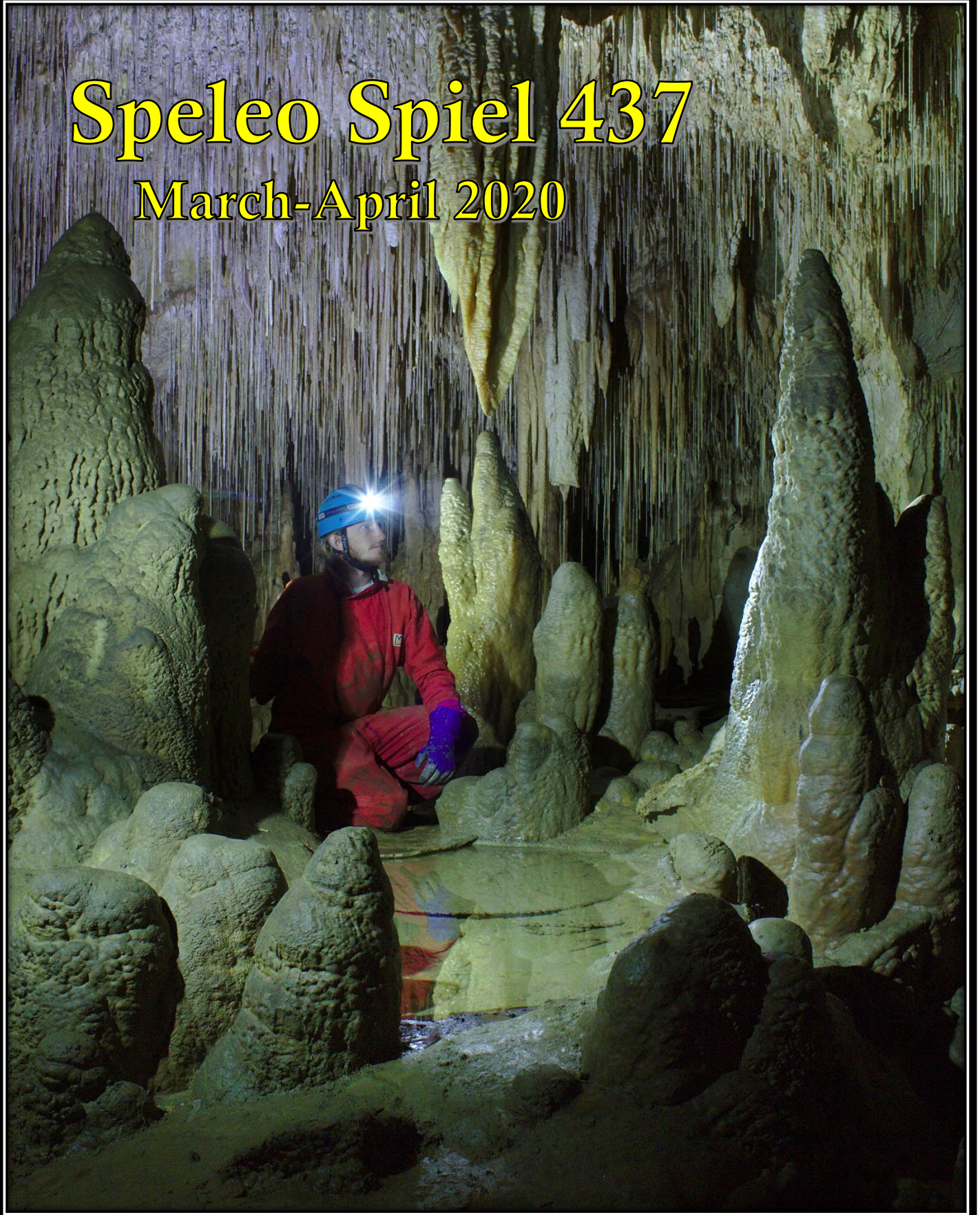


Speleo Spiel 437

March-April 2020



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Front Covers: *King George V in all his beauty. And a caver. Photo: John Oxley*

Back Cover: *AGM day – Time to clean up the house! Photo: Gabriel Kinzler*



Speleo Spiel

Newsletter of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated

PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7006
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The views expressed in the *Speleo Spiel* are not necessarily the views of the Editor, or of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated.

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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

You know they are strange times when Bill Nicholson is the most active caver in the country in 2020.

Bushfires in Australia already seem like a distant memory, now that they've given way to a global pandemic, which is not just our problem as a nation, but the world's as a species.

I cannot fail to mention the circumstances in which the *Speleo Spiel* you are about to read was conceived: it is my first issue as Editor, but also one that was compiled in isolation, with virtually no caving happening for the last month, give or take, and none planned in the foreseeable future. And for once, it's not for a lack of motivation or because of a physical barrier, but rather because we have been told not to, by law and by common sense.

It is a weird feeling to flick through all those reports and photos (and there are quite a few in this edition) not knowing when it will be possible to go caving again. I'm sure you will share that feeling.

I hope to do well as the new Editor. My plan is to be exhaustive and efficient initially, and to become more creative with content in later issues. This might be a tall order given the current lack of activity, but I look forward to the challenge and am thankful for being given the chance.

Stay safe & take care.

Stuff 'n' Stuff

- The executive and members of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers offer their sincere condolences to Stefan, Rolan and their families on the passing of their mother, Jo Eberhard.
- Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) earlier this year, caving activities have come to a halt following the introduction of nation and state-wide rules relating to social distancing, self-isolation and non-essential trips out of home, as well as the closure of National Parks and State Forests. At the time of writing, various projections indicate this forced abstinence could last up to six months, if not longer.
- David Rueda Roca was interviewed as part of the latest newsletter of the "Grupo de Espeleología de Villacarrillo", from Spain. Naturally, it is in Spanish, but for those of you who dabble in the language of Cervantes (or in Google Translate), it gives some interesting insights into his caving in Tasmania and around the world. <https://tinyurl.com/y8ut7emf>



Source: *Gota a Gota*, no. 18 (2019): 94-098

- Fraser Johnston has posted his short movie *Push Day* online and it is now free to watch for all here: <https://vimeo.com/308640769>
Work on the *Tartarus* feature film is still ongoing at the time of writing.



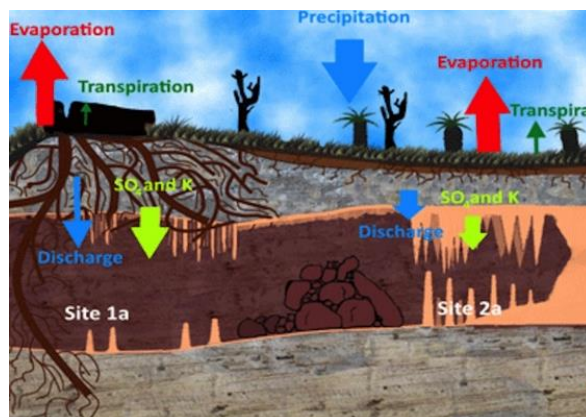
Source: Fraser Johnston

- More online things: Steve Fordyce gave a 50-minute long interview on ABC Radio Melbourne around mid-April. You can listen to it here: <https://tinyurl.com/yauf4fa9>



Source: ABC News

- A compilation of scientific studies on the impact of bushfires on karst has been summarised and made accessible in the following publication on the UNSW Sydney's website, a very interesting read. Thanks to Sarah Gilbert for sharing this. <https://tinyurl.com/y8dslt7j>



Source: UNSW Science

Office Bearers' Reports

President – Chris Sharples

The past year hasn't been particularly hectic from a presidential perspective, but then that's because the club has quite a few "doers" who make the good stuff happen without needing to bother the president.

In terms of what I take to be our core business – cave exploration – the highlight of the year was of course the long-anticipated linking of Growling Swallet and Niggly Cave. This happened via a terrifying (to me) dive by Stephen Fordyce (supported in various ways by a 'karst' of dozens), in which he successfully connected the Pool of Promise in Niggly Cave with his previous dive from the Dreamtime Sump in Growling. In doing so, the depth of Tasmania's deepest cave (now the Niggly-Growling system) was extended incrementally but is still annoyingly just a teensy bit shy of 400 metres! Thanks to a little bit of pre-planning by Stephen, this success was splashed across both state and national media outlets, and even resulted in a cave-themed political cartoon in *The Mercury* newspaper starring cartoon characters universally agreed to be based on Gabriel and Alan.

While on the topic of core business, this year has also seen Fraser Johnston continue filming in Tasmanian caves for his cave exploration feature film *Tartarus*. Although no date is yet available for the final blockbuster release, trailer-like extracts were shown at a Science Week event at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, which was unfortunately somewhat marred by unsympathetic lighting conditions.

The club's capacity to undertake and support cave rescues has continued to grow solidly following some significant grant-funded gear purchases in recent years. This year, Alan Jackson and Serena Benjamin attended a National Cave Rescue Workshop in Adelaide, which was followed during November 2019 by our biggest and most complex cave rescue exercise yet. This event in Growling Swallet was organised by Alan Jackson, overseen by Al Warild and included cavers from various parts of Australia, together with the underground participation of Police, SES and Ambulance paramedics. Given that the STC president was the designated casualty (with a genuine gammy leg to whinge about), it is pleasing to me that the exercise was a solid success!

STC continued to provide stakeholder input into the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service Cave Access Policy process as we have done for the last several years, which this year has resulted in STC as a club supporting the draft June Cave and Exit Cave CAPZS policies.

As usual there has been plenty going on with lots of people continuing to move the club's aims forward. No doubt I've forgotten to mention activities and people that should be mentioned, but my universally applicable excuse will be that somebody else should have written about that in their report!

I am happy to continue in the role of STC president, but don't mind if the club wants somebody else doing it...

Vice President – Stefan Eberhard

The club's various activities over the year have been covered in the respective reports of other office bearers.

Of interest was Bill Nicholson's recent comment that "the past 18 months or so have been a bloody toxic time for the Club and it's about time we work together to bring some healing amongst ourselves." Good on Bill for starting the conversation "2020/2021 The Year for Healing". Serena followed up by sharing a post that decried bullying, which is often disguised and excused as light-hearted banter and rarely ever called out. Amy also spoke up about tolerance, diversity and inclusivity. It's heartening to see some willingness to question the story. However it takes more than a few to change a collective narrative, and the collective culture around that narrative.

I will not be standing for any positions at this AGM.

Secretary – Philip Jackson

It has been a productive year with some correspondence sent and some received. For those that are interested in that kind of tedium, it's all listed in the minutes of the General Meetings through the year.

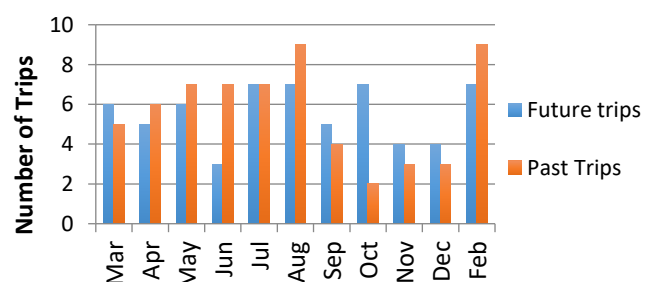
Of more interest, perhaps, are some statistics relating to the considerable increase in club activity. Meeting attendance has increased this year compared to previous years with 142 attendees over 11 GBMs, giving an average of 12.9 per meeting. In previous years attendances were usually around 8-9 per meeting. Average meeting duration is 73 minutes per meeting. This is partly due to the need for drink breaks to enable members to re-pay the Civic Club for the use of the meeting room and for the fringe rabble to re-charge their bevvies.

We have had 18 new members over the 12 months. These new members have contributed to the increase in caving trips.

The best stuff is the number of trips, both proposed and past. The totals of these correlate very well with 61 proposed trip and 62 past trips. Every good report should have a graph so here's one showing the distribution of future and past trip. Curiously the most intense period of caving was during the winter period while the summer months had the least number. Note that February actually includes January trips so fits much closer to the previous two months.

I am happy to continue in this role for 2020.

Future and Past Trips



Equipment Officer – Alan Jackson

2019 saw the transition from Geoff Wise to me. It took a few months but eventually enough of my hoarded stuff was thrown out from my shed to make room for the club stuff. It's all in now and things seem to be working fairly well regarding gear borrowing. A system is in place so that access to the gear (which includes critical SAR stuff) is available when no one is home – Gabriel, Serena and Andreas all have the necessary codes etc. to break in if needs be.

A fair bit of new gear came in, with ASF and private funds bolstering the SAR kits and *Australian Geographic* grants and article fees (c/o Stephen Fordyce) allowing us to spend up. The AG-related money secured 600 m of 9.5 mm Bluewater, ~100 stainless steel maillons and hangers and assorted other bits which are effectively dedicated to the STC Niggly project, but will go into the gear store coffers once derigged. The satellite text device is another AG-related purchase which hasn't proven a hit with the membership yet but is a good thing to have if you're heading out of phone range and I encourage people to have a play with it.

With the long term Niggly rig supplied from new/separate gear, there's plenty of other rope for other general trips and projects. The 200 m roll of Beal Spelenium Gold has been used only once and remains uncut. I don't see any reason why the club will need to purchase rope in the 2020-21 period.

