

Speleo Spiel 442

January-February 2021



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Front Cover:

Growling Swallet sober.
Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Back Cover:

Growling Swallet on psychedelics.
Photo: Alex Hormann

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



Speleo Spiel

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Editorial

A quiet spell was expected (hoped for?) after the agitation experienced in the last months of 2020, but it's been the opposite and we continue the state-wide onslaught of caving activities and news.

This issue of *Speleo Spiel* is not as paltry as I feared it would be, thanks to a few hefty contributions by a variety of cavers. Check out, for instance, Karina Anders and Ciara Smart's report of their trip to Niggly with Stephen Fordyce; it's worth its weight in gold.

It's been a year and six issues since I took over the position of Editor and I relish the job. Only one edition came out late (the present one), but I'm otherwise contented with the result. Hopefully so are you and if I'm allowed to take it on for another year, I envision a number of additional improvements to make it even more enjoyable.

Have a great year of caving, y'all.

Stuff 'n' Stuff

- There is a special online screening for the Australian launch of the International Year of Caves and Karst 2021, followed by live Q&A with the director, on 6 March 2021, 7:00 pm (AEDT).

For security reasons, attendees must log in with their Eventbrite account to view the online event page.

Register now using the following link:

<https://bit.ly/3oiDC3X>



Source: ASF

- It is the International Year of Caves and Karst; a year to celebrate all things related to caves and caving. To explore, understand and protect. The International Union of Speleology officially launched the IYCK online. For those that missed the launch, you can watch it here: <https://youtu.be/T4yud1bI1Hs>. You can also check out the official website here: <http://iyck2021.org/>



Source: UIS

- Brendan Moodie and David Holley of Mt. Field and Southwest National Parks confirmed that the 8 Road gate lock has now been replaced after it was vandalised, rendering it unusable. Thanks to both of them for sparing us an additional hour of walking to get to and back from our beloved caves.



The 8 Road gate. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

- Here is an interesting read on ABC News and supported by Stefan Eberhard on the loss of habitat impacting some caves and communities in Western Australia: <https://ab.co/3q5s3OB>



Source: Stefan Eberhard and ABC News

Trip Reports

IB-10 Mystery Creek Cave – 2020 STC SAR Training

12 December 2020

Alan Jackson

Party: Karina Anders, David Butler, Anna Ekdahl, Cath Hemley, Alan Jackson, Steve Jacobs, Gabriel Kinzler, Janice March, John Oxley, Michael 'Pax' Packer, Ciara Smart

After 2019's minor epic in Growling Swallet I decided I'd keep the 2020 exercise a bit lower key. A group of about a dozen, including four from up north, headed to Mystery Creek Cave for a relaxed day.



*Party parity.
Photo: Gabriel Kinzler*

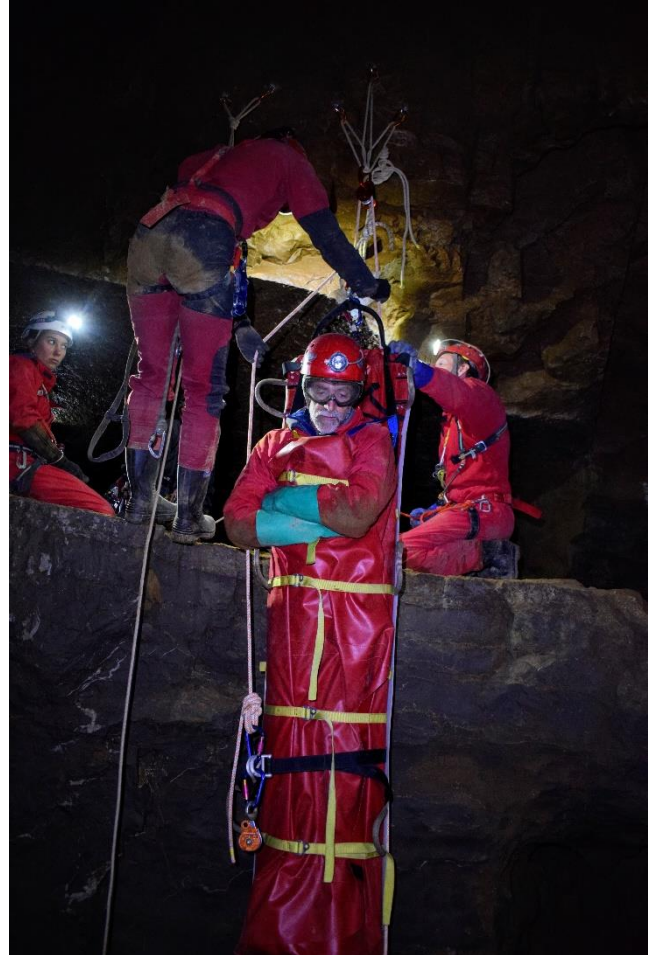
Rather than tackle a whole lot of new obstacles and spending time working out how to best negotiate them, teams were tasked with recreating three of the 'stages' from the 2018 rescue exercise (screw holes ready to go!). This facilitated faster rigging and gave groups more time to practice the stretcher transitions required.



*Trying to improve on the 2018 system to relative success.
Photo: John Oxley*

We did modify one section from the 2018 approach to add a degree of difficulty. We had time to set it all up, run the stretcher from one end to the other, then tension things up again and have another go in the other direction with different people in different roles and positions.

I think everyone had a good time, learnt something and could still keep their eyes open at the end.



Unsatisfied customer. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

After the exercise we retired to Ros Skinner's place at Hastings and gorged ourselves on a stupendous spread of BBQed goods and salads prepared by Pat and Tony Culberg.



Good mood good food. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Thanks to everyone who attended and Ros, Pat and Tony for their hospitality and catering.

JF-344 Serendipity – The third visit

20 December 2020

Petr Smejkal

Party: Karina Anders, Serena Benjamin, Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal

After two visits to Serendipity, we had a pretty clear vision of how to reach the bottom and what gear to take. It was four of us on the trip: Karina, Serena, Andreas and myself.

We had no doubts we would make it down and walk the bottom. Well, the trip went really smoothly until we reached the car park, where I realised I packed an extra thermal shirt but no thermal pants. Serena saved my skin (literally, try to wear a PVC trog suit with nothing under, that thing peels your skin off) with her extra thermal pants. After that it went smoothly again, there is no more drama in this report.

We entered JF-344 at around 10 am, the cave was rigged all the way to the last pitch "Phobos" which meant fast progress. Rigging the last pitch went really well; having seen the pitches on the trip before and having time to think about the rigging meant no time was wasted.

There was nobody to guide us and Phobos proved not to be the simplest pitch I have encountered. Reading through past reports I am almost certain we did not abseil as the original explorers did so I am going to talk about the rigging a bit more.

From "The Balcony" I abseiled ~15 m and I swung to reach a bridge. I used one sling to tighten around a natural sticking above the floor and attached another sling to the first one. The second sling freely hung under the bridge. I used this sling as a rebelay. The rebelay kept the rope away from the original wall which avoided friction.

From there it took another ~20 m to reach a little plateau about 25 m above the actual cave bottom. Performing a short traverse above the pitch (going away from a water stream on the pitch) we could rig a free hang that took us all the way to the bottom. This approach cost more rope (for the second part we used 27 m and it was just enough) but in the end I believe it was a bit more straightforward than the original rigging that involved a 7 m pitch and a climb.

At the bottom we had lunch and a chat about what to do next. Nobody was interested in an epic and the decision was to ramble around following the leads upstream. At first, we followed the "Headbanger Marathon Series I" to a point where the passage got tight. On my own I continued for another few minutes until I reached the "French Connection". I could see some free climbs that could be the way forward but being on my own I had no urge to continue and returned to the others. After that we pushed every single passage that we found but all ended up either narrow or as a sump. At the "Headbanger I Bypass" we did not push for very long, and returned to the main corridor after we hit the rockpile.

That was it for our rambling at the cave bottom. We decided to leave and started climbing up. I was last and was in charge of derigging. We left the cave derigged at ~5 pm. It was a great trip. It is also a last trip for Andreas before his journey to Antarctica, but hopefully we'll fit one more before he leaves us for Norway.

JF-237 Niggly

23-25 December 2020

Party: Karina Anders, Stephen Fordyce, Ciara Smart

Day 1 (by Ciara)

I will start off this report by noting that I possibly did not spend enough time interrogating Steve, who at this point was a stranger to me, as to his aims and methods for this trip. Having missed out on many adventures due to my second bout of a fortnight long quarantine 'holiday', I was possibly overeager to get underground again. On day one, a hot January day, Karina turned up a full 25 minutes prior to our agreed meeting time (this matters when it is before 7 am) and we were off on another adventure in the JF.

A leisurely walk up the interminable hill meant we did not enter the cave until after midday. Cave packs were weighed prior and it was noted that Steve's pack came in at over 14 kg, compared to the 8.5 and 9 of mine and Karina's respectively. This disparity was rather impressive considering we were taking very little into the cave other than camping gear and food.

The fun began when we reached the bottom of the pitches as Steve hadn't been quite honest in the actual distance to the 'tennis court.' Many hours, and possibly one piggy-back session later, we arrived at the final agonising mud slope below the tennis court. This took several desperate attempts

to ascend and the nature of the ordeal ruled out any notions of a simple dash down to the river to pee or wash up.



Like lambs to the slaughter. Photo: Ciara Smart

The description of our camping area as the 'Tennis Court' had naturally led to an expectation that we would be camping on a flat, dry, court-like surface. This was shattered immediately upon arriving at a gently sloping mud floor riddled with sizable potholes. Much care was needed to pick a site exposed to minimal drips from the roof above. None

of us succeeded in this. The site was also incredibly draughty and very humid with condensation clearly visible in the air around. The cavernous echoes of the river below made conversation difficult. Surveying the site, I realised I probably hadn't done my research well enough. However, the small rectangle compromising the taped-off section that gives the site its name did demonstrate some attractive mud formations, although not enough to salvage opinions of the site. Dinner was cooked promptly, and we finally slept sometime before 10 pm. Well I slept, while Steve and Karina suffered through a cold night sleeping on mats without insulation sitting on damp mud.

Day 2 (by Karina)

We had survived our first night. When I got up to pee in the morning, I could have sworn my pee bag was fuller the night before. Then when I looked at my tarp, I noticed the corner was a little wet... I had suffered from a leaking pee bag; luckily the hole must have been small as the bag wasn't empty yet. Challenge number two was to poop into the doggy bag. It turns out the hardest part about that was controlling my pee at the same time. One learns interesting things when caving. After a leisurely morning taking our time with our ablutions, we commenced the day of surveying. We got very muddy. I'll admit surveying isn't my favourite activity, so to pass the time I wrote a song. You need to sing it in tune with Rupert Holmes – Escape (the Piña Colada Song).

If you like going caving
Or sleeping in a cave
If you don't like people
Or UV rays
If you like getting really muddy
In the hills of Niggly
Then caving's probably for you
Especially if you like a tube poo.



