned into a 45 minute walk, as we parked at the JF-341 carpark and walked west through dense bracken and ferns. This cleared when we got close to the cave into much more open ground, so on reflection, walking north from the alternative road is likely to be a much better option. The GPS point I'd extrapolated from Rolan's Z-map was within 25 m and we found the cave easily – much respect.

We grabbed GPS points for both JF-1 and JF-342, these will be submitted to the STC Archive. The tag for JF-342 is on the ~80 cm diameter log lying across and we didn't even bother to enter, the cave looked very uninspiring. The country around however was really interesting – relatively flat with eroded limestone sticking out everywhere. It might well be worth looking around here for more caves. Neither cave looks like it takes anything resembling a stream.

Back at JF-1, a ~20 m rope was a very useful aid in the slippery entrance slope. At the bottom there was a lead to the left, and a tight squeeze to the right. To the left leads to a chamber, and then the way is back up behind, then over the chamber to a ~6 m pitch. The bottom of this pitch can be accessed from the lead at the right, which also gives access to a surprisingly long horizontal rift passage that dead-ends after a series of exciting climbs. From the base of the ~6 m pitch, a couple of squeezes and chambers head down to a diagonal slot which I elected not to free climb. At the base of this is apparently a squeeze that is the best prospect for continuation, if quite desperate.

There are upward leads and at least one daylight hole. Draft is present but confusing, and may relate to the daylight holes.

According to trip reports, Rolan is the last to have had a good poke here (in 1988, see SS 238, SS 241), and dropped down the diagonal slot. His descriptions, and the sketches/maps published with previous trip reports, were hard for me to reconcile before seeing the cave, but make a lot of sense now that I have. Huh, who would have thought it?

As a small but significant cave with an easy (hopefully) walk, it's an excellent candidate for a beginner survey/mapping project. I vaguely intend to get to it eventually, but if anyone else is interested, go for it, and/or let me know so we don't double up.

The rest of the day saw us exposed to no fewer than three separate games of the card game "Uno", obviously a sign that we should give the cave this name, figuring fair game if nobody's bothered to visit or write a trip report in 30 years,

let alone name it. Plus "Uno Pot" is a nice play on "you know what". However an objection was made that it was already named "JF-One" (SS 318), so if anyone has feelings either way, please feel free to make them known.

JF-442 & JF-443; Florentine Valley

29 September 2019

Bill Nicholson

Party: Serena Benjamin, Bill Nicholson, Callum Nicholson

The objective for this foray was largely to just have a jolly good time whilst introducing Serena to the area we call Pepper Pot Plateau. The plan was to do a through-trip, and to see if Serena remembered any of that section of cave that she and Ken Hosking visited, prior to a number of collapses, some years earlier (SS 373, p 6 & 7).

Serena, a.k.a. Spiderwoman, pushed one of the remaining leads in the upper level but that went nowhere, and we then completed the through-trip with ease. Callum attempted exiting JF-442 twice and fell both times, I looked on and decided "enough of this silliness" and we climbed out the way we came in (*so I'm guessing it wasn't far, going back retracing steps - Ed*), only to be confronted by Serena having a nap nearby, plunging both Callum and me deeper into the pit of unworthiness.

And no, alas, Serena didn't remember any of that section of cave, maybe it was the combination of the passage of time and the many collapses but we Nicholsons tend to think (that's an interesting word) that our level of intellectual conversation had a somewhat numbing effect on her.

No doubt, the highlight of the day was a wee tea party, with bone china cups, standing around our lunch log in the rainforest, under a tarp that we really should have moved a little more to escape the dribble - oops I mean drizzle.



Good manners and class always shine through.

Photo Bill Nicholson

Nice frock you got there, Gabriel

Cave Hill, Florentine Valley

20 October 2019

Bill Nicholson.

Frockers: Serena Benjamin, Gabriel Kinzler, Qug McKendrick-King, Bill Nicholson, Callum Nicholson

Well now, bugga me, don't know how to start here? The short version is that we spent some time in JF-442 & JF-443 and then frocked up and had a tea party. The longer version will have to wait for another time.



Who says STC has no style? Just about everybody...

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Mt Cripps

24-27 October 2019

Alan Jackson

Party: STC – Karina Anders, Yoav Bar-Ness, Serena Benjamin, Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Benjamin Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler. SRCC – Paul Darby, Lyndsey Grey. UTAS – Patrick (Paddy) Dalton

The annual pilgrimage happened again. As usual it proved to be more about plants than caves.