All other equipment (SRT kits, helmets, lights etc.) seem in good nick and should see us through the next 12 months also.

I aim to get some rope-testing done in winter.

The plan is for a new shed at my place in 2020, so there might be a working bee at some point to help throw it up and then there'll be lots more room for spreading the gear out a bit into a more user-friendly configuration.

I'm happy to continue in this role.

Editor – Janine McKinnon

It has been another fun and interesting year editing the *Spiel*. Lots of history-making, fun and productive trips were reported on by trip leaders. Several members contributed interesting articles. I rarely struggled for enough copy to make an issue worth publishing. Many trip reports were very detailed and must have taken the authors quite some time to write. The *Spiel* is only as good as the copy that is sent to the editor. Recording of data, current caving methods, exploration attempts (including dead-end leads) and surface exploration wanders are all invaluable resources for future cavers, and the *Spiel* is the primary place for them to use for research. Reports of fun trips also contribute to the record for the future of what the culture of the club at this time is and encourages the less driven members to actually go caving. I wish to sincerely thank all those who took the time and effort to contribute. I also wish to thank my sub-editing team of Alan Jackson, Greg Middleton and Ric Tunney. They were indispensable in my effort to produce the magazine of such high production values that you all enjoy. All *Spiels* for the last 12 months were available on the STC website within the allotted time period (i.e. they came out on time). I am unfortunately unable to fulfil the role of *Spiel* editor in the next 12 months due to other commitments. I will not be nominating for the role in 2020.

Science Officer – Stefan Eberhard

The Science Officer role in STC is fairly low key given the interests and activities of the club primarily revolve around exploration, documentation, mapping and rescue.

Some STC members are trained scientists who pursue their own research interests as part of their caving activities. Some club members are citizen-scientists who initiate their own research projects or assist others to do research. Importantly STC members provide caving expertise to enable scientists with little or no caving experience to obtain specimens and data from caves which they could otherwise never access.

One role of the Science Officer is to recommend any expenditure of any funds set aside for scientific research. As far as I know few funds have ever been directed to support any research projects during the years / decades of the scientific officer role existence which was a legacy of the merger between TCKRG, TCC and SCS.

Over the past four years as Science Officer I've included the club's conservation activities in my reports because conservation is fundamental and critically important to sustaining the fragile cave environments which we explore, enjoy and appreciate. I've covered conservation in my reports, also, because conservation is not expressly covered under any club position, although it features in our constitution and underpins much of what the ASF aspires to as a registered environmental organisation.

Glowworms

David Merritt from The University of Queensland is continuing his research on glow-worms. The background is his student Claudia Schipp found strong population structure in mtDNA from three sites: Mystery Creek Cave, Arthurs Folly Cave and Bates Creek Gully (Arthur Clarke's property at Dover) indicating that females don't disperse. He is following up this interesting finding with wider sampling of forest and caves in Tasmania and has sought assistance from STC members in sampling, especially from Exit Cave and Junee-Florentine caves. A permit is needed to collect glow-worms so contact Dave if you're not already listed on his permit and would like to help.

Tasmanian Mountain Shrimp *Anaspides*

Research on the Tasmanian Mountain Shrimp, *Anaspides*, is continuing with important collections made by STC members revealing several new species and intriguing genetic complexity, prompting further research questions. The researchers Stefan Richter and his students from the University of Rostock in Germany, and Shane Ah Yong from the Australian Museum, will be visiting again next year. As previously, they are very keen for, and appreciative of, ongoing help from STC members with making collections from vertical caves, especially Junee-Florentine and Hastings. A permit is needed to collect *Anaspides* so if you're not already listed on the collection permit and would like to help get in touch.

Conservation

The most significant conservation projects over the past year have been the completion of the JF-341 route marking and string-lining project, signage for cave divers in Junee Cave (For Your Eyes Only), and the Herberts Pot Conservation Project.

Cave conservation goes with cave exploration. Andrew Skinner recognised this need in the 1970s during the heydays of exploration in Exit Cave and he innovated the first track marking system in Exit. Another major conservation initiative was by Jeff Butt during the exploration of Rift Cave–JF-341 in the 1990s. I am sure there are many other examples of careful caving practices although looking back over my 40 years of involvement with STC my experiences were that cave conservation tended to take a back seat to exploration and surveying.

The situation in southern Tasmania contrasts with Western Australia and northern Tasmania where there is a strong cultural legacy and practice of cavers pro-actively protecting, cleaning and restoring caves. This difference may be partly explicable due to the generally robust character of many caves in the Junee-Florentine karst which is still STC's main area of activities, however the JF karst includes some well-decorated exceptions such as Welcome Stranger, Frankcombe Cave, Cashion Creek Cave, New Feeling and JF-341 - parts of these caves have been irreparably damaged by careless caving practices over the years. The Ida Bay and Hastings karsts contain caves of exceptional beauty and sensitivity on a par with anything at Mole Creek and Margaret River.

Coming home to Tasmania after 15 years in Western Australia I have been struck by the comparatively low level of interest in conservation and minimum impact caving practices.

With increasing restrictions being placed on access to parts of caves with high conservation values, now may be a good time for the club to foster conservation astuteness and mentoring in minimum impact caving practices.

One way to progress this would be to re-brand the Science Officer position to "Conservation Officer" to make the role more relevant, practical and contemporary. This would also make the position more open and appealing to members who are not trained scientists.

Search and Rescue Officer – Alan Jackson

The SAR revolution Andreas Klocker started continued. The last 12 months has seen more funds, more gear, more ambitious exercises and more bureaucratic wins. We now have six 'ready to go' rescue bags with almost everything a rigging team would need to overcome an obstacle. We have an extra club/rescue drill, donated by Ric and Janine (their old DeWalt – a bit dated but still perfectly functional and useful [like the donors!]) – thank you, R&J. Comms have improved too, with a Rod Burton (CRS NSW) custom Michie phone base station. These have proven robust and much more user friendly than the smaller units. In hindsight we should have grabbed two of these while the production line was hot but hopefully we can convince Rod to pick up his tools again soon. While we could always find more shiny stuff to spend money there isn't anything particularly pressing that I can think of. What our stash lacks is more than compensated for by gear housed with NC, MCCC and CRS NSW – if we get 'the big one' then pooling of resources from all the club sources and Police/SES will see us drowning in gear.

Brian Evans continues to work wonders with the ACRC. He facilitated a national workshop in Adelaide in September 2019 which was well attended by cavers from around the

country and New Zealand. Serena Benjamin and I represented STC/southern Tasmania. Brian has set up a working group so far consisting of himself, Richard Harris (Harry), Al Warild, Ian Collette, Anna Ekdahl and me to bounce ideas around. This is a good spread of people with a wide geographic knowledge and skills base. Anna's involvement is particularly noteworthy as she is a conduit to the emergency services bureaucracy and has already worked wonders at getting cavers listed on the 'people to talk to when the shit hits the fan' database for the various emergency services. Harry's high profile following the Thai rescue and Australian of the Year honours has resulted in open ears as well.

Of course the annual highlight of the STC calendar is the cave rescue exercise. We went big in November 2019, with 51 people from around the country (and even a Pole) set a gruelling challenge in the Growling Swallet streamway. It was impressive what we achieved and we also learnt a lot of lessons on what to do better next time. Many thanks to all attendees and particularly Serena for her help getting it organised.

2020 will hopefully see more lower key training in the first half and another whiz-bang exercise in the second half of the year.

I'm happy to continue in this role.

Social Secretary – Gabriel Kinzler

I had big shoes to fill following Nat Pausin's tenure as Social Secretary. That, in combination with the fact that I was still relatively new to the club and unknown by its members, as well as being tasked with bringing together a bunch of essentially socially awkward humans, all made it seem like a tall order. I am neither proud nor ashamed of the results, since a convincing number of events have been held during a year in which my title was nonetheless cheekily rebranded as "Antisocial Secretary" by Serena.

No big quiz night racking in thousands of dollars, my strategy was more passive, scouring ideas by others left and right and occasionally carrying them out lacklustrely, yet efficiently, I hope. Frequent rock-climbing sessions were held religiously at Rock It for several months with both regulars and seculars, until we got bored with it and started going outdoors again.

Amongst other occasional events, I can report a fun board game/whisky night, a fund-raising abseil at Wrest Point with Aardvark Adventures, a very interesting participative slideshow/potluck dinner at the Culbergs', the Beaker Street@TMAG science festival with appearances by Stephen Fordyce and Fraser Johnston showing his movie *Push Day*, Craig Challen's talk and panel discussion followed by a social dinner at UTAS as part of National Science Week, all organised by Serena Benjamin and Chris Sharples with our own STC booth, various improvised social gatherings following the bigger caving weekends (generally held at Alan Jackson/Loretta Bell's), a caving weekend with social propensities in Hastings/Ida Bay, STC and NC members being generously hosted by Ros Skinner, the Xmas Barbecue in Lower Sandy Bay, a sausage sizzle at Alan/Loretta's following the rescue exercise as well as the big reveal of the Cave Animal of the Year 2020 by Cathie Plowman and her team, meals at Soup Stop before GBMs, and a Tea Party in the JF organised by Bill Nicholson who

had us frock up in between cave visits (and probably forgetting a few other neighbourly activities).

The main learnt lesson is that social events can and should be organised spontaneously by anyone who feels that they can bring something to the table and not necessarily be routinely spearheaded by the SocSec him/herself, who acts merely as a central hub and interlocutor. Half of my job was to communicate those events clearly and across different platforms. To that effect, the STC Facebook group and the list server are both useful and satisfactory tools.

I operate and communicate better behind a computer screen and in written form than in person (it being my job), so I respectfully wish to relinquish this role and embrace another position that is more in line with said skills and the ability to go back to being a hermit.

Training Officer – Alan Jackson

I didn't really want this job. I've done the bare minimum and responded to training requests but didn't instigate any training sessions. There have been half a dozen or so beginners taken through their paces and none have died or been injured doing it. I'll take that as a sign of success.

I'd rather not continue in this role.

Public Officer – Bill Nicholson

In this term of Public Officer, I have fulfilled the statutory requirements that I am legally obligated to do.

The changes that we made by Notice of Special Resolution to the STC Constitution were duly recorded & passed onto Consumer, Building & Occupational Services / The Department of Justice.

No legal documents have been served upon me. Minutes of all meetings have been saved and are kept in a safe place.

Apart from the odd brain fart and technical difficulties... "It's all under control"

Webmaster – Michael Packer

Web stuff happened on a number of (virtual) fronts. The *Spiel* was posted every time Super Editor McKinnon produced another master piece. Discussion was had about upgrading the website, especially as WordPress has now started putting ads on the page. I've done some preliminary investigation into hosting alternatives. STC.org.au domain was grabbed to stop Microsoft or anyone else trying to steal it. A better photo gallery was promoted by Gab – added to list for updated website. I buggered off to the big freezer down south and was out of the loop for a bit as a result – Yoav and Gab stepped up in my absence – thanks guys! I'm happy to continue to as web wiz...

Librarian/Archivist – Greg Middleton

Since February 2019 the Library has received only 32 new paper journals (consistent with the progressive decrease in recent years), bringing our holding to 5,041.

Last year I advised that consideration needed to be given to discarding the large number of duplicate copies of journals and newsletters, especially from STC's constituent clubs, TCC and SCS. These take up quite a lot of space but are of no future value. I offered these back issues to any interested members but no one responded. I will now dispose of these.

Digital copies of journals are stored on a 1TB hard disk. Additions in the last 12 months include:

ACKMA Journal: #114, #115, #116, #117

ASF Annual Report: 2018

Binoomea (JCH&PS): #174, #175, #176, #177

Caves Australia: #207 - #210 (2019)

CEGSA News: Vol. 64(1)-(4)

Helictite: Vol. 45 (2019).

ISS Newsletter: Vol. 25(1)-(4), 26(1)

J. Sydney Speleo. Society: Vol. 63 (2019), 64(1)

Speleo Spiel: #431 - #436

SUSS Bull.: Vol. 56(3), (4); 57(1), (2)

The Western Caver: Vol. 58 (2018)

Trog (KSS): Vol. 54(7) – 55(6)

Troglodyte: 29(1) 2019

NSS News (USA): Vol. 77(3)-(12), 78(1)-(2)

J. Cave & Karst Studies (USA): Vol. 80(4), 81(1)-(4)

Cave & Karst Science (UK): Vol. 46(1)-(3)

No new books have been accessioned; our holding remains 426. A digital catalogue is available.

Our CD/DVD collection is unchanged at 52.

Two new issues of *Southern Caver* have been produced this year: #70 in January 2020 (featuring SCS trip reports 1982 to 1994, transcribed by Alan Jackson); #71 in February 2020 (featuring the report of the 2018-19 Irish Caving Expedition to the Juneee-Florentine Karst, edited by Petie Barry).

I'm happy to continue in the position.