*A song writer thinking about her next hit.
Photo: Ciara Smart*

I had a full day to come up with that and it sums up the extent of my musical talent pretty well. After some time of surveying and slowly getting cold, Ciara and I headed back to camp whilst we left Steve to faff. We enjoyed a delightful meal of couscous and Bolognese cooked by Ciara.

Day 3 (by Ciara)

On day three we moved camp from the 'Tennis Court' to the traditional Mt Niggly campsite. This move exponentially increased the exposure of all our 'clean' camp items to the mud and significantly heightened spoken complaints. When

we reached the river section that was above gumboot height one member of the party kindly provided piggy-backs in order to minimise further complaints. Alas this was for little gain when shortly afterwards Karina inadvertently demonstrated the best method to safely slide down a mud-bank at speed into a body of water. Steve and I were most impressed.

Some surveying was undertaken within Mother of God accompanied by Karina's evolving musical rendition of the trials and tribulations of the trip thus far. Later some verses of the Australian National Anthem were sung in honour of the next day's national holiday.



*Typical organised chaos around Steve's tarp.
Photo: Ciara Smart*

Arriving at our new campsite sometime after midday, we dropped our packs and headed off to Atlantis to pick up a few detectors and have our turn at Australia's deepest flying-fox. Many hungry hours later we returned. The traditional Mt Niggly camp site was considerably drier, warmer, flatter and less draughty than our previous two nights. It also had somewhere sensible to pee. Even sleeping on a leaking inflatable mat, it was a major improvement. That evening further musical entertainment was provided and final snacks were cheerfully consumed in order to lighten packs for the next day's climb.

Day 4 (by Karina)

Of course, we overslept on birthing day. The irony was we were all already awake but didn't want to get out of bed until the alarm went off. At the late hour of 8:30 am (an hour and a half after our agreed wake up time) Steve checked the time and we were greeted with a 'F***'. Whoops. There isn't all that much to say other than I got my stuff together and got a head start on the others. As I was by myself, I entertained myself on the way up by narrating my journey in a David Attenborough accent.

Once I was at the top of the pitches, I waited at Tiger Tooth to sight the others before continuing on. We shouted to each other but I couldn't understand anything. I was getting cold as I was in Cordura so I continued on out. It was lovely to be outside again. I sat in the sun while waiting for the others. It turns out Steve had to do Tiger Tooth twice because of his two packs... I had conveniently forgotten about that. Otherwise, given our sleep in, we were out of the cave by 4:30 pm. Not bad at all. We walked back to the car (I was very happy to see my car still there), went to Juneec to do detector stuff, stopped by Maccas and went back to town.

Other than getting a bit cold at times it was an enjoyable trip. Great company and many laughs were had.

JF-210 Sesame

20 December 2020

Gabriel Kinzler (text and photos)

Party: Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson, Gabriel Kinzler

With a diving trip in the works, I took it upon myself to re-rig Sesame with club gear and familiarise myself with the cave. AJ offered to help, bringing along AJ^{bis}.

I recorded the poorly taped track for the club's archive and we found (when exiting at the end of the day) that accessing the entrance doline from the south would be much easier than following the suggested treacherous track wrapping around the northern edge, which also passes by the upper entrance (JF-211 Sesame II).



Rorschach test: what do you see?

Navigation in the cave is a lot more straightforward than I had worked myself up to believe, but of course I was relying on Alan's impeccable memory of his multiple previous trips.



Anna pondering 'Why hang?'

All ropes and anchors were swapped over to club gear on the way down and we quickly reached the succession of handlines going up to The Wet Hole. We had a quick look and swiftly turned back, having left Anna pottering behind.

Another cave ticked off the list for me and her, and a productive day overall, getting closer to writing it off entirely.



Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Chrisps Road – Florentine Valley

29 December 2020 and 9 January 2021

Bill Nicholson (text and photo)

Party: Philip Jackson, Tamara Shearing, Russell Fulton, Serena Benjamin, Greg Jordan, Bill Nicholson.

Previously, Jacko and I took a stroll below the Satans Lair track with a thought to locate a number of holes that he and Russell found last decade.

We failed in fulfilling that thought but nonetheless stumbled over a couple worth checking out. With good limestone abundant and many dolines, potential looked good.

With Serena keen to check out the holes and Russell in his quest to update the geological status of limestone types in the June-Florentine, we descended into the scrub for a jolly good time. The holes didn't go anywhere but STC Chief Geologist, Russell Fulton, determined that the limestone is

Cashion (the good stuff) and not Benjamin (the not so good stuff).

In our collective stumblings, other areas of interest were noted and further investigation is planned.



What's better than a cave? Serena has the answer.

Post-COVID Junee-Florentine Extravaganza

Stephen Fordyce (photos: author unless otherwise credited)

Introduction

I had a 10-month enforced break from Tassie caving due to COVID, most of which saw me stuck at home enduring (enjoying?) the series of Melbourne lockdowns. I spent my weekends working on data from the STC Archive, and my weekdays developing dataloggers and dye tracing kit for use in our cave projects.

I applied for and was granted a 3-year research permit to formally conduct dye tracing experiments in the Junee-Florentine (JF) on behalf of STC. The getting of the permit could have an article on its own – suffice for now to say that the stakeholder consultation list is long, and includes PWS, DPIPWE, EPA and the commercial water licence holders. With a few carefully controlled exceptions, we can be confident that dye levels at the Junee River resurgence will remain well below visual detection, and indeed several orders of magnitude below EPA-recommended levels for human consumption.

The technical outcomes will be detailed in separate articles, but can be summarised as:

- New JF master list format, and general audit of locations and information
- A Compass project which plots all JF caves together
- A QGIS project which plots all conceivable data on a map which can be used both on computer and on a phone in the field; i.e.:
 - o JF data (cave locations, surveys and surface routes)
 - o Spatial data (LiDAR, topo maps, satellite imagery)
- A family of cave-proof electronic dataloggers/devices has been developed, including:
 - o Dye detector (sensitive down to parts-per-trillion levels)

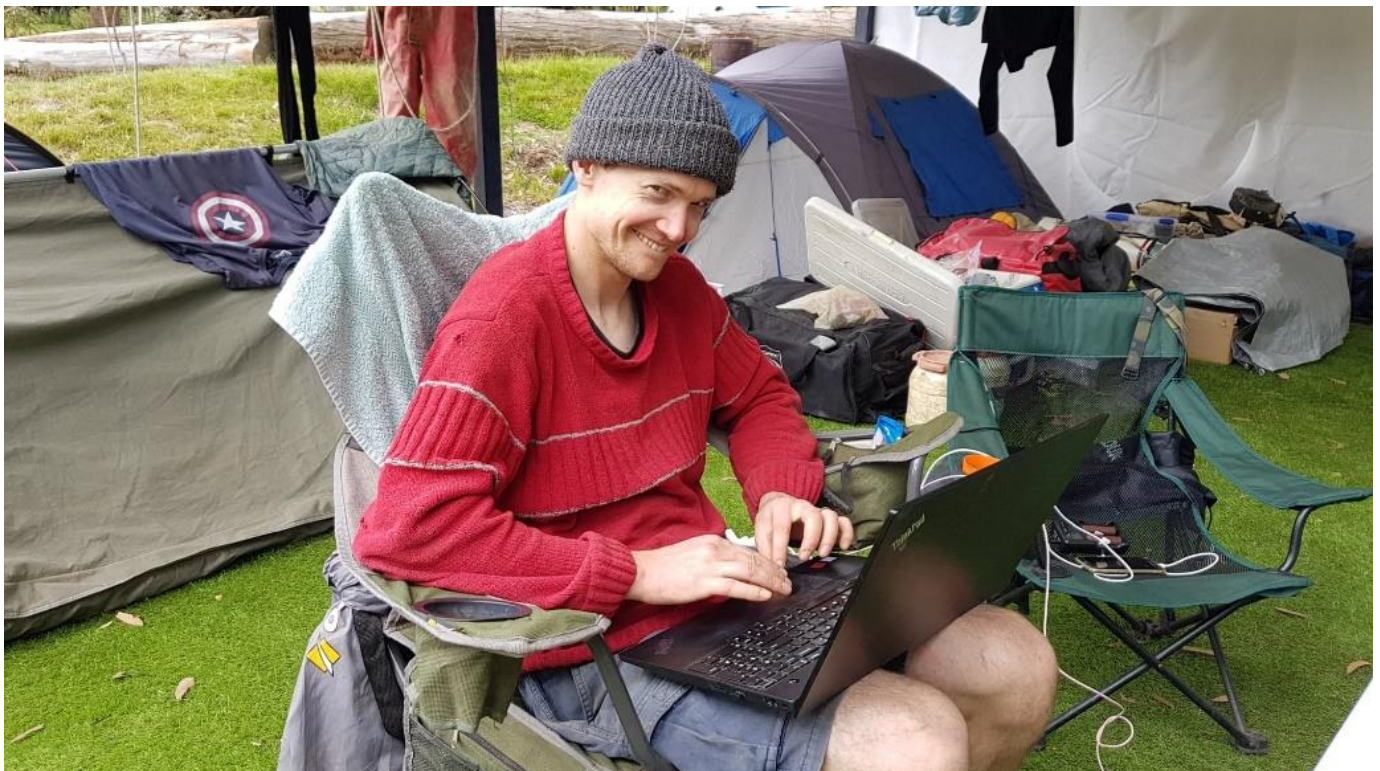
- o Dye dispenser (pump with many releases possible)
- o Dye oneshot (single release)
- o Water depth/temperature logger
- o Weather logger (temperature, humidity, pressure, rainfall)

All are intended to log for multiple years in the field.

I figured on doing a year's worth of Tassie caving plus a bunch of field testing in one go – to catch up for lost time and just in case there were more COVID disruptions. At first, I thought two weeks would be enough, but one thing led to another and suddenly I was booked and committed to a month! Various crew were pinned down on dates with various promises of caving excitement. Of course, the plans were equally gargantuan and much of the month was spent frantically trying to keep to the complex schedule. This was even more critical than usual when factoring in detector placement and retrieval trips, pre-programmed dye releases, weather and commercial water collection from the Junee River.

This article/report/diary is generally intended to be a high to mid-level summary of what happened day to day, and hopefully vaguely entertaining. I dunno how the present tense thing happened, but it seemed cool so I went with it. Where needed, I will do separate reports for each cave detailing more technical stuff (however be warned for some things, this will be the only mention). At this stage follow-up reports are anticipated for:

- JF-237 Niggly
- JF-36 Growling Swallet (Coelacanth Sump dive)
- JF-36 Growling Swallet (Living Fossils)
- JF-36 Growling Swallet (Frownland)
- JF-211 Sesame
- JF-234 Sump Pot
- JF-703 Jimmys Window
- Dye and other experiments
- Other archive data mining/mapping/plotting



The reporting never ends; you just have to grin and bear it. Photo: Dan Mitchell

Sun 27 Dec: Time to blow this joint

This is the least organised I've been for a Tassie trip that I can remember, and it's stressing me out (a lot).

Thirty minutes after designated time of departure from home for the ferry, I am still fixing dye detectors.