Hi Ho, Hi Ho, it's off through the forest we go

Photo: Yoav Bar-Ness

Thursday – punters dribbled in throughout the course of the day. Some scaled the mighty Mt Cripps that afternoon. Two new (to the locality) species of ferns were found in the buttongrass community on the upper flanks of Mt Cripps – *Lycopodiella diffusa* and *Lindsaea linearis*. Whoot! Paddy, who is a bryophyte (mosses and liverworts etc.) expert, found lots of mosses. Paddy was a lecturer of mine at UTAS and is responsible for kindling my interest in ferns.

Friday – weather looked ominous, but the rain mostly stayed away and only the wind was annoying. We stumbled down the hill to Xerxes (a cave) and had a stickybeak, then Ben, Paddy and I went moss hunting for the rest of the day while the others went to the 'White Giant', a massive *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* (or possibly *E. viminalis*) and scaled it using Yoav and his bag of tree-climbing toys. By all accounts it was a tad windy up the tree but a wonderful experience for those who've not savoured the delights of giant eucalypt canopies before. In the afternoon Yoav showed the rest of us his toys in some big trees nearby, but no climbing was done (dinner time intervened).



Anna Jackson adds SRT tree-climbing to her list of skills

Photo: Yoav Bar-Ness

Saturday – bloody cold and a bit wet (except for when it was hailing). The A-team went on a frogmarch to the big *E. obliqua*, then Philrod Cave then a lesson in horizontal scrub. Paddy, Lyndsey, the kids and I hunted bryophytes in the vicinity of the hut/road. I was happy to find lots of mature *Lycopodium fastigiatum* (which is a pteridophyte I'd thought I'd found last year but couldn't confirm due to lack of fertile material) – I can now put this species on the list with confidence.



Why go underground when you have such magnificent trees to view on the surface? Paul and Gabriel give some sense of scale

Photo: Yoav Bar-Ness

Sunday – Most of us had afternoon appointments in Hobart so we departed early Sunday (some left the night before). Nothing but commuting.



More Jackson family-affair caving. Photo: Alan Jackson

As usual, a massive thanks to Paul and Lyndsey for welcoming and guiding us. Once the bryophyte samples have been sorted and formally identified there'll be a comprehensive list published in *Speleopod* (Savage River Caving Club's journal). The gut feeling at the moment is we collected in excess of 100 different species. Quite amazing, since we never got more than 40 minutes' walk from T'Hut. There's more 'mossing' to be done further afield in the future.



And when the biggies fall you have to get over them

Photo: Yoav Bar-Ness



Alan's all about ferns here, so I'd better put a photo in.

Photo: Yoav Bar-Ness

Ben's time at the hut: Mt Cripps

24 - 27 October LWE

Benjamin Jackson (dictated to his Grade 1 teacher)

(This is so sweet. A 6-year-old's perspective. I think this might be the record for the youngest trip report author – Ed)

I went to Cradle Mountain with my dad, sister and a friend Patrick. I got bitten on the tummy by a leech. There was lots of blood. Then I fell over and hurt my knee.

I went to a cave and it was very small where we could go. It was very dark and there were some caution tapes where we wanted to go. There were five cave spiders. They were all girls. They were big. One of the cave spiders had two egg sacs.

It was reasonably cold in the cave. I thought we could live in this cave. There was a giant shelf where we could put food. We could sleep on the really soft moss and there was a hole for a spa that we could put water in and boil it so we could make it a spa.

My sister and all the other people went to the tallest tree in the forest and climbed it. But my dad said we could not climb it because it was too far away.



That was a big leech, or maybe just perspective on a small boy.

Photo: Alan Jackson

JF-237 Niggly – Crossing off The Gurgler

29 October 2019

Gabriel Kinzler

Party: Serena Benjamin, Gabriel Kinzler

Before the next big Niggly mission in December, a few of us were keen to get down there on a day-trip to do some maintenance and light pushing. Alan wanted to resume his P-hanging of the pitches, but eventually had to pike because of toxic work commitments. My own plan was to check that Camp Niggly hadn't flooded again, replace some camping gear and then show Serena the part of Gotcha she hadn't yet seen, and push The Gurgler (*see SS 433, p. 18*) with her help. Serena's plan was simply to have a nice day out.