Electronic Archivist – Michael Packer

This year has been a busy year in the world of cave numbering and maps. A lot of new cave numbers have been issued as the ever forward march of cave exploration continues. New features have been discovered and dutifully tagged (well done team!) in the JF, Hastings/Ida Bay and other areas. Maps of exceptional quality have been created, numbered, filed, and published by various intrepid explorers – great work! Some work on tidying up historical mix-ups has been started and the numbering of caves makes it a bit clearer as a result with fewer Z (X, Q and other interesting, but luckily, short-lived number systems) located, re-educated in the correct way of thinking, tagged and returned to the fold – lots more re-education work to do. GPS coordinates have been cleaned up and people have been encouraged to grab a GPS coordinate (and photo) at every cave they visit and forward it to the 'anarchist'. There is still a box of Hastings stuff from Jeff under my desk that needs attention... I'm happy to continue in the role for another decade.

Treasurer – Russell Fulton

2019 was a year of modest financial activity. The club made a surplus of a bit under \$500 in 2019 and there will be approximately \$5,000 in the operating account at AGM time, as well as \$10,000 in the interest-bearing account.

The ASF increased its capitation fee by \$5 for most membership categories last year but then offered a \$5 discount for that year only. STC increased its fees by \$5 so that the total member fee to be paid for those categories remained unchanged. The \$5 discount no longer applies so the total member fee to be paid will increase by \$5, due to the increased ASF component.

In addition, I am recommending a small STC fee increase of \$2 for Single membership to keep up with increased costs. Depreciation of the Australian dollar over the past few years has meant the cost of replacing gear has increased. The fees for other categories of membership are calculated as a factor of the Single membership fee so these categories will also increase accordingly. It should be noted that the actual factors used to calculate other categories of membership have fallen out of alignment with the nominal factors quoted on the membership fees form and it is proposed to bring these factors back into alignment.

I also recommend an increase of \$5 for a printed *Speleo Spiel* subscription to keep up with increased printing and postage costs.

Income and Expenditure Statement

For the period 1 January 2019 – 31 December 2019

INCOME (\$)	2019	2018
Membership fees	5010.50	4,693.50
Donations	387.5	950.00
<i>Speleo Spiel</i> subscriptions	55.00	40.00
Gear hire	330.00	84.00
Interest	253.01	121.80
Refund from ASF	155.00	8290.00
TOTAL INCOME	6191.01	14,179.30
EXPENDITURE		
ASF fees	3030.50	2,967.00
ACKMA membership fee	50.00	50.00
Civic Club membership	50.00	-
Audit fee	123.75	110.00
Annual Return fee	63.20	62.00
Gear Custodian honorarium	-	113.40
Gear purchase and repair	1642.84	2,196.73
Tas Community Fund rescue equipment		9,430.00
<i>Speleo Spiel</i> costs	177.90	121.65
PO Box rental	205.00	201.00
Search and Rescue airfares	171.74	-
Sundries	190.65	143.10
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	5705.58	15,394.88
SURPLUS (LOSS)	485.43	(1215.58)
BALANCE SHEET as at 31 December		
CommBank Business Transaction Account	\$5237.75	\$4,752.32
Term Deposit	\$10,000	\$10,000
TOTAL MEMBER FUNDS	\$15237.75	\$14,752.32

Notes

1. Membership breakdown as at 31 December 2019:

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Single	27
Household	18
Concession	10
Introductory	15
Life - Active	4
Life - Inactive	2
TOTAL	76

2. Funds raised under the Donations category included \$100 from Tony Culberg's crowd funding campaign and \$229 from disposal of old gear.

3. Sundries include \$178.00 refunds of overpaid member fees and \$12.65 in bank charges.

4. The accounts were audited internally by Alan Jackson.

The proposed new fee structure (to be voted on at the AGM) is:

PROPOSED NEW FEE STRUCTURE - 2020					
Category	STC component	ASF component	Total fee to pay	Old total fee paid	STC nominal factor
Single	\$37.00	\$68.00	\$105.00	\$98.00	1.00
Family	\$64.75	\$119.00	\$183.75	\$171.50	1.75
Concession (student, unemployed, pensioner)	\$28.00	\$45.00	\$73.00	\$67.50	0.75
Introductory	\$18.50	\$20.00	\$38.50	\$35.00	0.50
Life - Active	\$0.00	\$68.00	\$68.00	\$63.00	-
Life - Inactive	\$0.00	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$20.00	-
Friend of STC	\$0.00-	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	-
<i>Spiel</i> subscription (members only)	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$25.00	\$20.00	-

Office Bearers

The following were Office Bearers as at 31 December 2019

Public Officer	Bill Nicholson
Executive Committee	
President	Chris Sharples
Vice-president	Stefan Eberhard
Secretary	Philip Jackson
Treasurer	Russell Fulton
General Committee	
Equipment Officer	Alan Jackson
Librarian/Archivist	Greg Middleton
Karst Index Officer	Michael Packer
Science Officer	Stefan Eberhard
Editor	Janine McKinnon
SAR Officer	Alan Jackson
Other office bearers	
Training Officer	Alan Jackson
Social Secretary	Gabriel Kinzler
ASF Delegate	Sarah Gilbert
Webmaster	Michael Packer

AGM Results

Below is the list of Office Bearers for 2020.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Elected</u>
President	Chris Sharples
Vice President	Alan Jackson
Secretary	Philip Jackson
Treasurer	Russell Fulton
Equipment Officer	Alan Jackson
SAR Officer	Alan Jackson
Librarian	Greg Middleton
Editor	Gabriel Kinzler
Social Secretary	Serena Benjamin
Training Officer	James Barnes
Science Officer	Chris Sharples
Public Officer	Bill Nicholson
Electronic Archivist	Michael Packer
Webmaster	Michael Packer
ASF Representative	Pat Culberg
ASF email representative	Kirsten Laurie

Trip Reports

JF-210/JF-211 Sesame

10 June 2019

Petr Smejkal

Party: Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal

The Irish invasion (Dec 2018/Jan 2019) with Andreas managed to find a new part in Sesame. Later, Andreas and Serena revisited the place and discovered a small draughting opening. Before the trip in June, Andreas contacted a few people but at the end it was just the two of us who went.

It was his birthday on the 9th and I thought I would surprise him when we got down there. I filled a thermos with some mulled wine that I made just that morning and wrapped it in my spare jumper. Andreas picked me up at ~8 am and we went. Trip down to the dig was OK; we managed to get to the place in two hours. The passage went through some really muddy parts, certainly not a pleasant caving trip. Once we got there, I said happy birthday and we shared a glass of mulled wine. After a bit of a chit chat, we started the dig. Andreas operated at the front and I cleared the spoil. In two hours, we finished the rest of the birthday present and swapped our roles. We worked until we ran out of 'energy'. The passage wasn't fit just yet, we had to call the day and went back home. Probably this report is politically incorrect too, a caver doesn't let a caver drink and dig, right :-D

27 July 2019

Due to other trips on the same day it was again only Andreas and myself. All went well, as last time no struggle on our way down. Well, I got a new PVC suit and that turned out to be a bit of a struggle. This was my first time wearing it, I did not know what to expect and I have to admit I was getting much warmer than I would in my Cordura suit. In fact, I was so warm I had to stop a few times to avoid overheating.

The dig went well, we managed to slip through the passage after an hour of digging. I let Andreas lead the way but all we found was an inside of yet another rockpile. The draught we felt inside the passage was a cumulative draught coming from the rockpile behind. Shifting rocks under our feet opened a little abyss. Andreas went down to discover more rocks, then he had troubles to get back up, not because it would be deep (maybe 3 m from where I was to the very bottom) but because there was nothing to stand on, the rocks he was holding were all moving and it was slippery with mud. After he managed to get out of this trap, I tried the opposite direction and went up instead. I dug a bit and the abyss we found a few minutes ago disappeared under what I sent down. This attempt ended up in more rockpile. After a while we gave up all our hopes for a better cave and went back home. I can't think of going there again but it might be worth it to visit this place after a flood.

JF-402 Burning Down the House

23 August 2019

Karina Anders

Party: Karina Anders, Andreas Klocker

This was my first caving trip with Andreas. It was a nice cave, no SRT required but some lovely scrambling. I believe we walked to the end of it. You could see that it had flooded recently as there were green leaves dotted around at the end.

It took us about 3 hours to go in and out, including a small lunch break. It was a great beginner caving trip.

JF-387 Porcupine Pot

8 September 2019

Karina Anders

Party: Karina Anders, Andreas Klocker

My second caving trip with Andreas was a maintenance trip into Porcupine Pot. He wanted to change out a number of the ropes. I'm afraid I can't remember which ones.

It was a great opportunity for me to practice my SRT skills. We got to the bottom of the vertical part, left our SRT gear there and walked up to the part where you have to crawl through water to go further.

We had a good look around, had some lunch and then started making our way back up. Andreas' hand ascender broke around half way to the top, so we shared mine the rest of the way.

I think we entered the cave around 10 am and exited around 6 pm. I was in complete denial that we were close to the top of the cave because I couldn't believe it was already dark and I couldn't see any sunlight.

This was my first experience of how time escapes you when you're caving. We demolished the box of Shapes I had in the car on the way home.

JF-36 Growling Swallet

23 November 2019

Karina Anders

Party: Karina Anders, Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal

My third caving trip with Andreas. This time we went with Petr into Growling Swallet as a tourist trip, no gear required.

We entered through the main entrance, I was blown away by it and loved every part of the trip. I can't remember what the place was called where we stopped for snacks on the way in and out but it was a bit of a hill.

We reached Frownland and, on the way back, we climbed up Tiger Mountain.



Happy days in Frownland

Photo: Petr Smejkal

Lots of scrambling, walking, crawling and a bit of climbing. It was a big day, about 8 hours in the cave, I fell asleep in the car on the way home. It was my favourite trip and cave so far.

JF-484 Hot Prospect

25 August 2019

Ben Armstrong

Party: Ben Armstrong, Andreas Klocker

After 8 months in the warm, spacious and well-decorated caves of Quang Binh, Vietnam, I was itching to get back to some honest grovelling in the JF. Hot Prospect had been left with several promising-sounding leads by the Irish and Andreas was keen to push them.

The walk up was long and fairly vegetated. Once inside, the cave very quickly satisfied my cravings for tightness, dampness and awkwardness and I was missing Vietnam in about 10 minutes.

We missed the first pitch (a tiny vertical slot) and started rigging at the second, following the glow sticks the Irish had generously left in the bolt holes. At the bottom of the main pitches, we swung across into the Pinnacle Rift and rigged the 9 m pitch to the bottom.

While the lead initially looked very promising, some digging and a fair amount of effort yielded only about 1.5 m of new passage which terminated very conclusively. We retreated and rigged our way down to the bottom of Spike Rift.

The "lead" was a horrible little rift squeeze with no real prospect of continuation. I had a go and came very close to getting stuck well before the crux of it. Digging did not look like worthwhile.

We derigged (although the rope tried its best to stay in the cave, tying itself into a well-dressed figure-8 around a spike), squeezed out through the awkwardness and stumbled back down to the car.

IB-120 Valley Entrance – IB-14 Exit Cave

9 November 2019

Serena Benjamin

Party: Serena Benjamin, Stephen Jacobs, Ben Lovett, Janice March, Eleanor March, Bob Pennington

Valley Entrance through trip (aka step #562 in completely exhausting oneself by the end of the year).

A late shift on Friday preceded a crackingly early start in order to get to the MCC carpark by 0800 on Saturday. Unbeknownst to me the other members of my party had decided that the start time and location of Alan's planned trip for the day was more preferable. It was some time before this was rectified and I had a full complement of cavers. Twas a pleasant day for strolling through the forest and we made it to Valley Entrance in due course. This was the first time I'd navigated through the entirety by myself. I think the others were mostly convinced that I knew what I was doing. I'm less convinced that they enjoyed my walking style. Everyone was still smiling by the end though and people said they had a good time. The weather was a little less agreeable by the time we returned to the surface. This was assuaged by a hot shower, food and beverages by the fireside at the wonderful Ros's place. A fine way to end the day. I repeated the crackingly early start on Sunday to be at work for a 0730 start while the others stayed to have a few more caving adventures.

JF-79 – JF-82 Beginners Luck

8 December 2019

Serena Benjamin and Bill Nicholson

Party: Serena Benjamin, Bill Nicholson



*Serena training for the 2020 Cave Olympics
Photo: Bill Nicholson*

Part A: Serena

Sunshine heralded a brief hiatus from winter, bolstering the waterways with snow melt and providing pleasant views as mist gently rose from the moss-laden road in toward Beginners Luck.

Fortifying our resolve with cups of tea we began an exhausting walk from the car to reach Womguano entrance, located the preceding week by Bill and Callum.

Diving quickly into its close confines to escape the heat we alternately did breast stroke through the wombat cubes and wallowed like wombats doing an imitation of Lt Dan.

Progress was impeded by Fatboy Flatteners where lassitude, and inflexible vertebrae, dictated we return post haste. Perhaps too much haste as Bill came out looking like he'd done a few rounds with Ali. To the car we went to placate ourselves with more tea.



*Bill after a training session in Bludgeonics
in preparation for the 2020 Cave Olympics
Photo: Serena Benjamin*

Part B: Bill

So there we was, out the back of the Florentine, standing in the middle of this obscure road, drinking tea from bone china, looking like a pair of dairy farmers after milking, thoroughly smeared from head to toe with wombat poo, thinking it could be worse... it could have been Tassy devil poo, but enough rambling.