Nadia helps me shove boxes of miscellaneous tools and parts into spaces miraculously left in the car. Fortunately, the designated time of departure was stupidly early, my overloaded car groans onto the ferry in good time, and after a visit from the Chief Officer I don't have to unload my 15 SCUBA cylinders.



The devices just for Niggly!

Mon 28 Dec: I'm back!

Arrive Tasmania after nearly a year away; eyes start watering – most annoying (Devonport air?). Drive to Hobart and commandeer Gabriel's shed (thanks!) to finish prep. Try to make up for disorganisation back at mission control in Melbourne.



About to see if I'm still hardcore.

Tues 29 Dec: Dye release setup for Niggly detectors

Desperate morning faffing at Gabriel's then drive to Maydena and throw things into/onto my hiking pack to walk up the hill. Inspect stupidly heavy hiking pack. Really hope 10 months of inactivity hasn't made me soft.

6 pm – leave car to walk up the Tachycardia track and deploy dye release devices (at JF-236, JF-273, JF-704, JF-568, JF-274, JF-280, JF-277 and JF-556). Regret earlier faffing while slogging cross country in the dark.

Pademelons apparently don't like Michael Jackson songs. 12:30 am – arrive at Niggly entrance, and sleep like the dead in my bivvy.

Wed 30 Dec: Niggly grand tour (detector placement)

JF-237 Niggly daytrip with Gabriel Kinzler and Alex Williams for dye detector setup and resupply. Gabriel has a convincing victory in a new game of not breaking detectors (and a fatal flaw in the new pressure sensor design is discovered). Detectors are installed anyway (out of the water, pointing at it) and fingers crossed there is no flooding.

Alex gets to see pretty much the entirety of the cave in one day, ranging from the end of Mother of God to the Gotcha stream in Atlantis. 14 hrs underground is sufficient to achieve all mission parameters although Gabriel's mojo is in tatters from his reintroduction to my faffing, and Alex is deliriously expressing enthusiasm for "the next trip" as our corpses shamble down the hill.

Thurs 31 Dec: Junee shakedown dive

The Tachycardia track carpark turns out to be where the entire Tasmanian supply of mosquitoes come from, but I've unloaded too much of the car (to construct the ridiculous pack) and am thus committed to camping here for the next few days.

There is frequent drizzle and nothing dries – I consider how lucky it was that Dan, Simone and Nina outvoted me on bush-camping vs campground. A rest day would be infinitely preferable, but the schedule requires a JF-8 Junee dive (shakedown & detector placement in For Your Eyes Only). At least the 12 l steel tanks can be left at the sump for the retrieval.

I also check and fiddle with detectors and loggers placed around Junee by Gabriel earlier in December.



Troubleshooting these solar panels was difficult.

Bec Foxen (paramedic, veteran cave rescuer and all-round good egg) and friends, show up by coincidence (no mean feat considering they live in Devonport, 5 hours away) and much hilarity ensues.

A friendly policeman presumably checking reports of a weirdo up to no good at 10 pm (as the faffing continued) on New Year's Eve provides the first real opportunity to show the dye tracing permit to authority. Admittedly I was more excited than he was.

Fri 1 Jan: KD & Niagara Pot dye releases

Manual dye releases in JF-4 Khazad Dum (KD) and JF-29 Niagara Pot are done (to see if they join in Junee Sump 1), with an accidental visit to JF-2 Cauldron Pot and some surface bashing and LiDAR target checking enjoyed as well. Results are in the QGIS project and JF Point of Interest register.

The routes to the caves are now GPSed though, and the QGIS project I worked on in lockdown is as awesome in the field as it is at home. I pack up Camp Mosquito, and leave a stash of spare gear at the Tachycardia carpark rather than try to fit it in the car again.

A contingent of mainlanders (Dan Mitchell, Simone Lee and Sil Iannello) trickles into the campground at Left of Field, we set up camp and waste no time becoming “close contacts” with hugs and no face masks. When in Rome, etc.



Simone and Dan put on a show for the other campers.

We set up some ropes from our camp shelter at Left of Field to practise rebelay and endure many good-natured comments about our sexual proclivities from the other campers.

Sat 2 Jan: Slaughterhouse Pot shakedown

Mainlander caving shakedown – Slaughterhouse Pot to Destiny Pitch in JF-36 Growling Swallet (with optional dive gear portaging of course).

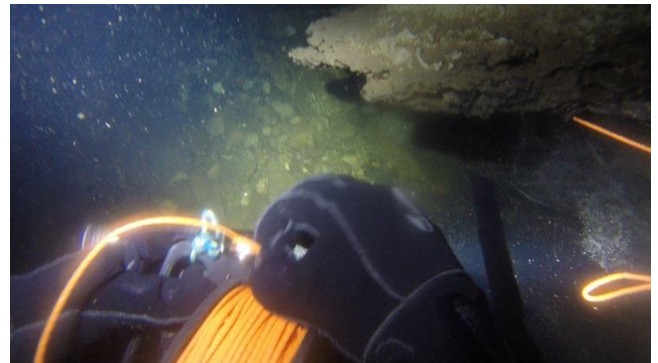
More mainlanders (Nina Birss and Oxana Repina, also token Tasmanian John Oxley) trickle in and are instructed not to park on the fake grass and where the fabled flushing toilet is.

Sun 3 Jan: Coelacanth Sump dive

We portage all the dive gear to Black River in Growling Swallet, complete the Coelacanth Sump dive push (effectively no progress beyond previous dives) in a quite reasonable timeframe, and retrieve some dive gear.

Piggybacks are offered for the wet-feet section, but a bypass in the ceiling is discovered and both dry feet and pride are retained, although perhaps in need of ego stroking, I volunteer to portage the packs through the wet bit.

Not bad for a bunch of post-lockdown punters on day 2 (day 1 for some of them!), not bad at all – well done team.



A comprehensive GoPro record of Coelacanth was made.

Mon 4 Jan: Dye release setup for Sesame

Morning rest, then we are off to set up dye release devices in anticipation of Sesame detectors being placed in the next few days.

A short walk up the Tachycardia Track to reprogram the dye dispenser at Chrisps Creek (targeting JF-568) is quite pleasant. We then head up the Rescue Pot track to Tyenna Tomo placing assorted dye release devices (JF-364, JF-202, JF-201).

The promised “minor detour” to JF-583 Village Idiot on the way back turns into a scrub-bashing epic and the cave name is apt when there is no flowing stream to install a dye release device. I briefly wonder whether Alan is sadistic enough to have sent us here for a joke and decide this is possible but unlikely.



Village idiots enjoying a leisurely walk while another takes the photo

Tues 5 Jan: Living Fossils (Growling) push (epic)

Sil leaves us, but first comes to Junea to jumpstart Nina's car and earns her hero badge.

Five of us mix it up and go into Growling via the main entrance, which is a big hit (and much less scarring than last time I did it). The "ohhhhh" when everyone pops into Rescue Aven and the familiar Slaughterhouse bottom pitch is extremely satisfying.

Oxana and I sync motivation at the wrong time and follow through with our original plan of going through the roof sniff to check out the end of Living Fossils where Oxana begrudgingly earns her wombat badge. A night owl badge is also earned as we exit the cave at 1:30 am still in good spirits.

The rest of the crew grab a tank and haul it out with them in time for bed (but the tank prefers to sleep alone). They already have their Sherpa badges, but progress to super-Sherpa level.

Wed 6 Jan: Resting and faffing (mostly).

Although it is a generally restful day with much faffing, we get some token exercise with a short walk to replace the Tarn Creek Swallet dye dispenser with a oneshot as Sesame plans have changed.

Crew start trickling out but we are joined somewhat unexpectedly by Lewis Clarey, Matt Dunwoodie and Hugh Mason. These guys have extensive NZ caving experience and are keen on experiencing what Tassie has to offer. Despite my best (worst?) efforts to describe the unimaginable horrors, they are up for a Sherpa mission to the Sesame sump tomorrow.

Pax is buttonholed into a follow-up trip and the Sesame dive gets an unlikely green light, after teetering on the brink of the too-hard basket. A last supper at the pub is enjoyed by all.



*Oxana and Nina prepping oneshot dye release devices.
Photo: Dan Mitchell*

Thurs 7 Jan: Sesame staging and survey (epic)

The (first) JF-210 Sesame epic. Route finding through most of the cave is reasonable (thanks Alan for your notes, and to Gabriel and Alan for the recent rigging efforts), and we get everything to The Wet Hole in good time. Nina and Oxana have a brief look, shudder in disgust and escape as planned.

We negotiate TWH and it's about as unpleasant as expected. The waterproof/crushproof case for my phone is accidentally and thoroughly tested in my breast pocket (and passes). Route finding becomes improbable, demoralising and the mud reaches 20 out of 10.

It takes hours, but we find our way, rig an awful pitch back down to the streamway and enjoy the surprise prospect of more wriggling in the water.

Finally, walking passage is gained and it's impressive, with lots of big feeder streams and it goes for ages. We thoroughly muddy the water which finally flows into a brown sump pool.

We have a hot cuppa and briefly contemplate doing the dive, but it's ominously late and the sump pool is decidedly uninviting. We place several dye detectors on the way out though.

The prospect of surveying out is equally uninviting but I promise it will be quick and dirty, with all shots recorded in the DistoX, and notes kept on the GoPro. This proves surprisingly successful, and a mutiny is thwarted.

The way out is long and awful, even without bags, and we get back to camp at 3 am. A spectacular effort all round to get all that done the first time any of us had been in the cave.

Several days later, the survey data surprises everyone and reinforces the necessity of surveying your discoveries!

Detector data also shows that JF-202 Tyenna Tomo and JF-201 Rescue Pot join and form a large stream in Sesame. There is a possible result for JF-364 Tarn Creek Swallet, and insufficient time for the JF-568 Chrisps Creek Swallet release to be detected.

Fri 8 Jan: Tyenna Tomo checkout and dye release

A token rest day, largely signified by a sleep in and late start.

We hike up the hill to JF-202 Tyenna Tomo, and abseil into the doline just for fun. Turning the waterfall pink in the name of science is also fun. Some other dye devices and releases are done too.

Only 1 of the Sesame party from the previous day sensibly elects to sleep in the car rather than walk up the hill.

My car now has a functional spare and fewer bald tyres after a run into Hobart, I have enough snacks for another six days in a row of scheduled activities and Oxana (eventually) manages to fly back to a virus-riddled Queensland.

Pax confirms that no, tomorrow is his only window, which is thus the only opportunity to both do the dive and see my dive gear ever again.

Sat 9 Jan: Sesame dive (epic)

I leave my caving undergarment back at Left of Field and Michael "Pax" Packer drives back to get it while I hike up to JF-633 Ring Hole to do a dye release. We lose an hour, but Pax gets the opportunity to set a more realistic callout time.

Pax and I put in a heroic effort to get the dive done, and get all the dive gear (in four nasty bags) back to The Wet Hole. We leave two bags on the far side of the wet wriggle, and ditch most of the rest at the base of Pitch 4 in the interests of surviving the exit – we are still about 14 hrs underground.



Pax releases a carefully calculated amount of fluorescein in Sesame.