A very dry Niggly allowed us to get there in record time and, after lunch at the junction with Gallantry Sump, Serena got to work. The Gurgler is a draughty rift inlet getting its name from the loud and unusual watery noise it makes. Unlike a waterfall or a drip, it sounds like bubbles popping on emergence. Gurgles. We wedged our way up in a duet, me offering her some knee and shoulder support as she progressed. I used my crowbar across both walls as a push/pull-up bar to ensure my own ascent behind her.

Soon though, Serena reached the point where Petr had previously stopped and bailed, noticing tightness and obstacles in the way. We reset everything and switched places as I was keen to launch one final assault. After some redecoration work of the upper, less narrow portion of the rift, I progressed to just 2 metres away from the end of the tight section, where it visibly and audibly reopens.

Alas, it really is just beyond what's classically acceptable to put yourself through: the sort of caving where you go all in, remove your helmet, stop using your eyes (because your sense of touch and proprioception are now way more efficient, and because your vision is dictated by what the wall graciously allows you to see, i.e. nothing) and commit your entire body to a position you're likely not coming out of under your own impulse. After a lot of pondering, I took the sober decision to file it under the "possible-if-your-life-depended-on-it" section and gave up.

If only we knew a smaller, thinner and capable caver, perhaps a kid between 8-13 years old, who could fit through more easily...



Mud obviously sticks to Gabriel more than Serena.

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Other Exciting Stuff

From the Archive

Speleo Spiel 335, March-April 2003

(note: all grammar and punctuation are verbatim, for verisimilitude)

This issue I thought I'd give you another taste of the joys of a Phil Rowsell trip report. This will bring back memories for many of you, and for those of you, dear readers, who were ever actually on a Phil trip, probably nightmares. I aim to please.

This is actually the first of many Little Grunt trips run over that summer. They left an indelible imprint on most attendee's memories (all Phil's trips certainly did for me), and night terrors for a time afterwards for some. This may activate PTSD for a few.

The series of reports from little Grunt trips continues in that issue, for any interested in follow-up reading.

Little Grunt (IB-23) - The Dawning of a New Era: 1st September 2002

By Madphil Rowsell

Party: Madphil Rowsell, Geoff Wise, Andras Galambos

Well I was finally back caving in Tassie!! It had also been nearly two weeks since I have been underground; a sad state of affairs. I had been glad of the break though as it had allowed my foot to have a rest which was good. A stone had dropped on it in Austria and it was still giving me trouble. Guess the bone had healed funny.

For the first trip, I didn't want to do anything epic, needed to break the Lads back in slowly. There was still a lot of snow on top of Mt Field so I wasn't too keen on doing another potential flood in trip in the Florentine like last time back!! Ida bay sounded good, but what?? In the end, we settled on Little Grunt, lots of small pitches (so fairly easy going) dropping into a large horizontal system. How this system fitted in with Exit Cave I didn't know, but certainly warranted further investigation. Some of the pitches were meant to be tight so it would be interesting to see.

The log book at Ida Bay was brand new and not a single entry. Guess these Tassie boys can't cope with the winter!! It was quite pleasant walking up the quarry, a fairly light rucksack and the knowledge that we didn't have an epic walk in front of us. None of us had been to Little Grunt before, but we knew it was somewhere in the valley down hill from the first log crossing. It was a bit of a laugh walking down as it is pretty steep and muddy so you were slipping all over the place. After a bit of routing around, we finally found the cave IB-23. I looked like a new boy when changing, new TSA, Helmet, fury and harness. All nice and shiny. I knew they wouldn't stay like that way for long!!

I headed in rigging with masses of gear. The precariously balanced boulder over the first pitch was a good reminder of Tassie caving and the fact that I would have to get my head back into natural rigging again. I had recently been used to hanging off bolts!! Lots of natural possibilities made rigging pretty easy, and deeper in the cave the odd spit was present. Most of the pitch heads were pretty open, a couple were a bit more awkward (especially when rigging them), but definitely not the nightmare I had been lead to believe. I actually found it quite enjoyable. Being the first time in the cave, it did take quite a long time to rig, the 13 pitches had

taken nearly 4 hours to rig!! Still would be a lot faster next time through.