Having no GPS thingy we went "old school" and orientated ourselves with magnetic compass (Google it) and survey map of JF-79-82, combining that with a sketchy 40-odd-year memory from the decadent '70s we hit the bush in search of JF-80; which we located after a rather interesting and entertaining systematic investigation along contact lines.

We checked out this section of Beginners Luck as far as the dim bit and decided to leave the remainder for another day as Womguano had inflicted enough pain and we both had peaked our fatigue limits, so we just simply wussed out of there, surviving yet another epic frolic.

JF-237 Niggly

16-19 January 2020

Stephen Fordyce (text and photos)

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

Another month, another Niggly trip, or that was how it seemed anyway. This was to be a comparatively lightweight and cruisey exercise, with no diving, and some satisfying tidying up of jobs on the punch-list. As usual, it turned into a bit more than that.

Day 1: Thursday – Sleep optional

The best laid plans of mice (us) and men (alas Ben was absent this trip) were soon thwarted as one of my bags was left in Melbourne. Alan and Gabriel were keen to have a Thursday being paid, so the plan had been to leave Hobart “after work” and reach camp in the depths of Niggly at roughly bed time. Alan, correctly anticipating delays and faffing, shot ahead, while Gabriel patiently put up with my various detours and we finally entered the cave at the undignified hour of midnight.

Figuring we would surely find Alan whimpering gently in his hammock, we were surprised to meet an uncharacteristically surly caver at the bottom of the 85 m pitch. He had been in his element installing P-hangers but with both glue canisters out of action, things were looking grim and another unfinished job was looming. Fortunately, a fresh set of eyes and my knife were able to rectify the situation and we left a recharged energizer bunny to his work (at something like 2:30 am). We bombed down the next couple of shorties and the 105 m pitch and headed to camp. I had some more important faffing to do at the DIY Sump, and Alan and I rendezvoused at the ridiculous time of 4:30 am back at camp. He had finished all the P-hanger installs, including the far side of the waterfall tyrolean. An admirable nutter.



Gabriel and Alan enjoy some science.

Day 2: Friday - Psychopomp

A sleep in was called for and we surfaced at 11:30 am. A shortish but useful day followed as we did some experiments at Atlantis Junction and then headed up to finish and de-rig Psychopomp. Sadly, the final pitch the guys had stopped at last time didn't yield much more passage, ending in pretty terminal rockfall less than 50 m after the previous end. It's quite close (in the order of 30 m, although quite a bit of vertical) to intersecting Red Rockets Rockpile, which wasn't particularly inspiring anyway.

I hadn't realised just how big and impressive some of the fossil passage up there was – wow! We did a complete de-rig but left orange string and stainless steel anchors at the top of the two main pitches required to access this section. These are pretty bog-standard, but will be reported on with all the other retrieved climbs when the project is finished.

Day 3: Saturday – Mother of God

Alan left, but Petr and Serena joined us on a bounce trip. We put in a stainless throughbolt for the climb down the slot where you reach the stream for the first time. Water levels were gratifyingly low, and the day trippers caught up with us at Ninja Junction. We did some more experiments and then headed to Mother of God, managing to keep our feet dry. Petr and Serena called it a day at that point and (did I say no dive gear?) Petr as usual outdid himself by hauling a heavy bag of dive gear all the way out.

At this stage, the diving prospects in Niggly are pretty well dead. The motivation for a through trip to Growling is low, the Gallantry Sump is a bit small to be excited about, and while I'd like to have another look at the Bin Chicken Haven (hey, it worked for the Business Class Lounge), Living Fossils and even Coelacanth Sump seem like a better prospect for the moment. Meanwhile, leaving un-used gear in the cave is best avoided; I carried out most of the rest of the dive gear on Sunday, leaving only a dismayingly-full tank and the weights/rigging to go with it.

The last visit to Mother of God was apparently in April 2017 (!!!) so Gabriel's dislike of making steps in mud banks was given a thorough workout. Traces of tracks were still there in places and route finding wasn't too bad – we fair old jogged along for the stretches in the stream, getting unfortunately wet feet in one difficult to avoid spot. Our packs were heavy, as rather than just assessing the bolt climb that had previously been looked at, we figured on bringing all the kit to just do the thing. Despite it having been written off back in 2017, time and enthusiasm had brought it back into viable territory, in my mind at least.

A brief detour was made to “The Tennis Court” (some mud formations protected by a square of white tape) to make good on the climb done by Petr and surveyed by Stefan *et al.* in 2017 (see SS420, p11). We put in stainless anchors and retrieved the rope, leaving orange string (more details will be reported with all the climbs, etc.). Over and down the rockpile, a final epic mudbank for a tortured Hungarian/Frenchman, and we were in the final section of streamway passage.

Finding the climb took a couple of goes and it became kind of obvious why it had been written off. It was a fair way back from the terminal rockpile proper, did indeed look like it was just a pitch coming in and was a helluva long way up to the first section of remotely possible horizontal passage. A shared box of Shapes and some mutual enthusiasm-building were enough to decide we would give it a go and see how it went.

Well I've been trying pretty hard to get everyone to see the light on the impact driver and a few hours later Gabriel was (somewhat) impressed. I'd done about 15 holes and got maybe 20 m up the sheer wall and was 1-2 holes from the top. Using standard concrete screws, I was comfortable going really high up on the etriers, and hooking into the hanger with a skyhook looped on my harness maillon.

Putting the next concrete screw in at full reach was made viable by using the impact driver and saved a heap of energy. There was only really one spot where it wasn't just sheer rock, which maybe gave us a metre for free. I'm not a climber, but I can follow a methodology and this one worked and felt pretty good. We did use a dynamic rope, and quickdraws pre-loaded with concrete screws. Sometimes I removed the bottom of three quickdraws to be able to continue to make progress without stopping to clean lower ones.

With the top so close, the impact driver went from intermittent to not working. Later inspection found it full of mud from the forward/reverse control (but it was resurrected!). I started trying to install a concrete screw the old-fashioned way, but it was too high and I was too shagged. Defeat admitted, in any case it would be nice to reward Gabriel for being such a patient and attentive belayer, so I came down and managed to assume the belayer position rather than the foetal position.

Gabriel made a bit more progress with manually installed bolts in more reasonable places, but the hours had taken their toll. He gave it a good go, but it was shaping up to be an unwanted epic of a day already, so we used that as an excuse to leave all the climbing stuff there and finish it off next time. We had a few more experiments to do on the way and got back to camp thoroughly stuffed, after 14hrs of caving.

As a post-script, Gabriel discovered the joy (?) of peeing on his hands on this day. Mark it well. Hopefully he doesn't use his new-found editorial powers to remove this bit.



Gabriel contemplates life on the return to the surface

Day 4: Sunday – Birthing Day

We took the time to do some experiments before heading out – confirming that the waterfall flows under the Vietnam passage at base level to emerge in Lower Atlantis in the obvious corner/fissure about 30 m back from where the stream disappears into Red Rockets Rockpile. Great success!

I carried most of the rest of the dive gear out and rather ran out of steam in the upper reaches of the cave while Gabriel enthusiastically charged on out with an equally heavy bag. We did the usual stumble down the hill and a detour to June on the way back. Good times, happy days and a few more Niggly mysteries unravelled, but more yet to come. There's still Bucks Luck and the Wedding Chamber out beyond Atlantis, and a survey bonanza and push to be had at the end of Mother of God.

IB-11 Midnight Hole

30 January 2020

Alan Jackson (photos John Oxley)

Party: Finn Clarke, Simon Elliot, Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Ben Jackson, John Oxley

Beginner/whatever trip combined with a bit of p-hanger maintenance. Finn is a total newbie to caving, Simon is an experienced caver from the UK now living in Geeveston, the kids were dead keen to do the trip again (having been there only late last year) and John appears to like the cave too.



Testing the bolts at the top of the last pitch. They passed.

Ben controlled his own descent this time, with a belay on him just in case. The descent was a bit slow with six people but very relaxed. James Barnes had reported to me that the only remaining original bolt on the sixth pitch was wobbling a week or so before this trip, so I dragged the bolt tester in. It was indeed slightly wobbly (less than 1 mm) and appears to have suffered the same glue/rock interface detachment that three other bolts (subsequently removed) have suffered in this specific location. Weird. One of the two 'new' bolts (the ones with the chains on them) at this pitch appears to have done the same thing. This pitch is cursed. All three bolts were tested and passed without any concerning movement. They're not going to fall out, it would seem. Parks might disagree, but we'll cross that bridge when we get to it.



Rite of cave passage

We toured slightly on our way out MCC, taking Skyline then a loop down to the waterfall and down Cephalopod Creek to Lower Left Skyline and back round, some glowworm viewing and chatting to the multiple other parties of general cave visitors we encountered along the way (the place was crawling with people). A pleasant and easy day out.

JF-29 Niagara Pot

1 February 2020

Alan Jackson

Party: Cath Hemley, Alan Jackson, Steve Jacobs, Janice March, Bob Pennington, David Rueda-Roca

David had rigged Niagara over the course of a couple of (very wet) trips late last year as his next mission after 341. I was interested in going back to this cave (I'd last been circa 2002 with Madphil as a practical newbie and hadn't seen much of the cave). It was fairly wet following the previous evening's rain but a far cry from the conditions of David's previous trips. The northerners made slow but steady progress (slightly out of their comfort zone of pleasant Mole Creek caves) and we convened in the large talus chamber for a bite to eat and some dry clothing. We had a few missions in mind but the main aim was to find the way on to the deepest point/1989(90) extension and original 1970s large fossil 'sand' passages, which I'd not seen before. It took a bit of scouring but we found both eventually. The 'sand' passages were pretty cool – large, pretty, fascinating. I shot the Disto up the big aven (listed as 'high aven >30 m' on the old map) and the biggest reading I could get was 64 m (plus lots of errors because it was clearly bigger than this and not within the Disto's range). The lower extension was checked out too and some rigging commenced to expedite the next trip checking out these pitches and the potential digs beyond. A bit of re-rigging was done on the way out to improve a few spots which didn't meet my standards (couldn't help myself).



Photo: David Rueda-Roca

It's an interesting cave. The wet pitches are precisely that, and aren't the most inspiring bit of cave in the JF. The lower sections are interesting. To assist future trips, I marked the two ways on from the talus chamber with labelled pink flagging tape ('1990 Extension' & '1974 Sand Passage Extension' or words to that effect). The 1990 (actually 1989-90) extension is pretty easy to locate – just turn right after you pop out from the little tunnel that connects the last pitch with the chamber and keep to the right wall for ~15 m, you'll spot the tape on a boulder, and follow the arrow down the hole against the wall. The 1970s sand passage is trickier: after popping out the tunnel from the pitch, turn left, but skirting out around the rockfall pit with the pitch water cascading down it, traverse the rockfall (passing a 1990s labelled survey ribbon), pass just left of the waterfall falling out of a small hole in the ceiling and a few metres after that point you should spot a small cairn with the aforementioned

labelled pink tape – head straight down from the tape and you'll pop into the small side passage you're looking for, perched on the edge of a drop down into the wet rockfall horror below.

A nice easy trip with good company. The northerners did well and claimed to have enjoyed it thoroughly. I'm even keen to return.

The northerners visited Welcome Stranger on the Sunday before heading home.

JF-221 Owl Pot

6 February 2020

Stephen Fordyce (text and photos)

Party: Karina Anders, Nina Birss, Stephanie Blake, Stephen Fordyce, Andrew Stempel, Thomas Varga

After the recent assessment (see report in *Spiel* 436), I felt that the sump at the bottom of Owl Pot was well worth a dive. A party of mainlanders (plus honorary mainlander Karina) was lured back to Owl Pot with the promises of how much fun sherpa'ing could be and that we would do some other cool stuff on subsequent days in the JF. I'd been supremely organised, getting tanks and dive gear stashed in Tassie (thanks very much to Alan, Janine and Ric for their assistance) on my previous trip and was optimistic the sump could be made to go, despite the challenge. (my impressions and the challenge are described in SS436)

Sadly, the cave had other ideas, and in the very dry conditions the sump was... gone! Yep, where previously there had been a slanting pool perhaps 1 m deep, now there was a shallow trickling streamway ending in a 20 cm deep puddle which appeared to disappear into solid rock. Confused celebrations and disappointment ensued as we could now exit the cave hours earlier than planned.



The not-sump (foot for scale)

The character of this far end of the cave was noted as vaguely odd, as the 45-degree slope down to the sump/stream was at 90 degrees to the bedding plan (i.e. punching through the successive layers). This was at odds to the access to the sump, which had sloping ceilings aligned with the bedding plane.

We figured a poke had better be had and the stove canister which Karina had managed to find on her way (Mitre10 in New Norfolk appears to be the only place in Tassie where you can get stove fuel before 9 am) needed to be commissioned. So the smell of caramel hot chocolate and the sound of interesting trivia questions wafted down to the "sump" where I spent an hour or so grovelling in my wetsuit.



Looking upstream from the terminal pool - streamway, mud banks, ceiling showing bedding plane and flood debris.