Pax gets a “boulder” in his eye early on the ascent and spends the rest of the night hiding and complaining about it. Fortunately, it popped out in New Norfolk before he could make good on threats to go to emergency at 4 am.

The dive is an awful bloody scary thing – tight and nasty, with line traps galore and total zero visibility, despite our best efforts to keep it clear. 40 m of line leads to a small airspace which continues through a restriction I didn’t attempt due to time, cold, gas and lack of mojo. It sounded like it sumps again. Definitely worth pushing further...



The miserable little air space reached at the dive far point

Sun 10 Jan: Rest and replenish

The 3x 14 hr epics of the last five days have well and truly caught up with me, and worse, I’ve nearly run out of pre-cooked frozen dinners.

My New Norfolk shopping list starts with “Better moisturiser, only got 2x Jerky”, noting the important things first.

Too much and yet not enough time is spent planning the next week of activities...

Mon 11 Jan: Dye devices retrieval, tagging of JF-703 and JF-704

Nina is back from a weekend of climbing and pleasantness, and up for a bushwalk to retrieve the expended dye release devices placed around Niggly and Tachycardia on the 30th.

The pot is sweetened by some juicy LiDAR targets east of the Tachycardia track, and fortunately I ignore Nina’s

suggestion that we bypass a small cliff, because it has an untagged cave halfway down.

However, while contemplating a moss chunk or rotten branch as my handhold of choice, humble pie is eaten and a handline is rigged.

The new cave appears to be part of a fault with close by caves JF-254 (a decent doline at the base of the cliff) and JF-554 Nasty (a grovelly shite-hole at the top of the cliff).

It just seems like a superficial bit of cliff, so I am sceptical when Nina requests my presence from a dubious crack. However, a decent pitch head with 10 seconds of rock clatterings is gained and we excitedly clatter until there is nothing left within easy reach.



Nina is gripped by cave fever at Jimmys Window

The cave is tagged JF-703 and later named “Jimmys Window”. We plan to return, post-haste.

Other LiDAR targets below JF-703 are checked and notes made (these are incorporated into the QGIS project and POI register) with nothing but a few big blind dolines to report.

The device retrieval business is continued and motivation flags, but fortunately by this point we are past the point of no return. All but one of the dye releases seem to have successfully worked, although most have no flow in the dry conditions (they were flowing and had rain forecast when due to go off though). The oneshot hopper at JF-280 had got stuck on a root and not tipped out.

We affix tag JF-704 to the stream sink point at North Chrisps Swallet, note some limestone and a small void where the water disappears (although it’s in a dolerite-filled gully, so a bit of luck would be needed there) and eliminate Z-79. A manual dye release is done here too. It’s a big swallet, and the relationship with Niggly is still unclear.

We are very grateful for having set up a car shuffle.

Tues 12 Jan: Sesame gear retrieval, log fun-times

There's a bunch of dive gear still in JF-210 Sesame, and Simone is keen to see the cave. At the last minute, Nina decides to have a rest day, which turns out to be the most useful decision of the day.

Overconfidence in track selection sees us make an unexpected visit to Tarn Creek Swallet, but there's a dye release device to be collected, so it's easy to pretend it was intentional.

Simone professes that she is starting to get tired after three hours of leisurely downward caving with no bags, so I go through The Wet Hole and drag the two bags back into the more accessible section of the cave. Phew! TWH is still surprisingly dry, even with a bit of rain. Possibly it is not as flood-prone as expected (not that I really want to put that to the test), and having done it a few times, is no worse than the crawl in Porcupine really.

Simone finds a second wind and earns her cup-of-concrete badge, hauling a respectably heavy bag up all the pitches and spending six hours helping me fight a giant one. Only a single bag of dive gear is left behind! Although it is a monster with both tanks in it. Simone finally runs out of steam on the walk down, but thanks to the Sat Text we don't miss our callout.

We also can't miss the two giant logs across Chrisps Road at the recent logging coup apparently placed during the day. Bugger. Nina's rest day pays dividends, and my car is soon abandoned to its fate...



Sub-optimal at 11 pm



The logs are approximately 0.8 Steves (photo: Simone Lee)

Wed 13 Jan: New cave calls – Jimmys Window

JF-703 Jimmys Window has a big pitch to drop and Gabriel Kinzler's mojo needs rebuilding. Simone could do with some general rebuilding too after Sesame yesterday, but there's no way she was going to miss virgin cave. Nina and I make up the party of four.

We make some phone calls and the Chrisps Rd logs are already removed when we get there. We find the logging crew and have a pleasant and worthwhile conversation after explaining that we are "Cave Explorers", not Greenies. They explain that people have been cutting up prime timber from their remaining stockpile for firewood.

The walk is painful, but the cave is rigged and surveyed, and the peasants rejoice. Gabriel's mojo re-inflates, some rather exciting rearrangement of matter in the terminal rift yields a tantalising constriction at -70 m that will require more energy.

We de-rig and make good use of the "Parsnips" I have made up to mark concrete screw holes.

We find, tag and spend three minutes fully exploring JF-705 "Log Fiasco" in the twilight on the way back. Gabriel later makes a map.

Later analysis of survey data indicates Jimmys Window is right above the Tennis Court rockpile in Niggly and an excellent candidate for one of the avens or leads in this area, albeit with a vertical gap of some 250 m.



High hopes outside Jimmys Window

Thursday 14 Jan: Dye experiments briefing

I am scheduled to meet with David Holley, the Mt Field National Park Karst Officer, and Rolan Eberhard in his official DPIPWE capacity. Serena comes along too in her official capacity as provider of witty repartee and good company. A nice opportunity for a face-to-face briefing on the dye experiments, a visit to the detectors at Junee, and a dye release/setup of release devices up the Serendipity valley.

The state of the campsite is embarrassing (there are disorganised piles of gear everywhere) and my hands are stained red from hurrying to get a dye dispenser switched from eosine to fluorescein. The show goes on, and seems to go ok.

The trip out to Serendipity is a bit of a failure – despite the drizzle and leeches, there is no water, so we don't place anything. There is pleasant conversation and nice rainforest though, and a good opportunity to GPS the route.

A silver lining is stumbling across a recently-opened hole (later tagged JF-706) at the base of a rocky alcove right next to the Dissidence track, with an obvious void (5 m pitch) and a pumping draught. There is excitement from young and old, and the cave is named Caught Red Handed. It's located right between some mid-level passages in Serendipity and Dissidence, and just might yield the long-anticipated connection between the two. A recent return by Rolan and Serena makes a few body lengths of progress, but the cave makes them work for it.



*Reconfiguring a dye dispenser in the field
(photo: Oxana Repina)*

Friday 15 Jan: Junee retrieval and assessment dive

The For Your Eyes Only detector in Junee still needs retrieving, so I make good on promises (threats?) to introduce Simone to Tassie cave diving.

We patch the line in Junee where it went under a rock on a downward gravel slope not far into the sump (tying a rope around the rock).

A promise to record a GoPro video of For Your Eyes Only for management purposes is also kept. The footage is pretty ordinary, but the commentary (including a touching falsetto rendition of the song "For Your Eyes Only") more than makes up for it.

I dash up the Niggly track in the rain to place a dye dispenser for the Frownland trip tomorrow.



Simone checks out For Your Eyes Only

Sat, 16 Jan: Frownland (GS) detector placement

Petr Smejkal and I embark on a mission to place detectors in Frownland (the back end of JF-36 Growling Swallet). We agree that Slaughterhouse Pot is quicker and easier than the main streamway, and it's a good thing as Garths Creek is up and semi-flooded. We stay dry and even keep dry feet all the way.

We place a detector just upstream of Dreamtime Sump, solve the mystery of the fin I found on the connection dive, and chicken out on crawling in the water into Frownland proper (Alan later pointed out we were only 40 m short of the theorised Dissidence entry point, and didn't actually have to get that wet).

We place a second detector just upstream of the Tiger Mountain inlet and do a few dye releases to find transit times.

I am surprised that there is no sign of dye from the dispenser left at Boulder Jenga, which was timed to coincide with our visit. Perhaps there a new mystery looms.

Petr allows me to carry the shared caving pack occasionally, but it would seem that two weeks of hard caving has slowed me down rather than built me up. Petr later confesses to being broken after the trip, but I'm not sure I believe him.

On the way out, we de-rig Destiny Pitch and retrieve the last tank from the Coelacanth dive. Oh boy, am I relieved to only have dive gear left in one cave, not three like a few days ago.

The other mainlanders have left by this point, so my gear quickly spreads to occupy the entire campsite.



A prehistoric (and recently uncovered?) dive gear stash near Dreamtime Sump only has one fin...

Sun 17th Jan: Rest, and gentle walk to Four Road Swallet

A much-needed rest day, with a supermarket run, some faffing and tidying of gear and data.

It's cold and rainy, but dye must be released at regular intervals, so that evening I drag myself out to JF-248 Four Road Swallet and enjoy a gentle scrubbing by the chest high ferns on the second half of the route.

The three-point turn at the end of mossy/wet Four Road is exciting, and the drive up is like driving on ice. Lucky I got those new tyres!?

On a whim, I head up Chrisps Rd and collect the gear stashed up there. This turns out to be an excellent idea, as the log is replaced the next morning.



Lovely Tasmanian summer weather was experienced

Mon 18 Jan: West-Wherretts dye releases & setup

The rain and general dampness give hope to the idea of dye releases in Serendipity and some nearby swallets (remember the last attempt failed due to lack of water).

A 7-hour mission in the rain is cold, wet and character-building, but pre-programmed oneshots are set up at streams feeding Serendipity (a few hundred metres up-valley of JF-344) and Dissidence (just above JF-373 Punishment Pot), and manual releases done at JF-385 Wherretts Swallet #1 and JF-661 Beautiful Possibilities. The return via the JF-345 Ice Tube route is a good chance to finally GPS it and I am impressed by the Ice Tube entrance.

JF-661 Beautiful Possibilities is impressive and interesting, collecting three streams and being a quite decent swallet, although I would have to concur with Rolan's report and say that it doesn't look like it goes.

I also take the opportunity to tag JF-706 Caught Red Handed, and find a nasty little unstable recently-opened hole which is tagged JF-707 and named "Self Isolation". Finding solid rock for the tag was tricky, and is likely to be covered by moss, so refer to the photo in the archive. There is also a strip of orange tape around the tree next to the hole.

The oneshots were retrieved in February by a group from NUCC, with a sweetener being a gift of the undescended JF-707. Regretfully, the cave did not extend out of sight, but might be worth checking in a few years in case it erodes open some more.

Tues 19 Jan: Final Sesame retrieval, Tyenna Tomo derig

It's been put off for long enough – the last bag of dive gear needs retrieving from Sesame. The log has been put back across the road, and while the loggers are still friendly, removing the log today is going to stretch that.

Fortunately, it's not that much more of a walk, and it's actually a nice day.

The Sesame retrieval is surprisingly quick (four hours underground), and there is no excuse not to head up to and de-rig the Tyenna Tomo doline pitch (we had planned to go back and survey the new pitch found in 2015 – don't bother looking for the report, there isn't one - but Jimmys Window happened instead).