I was stood at the bottom of the vertical part looking down at a narrow crack. You could see where the break through had been made. I dropped down and crawled through into a small stream way. A short squeeze passed a few straws in the roof and into a junction of a big steam passage. Wow, pretty impressive stuff, this was major development!. The river passage was fairly narrow with lots of formation, masses of cave coral. Some good straws too. We hit a couple of large break down chambers and then the cave really opened up into fairly sizeable passage similar to main drain in Exit Cave, but not quite as big. It would have been wild to have found this!! We continued following the stream on though a mixture of contrasting passage, massive stream way, and then crawling in water. There were also numerous side passages, with lots of small streams flowing in everywhere.

I should have looked at the survey of the cave before we headed down!! I wonder whether the cave has been fully surveyed and draw up etc. We pushed on passed a couple of really high avens with a lot of water coming in. Again I must check out where they are on surface!!. We really needed to have more time to have a good look around here. I don't think we will be de-rigging it today! Finally got to another major river junction where another big stream (same size as the one we had been following) met. Survey station 155 I will have to see where it is on the survey. We decided to knock it on the head now as it was beginning to get late and we didn't want an epic. I will definitely have to head back down here again.

We headed back along the stream way and progressed up the pitches. I think the boys were glad we were not de-rigging it today! Geoff had a bit of a thrash on one of the pitches when he tried squeezing through the wrong place, but apart from that things went pretty smoothly. We pushed on out, emerged from the cave after a 7.5 hours trip. One would have thought that the excitement was over, put the climb up the hill was another story, seemed to spend half of it on my ass!

A pretty good trip, a really nice cave to kick off being back in Tassie again. It would be really interesting to see the cave layout in relation to the other caves in the area!!



Australian
Cave Rescue
Commission

ACRC Report October 2019

National Cave Rescue Workshop

21-22 September 2019: Adelaide

Brian Evans

ASF Australian Cave Rescue Commissioner

A great success. You'll be seeing a report in *Caves Australia* shortly, but 33 representatives from cave rescuers in all regions of the country, and NZ came together for two excellent days of discussion and new ideas. Highlights included:

- the story of the Thai cave rescue from the inside, from Craig and Harry. This was eye-opening with respect to both the courage and inspiration involved in the rescue, and descriptions of working within such an intense and enormous team;
- learning much from the NZ CaveSAR group which, like us, is cavers being prepared to rescue from caves – Chris Whitehouse and Oz Patterson brought deep knowledge of rescue and strong relationships with national emergency services to us, and shared the processes and procedures that they have developed – we Australians were most impressed with their organisation (those of us that attended their multi-day rescue exercise in March were, too);
- considering how some injured cavers could be rescued from a remote and reasonably difficult (fictional) cave in the Kimberley. I think we came away from that with some understanding of how we could provide useful support in the event of a cave rescue being needed in remote parts of Australia

All the participants, presenters and supporters deserve thanks, as does the ASF for providing travel subsidies for two people from each region.

CA will have more detail, including ideas of what should be happening on the cave rescue front into the future...

MICRC

A draft new proposal was circulated to five cave rescue people who had previously commented and then to the participants of the workshop. Some more improvements and comments have come back and a new draft (v5) is done. If we reach a consensus by November the proposal will be put to clubs for approval, or not, at ASF Council in January.

Club Satellite Text Messenger (SatText)

By Stephen Fordyce

STC is now the owner of a Garmin inReach Mini (Sat Text for short) which allows text messages to be sent and received via satellite network. It can be left at the mouth of a cave, allowing 2-way communication with emergency contacts immediately on exiting, and potentially saving hours of time spent getting to mobile reception (and then back to the casualty). Especially valuable for small parties.



The Sat Text is tiny!

The purchase was made using funds from the Niggly/Growling connection article that I wrote for *Australian Geographic* (#152) and with photos from Stefan Eberhard and Fraser Johnston (disappointingly, the photo acknowledgement disappeared between final review and publishing). This included the unit itself, a silicone jacket, a micro Pelican case, and 1 year of usage (~AU\$250).

Assuming it survives (anticipated lifespan is approximately 3 milliseconds based on the club Disto experience) and proof of concept is established, a good case might be made to the ASF to cover the annual costs. That bridge to be crossed later.