A couple of interesting things happened:

- I was able to get high res GoPro footage of the stream, the terminal pool, and the underwater extents of it before destroying the visibility
- The mystery of where the water went was only partly solved
- The water level increased substantially (perhaps 20 cm) over the course of the time.

The footage shows well the stream approach to the terminal puddle, the puddle itself, and gives an idea of where the water flows. I dug down in the mud and made a pool about 60 cm deep – enough to have a complete bath in and my arm almost couldn't reach the bottom without pulling my head under. The rock wall felt like it was just going down into a hard mud base, so I gave up and started working on the horizontal crack where the flow seemed to be going.

The flow seemed to be going through a gap only just wide enough to fit my fingers in, and trending up, almost to the surface behind the wall. I pulled mud and the occasional rock out of this crack in either direction, wondering if I might find a bigger gap, but despite being able to get my fist and arm through in places, there was no feel of a void on the other side, or any larger section.



A tenuous gap where the water was going is visible between rock wall and mud bottom (on the video, you can see small particles moving through it)

On leaving, I noticed that the water (now a chocolate brown colour and consistency) was significantly higher than it had been – enough to drown the mini-rapids and stream bed which I'd noticed earlier. Maybe my digging had actually blocked the crack further in (there was no rain that we know of on the surface). Certainly, there was foam, flood debris and marks that indicated water levels had been significantly higher (1-2 m) since our checkout trip a few months ago. An *Anaspides* was noted, confirming that we are at base level.

I don't have any hopes for a way to follow the water through there, which is disappointing considering how big of a streamway it is. Perhaps there is a higher-level bypass that's been missed. In hindsight, we neglected to follow the lower streamway upstream from the terminal puddle and look there – this, and a thorough re-examination of the passage leading to the sump might be the key to getting further. On reviewing the GoPro footage, perhaps there is a crack going up/behind just above water level, although it seems hard to think that I wouldn't have noticed if it was interesting, as I had my head right in that spot.



Rock meets hard mud, not a good sign for finding a way through

All present thoroughly earned their Sherpa badge and didn't seem too much the worse for it. I'll leave some of the other details to them in a separate report. Well done crew, and thanks!

Notes on rigging: with more detailed instructions from Alan, we found the natural thread (for the deviation) mid-way down Pitch 2 this time. These instructions can be summarised as "Abseil down until there is an obvious ledge you would stand on if you had to get off the rope. Stand with the continuation of the pitch behind you, the thread is at about chest height in front of you". Lo and behold, not one but two threads were found, and the peasants rejoiced. Andrew kindly donated a green sling, which has been left on the thread for future parties to use, or at least help identify the thread.

JF-337 Slaughterhouse Pot

8 February 2020

Stephen Fordyce (text and photos)

Party: Karina Anders, Nina Birss, Stephen Fordyce, Gabriel Kinzler, Benoit Philippe, Andrew Stempel

Being one of three obvious candidates for access into the master cave between Porcupine and Niggly, the Black River section of Growling Swallet (which terminates in Coelacanth Sump and Living Fossils) has always piqued my interest. It's historically been protected from easy access by the Black River Sump, which turned into a roof sniff and facilitated the Living Fossils extension by Rolan and Stefan Eberhard and others in 2013-2015. The map is published in *Spiel* 411.

I spearheaded a checkout/route-finding trip to the roof sniff last August (refer to *Spiel* 435) and the Owl Pot dive

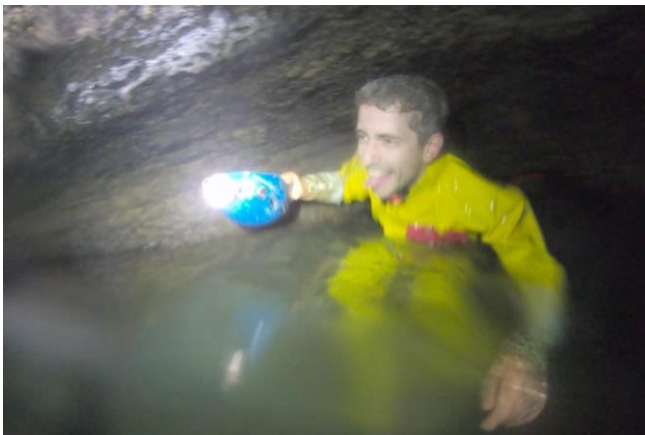
weekend was a good chance to go a bit further, in combination with a nice step up for a few newer cavers.



The second brief sniff after the initial roof sniff is short, but low

The plan was to get to the sump via Slaughterhouse Pot, assess how we were feeling, and then split – anyone not keen to get wet and commit to a long day would head out. Both parties headed out Slaughterhouse Pot (better the devil you know) and managed not to get too lost – the effort by Nina, Ben and Andrew particularly impressive. This time, the track to Slaughterhouse and the co-ordinates of the cave were successfully recorded and submitted to the STC Archive.

Karina, Gabriel and I donned 3 mm wetsuits (mine a shorty) over our caving thermals, and put our trog suits over the top. Warm jackets, emergency kit and beanies went into Darren Drums and drybags. Much squealing and swearing was required as we went through the roof sniff, but we were pretty good on temperature for the ~4 hours we spent beyond it. The others took their wetsuits off for the trip out, but I was quite comfortable leaving my shorty on. Instructions for the roof sniff can be summarised as: don't follow the diving guideline; keep left initially and crawl/crab through quite shallow water and about 15 cm airspace; a small space is reached and there's another low bit but with more space (the direction is a little confusing, especially on the way back); a short section of large streamway passage is traversed; then there is a brief sniff/duck under.



Gabriel: "This is next level man" (plus much assorted swearing)

First we checked out Coelacanth Sump, following the obvious streamway passage downstream. It wasn't all easy walking, there were a couple of climbs, stoopy bits and it took longer than I expected to get to the pool with the start of the guideline. The last 100 m or so had no water in the

streambed, and the sump was static, as we had expected, particularly in the dry conditions. Diving Coelacanth Sump without sherpas coming through the sniff would be a time-consuming and energy-sapping process. The sump pool had all the hallmarks of a roof sniff, so after some deliberation, the enthusiasm of Gabriel and Karina won out and we went through a short section of actual swimming passage to a beach, then the sump pool proper. Curiosity satisfied, we swam back and started getting down to the business of examining Living Fossils.

First impression: wow, it's bigger than I had expected up there and immediately gave the impression of large upper level fossil (or some such) passage that's heading for the master cave. Not the inlet cave heading in the wrong direction I'd somehow envisaged. Cool! There were large voids, breakdown, and small bits, a crawl on cobbles, and a few leads apparently not shown on the map – one of these lead to a large chamber with an aven, and a horizontal lead going off after an easy but exposed climb. The last labelled station we found was LF20, and from there the route got a bit confusing. We eventually found ourselves worming along through some quite small but going passage a long way beyond the last cairn or footstep.



Karina enjoys a nice swim to get to the second pool in Coelacanth Sump

This was pushed increasingly further, until we were pretty sure it was new (and – depending on your mojo at the time - exciting!). The passage was for the most part small and frequently in solid rock, but with sections of breakdown, and in many places a small streambed of clean washed pebbles with a gentle downward gradient. There was much flood debris on the ceiling. When worming alone proved insufficient, the crowbar was pulled out, and as I worked on the offending rock, Gabriel experienced a momentary revival of motivation to push through an alternative way.

This enthusiasm soon flagged at the next obstruction (along with the growing realisation that we would need to survey this new passage and it would be a "late one") so I regained point position and made painstaking progress for a few more metres. The streambed went through an impossible squeeze, but there was a short chimney going up to a void. The crowbar made short but careful work of a couple of obvious rocks and I gingerly made it up into the chamber. "Chamber" might be a bit generous, but there was at least room for a few people to sit around. There were a couple of dubious-looking rockfall leads and, figuring this would mark the limits of team endurance this trip, I set about making the chimney a bit nicer for future traffic. A rather large and rather loose rock seemed like it would be better placed at the bottom and

that it would fit down the chimney. Of course, the rock had other ideas and wedged sideways blocking my way out.

Having adhered to the old adage “never leave your crowbar behind”, I eventually showed the rock who was boss and got back to the rest of the shivering crew a bit later than anticipated. We commenced to slowly survey out, with Karina learning the basics of electronic cave survey and looking suitably hardcore while doing it. After some quality surveying, Karina started demonstrating an impressive ability to delete data and a tortured soul stared out of Gabriel’s eyes, so we switched roles to avert a crisis. Just as we reached the junction point with the old survey, Karina noticed some drops of blood, and Gabriel noticed a nice gash on his hand. Having made a half-hearted attempt to patch it up, this was a good excuse to stop sketching and we speed-surveyed back to the labelled LF20 station to tie in. Unfortunately, we misplaced the flagging tape, so none of our stations are labelled, although that’s on the list for next time, and the cairned stations are mentioned on the sketch.



Gabriel briefly considers taking up cave diving and thinks better of it

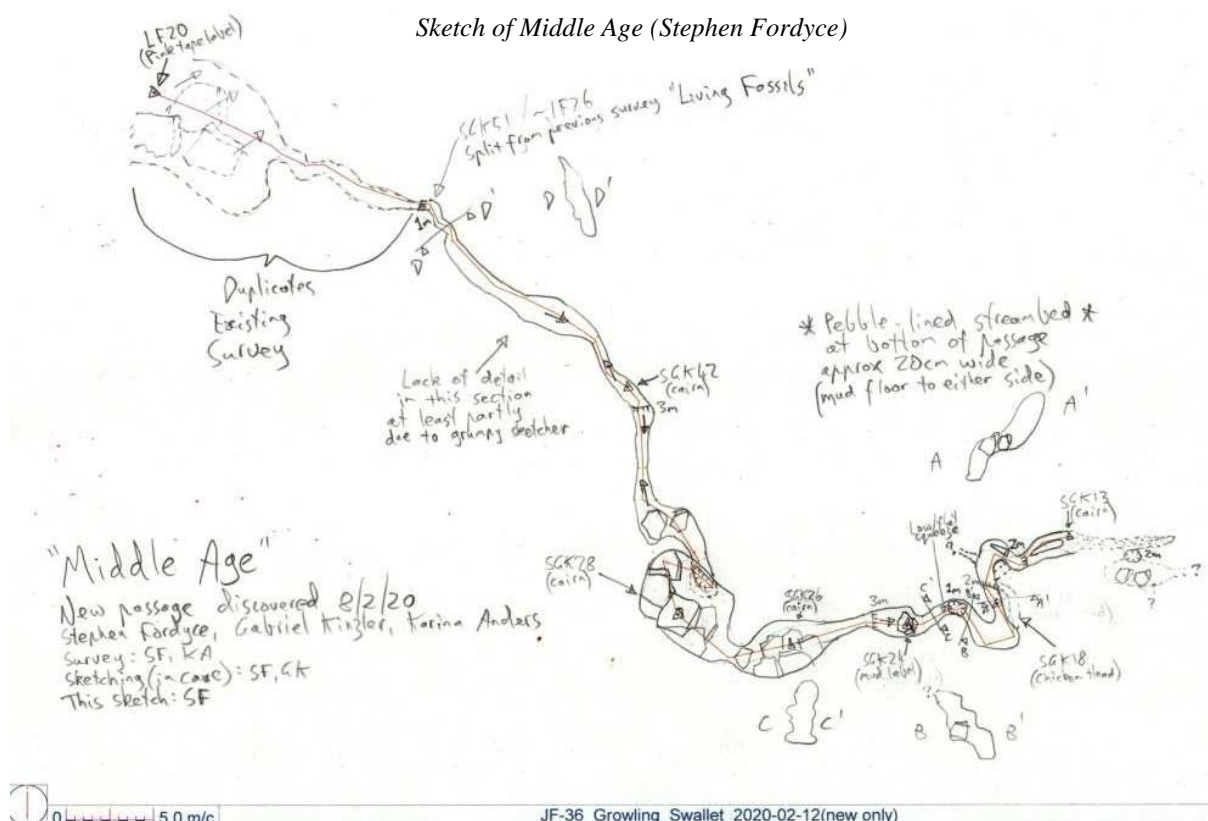
Back at the stream, we were very glad to see some water to both drink and pee in. I offered to pee on Gabriel’s hands, but he declined, the precious bugger.

The way out was... lame, although generally pretty quick. We followed the wrong stream up from Black River and spent about 15 minutes figuring out our mistake. The Slaughterhouse rockpile was uneventful. We contemplated going out via the main Growling Swallet entrance, but couldn’t be bothered walking back to Slaughterhouse to collect stuff we’d left there, and after my last trip I’m still a bit sceptical that it’s quicker. It was also an excellent opportunity to see how much energy Karina really had left – and I’m pleased to report she was still moving fast and cracking jokes as we failed to find the hole at the very top to get out. We exited the cave at 2 am, having got rather a late start (12:30 pm due to assorted faffing and embarrassments). We also removed the ~20 m length of rope left near the dive weights at Black River and all the rope and rigging on the Destiny Pitch – it’s slated to be replaced next time.



Coelacanth Sump was smaller than I expected, and less flat than the other passages I’ve dived. It’d be nice to give it one more go, but not until all other avenues have been re-checked.