The last of the Sesame dye release devices are also collected

Wed 20 Jan: Sump Pot relocation & Rainbow Cave

The official last day of festivities before self-mandated pre-Niggly rest days (my knees are really feeling all the caving)

Lots of things are left on the list, but locating and checking out JF-234 Sump Pot is highest. It's a lovely day, but battling the ferns is not so lovely, and it takes much longer (via JF-402 and JF-228) than I expected to follow the ancient treasure map recently discovered in the archive to the Sump Pot location.

Thanks to Jeff Butt's detailed sketch showing the exact rock the tag is affixed to, I find a corner peeking out from a moss blanket, and the mystery is properly solved. I pause for a moment of reflection and feel a nice connection to Jeff, who passed away well before I came onto the Tassie caving scene.

The fabled sump is checked and it's a bit miserable. So is the walk out. So are my attempts later that afternoon at finding JF-11 Rainbow Cave (I would like to see the dive re-done, just in case anything has changed since Janine's last crack at it).

After literally giving up, I find a random tape on my way back to the car and record the track and location (also the co-ordinates of every piece of flagging tape!) for the archive. I intended to do the same for Welcome Stranger but motivation is flagging so I give up and head for camp.



*The JF-234 tag is relocated.
I experience facial hair in celebration.*

Thurs 21 Jan: Break camp

Breaking camp is no mean feat, as it has spread to fill the space which once accommodated eight campers. There is also the matter of fitting it all back in the car.

The bill is settled with Left of Field – the camping has been extremely good value, even with using power, the owners Adrian and Mel have been extremely helpful, friendly and they have even given us a “caver” discount. Being allowed to camp undercover on their “stage” has been a trip-saver in the bad weather.

Pax and Gabriel drop past to collect the JF tags and some dye for their overnight jaunt up Wherretts Lookout. I try to manage Gabriel’s expectations about the caverns measureless to man they won’t find.

Eventually camp is packed up. It’s the last opportunity, so I spend more time faffing at Junee with The Ecosystem (an attempt to get dye results onto the Cloud in real time – thanks to a bunch more later faffing by the NUCC group, it’s working!).

The disorganisation is strong and I feel dirtier than on any caving trip. I am late for dinner and Niggly briefing with Karina/Ciara in Hobart, but impress them with some cheap data tricks, bad jokes and doing the dishes.

We decide to provide one group dinner each, and discuss appropriate portion sizes. Apparently, a box of Shapes will not be sufficient – this worries me.



*The luxury of a camp shelter at Left of Field
(photo: Oxana Repina)*

Fri 22 Jan: Clean-up and prepare for Niggly

Rest and cleanup/preparation day before four days camping underground in Niggly.

I spend too much time making ropes lovely and clean, and end up throwing the Niggly stuff together at the last minute. Story of the trip.

My group dinner consists of all the good stuff left over from my camping food, plus two freeze-dried meals to make it look proper.

Pax and Gabriel return bragging about having discovered 30-something new caves and 4% of the JF numbers up on Wherretts. Alas, Gabriel’s expectations will be unrealistically high forever now.

I am reminded by multiple people not to break Ciara and Karina in Niggly...



The Left of Field laundry is worthy of the name

Sat 23 Jan: Niggly day 1 of 4

It’s JF-237 Niggly entry day. Karina Anders has kindly volunteered her car (and to pick us all up), so Ciara Smart and I pile in with our gear and head along.

The trip is officially named “Girl Power” (“Giggle Power” was a close second) and the theme song becomes the only Spice Girls track I have on the cave phone – “We Are Family”. Fortunately, this is also more appropriate than most of the other contenders, especially considering Ciara and I have only just met.

Fun is had, faffing is done and deep discussions are had about gender equality. On an unrelated note, I piggyback the team through the wet feet section, go back down the muddy slope to collect water and wash the dishes. We make camp near the end of Mother of God and find it much less comfortable than the regular camp. Fortunately, the girls don’t know any better and think this is normal.



Karina embraces cave camping – scraping mud off her shoe with a fork

I am over the moon to have finally converted others to the way of the pee bag at camp. The alternative - a slippery mud slope down to the stream - is the clincher.



One of many detectors is retrieved

Mon 25 Jan: Niggly day 3 of 4

Niggly day 3 and another round of “We Are Family” blares out, although it’s pretty well bedded into everyone’s heads by now. We slowly break camp and start heading back to the original camp at Mt Niggly.

Detectors are collected along the way and all are still working, hooray! Piggybacks through the wet feet section are wasted when feet are subsequently wetted anyway (Karina reprises David Rueda’s spectacular mud-bank slide), but Ciara is still gratifyingly keen on surveying the large section at the start of Mother of God which goes back over Ninja Junction. Karina works on another verse of her masterpiece.



Ciara requests proof-of-hardcoreity on the flying fox. As you wish, ma’am.

We reach the Mt Niggly camp mid-afternoon feeling slightly seedy, we do a water run and detector swap, and I promise it will only take an hour or so to retrieve the detectors from Atlantis.

Three hours or so and a critical packet of morale-boosting beef jerky later we return to camp, and I am revealed for the

overoptimistic monster that I am. It’s also my turn to cook dinner, so the stakes are high. Fortunately, dinner is a success and the tyrolean across the waterfall has helped overshadow any doubts as to the necessity of the Atlantis retrieval.

We reflect upon how much fun the trip has been (very).

Tues 26 Jan: Niggly day 4 of 4

We all wake refreshed in this comfortable campsite and enjoy a lie-in while waiting for the alarm. Eventually I check the time and some expletives precede the obligatory theme song. The alarm didn’t go off, and we have overslept by an hour and a half. Oops!

Apart from this, birthing day proceeds more or less as normal. Ciara starts to feel the effects of three days of caving on top of two weeks languishing in quarantine, I feel the effects of two packs (containing eight retrieved detectors and Alan’s un-dessicated, mouldy sleeping bag) and a month of caving, so we chug slowly but surely out.

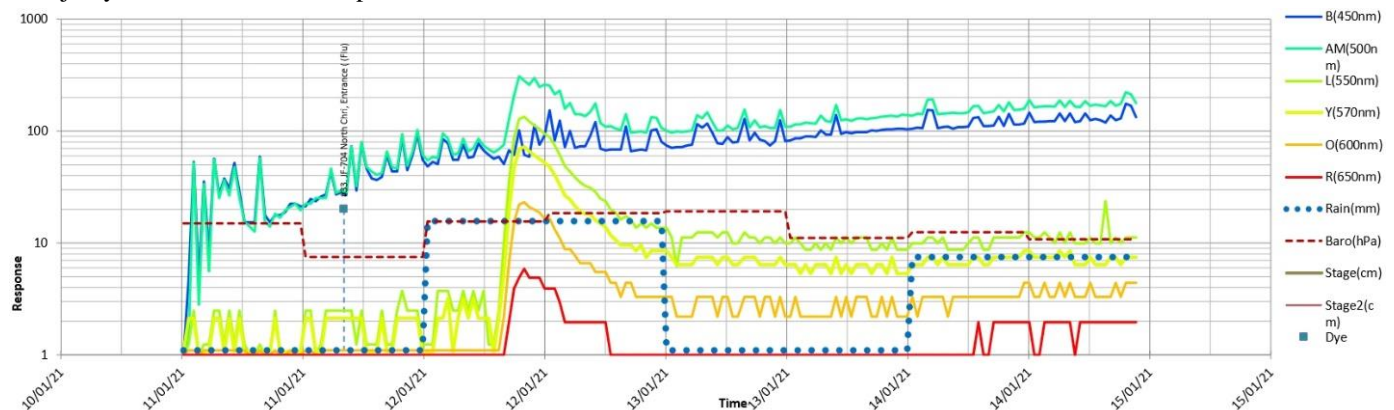
Karina feels the effects of her wet Cordura suit and a desire for greenery, so is off like a rocket. We have intermittent incoherent yellings until she paints herself into the corner of being too far ahead and too cold to wait.

The car is gained eventually and I apparently still have enough goodwill left to convince everyone to make a detour to Junee to grab detector results. Thanks guys.

A Facebook post indicating “We survived Steve” is made, which no doubt sees some money changing hands back in Hobart. I really should get T-shirts made.



Reorder this image from most broken to least broken.



A release of 20 g of fluorescein at JF-704 North Chrisps Swallet is easily detectable in Niggly Cave.



A satisfying pile of clean gear

Wed 27 Jan: Goodbye Tassie

My plans for being packed and ready in time to catch up with much-neglected visiting of people in Hobart are again thwarted by excess faffing (and returning Gabriel's shed to its pre-Fordyce state), and I give up on anything much other than getting to Devonport with plenty of time to negotiate Spiritual SCUBA tanks and perhaps wheels falling off the car.

Arriving at Devonport with a bit of time to spare, I can at least catch up with Alan and chew the fat for a bit.

Negotiations about SCUBA tanks are successful, although I board the *Spirit of Tasmania* as literally the last car. Alan waves the ship goodbye from his balcony and helpfully informs the caving populace that it's now safe to come out of hiding. I consider an act of sabotage (or a swim) in the interests of one-upmanship.

Thurs 28 Jan: Hello Melbourne

Home again, home again. So many things done, so many things still to do yet. It was a great trip, with many good things done, a few new things started, and a few old things finished off. So many great people involved in so many ways – thank you all for your companionship, help and attitude. Let's do it again sometime soon!



Masking up to return to Melbourne

IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot

4 January 2021

Janine McKinnon

Party: Serena Benjamin, Sarah Gilbert, Janine McKinnon

Sarah was down from the mainland for holidays and we wanted a pleasant but not too hard caving trip for the day. We had done a long day canyoning on Saturday and were still a tad tired (well I was anyway). I haven't been to this cave for 10-15 years and so this seemed like a good choice.



Model 1 and Model 2. Photo: Janine McKinnon

The route to the cave runs off the Exit Cave track not far from the top of the quarry but is not marked and we left it a little early. We had a slow and less-than-ideal route to the cave and arrived after more than an hour walking. Still, we got there in the end with Serena leading using the GPS location in the club device.

We only planned to visit the top part of the cave - the nice bits - so only had one, 35 m, pitch to drop. A spit had been placed since my last visit as a rebelay just below the start however Serena (who was rigging) was unable to get the nut

on the hanger we had to screw in more than halfway. There was no plug in the hole (or marker on it), so possibly it was part-filled with gunk and this was stopping the nut screwing in. The next party might consider taking a small pipe cleaner to clean it out – and a plug for it – and a marker for its position.



Model 3. Photo: Sarah Gilbert

So we changed plans and dropped straight down with a redirect to pull the rope away from the rub a few metres down. It worked well enough.

Once we were all down, we spent an hour or so wandering all over the top chamber. Someone (Rolan presumably) has been very busy since my last visit taping off areas and marking routes to follow.

I had forgotten there are quite a few decorated areas in there.