Selection of the inReach Mini in particular was based on the following:

- Roughly half the price of a satellite phone (to buy, and to use)
- Robustness and size
- Uses the Iridium satellite network*
- Text messaging only needs a brief window of signal (important in areas of thick forest, steep terrain, etc.)
- Obviously, the major downside is that you can't make a call in an emergency

*There are four satellite networks. Only Iridium and Globalstar use constellations of orbiting satellites. Iridium is the gold standard. Globalstar doesn't allow text messaging,

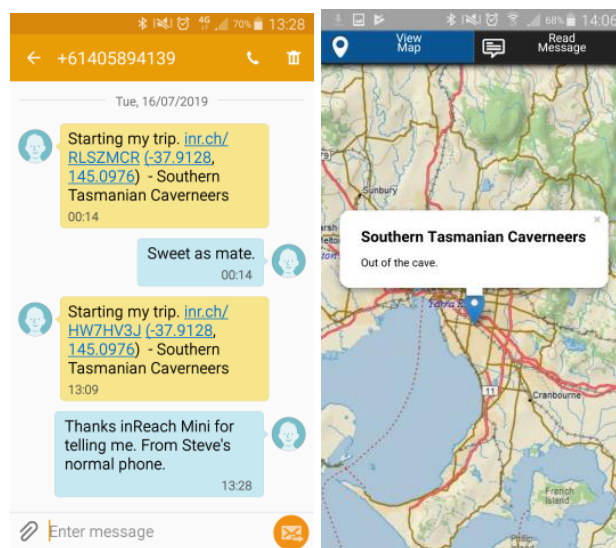
and has fewer satellites. Thuraya and Inmarsat are geostationary networks using satellites around the equator. So being far south, and on the southern side of a cliff or mountain range (i.e. The Junee-Florentine) is not ideal.

It appears the network/signal thing is quite important. I could not get a satellite signal from the bottom of the Niggly gully, and had to wait 5 minutes in the clearing at the base of the cliff before a message sent. While walking from Slaughterhouse Pot back to the Nine Road carpark, a message remained unsent until I stopped and waited in a clearing. It would be interesting to see how a satellite phone (with larger antenna) went under the same circumstances.

Using the Sat Text is reasonably simple and intuitive, although a bit tedious as it only has a few buttons. 10 custom text messages per month are included, so feel free to actually send messages (additional messages can be sent in an emergency and charged later). Messages can be sent to email addresses and phone numbers. I have loaded it with all the contact details I could think of, but it's possible to add in your own (easiest to do via a web or phone interface, ask me about this). It's also loaded with pre-composed messages to save having to type. Useful things like "Out of the cave", "Delayed but ok", and "Phew, that was a fricken epic".

There are three pre-set messages which are actually free to send, but need to be programmed (both content and recipients) beforehand. The third of these is an emergency message to a collection of STC contacts. There is also a dedicated SOS button that triggers additional emergency stuff like a message to contact Tas Police and STC.

All messages include GPS co-ordinates and a link to show this on Google Maps. Your emergency contact can reply to a message as they normally would (receiving messages is free). However it's not possible to send an unsolicited message to the Sat Text (its number/address change); you can only reply to a message sent.



Screenshots showing Sat Text communications

The Sat Text is kept in the gear store, in the micro Pelican case also including its USB charge cable and instruction book. It would be great to see it being taken out, and used, as a really easy way to shave some risk off a caving trip.

Letter to the Editor

I remark on Alan's letter to the editor, *Speleo Spiel* – Issue 434 September-October 2019– Page 19.

In the commendable spirit of not forgetting upon whose shoulders we stand, and in the context of scanty mention of northern conservation issues covered in the otherwise excellent *Wonderstruck* (Nic Haygarth, 2015), we are all indebted to a small band of people who pioneered the conservation work in Kubla Khan Cave ahead of the 1985 ASF Speleomania conference. This certainly established the bureaucracy-caver cooperation we now enjoy. We could not get Parks to formally or otherwise approve cavers instigating mud trafficking control measures ahead of the conference. Nevertheless, we made a judgement call with the unofficial support and active in-cave involvement of local Class 3 ranger Chester Shaw and went ahead and did it anyway. As a result, the post-conference trips of 1985 commenced the now well-established tradition of Kubla visitors contributing volunteer hours to the cave's conservation. And so, the cleaning of Kubla had commenced and it followed that mud-proofing a marked track received an official tick. Chester and Bob were key to this success. Many cavers helped before and during the conference.