To the survey and was it all that exciting really? Yes, I think so! The new passage is about 80 m shy of the end of the Living Fossils horizontally, and about 20 m below it, roughly following the same line.



It's about 150 m of new passage, which seems to keep going (BYO crowbar), and the pebbled streambed gives something to follow. The end is about 16 m above Coelacanth Sump level, which is a nice height for a flood bypass (about the height of the recent Niggly flood) that might actually punch through – this is further reinforced by the flood debris observed. Alan reports having possibility been in some of this section but without surveying it, any trace had (unsurprisingly) been washed clean. We named it “Middle Age”, since it's between Living Fossils and Coelacanth Sump, and because we were feeling decidedly middle-aged after pushing and surveying it.

The next trip has the dubious pleasure of pushing the end of Middle Age, as well as orienting and re-checking in the far reaches of Living Fossils, as well as contemplating some of the less remote leads we noted as we went along. A sketch update of the Living Fossils map may be added by Gabriel (I cunningly got him to annotate it in the cave and left it with him in Tassie).

Tachycardia Area Surface Bashing

9 February 2020

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Nina Birss, Stephen Fordyce

It was Sunday of a big weekend with not much sleep, but it was our last day in the JF and there were things to do. Nina was keen on seeing what the Tasmanian bush had to offer (sucker!) and I had an optimistic gigantic list of things to do (to be reported on later). Karina used the excuse of only having gumboots to head back to Hobart instead of join us, but she helped us leave a car at the bottom of the Niggly Track so was forgiven.

Having waved goodbye at the Tachycardia Track carpark (end of the western fork of Chrisps Rd), we had a vague look at Alan's map, missed his instructions entirely and followed an obvious blue-taped track west along the border of the logged area. Had we read the instructions, we would have known to head north through the dense cutting grass for 50 m and the proper track would soon make itself known.

So when we quickly lost the blue track and headed north, it would take 2 hrs of nasty scrub bashing and steep uphill before we got to Tachycardia (JF-270). Various lessons learned. However, if we hadn't taken this unfortunate detour, we wouldn't have found a hole halfway up. I hesitate to say cave, but it's worth another look and maybe a tag – 200 m NW of JF-568 Chrisps Creek Swallet (which we didn't visit) on a ridge, labelled “W27cave” in the GPS.

We also wouldn't have intersected a red-taped track two thirds of the way up, which angled up the hill towards Niggly. Eventually we realised it wasn't going to Tachycardia, so we bush-bashed the rest of the way. It looked a bit old, but was well marked – don't know where it starts or ends though.

We oriented ourselves at Tachycardia, and then took the long way (a large circle) to the small Swallet JF-273, which had the tiniest trickle running into it in the dry conditions. It's literally 10 m uphill from Tachycardia. Our navigational mojo in tatters, we continued on to collect a much more

accurate GPS point for JF-277 (a slightly larger trickle) and Z79 “North Chrisps Swallet” (a healthy flow, disappearing into the streambed).

In between these caves we stumbled upon a healthy shaft with a 2 m pitch and a noticeable lack of rocks to drop down it. Our building excitement was dashed on discovering the JF-278 tag, and subsequent checking of the archive indicated that it was “Charnier”, discovered by MadPhil and named/dropped by Alan and Serena in the mid-2000s and possibly explaining the lack of nice dropping rocks. There's a sketch in the archive and trip reports in SS345, 348 and 349. Lots of scary loose boulders and bones, bottomed at ~50 m depth but the final check and survey not completed. Potentially a worthy thing to do if anyone is game.



[insert random rainforest pic here]

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

By this stage we were on borrowed time, (literally) had a plane to catch and still faced an uncertain traverse around the contour to the Niggly track. Fortunately, the JF had toyed with us enough today and it was relatively quick and easy going to get around and start hoofing it down the Niggly track.

A quick stop at JF-398 Boulder Jenga to GPS it (the one in the club GPS was about 20 m out), along with the doline about 200 m up the Niggly track (JF-396). With the ~120 m of club rope still trapped in the scariness of Boulder Jenga (see *Southern Caver 71* – the Irish expedition), perhaps JF-396 might yield an alternative way in. It takes a small stream – in fact on a recent Niggly trip the Boulder Jenga entrance was completely dry but the JF-396 stream still trickled – which could well feed the aven with dripping water shown on the Boulder Jenga map in SC71. JF-396 gets only a few mentions in the literature (SS216, 222, 261, 265), none in recent history, and although it didn't look that exciting, I really didn't have a proper look. From the trip reports, it'll be (at minimum) a crowbar jobbie.

We set a new record for traversing the rest of the Niggly track and a land speed record driving back to Maydena and then Hobart. The flight was made, despite some last-minute confusion about luggage allowances (my fault!) and all was well.

GPS is recorded for (and submitted to the archive):

- The new cave part-way up
- The red-taped track
- Our entire track for the day
- All caves/locations mentioned above

JF-345 Ice Tube – JF-36 Growling Swallet through trip – How not to do it

15 February 2020

Alan Jackson

Party: Simon Elliot, Alan Jackson, Liz McCutcheon, Daniel Mitchell

Ice Tube always throws a spanner or two your direction but after this one I have a complete tool kit to work with.

A pleasant start saw us stroll to Ice Tube, arriving late morning. The track wasn't in bad condition, but could do with a tart up in the not too distant future. A bit of overnight rain indicated water levels would be lively but not unpleasant. The first bunch of pitches went as usual but, as always, Killing Joke, and its propensity for a good rope snag, was in the back of my mind. Not to worry though, as I was happy with my rope stocks if the usual happened. But it was the 47.5 m Fabulous Spangle that brought us undone. I've never even gone close to having a rope stuck here. Bizarrely the knot/join had made it down and about 8 m of the other rope was on the ground when it went awry. I wasn't pulling the rope, so don't have a read on what the dynamic was. It's not clear if the end came through then it wrapped on something, if snagged on something else before that point or if we simply failed to take the knot out and it jammed in the ring. I guess the next trip will reveal all.



*Dan and Liz all smiles while Alan goes to meet his fate.
Photo: supplied Dan Mitchell*

Three of us bounced on the rope but it wouldn't budge. The banter and grins turned to nervous smiles and anxious silence. Shit. We had a 12 m and 41 m rope and the portion of the 56 m we could reach. A rough measure suggested we'd be able to salvage about 16 m of rope from the 56. Before committing to cutting off what we could reach I did some mental calcs. Killing Joke, at 44 m, was the problem. 16+ 12+ 41 knots wasn't getting us down a 44 m pitch in one clean move, and even if the 41 stretched enough to get us down and we improvised some extra pull down length with pack lines, bits of SRT kit etc. the risk was too high that a standard KJ rope snag would leave us with insufficient rope to get down the 35 m Maelstrom pitch and most of the way down Never Forever (14 m). Hmmm...

Well, you aren't reading about an Ice Tube rescue, so obviously we made it out. What would you have done to get out? We didn't leave any more rope behind. A good mental exercise for you all to see if you can decide what you'd have done (assuming sitting down on a wet windy ledge and

awaiting rescue about 24 hours later wasn't high on your agenda).

Problem solved we launched into Fallopian Tube. And so began episode two of how not to do Ice Tube. We headed in a few metres too low and found lots of too tight stuff. Simon ended up down near the bottom and in a spot he couldn't get out of. We left him there till I'd found the way through up higher then we worked out a way of helping him up with a bit of rope and muscle. All this, combined with the time required to solve episode one, resulted in four pretty tired cavers a long way behind schedule with many obstacles still in front of them.

We slogged through the shit of Mothers Passage to Mainline and felt like we'd finally had a win. I had already abandoned the idea of popping over to Dreamtime to complete my Fordyce homework – he'd keep. We headed upstream 50 m or so to the first bit of easily accessible running water and settled in for a wash (and some lunch for me – the others had eaten while I solved the Killing Joke puzzle). Lunch at 1915 hours was well overdue.

The rest of the trip was relatively uneventful. We were on the slow side but didn't stop. I was concerned about meeting the midnight preliminary call out I'd set. The eroding silt banks at the bottom of Windy Rift completed the tool kit though. A central section, about 4 m wide, of the remaining silt bank had disappeared and this was just passable by sidling along a narrow ledge (of friable silt) and then springing over the last metre or two to the next chunk of sediment. Fun and games. We slogged up the streamway and emerged into the darkness, reaching the carpark at 0001 hours. Crisis (and call out) averted.

Some comments on the current IT rigging situation:

The rigging in Ice Tube is pretty crusty at the moment. Rolan pointed out the same when he and others did a 30-year anniversary trip a few years back. Lots of non-stainless maillons and chain looking festy as hell, the approach to Killing Joke is a joke and the repeated historical rope hang ups on KJ is a problem that should be solved, since pull throughs are the norm for this cave. April, once I'm back from Vietnam, has 'rig IT with standard SRT and throw some more stainless steel in' written all over it (as well as solve the riddle of how on Earth we cocked up the Fabulous Spangle pull down). If someone else goes there before me then please take a photo of what caused us so much grief.

Solving Killing Joke

Firstly, we didn't for one second consider ascending the snagged rope to see what it was stuck on – this generally leads to spectacular falls and broken limbs (and mostly probably death once you throw in a wet, windy, cold 24 hour wait for heroes to arrive).

We hung three people off the snagged rope to stretch it down as much as possible then reached up and cut it off as high as we could reach. This generated 16.5 m of rope. The rest sprang back up and hung well out of reach.

The next two pitches presented no problem (12.5 and 3 m). Killing Joke would require serious attention. I tasked the others with eating and keeping warm. I rigged the 16.5 m rope as a traverse to reach the pitch head proper then used the 41 m rope from the primary chain y-hang and headed down for an SRT recce. While I'd never done an Ice Tube

bounce trip, I knew the pitch was twisted and ledged, so there had to be at least one rebelay bolt part way down and Madphil had used exclusively 10 mm stainless steel expansion bolts with hangers left in situ. The large broad ledge was reached and I noted a few useful potential natural anchors in the floor. You can safely get off rope and wander about on this ledge if you want. A few metres down past the edge and off to the side was a single 10 mm stainless steel as hoped for. I tied in and continued down to another ledge (not so nice for getting off the rope on though). Another rebelay bolt was located just below the ledge. Again, I tied in and eyeballed how much of the 41 m rope was left. It didn't reach the ground but it was close and the water spray was making it tricky to be sure. I chose to tie the 12 m rope in at this rebelay and descend to check it reached the floor instead of giving the others a knot crossing in the middle of a water fall a few metres off the deck. There were a couple of metres on the floor, so I headed back up to explain the plan (after I'd worked it out during the ascent...).



*A common scene in Ice Tube
Photo: Gabriel Kinzler*

Liz and Dan headed down and I tasked Simon with hanging about at key points to confirm ropes were going to reach critical points for me. Simon waited at the first big ledge while I stripped the approach and measured it against the first drop. Simon confirmed that the 16.5 m rope would get me to the ledge nicely, but wasn't going to get me to the first rebelay five or six metre further down and out. Simon then moved to the rebelay and I switched the ropes around so the 16.5 was the abseil rope and the top section of the 41 was the pull down for stage 1. I descended and pulled the ropes.

I took the 16.5 rope, knotted the ends together and found the middle point, which I placed around the large natural bollard on the floor of the ledge and threw the tails down to Simon who confirmed I would JUST be able to reach the first rebelay bolt (had it been short I could have used the end of the 41, which would have been more like a 22 m length). Simon continued down to the second rebelay and I did a double rope descend on an oval carabiner on (double) munter hitch. I locked off the munter with the last half metre of rope(s) and swung to the bolt and clipped in, then got off the double rope and convinced it to pull through on the natural.

Simon again confirmed that the rope I now had available (growing all the time!) reached the second rebelay and headed down to the bottom and I set up a pull down with the 16.5 and the twenty-something metres of the 41 I now had. Managing the traffic in the bolt was critical to ensure I didn't

end up unable to retrieve my cowstail carabiner because it was jammed under a loaded rope (this was actually planned BEFORE I unweighted off the previous double rope abseil). The rebelay was practically free-hanging, so I couldn't rely on standing on a ledge to unweight the bolt).

I was soon at the second rebelay bolt and did the same again – managed carabiner traffic, pulled down the rope from above, set up a new pull through, confirmed it all reached the floor with the others then headed down.

Mischief managed. From this point we had enough rope to get down the next two pitches using single rope rigging, so the stress was over, but all the standard pull downs worked and we escaped with all of what was left. Despite the anxiety at the time, in hindsight I really enjoyed the problem solving opportunity this cock up presented. All's well that ends well.

STC Outrageous Social Event: Caving/Tea Party for Twisted Minds

16 February 2020

Bill Nicholson

Twisted Minds: Qug McKendrick-King, Dan Mitchell, Liz McCutcheon, Amy & Linda Robertson, Chris Sharples, Alan Jackson & Loretta Bell, Anna & Ben Jackson, Bill & Callum Nicholson

And a fine morning it was as we all loitered outside the Public Toilet at Maydena, talking frocks and other groovy stuff related to caving. "I need a cuppa" someone yelled, "and I can't wait to frock up" said Chris ever so quietly; so we headed off to the Florentine before this gaggle of twisted minds became a rabble of ill intent.