The trip out was straightforward and our route back to the Exit track much more efficient. It turns out that we should have turned uphill at the first cut log. *[We made the exact same mistake four years ago. -Ed]*



Pretty cool way to die. Lovely critter shot. Photo: Sarah Gilbert

IB-15 Hobbit Hole – Fail one

16 January 2021

Janine McKinnon

Party: Karina Anders, Serena Benjamin, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

None of us have been to this cave before. In fact, the last trip report we could find in the *Spiel* was from 1991 (SS 268). We have been planning to visit for a couple of years but were waiting for a dry period in summer as the cave is reputedly very wet. January seemed a good time so the date was set a couple of months previously.

Of course, it rained the day before, and rain was forecast for when we were planning on being in there. Such is life.

We started into the cave at 10 am, armed with drill, concrete screws and all the other paraphernalia needed to rig a cave that hasn't been visited for decades. It is a pot, so rope was part of the kit too. The small stream was only a trickle, so that was a good start.

Inside the entrance chamber we found the steeply-sloping ground to be loose and mobile, and the slope was wet, with water trickling through it, so Ric moved very carefully to the rift at the bottom of the slope that started the descent. He put in a concrete screw and we dropped the rope down what is a short climb/pitch (depending how adventurous you feel). Ric abseiled to the bottom and started drilling for the first true pitch head rigging.

I then moved to the “pitch” head very slowly and carefully (as Ric was just at the bottom) but I wasn't able to move carefully enough not to be dislodging large rocks and small boulders. I could feel the whole slope shifting under me. A couple of large rocks started rolling and I had to stop them. I was not happy. The rift is narrow and small. Rocks could easily block it (and thus the rest of the cave). I decided to have a re-think.

We got Ric to come back up (and pulled up the rope) so we could move a couple of very large and unstable rocks. We gardened a bit and dropped a few large rocks down the rift. One hit a 1 metre square boulder that was in the wall of the rift and knocked it out of the wall to finish sitting over the rift. That didn't look good.

We had another re-think. We dropped a few more large rocks down, and then Karina went down to see if she could move the boulder. It seemed wedged.

Serena then went for a look and wasn't too fussed about continuing but I surprised myself by playing madame safety. I wasn't happy with this now remodelled slope of loose rocks and crap doing a Sword of Damocles over our exit. The whole thing could come down if it starts moving and we had now changed the stability by removing rocks from it – not that it was stable to start with.

Cowardice [*acumen* -Ed.] won out and we decided that we would leave the cave for a year to see what happens with our remodelled slope over some time. We were out of the cave by midday.

MC-13 Croesus Cave

17 January 2021 – Alan Jackson (text and photo)

Party: The Jackson Five – Graeme, Jeanette, Alan, Anna, Ben

Stuck in the north for work, so doing a few northern adventures. Did an old fogies and young children trip to Croesus to test the circulation in their toes.

Pleasant cave and pleasant company.



A missed opportunity to capture all five Jacksons aligned from tallest to shortest (or oldest to youngest).

NUCC Tassie Visit, Part I – Ida Bay

Lachlan Bailey & co. (for a more extensive version, see *Speleograffiti* 27.1)

Party: Lachie Bailey, Riley Baird, Chris Bradley, Jak Burges (MUMC), Corey Hanrahan, Hugh Mason (STC), Oxana Repina (SUSS), Elisa Scorsini, Jess Spargo, Andriana Stoddart, Andy Waddell, Austin Zerk,

Saturday 30 January

Jak: Woke up, made spaghetti bog round 1. Bought a book and some last-minute equipment. Made spag bog 2 electric boogaloo. Had to deal with some strangers in my house, but bed was nice.

Austin: This was my first big caving trip and I was really excited to go. I had my bag packed (minus a few things) and was ready to go. This started a great discovery of things I forgot to pack. First thing I noticed I was missing a mask, as one was required for the boat ride from Melbourne to Tasmania. The next thing I forgot to take was my gumboots. They were by the door ready to go, but were not with my other things and so by the door they remained. The driving itself was quite nice. I was driving with Chris Bradley, and other than a few stops for lunch and toilet breaks it was almost straight to Melbourne. There we crashed at the place of a wonderful person named Matt Dunwoodie who lived with Jack and Jak's brother. After grabbing some dinner at a local fish and chip shop we were ready to board the boat. Nothing eventful really happened on the boat, everyone mostly just slept.



I think there's still a few spaces in Lachie's car, we can cram more stuff in! Photo: Lachie Bailey

Lachie: Yay! Caving! Tassie! After nearly being derailed by COVID, the Tassie Trip was finally here! Met Chris, Andy, Austin and Elisa in Gold Creek at Maccas, because there has to be a meeting in a Maccas carpark for any good road trip. After some chat, we were away, with the first stop being at the Dog on the Tuckerbox in Gundagai. Then it was on to Albury, for the feared border crossing, which I had been fretting about for a week. It turned out to be a non-event – the police were actually dismantling the checkpoint, and we were all just waved on through. I think I was actually pissed off about the fact that they didn't even look at my border pass!

Had lunch at Wang, and raced on to Melbourne, using Jak's conveniently placed place in Port Melbourne as a staging point. After arriving, I discovered that Matt had bought some disgusting amount of removable anchors and 8 mm rope. Much gear envy. Grabbed Jak, and raced off to visit Steve

Fordyce out in east Melbourne and pick up some dye-tracing kit and other random bits and bobs. Steve took the time to give us some excellent advice and a general overview of JF. We also met his kitten, who was adorable.

Got back to Jak's place to find the others were poring over Matt's map of Bulmer Cavern in NZ. More gear (and cave) envy. Jak offered me some of his freshly cooked spag bol, which was excellent (although, is it still spag bol if there isn't any spaghetti in it?). Got chivvied along, and we were soon boarding the ferry. I had a moment of utter despair as they pulled me aside and made me unpack my car and took the three gas cylinders I had. I thought they were being confiscated, but no, they just wanted to store them elsewhere for transport. We all trooped up to the observation deck to watch the lights of Melbourne recede into the distance, and soon after that collapsed unconscious into the recliners.

Sunday 31 January

Austin: The boat pulled into Devonport at about 8 am and we were off at about 9:30 am. We had a nice breakfast at a small café and were on the road again. After some nice mountains and fields of various animals and crops we arrived at Hobart. There we faffed around sorting who and what was in each car and headed to Woolworths in Huonville to do some shopping. After about an hour of shopping we had a tonne of food and spent about \$690. We then arrived at the campsite tired from driving so we set up some tents, had some reheated pasta and called it a day.



Approximately \$700 worth of groceries at Huonville... Despite suggestions of over-catering, this lasted up pretty well until we left Ida Bay on Friday. Photo: Lachie Bailey

Jak: Woke up at 4 am to an alarm set the previous day. Despite knowing that I was supposed to be heading out for a flight in an hour I was very reluctant to get out of bed. Despite this I was still able to comfortably leave home by 5 am and was making good time until it was realised that the flight was at 6 am. Desperately ordering a taxi and running through the airport fortunately corrected the mistake and I even made the gate before final call.

Flight was uneventful as was locating Riley. Happened to be on the same flight making the whole thing rather easy.

Everyone in Hobart does not believe in Sunday and all useful facilities were closed. Rather annoying but oh bother. Walked through the botanical garden, over an overly-sized bridge, and up to Rosny Hill Lookout which I had decided to be the meeting point about half way to it.

Meeting was a little chaotic, but it was decided that Andriana and Hugh would buy the beer, and everyone else buy the food at Huonville. Lachie's driving made me sick, that or my weak stomach, but an otherwise uneventful day.

Monday 1 February

Lachie: Got up, headed off to Big Tree Pot. Found the other group at Mystery Creek Carpark, only just getting ready to go. Apparently, they had gone off down South Lune Road, despite clear instructions beforehand to Jak that it was the wrong way. Went for an unnecessary bushwalk. Turned around and headed back to Big Tree Pot (thanks to Optus allowing an emergency call to Janine McKinnon). Found cave (thanks to the STC trackwork fairies), rigged down to P4. It was now getting late thanks to the unnecessary bushwalk, so headed back to camp. Lovely rainforest. Jak seemed to have a bee in his bonnet about something when we got back to camp. He even volunteered to write the trip report. Is something up?



*Wandering through the rainforest to Big Tree Pot.
Photo: Lachie Bailey*

Jak: As is tradition we started the day taking a wrong turn driving out to the carpark an hour after what had been written on the intentions board.

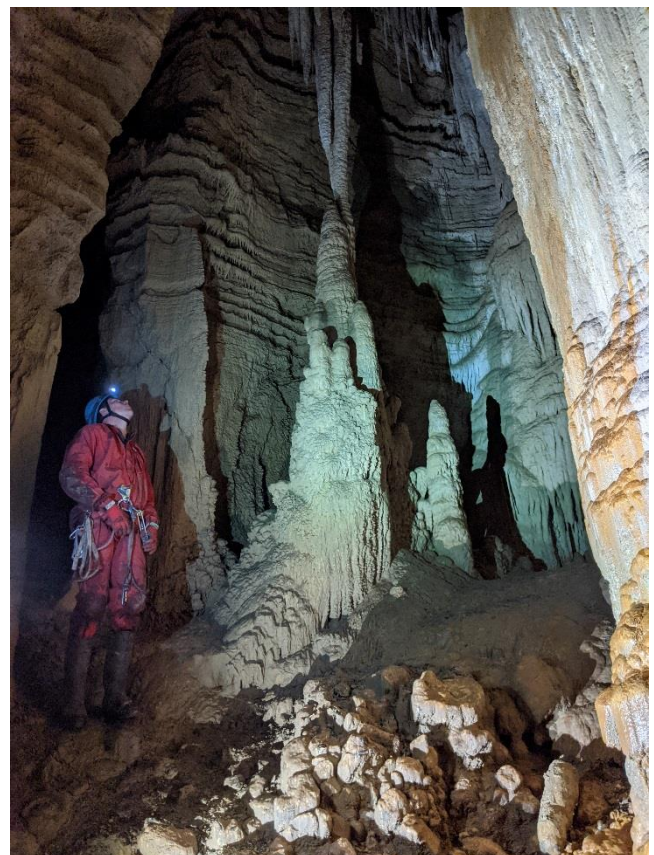
With Lachie's expert guidance, we walked along the Southern Ranges track until we had reached the appropriate altitude of the cave and began the bush-bash towards the cave. Unfortunately, the information we had been given by our intrepid leader was inaccurate, as after 200 meters

towards the cave no tape appeared on any tree. Never doubting Lachie's directions, we persisted onwards in the vague direction of IB-11. After roughly 30 minutes of hiking the first pink tap was found, not exactly 10 metres from the trail but a certain someone might have misremembered. After some more arduous trekking the very clear signage around an innocuous hole in the side of the mountain indicated we were on the right track.

First pitch was simple enough, and after remembering how to spell our last names we were ready for the rest of Midnight Hole. The freshly installed bolts (courtesy of STC) were clearly visible and had little to no rub (not that this would have been an issue on a pull through). Barring some unease with the final pitch, the vertical section had been passed and Matchbox Squeeze approached. Now I say squeeze, but it was a rather pleasant experience, with plenty of wind suggesting that the cave likely went. After a rather stunning step over the streamway, the first rock pile was the site of a quick lunch and some light reading of the map. Following the rock-pile/streamway was straight forward and well trogged. Stopping by the well flowing waterfall and topping up our bottles, we squeezed into the final passage which contained a beautiful collection of glow worms giving the cave an excellent artificial horizon. Dwelling there for an extended period, we finally took the last 200 metres of the cave and enjoyed a simple walk back to the cars where it was discovered Lachie was running a little late, likely still lost on the walk in.