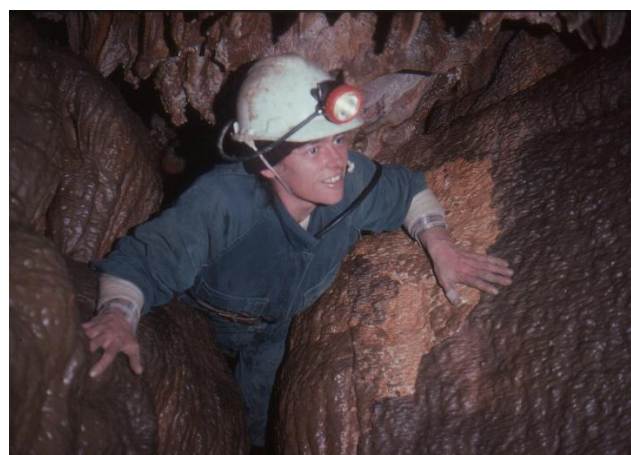
The images relate to the consolidation of a new route via the Waiting Room, Keyhole and Khyber Pass to avoid a muddy lower route and cleaning of the area above Pitch 3 that had become dirty.

Deb Hunter



Chester Shaw and Bob Woolhouse cleaning above pitch 3

Photo: Deb Hunter



Deb Hunter at the Keyhole (Waiting Room)

Photo: Deb Hunter (yes, I know she's in it but "mists of time", and all that- Ed)

Left: Rick Bray cleaning the Waiting Room.

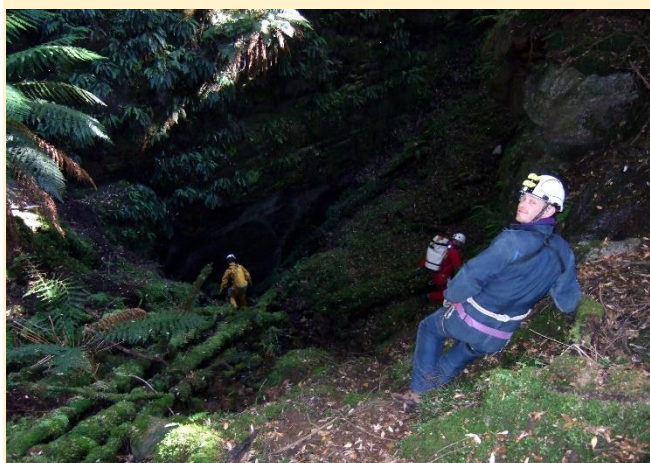
Photo: Deb Hunter

Fun and Diversions



Adapted from Tom Gauld. Inspiration Ric Tunney.

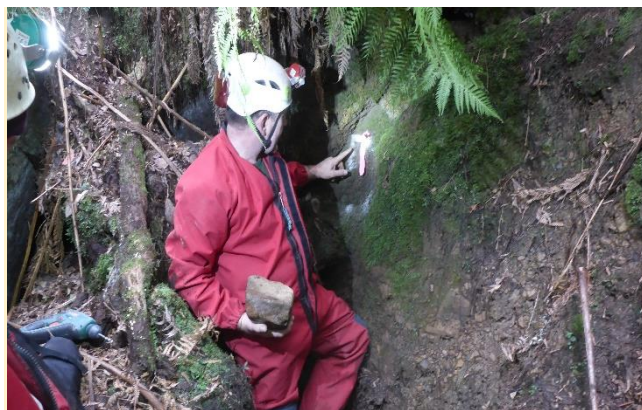
Name this entrance...AND caver



So, the cave entrance shouldn't be too hard for those of you who have been around caving in Tassie for more than a couple of years.

This might (hopefully will be) a bit harder. Who is the guy in the foreground though? A Lindt choccy ball the next time I see you for whoever gets his name, assuming the correct answer triggers my memory too. If not, then any name will have to do!

If you are REALLY clever you can name the other two further down the doline (I remember those names). That will give you another Lindt ball.



The caver should be identifiable to some of you, despite not seeing his (I don't think I give anything away by assuming you've noticed it is male) face.

The cave entrance I am hoping is going to stump you all. Unless the person in the photo reads the Spiel and responds.

That Lindt choccy awaits the successful reader. So OK, that is a Lindt ball for each of the person and the cave.

I am going to run out of cave entrance photos quickly. If anyone has any, particularly with a person in the entrance to identify, then send them to The Editor (email address on Page 2) and they can be used in this section. Fame and glory await contributors as you will be credited. Lindt ball prizes depend on the difficulty of the identification.

The Last Page