*The presidential couple
Photo: supplied Bill Nicholson*

The aim for this bit of silliness was just simply to bring members together for a laugh or two over a cup of tea (4 litres was brewed) and to top the day off with a wee grotty cave.



*A good bunch and a cuppa in a nice setting
Photo: supplied Bill Nicholson*

Chris wore his frock with maybe too much ease, Amy looked very debonair; Dan, what can I say... strutted with flair & took out the "Most Outrageous" award whilst Liz sauntered amongst us with her ahem... groin enhancement and all but two ended the day with a poke in Cashion Creek Cave.



*Alan's look says it all.
Photo: supplied Bill Nicholson*

It was a team effort to bring such a diverse group of bent misfits together...well done everybody.



*Mrs Alana Jackson
Photo: supplied Bill Nicholson*

JF-35 Gormenghast

26 February 2020

Bill Nicholson

Party: a damp one... Serena Benjamin, Bill Nicholson

The weather forecast was excellent; snow above 900 m, hail, rain and a brisk south-westerly, adverse conditions it stated. So I asked Serena if she would like to go for a stroll in the Park, to check out the access track to Gormenghast.

"Yes, I have seen the forecast, let's do it"
- Great, I will bring the Tea Pot"

I have been dyeing to check out the access to this old favourite for a while with a mind to run a trip or two. Well the weather didn't disappoint us, nothing like a bit of adverse conditions to relieve the boredom of sunny days and dry tracks.



*Guess the fungus
Photo: Bill Nicholson*

The track is fairly good, a few treefalls could do with maybe a little track relocating. Water flow into the cave was not significant.

Have you ever noticed how a cup of tea tastes so good, when you are standing in a puddle, cold and wet?

JF Surface Bashing

5-9 March 2020

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Karina Anders, Stephen Fordyce

Despite the constant rain both forecast and observable, and multiple opportunities to bail, Karina was still up for accompanying me on this fool's errand, and professed to needing to get out of the house. We made a stop at Junee to collect data, before heading up the Niggly track in the rain.

First port of call was JF-647 The Slip Swallet. On Alan's advice we ignored the vestiges of the track up The Slip, turning right at the star picket and continuing the follow the

Niggly track out of the thick regrowth before going into beast mode up the hill. It was hard going both up and down, including a few experimental (and regrettable) forays into The Slip. My best advice would be to stay within sight of the dense skinny regrowth of The Slip, but out of it. The GPS co-ordinates were within 20 m, but new ones were recorded anyway. There was a goodly gush of water going into the cave.



Karina enjoys “getting out of the house”
Photo: Stephen Fordyce

By the time we got back to the Niggly track it was 2 pm, still raining and Karina made the rather wise decision to take steps to retire to bed with a hot water bottle sooner rather than later. The leeches she had acquired did not seem to be the medical variety. I reluctantly continued up the track, to meet up with Gabriel later as planned.

Boulder Jenga was flowing well, nearly overflowing its banks, and I continued up the hill to Niggly. Assorted optimistic entrance checking plans were hastily shed, to focus on the necessities. With only basic survival kit in my pack, contouring around to JF-236 Bunyips Lair wasn't too bad, although as usual I lost the track immediately (follow the base of the cliffs around from Niggly, the tape going up the gully is a red herring). It was taking quite a bit of water, unsurprisingly.

Next stop was Z-79 North Chrisps Swallet, then JF-277 (an un-named swallet) and finally JF-273 (adjacent to Tachycardia) to check on experimental setups from my trip out there with Nina in January. This route is well worth a taped track, I will probably make one next time! Back to Bunyips Lair and I was able to follow the track back to Niggly with only minor geographic embarrassment.



The Bunyips Lair stream cascading down into the cave
Photo: Stephen Fordyce

A return trip Niggly to Bunyips Lair if you know the track should only take 30 min, and I think it took about 3 hrs from Niggly out to JF-273 and back, with considerable faffing, getting lost and messing about.

JF-237 Niggly

5-9 March 2020

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Stephen Fordyce, Gabriel Kinzler

A brief and belated report on what could well be the last Niggly trip of the summer. With Alan in Vietnam and others unavailable, the dregs of the Niggly project ground on, courtesy of the dubious enthusiasm of Gabriel and me.

Thursday 5th saw Karina and I wandering around in the JF in rather miserable conditions – a separate report on that – before the trip into Niggly began early evening. I have never found the entrance so dry, warm and generally enjoyable! Some faffing and experiment setup were required on the way down and so while bed-time was a modest 2 am, we still didn't get away from camp until midday on Friday. The forecast rain made the large stream in the Pool of Promise Passage loud and angry, justifying our decision not to attempt access to Mother of God on Friday 6th.

At some crucial point it became apparent that we had all required drilling paraphernalia with the exception of the bits. In undoubtedly my highlight of the trip, my previously guilty distrust of a distraught Gabriel was revealed, and the secret drill-bits stashed in my survey kit were produced with a flourish.

We made our slow and tortured way along the Game of Thrones section and then headed up Bucks Luck to the Wedding Chamber, dragging a heavy bag each containing crowbar, drill, rope and gear for dropping the pitch. Once down, the obvious way on was at the end of the chamber, through a vertical slot/window about 3 m off the floor. A couple of bolts, standing on shoulders and much grunting saw this obstacle passed using the only spare rope we had left (a nasty 11 mm thing). A single 8 mm SS throughbolt with orange string and SS maillon was left on our way out. A new chamber of similar proportions was gained, and named the “Room of Resignation”. The sad excuse for a way on was ~8 m up a shear wall to an uninspiring lead in the ceiling – it had taken us something like three hours to get here from camp and returning again for a full-scale aid climb was beyond contemplation.



*Clean Tasmanian
Photo: Stephen Fordyce*

With more enthusiasm than me, Gabriel disappeared in an improbably small side lead, coming back to report a pitch and a climb some distance away. Regretfully, it would need to be surveyed and the rigging gear was also shoved/thrown/cursed through the painful little meander – this section was named “Bad Juju”. Turns out this little meander was a connector into a section of parallel streamway, which was mildly interesting (but no more). The stream was small but steady, with two pitches and a climb. From the junction point, a ~8 m pitch down a large hole was mirrored by a ~6 m climb going up blades of rock. A smaller hole with ~5 m pitch was rigged off naturals and allowed going downstream a (very) short distance into impenetrable rockfall, or upstream to the base of the 8 m pitch. Nothing doing.

We were hardly going to come back to do the climb, so it was now or never. Back at the junction point, with the trusty 11 mm as safety line and a bolt in the ceiling, I was able to gingerly get across to the other side and perch on cemented dolerite boulders, for a better look at the source of the water – some kind of a hole up there. If it was closer to home, it would be a viable climb, the blades of rock sticking out making for good holds. Less exciting is the thinly bedded rock with questionable bolt placement opportunity on the way up. If this is ever visited again, hopefully it's from above.

Pretty sick of it, we surveyed out with no enthusiasm for sketching, but I made a passable memory sketch later. The short climb to the window between lower Wedding Chamber and Room of Resignation was derigged but stainless hardware and orange string left in case some idiot wants to

go back there again. The pitch in the Wedding Chamber was fully derigged.

We had a quick look at the prospective climb identified by Alan and me in the upper reaches of the Wedding Chamber, near where it's entered from the Bucks Luck lead. It still looks vaguely worth doing and I suspect a way could be found around the boulders rather than climbing (at worst, 4-5 bolts would probably do it). This was an excellent excuse not to derig Game of Thrones, and apparently also one to leave Gabriel's spare drill battery and blue bag somewhere out there too.

On Saturday, the observed dropping water levels matched projected expectations nicely, so we committed to Mother of God, re-jigging various handlines as we went. There's an 11 mm rope etrier down the slippery slot on SS hardware, and SS hardware and a tape (to be replaced) on the final down climb to the main stream. The upstream-side handline at the up and over just before Ninja Junction was replaced with 11 mm rope last trip and the old stuff gleefully set aside for the next rope testing day.

Enthusiasm was not high, indeed I'd only managed to convince Gabriel not to leave early by continuing delaying of the decision, so the agenda at the end was not ambitious. We put in a solid couple of hours continuing the aid climb near the end of Mother of God – it's now at 20-25 m (the DistoX had gunk on it and wouldn't measure it), to a saddle which will serve nicely as a new belay station. While it still keeps going up, the character of the upper levels of the cave is less of a round pitch and more of an elongated passage cut down by water, complete with roof steps on the side. No footage/photo; you'll have to take my word for it. Still pretty desperate, obviously – we probably should focus on the planned survey bonanza and final push of the terminal rockpile before spending any more motivation on the climb.



*Dirty mainlander probably infected with The 'Rona
Photo: Stephen Fordyce*

For some reason, this somewhat unproductive trip left us as shagged as usual, but with only moderately heavy packs, it was too good an opportunity not to drag out the SCUBA tank which has been mouldering down there since the Bossland push dive. It was nearly left behind several times, but eventually made it back to the car, which turns out to have been an excellent move given I may not be back until next summer. It's rather nice to be having a break from Niggly, and perhaps an enforced break will do a world of good for enthusiasm when we return.

A postscript: as I dragged my sorry arse out of the Niggly entrance, I heard voices. Aha, it must be Fraser, who had talked about coming up to meet us and do some filming on

the way back. I yelled “Hi Fraser, you are totally carrying this cylinder down the hill!”, only to be informed that the person Gabriel was talking to was in fact not Fraser, and given what Fraser might have to do, was most certainly not Fraser. He was a bushwalker looking for Wherretts Lookout (obviously not in the right spot). Certainly got both Gabriel and I very confused.

An update on some of the experiments will be published in a separate report, but a key finding on this trip was that JF-236 Bunyips Lair appears NOT to feed The Waterfall near the base of the main pitches, as was previously assumed.

IB-14 Exit Cave

8 March 2020

Janine McKinnon

Party: Janine McKinnon, John Oxley, Chris Sharples, Ric Tunney, Barbara (Wetti) Weiland

The original plan had been for a few of us to swim the lake that was my sump dive in January this year to do a second check of the rockpile I thought didn't go (see SS436 for an enthralling – I mean hilarious – read). My other two enthusiastic participants couldn't come this date so there wasn't much point me repeating the exercise alone again. Thus the trip morphed into a pleasant tourist trip.

Wetti is an Austrian caving friend visiting for a few weeks, and thus hasn't seen this (or any) Tasmanian caves. John hadn't been there in 33 years, so a wander about would suit them well.



*The Ball Room, re-revisited
Photo: John Oxley*

It had rained heavily on Thursday and Friday and we were a bit concerned about water levels at the entrance. The river was in good flow, but not flood. The river at the first crossing was flowing well and we got wet to (my) mid-thigh. We could see the levels had been much higher recently (presumably the previous day or two) so waiting a full day after the rain stopped was possibly a very good idea. Most of this water was coming in via D'Entrecasteaux Passage, and the stream level was only calf deep past the junction.

We wandered up to past the rockpile and into a few side passages, before a side trip into Western Passage as far as the Railway Tunnel. Chris showed us the extraordinary markings on some boulders just before the Railway Tunnel. Attempts are still being made to identify what they are. None of us have seen anything like them before.

The water monitoring station Ian Household placed in the stream at the entrance to Western Passage in the early 1990s, and which has been abandoned since its purpose was completed then, is still there. As is a set of three or four quadrats placed by a club member around the same time for a biology sampling exercise and also abandoned long since. It is a pity those responsible for these infrastructures also didn't take the responsibility to remove them when they had completed their studies.



*The most staggering streamway passage in Tas is in Exit
Photo: John Oxley*

The water level had dropped about 10 cm on our way out.

My “sump” is probably truly named again now, so we probably saved ourselves a wasted trip not heading up to there.

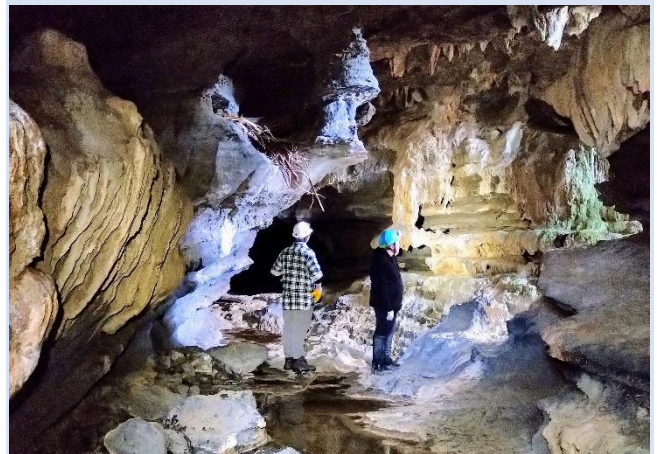
Mole Creek

20-22 March 2020

Bill Nicholson

Party: We tried our best. The Clan Nicholson; Liam, Callum and of course myself.

Regardless of the cancellation of the Club piss up with a little underground frolic, we decided to go anyway and have a session amongst ourselves and to poke around Honeycomb for some light entertainment.