Tuesday 2 February

Hugh: Headed to Big Tree Pot (IB-9) for the day; Lachie's group from Monday rigged the first three pitches and left rope for the next three pitches, plus extra gear.



*Andy admiring the formation just above P90 in
Big Tree Pot. Photo: Andriana Stoddart*

We did take some time trying to find the entrance, and ended up stumbling across IB-49. Eventually we did find Big Tree Pot and we descended the rigged pitches, and made good time to the 90 m. The 90 m was super impressive with massive avens and a clean drop. The bottom was a small platform with a ledge that led to the last pitch (9 m). According to Oxana and Andriana, the bottom of the cave is nothing to write home about. Ascending the 90 m pitch was kind of miserable with the amount of rope stretch we had, but didn't dent anyone's spirits once we all made it back to the surface.

Lachie: After the misfire in Big Tree Pot yesterday, I wanted a short and sweet cave that I knew I could get to the bottom of, contained something interesting, and could be back from by tea-time. Janine had told me about IB-1 Revelation Cave, which sounded really interesting as it had lots of question marks on the map, and a draughting dig at the bottom. I convinced Corey, Riley and Austin to come with me, and after a quick packing session in the morning, we were on our way. This time we knew EXACTLY where we were going. So, shortly after leaving Mystery Creek Carpark, we found our turnoff from the Southern Ranges track, and then Revelation Cave itself, buried in the rainforest.

The rigging was easy, although I found myself cursing the throughbolts; dicking around with a spanner while perched over a pitch with no real safety is not my idea of a fun time. Pitch 3 was slightly more interesting; the naturals worked, but were a bit marginal. I found myself wishing that the bolt fairies would come and make another visit, even if they did leave more throughbolts. Once down P3, we had a look at the inviting inlets that feeds water into the cave. Considering how high the roof and avens are here, I reckon there is a good chance for some neat feeder caves! A few desultory scrambles later, and we barrelled down to the dig and low stream passageway where the cave ends. We did the obligatory spot of grovelling, made our contribution to the dig by removing a few handfuls of mud, and made our way back out. We derigged as we left, and left the cave to the zillions of cave crickets that call it home. Returned with plenty of time before tea time.

Wednesday 3 February

Oxana: I'd noticed Cockle Creek and the South Coast Track marked on the National Parks map en-route to caves on previous days, and had been desperately keen to go there since bushfires during a previous trip two years ago had disallowed it. So today was set aside for bushwalking and sight-seeing. We left camp fairly late so only had time for one short-ish walk, so we picked the day trip to South Cape Bay.

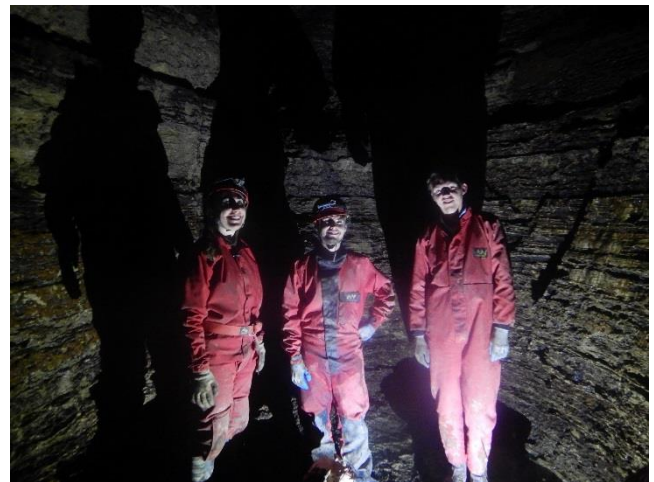
The track started with a couple hours of slogging through bush, which I sulked through as I'd had plenty of that the last couple of days and had mentally prepared for a day of coastal scenery. But looking across corduroy lines of big blue breakers booming below grey gravel cliffs as the bush suddenly opened out onto the southern-most point of Australia's southern-most track, I was very glad I came. We ate lunch looking out across the ocean, then ran down to touch the water before turning back.

We spent a little time at the Cockle Creek lagoon, wading through the water and watching mud crabs dig themselves into holes. Dinner that night was at the pub, featuring an almost-fist-fight relating to spoons.



Caving tourists trying to score as many southernmosts as they can. Photo: Andriana Stoddart

Lachie: Midnight Hole today. Very easy walk in; I don't know what Jak was complaining about. He must have gotten lost, poor thing. Lovely pitches! Our setup of 2x30 m ropes and 1x60 m rope was less than ideal on the longer pitches, as a European Death Knot (Flat Overhand Bend for those who like boring knot names) in 9.5 mm rope was easily insufficient as a knot block on the pitches. 2x60s, isolated with a Stone Knot, SRT, last person removing Stein Knot then abseiling double rope would be much easier. Had one fun pull-down (P5 I think), where the rope caught on a flake 10 m up, but we managed to dislodge it eventually.



Elisa, Austin and Chris working on creepy lighting in Midnight Hole. Photo: Lachie Bailey

The Chasm of Fear failed to live up to its name, but I very much didn't like the climb down from the end of it into Confusing Chamber. Used a 15 m rope we had for the Midnight Hole P6 approach line and a meat-anchor to handline it. Don't bother with naturals - they're crap, and a meat-anchor does the job, as you only need one person happily down to guide the rest of the party down. Loved the glowworms in the Walls of Sorrow area, and encountered some tourists in Glowworm Chamber 1. They hadn't made it 50 m from the entrance yet, and were not only lost already, but afraid of getting muddy ("do I need a caveman suit like yours to go any further?").

I pointed them the way on and the way back, and left them to it. Breezy walk back to the carpark; I wish all caves could have such a lovely walk in as Mystery Creek Cave.

A group also headed in Revelation Cave again today, and had a good look around. They also concurred with the assessment of my group from the day before: it's a super interesting cave, and has lots of potential. Having said that, it would be super depressing if the dig down the bottom went all of 10 m and then connected into Exit Cave. Sure, it might be a fun through-trip under the hill, but you'd need a permit then!

Thursday 4 February

Andy: Today we went into Midnight Hole. By now, everyone in the group had gone through Midnight Hole. Hugh and Andriana were heading in for a second time. This made the walk in pretty leisurely, because they knew exactly where to turn off the well-trodden track to the pink tape trail. Jess took the opportunity to learn some pull-through rigging. The recently installed chains and bolts were the caver's ultimate dream – so shiny and in the perfect places. The cave was very enjoyable because each pitch was pleasant and the process was fast.



*Jess ready to descend in Midnight Hole.
Photo: Andriana Stoddart*

When we arrived at the Matchbox Squeeze, we were expecting a squeeze, which we did not find. Instead we found a jumbo-sized matchbox (for the sort of matches that are as big as a twig) that could have fit two people through at once in parallel. I am not even sure if I touched both walls at once. While disappointed there was no squeezing to do, I was relieved that it would be easy to get through the slot without trouble. Soon we will have to lodge a petition to remove the word squeeze from 'Matchbox Squeeze', and rename it to 'Matchbox Passage' – watch this space. *[We'll show you a real squeeze next time, you won't be coming back to Tassie. -Ed]* The remaining cave was pretty fun with a few small climbs, although I did not like the drop underneath my

feet in the Chasm of Fear. When we reached the waterfall, we filled our water bottles for those complaining back at camp about the campsite tank water, and also took some photos. Altogether, the cave was fun and I was happy.



Hugh filling up his water bottle from the waterfall in Mystery Creek Cave. Photo: Andriana Stoddart

That was until we reached the glowworms. The glowworms experience was incredibly immersive and emotional. I'm not sure how else to describe it other than that we were definitely in another world. Has to be the highlight of the trip so far for me! Walk out was super easy. Midnight Hole? Would recommend.



*The dumb pose competition in Mystery Creek Cave.
Photo: Corey Hanrahan*

Riley: Today was our last full day at Ida Bay. With ropes left in place from the previous visits, it was necessary to organise a team to de-rig the cave and recover the 220 m of rope we had rigged in Big Tree Pot. Through Lachie's persuasive efforts, he was also able to recruit Riley and Jak for the trip. The path to the caves was long and filled with various types of terrain. Starting at the entrance to the Southwest National Park, and guided by pink tags, we walked to the base of a quarry, then proceeded to follow a path climbing to the top. Immediately following that, we proceeded inward through a rainforest, complete with logs, moss, huge trees and rain. Reaching the cave entrance, we ate lunch and began our descent. There were several pitches, but thanks to the rigging setup, it was possible to combine some of these to descend multiple pitches in a single go. Following these pitches, there was a 4-metre climb, described as short and easy by our

Tasmanian rigging notes, but still nasty in a SRT kit. After the climb, we reached the biggest pitch in the cave – 90 metres.

Lachie descended this to de-rig, as well as descending the much shorter final pitch, bottoming the vertical section of the cave. Riley and Jak stayed up top, examining the formations in the chamber and preparing to receive and pack the ropes that would be delivered. Following this, we continued back up the cave, gathering rope as we went. While de-rigging, Lachie noted that some of the spits in the cave seemed to be starting to degrade – despite the plastic plugs, a couple had a little grit in them, and were getting quite corroded. The spit on P4 was particularly difficult to deal with. Possibly, this fabulous sporting cave deserves some nice p-bolts as replacements for the old hardware!



*Looking back up the majestic P90 in Big Tree Pot.
Photo: Andriana Stoddart*

All of a sudden, we heard a voice above us. Calling out, we discovered that it was Chris, another member of our caving contingent – after going for a long-distance power walk in the morning, he joined us to help with derigging! This was very much appreciated, as Jak had a shocking time derigging the last two pitches. Apparently, he'd suffered a mix of jammed knots, stuck krabs, and a rope slick enough with mud that his ascenders were sliding on it. To make matters worse, he was wearing Andy's gumboots thanks to an accidental mishap in the morning, so was thoroughly miserable upon reaching the surface. Overall, we weren't entirely sold on the placement of some of the spits and some of the naturals recommended by Jeff Butt in *Speleo Spiel* 317, p. 9. Still, with Chris there to help us, we headed home muddy but accomplished. Walking back, pushing through the rainforest then enjoying the downhill walk down the quarry, we returned to our car, and our campsite for dinner.



*Caver's effects scattered around the top of Big Tree Pot - does this remind you at all of a horror movie?
Photo: Chris Bradley*

Friday 5 February

Lachie: After five fantastic days, we made a leisurely exit from Southport. We all gradually packed up in the morning, in no hurry as we only had to drive 3h to JF today. Once packed, we all trooped down to the Rocket Pod, a lovely local pop up café on the Southport waterfront that is only open three days a week. There we had some most excellent chai, coffee, hot chocolate, cookies and meteorites. It's only a short walk there and back from the Southport Tavern, but our trip was slowed by the abundance of blackberries growing by the sides of the road. Corey, Oxana, Andriana, Hugh and I nearly made ourselves sick from the number of them we ate!