*Honeycomb Cave
Photo: Bill Nicholson*

The weather was glorious, the beer was cold, the food was exceptionally well-cooked and the after-hours entertainment was significantly tripping due to memory loss of where the tent pegs were.

Social distancing was maintained by not washing and changing clothes. Our fire pot was voted "from a distance" as the most impressive in regards to heat output and flame height.



You don't say...
Photo: Bill Nicholson

In the early hours of one brisk morning, stumbling back from the Sir Thomas, a platypus was seen wagging alongside our tent; inquisitive little monotreme thingy.

A few hours were spent in Honeycomb. A great weekend, reminiscent of great but decadent SCS times.

June-Florentine Experiments Update

9 March 2020

Stephen Fordyce

Inspired by various things, including previous dye tracing and water logging experiments (i.e. Rolan Eberhard's 1993 forestry report, Petr Smekjal's dye detectors), I have been conducting some experiments on visits to the JF. I've made some electronic loggers to detect commonly used water tracing dyes, and also depth, as well as programmable devices to release dye automatically.

I'd better start off by saying that while none of the concepts are particularly new, an extremely cautious approach has been taken to avoid any adverse impacts (i.e. turning rivers green). In the good old days, common practice was to chuck kilograms of dye in just to make sure of a result, and apologise later if needed.

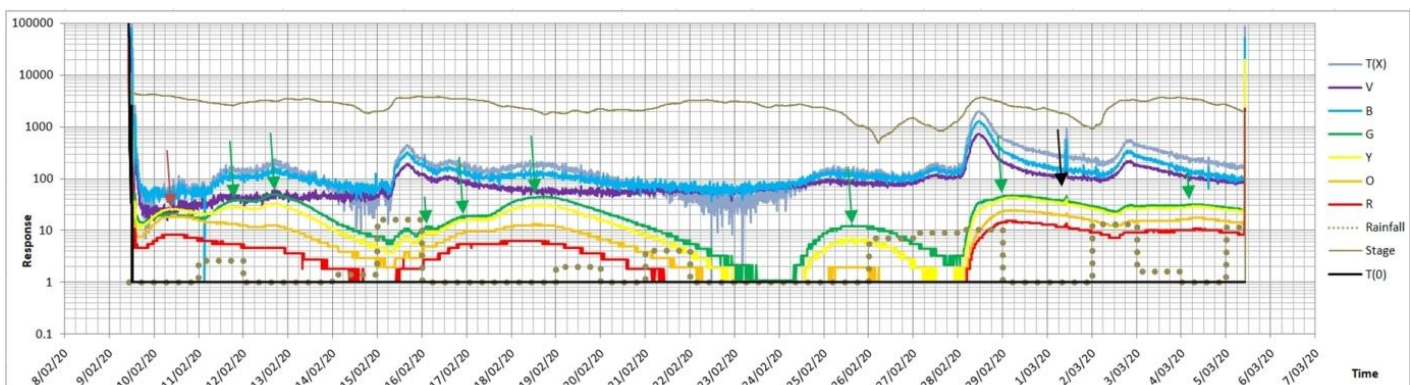
The first stage of experiments is mostly complete, largely intended to help determine appropriate levels of dye to use, test the setups, and see where to focus next. I'll publish something ridiculously detailed at some point. Still, here are some key results for general interest:

With the detectors able to detect dye down to roughly 1 part per trillion, only very small amounts (tens of grams) of dye are required. The dyes used are harmless, with long histories of use for water tracing.

- The water from Boulder Jenga was detected at the Pool of Promise in Niggly, with the assumption being that it joins the Dreamtime Streamway in Growling Swallet
- A convincing negative result for Bunyips Lair feeding the Niggly Waterfall (my guess is Z-79 North Chrisp Swallet feeds the waterfall instead, and the Bunyips Lair water joins in Red Rockets Revenge)
- The Niggly Waterfall joins Lower Atlantis where theorised
- There is a probable result for Four Road Swallet to Junee (no result by Rolan in 1993)
- There is a probable result for Tachycardia to Junee, and Bunyips Lair to Junee (no previous tests)
- In Niggly, in low water conditions:
 - o Ninja Junction to the end Mother of God is ~7 hrs and ~1 km
 - o From there, it's ~6 km to Junee and ~37 hrs

I've also placed depth/stage loggers both in Junee Cave, and in the DIY streamway in Niggly. These help to interpret results and account for turbidity, as well as understanding flooding patterns.

If you would like to help by doing a dye release, please get in touch – stephen.fordyce@gmail.com. There are currently deployed detectors needing dye releases, which I can't do thanks to the bloody 'Rona.



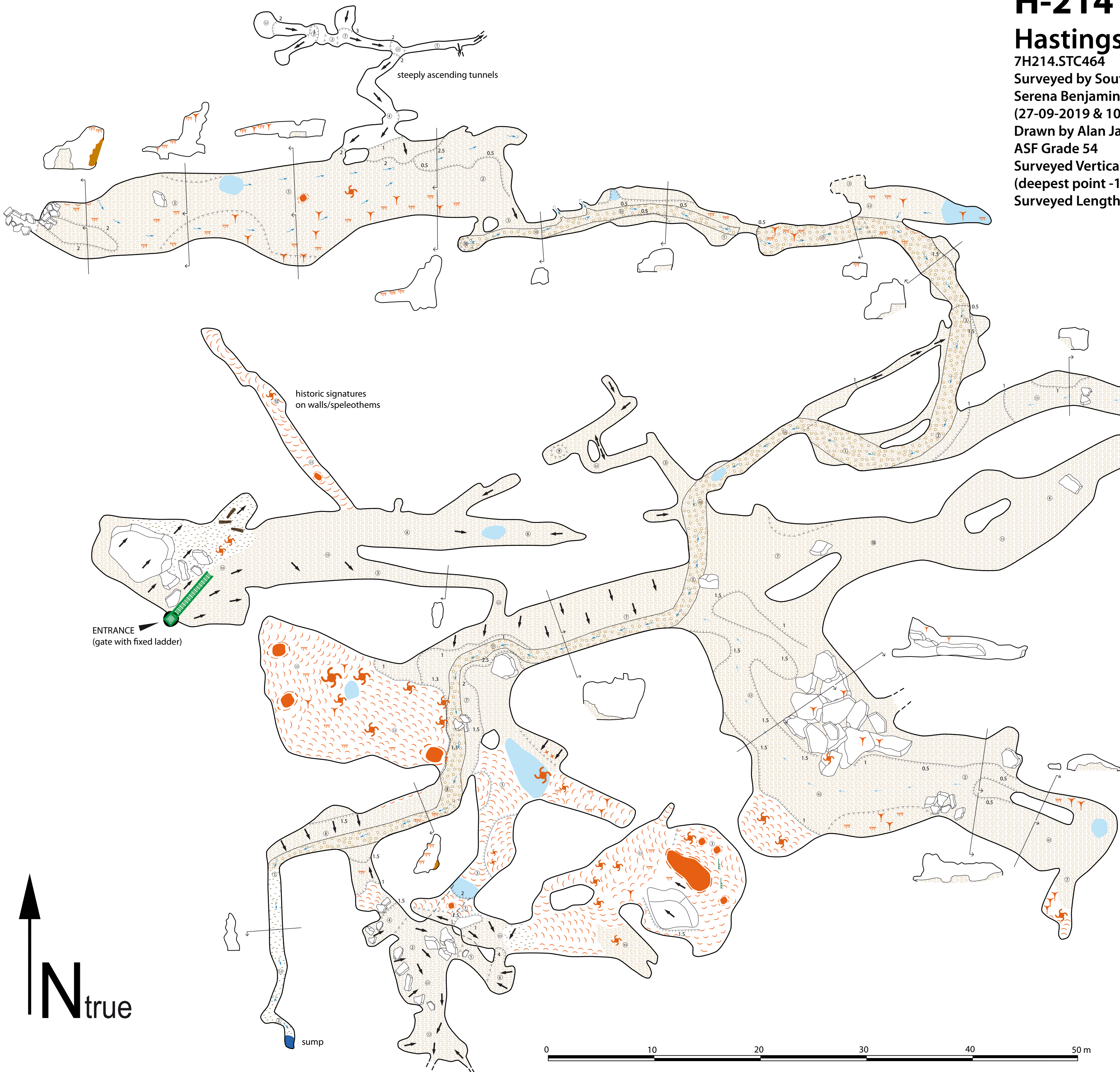
Some lovely results from a month-long detector deployment

H-214 King George V Cave

Hastings, Tasmania

7H214.STC464
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers:
Serena Benjamin, Rolan Eberhard, Alan Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler
(27-09-2019 & 10-11-2019)
Drawn by Alan Jackson (2020)
ASF Grade 54
Surveyed Vertical Range - 44 m
(deepest point -18 m below entrance, highest point +26 m above entrance)
Surveyed Length - ~800 m

PLAN



LEGEND

passage wall

passage wall conjectural or continues (tight/low)

passage wall (underlying passage)

drop off/ledge - with height (m)

ceiling step

③

ceiling height (m)

section (with view direction)

direction of floor slope

entrance

large boulders/rocks

gate

steel steps/ladder

log/timber

roots

cobblestones

clayey/silty sediments

mud

water

water (sumped)

water direction of flow

water direction of flow (rising)

water direction of flow (sinking)

water direction (ephemeral)

stalagmite (plan)

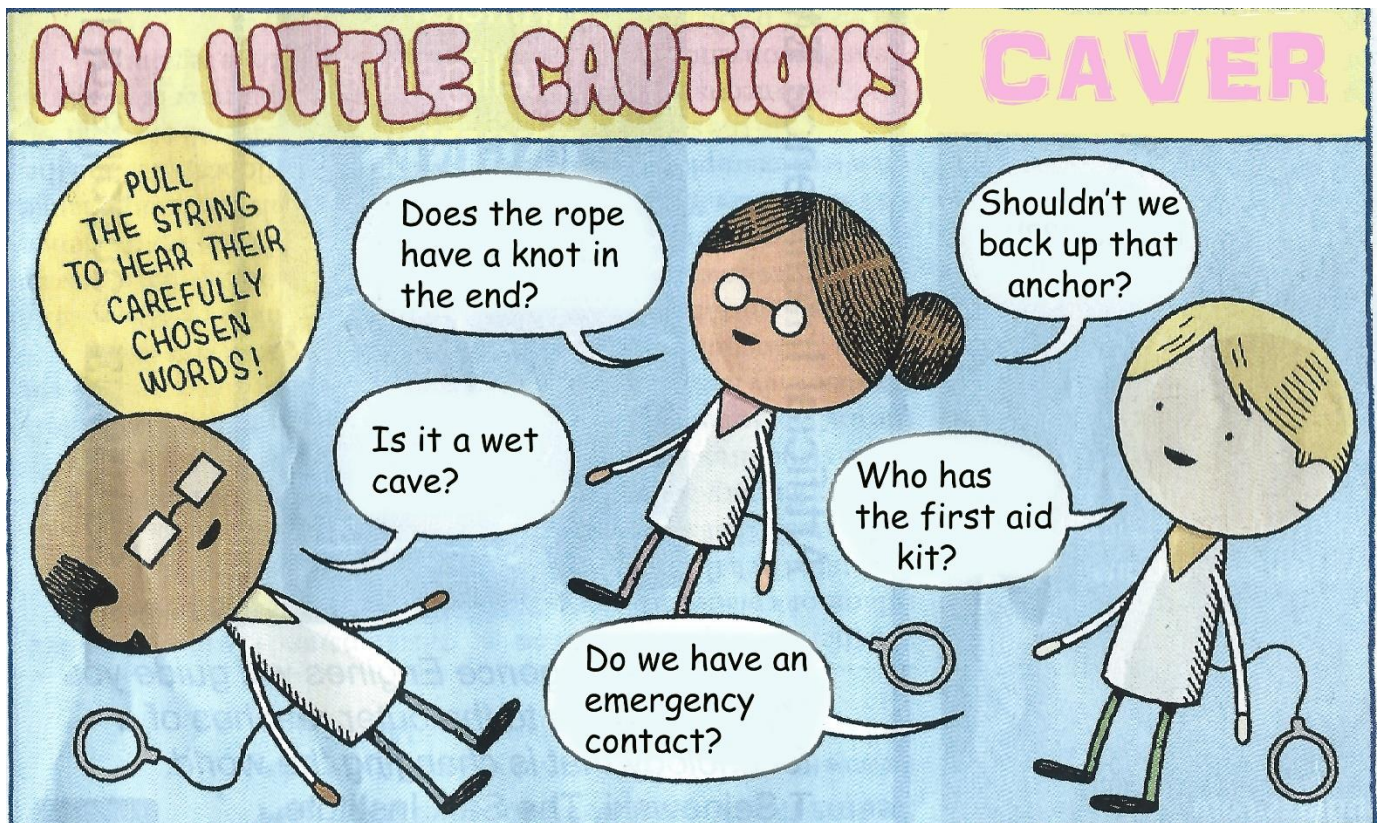
stalactite

column (plan)

straws

flowstone (sloping)

Fun and Diversions



Credit: Tom Gauld

Blast From the Past



Source: Janine McKinnon

The Last Page