*Austin and Lachie hard at work at camp.
Photo: Chris Bradley*

Still, eventually we had to leave Southport, and drive back to Hobart, where we all mostly regrouped at Recycled Recreation in the city. Riley and Andy declined the offer to worship at this shrine of cheap outdoors gear, and went to visit some old railway relics instead. There was also a functioning map shop very close nearby, which was amazing to trawl through. Unfortunately though, JF is on the border of four 1:25k map sheets, at least several of which are out of print, so sad). Still, it wasn't all fun, as we eventually had some chores to do, like grocery shopping, buying some missing survey kit and refilling gas cylinders.

Once this was all done, most of the group trooped off to JF, where we would be camping at the Left of Field Camping Gardens. Jess, Jak and I had to visit Alan Jackson from STC to pick up the keys for JF, and hopefully pilfer some STC 9 mm rope. Seeing as Alan wasn't going to be home until late, we went over to the eastern shore to visit Ric Tunney and Janine and thank them for all the help they'd been with the advice for Ida Bay. We had a lovely chat with them and admired the excellent view from their balcony!

After dropping in to say hi to Alan, I was impressed just how low Alan's opinion of mainland cavers was: we got described as intelligent simply because I'd managed to bring hanger plates AND M8 bolts to Big Tree Pot for the spits.

We also dropped in on Gabriel Kinzler to pick up some capping kit. Unfortunately, we interrupted him in the middle of dinner (sorry!), and it had all been a misunderstanding

anyway. The short version is I misunderstood Jak, who misunderstood Steve, who gave us perfectly clear instructions, resulting in me pestering Gabriel when I really didn't have to!

We still took the capping kit though (it might come in handy), and scooted out to Left of Field. My timing was impeccable again, and we arrived just in time for dinner. It was less impeccable for the NUCC Committee meeting, as we arrived an hour and a half late for it, despite having suggested it for the 5th as 'nobody could possibly be likely to arrive after 8 pm at JF'. Even worse, I didn't get to dodge the meeting, as everyone kindly waited until Jak, Jess and I got there to commence.

[See Part II of NUCC's trip to the Junee-Florentine in Speleo Spiel 443. -Ed]

L-73, L-74 Jeanbrook Nook

4 February 2021

Alan Jackson

Party: Paul Darby, Lyndsey Gray, Alan Jackson

We found a cave when 'canyoning' down Jean Brook at Loongana in January.

Went back with Paul and Lyndsey to confirm it was a new find and document it.

Two entrances, tagged L-73 and L-74. About 60 m long and quite interesting.

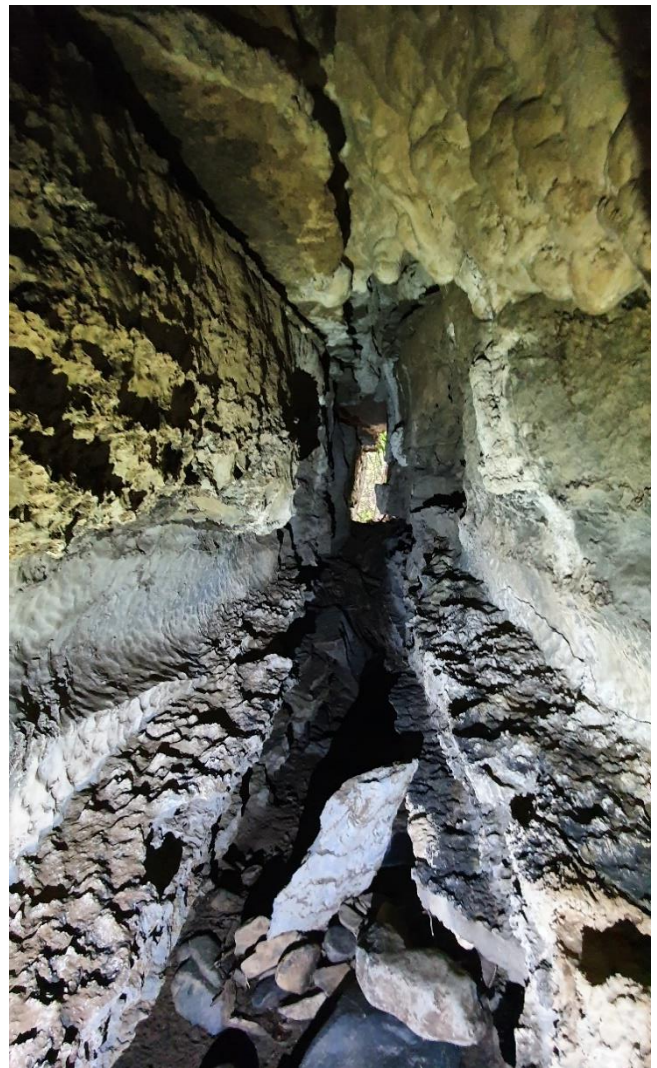
Full description, report and map will be published in *Speleopod*.



*Paul couldn't resist the call.
Photo: Alan Jackson*



*Squint and you'll see Paul slotting through.
Photo: Alan Jackson*



*Technically a through-trip.
Photo: Alan Jackson*

JF-36 Growling Swallet

20 February 2021

John Oxley

Party: Michael Packer, Luke Dimsey, Ronni Hayes, Alex Hormann, Kirsten Laurie, Brenton Owens, John Oxley, Lauren Platzer, Robin Prisland, Craig Stobbs

Pax arranged a trip into Growling Swallet for new members to provide a bit of SRT practice in a cave following the training on the cliffs at South Hobart the previous week.



*Kirsten and Alex trying to make a good impression.
Photo: supplied Alex Hormann.*

It seems we weren't the only ones heading for the cave. On the "8 Road" we passed several people walking and after we arrived two large 4WD vehicles arrived at the now very crowded car park at the end of the road. They had collected a key from Parks at Mt Field NP.



*Clearly, fun was had. Mission accomplished!
Photo: John Oxley*

On arrival at the cave, Pax headed straight in to rig the first pitch while the rest of us did battle with unfamiliar harnesses and tightly fitting trog suits. By the time he returned we were just about ready so we all headed in.

After successfully passing the Dry Bypass abseils, we headed down to the creek for a spot of lunch and some photos. The water level was much lower than the last time I was in the cave for the rescue exercise in November 2019. Following a quick look around and a few minutes in the dark to admire the glowworms we started our way back out. We were all out soon after 5 o'clock.

Thanks to Pax for running the trip and thanks everyone for a great day.



Marvelling at glowworms (or just pretending for the photo). Photo: John Oxley

Other exciting stuff

Cave training with Tasmania Police SAR applicants

21 & 22 February 2021

Janine McKinnon

Party: Sunday – Gabriel Kinzler, Janine McKinnon, 8 trainees, 3 instructors.

Monday – Janine McKinnon, John Oxley, 8 different trainees, 2 different instructors.

Every three years, the Tasmania Police (TasPol) Search and Rescue team (SAR) run a training course for general duties police wishing to join the call out list for emergencies under the SAR umbrella. The course is two weeks and covers all the areas under SAR control. Cave rescue is one of these.

STC was asked if we would field a few members to come along on the two days of the course where they throw the trainees into a real cave. The students have done rope work, including abseiling and prusiking, on walls in the previous days but a real cave environment is different, thus our help was requested.



*STC and TasPol once again working hand in hand.
Photo: Gabriel Kinzler*

The ages and police experience of the students was varied but they all had one thing in common, none of them had been into a cave before. None of them came with any experience of outdoor activities like rock climbing or bushwalking. The course was a massive learning curve for them from any perspective.

The plan for both days was the same, only the faces changed (except mine). The group would be split into two, with one group (of four students) going underground whilst the other waited around on the surface, a return by all for lunch, and group two (the other four) repeating in the afternoon, with we cavers and the instructors doing both trips. Because of this we couldn't make it a very long caving experience, particularly as we expected them to be quite slow.

Two of the instructors had visited the venue a couple of weeks before and determined that we would drop two of the pitches in this multi-pitch cave. They also wanted the students to show how they would respond to a squeeze, so they found a vertical squeeze in the cave that each student was required to attempt to get through (some of the bigger boys were not going to fit!).

The plan was discussed in the car on the way to the JF on day one between the SAR leader (driving our police transport) and Gab and myself. We were to lead the days and decide how things were to be done. This was a bit of a

surprise to us as we had thought we were only along as a good will measure to tail and observe!

We rigged the two pitches and the instructors brought the students in behind us. We were trying for time efficiency as it was potentially going to be a long day. This plan fell in a bit of a hole when, after dropping the second pitch, I was sent looking for the restriction they had picked with vague instructions of “it is vertical and tight and somewhere in that chamber after the second pitch” – or words to that effect. I stuck my head down holes in all sorts of places but couldn't find one the right size. I was failing the goldilocks test. One of the instructors who had selected the restriction arrived and we continued to look for another 10 minutes before we found what he had picked. Yes, it was tight for bigger people. A good choice.



Different equipment, same result. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

By the time we got back to the bottom of the second pitch the first two students had arrived so Gab and I took them off to the restriction, I dropped down and they followed. They found it intimidating but managed to do it. Out we went, back to the pitch, pick up the next two and repeat - whilst the first two started up the pitch.

This worked well but it still took us three and a half hours to do the trip. Lunch was late (and very short). I was worried about how long the whole day would be but group two were much faster and we were all out of the cave by 4:30 pm and driving by 5 pm.



Some smiled, some didn't, but all learned valuable skills.
Photo: John Oxley

Day 2: Rest and repeat.

Same time starting underground. I expected a smooth and fast show today after sorting out the wrinkles in the game yesterday, and with the cave already rigged, but somehow it still took more than three hours to get the first group through the hoops. I guess they were just a bit slower than the previous afternoon's group. We decided to bring the second group down before the first were out and leave the instructors inside, so I went out to get them. It was still 2:30 pm as we started down the first pitch.



Janine dispensing her wisdom to the troops.
Photo: John Oxley

All went smoothly, if a bit slowly, but that was to be expected. We were all out and de-rigged around 5:40 pm.

I was impressed by all the participants; students and instructors alike. One of the things that really stood out for me was the support and encouragement they all gave to each other. They checked each other's gear, offered help when needed and gave support and praise to each other along the way. They were open about what they found hard or intimidating but got on with it anyway. They were a great bunch.

This was an excellent opportunity for STC to collaborate with TasPol SAR and also meet the potential SAR team members we may be sharing a cave rescue with in the future. You just never know, do you?



The more cave rescuers the better. Photo: John Oxley

Background Regions for the recording of caves outside karst cave areas in Tasmania

Michael Packer and Greg Middleton

Back in 2015, one of us (GM) proposed a new scheme for numbering cave entrances in Tasmania which lay outside the established (karst) cave areas (Middleton 2015). Comments were invited from anyone interested, particularly other Tasmanian caving groups.

In the months that followed, constructive criticism was received from Lyndsey Gray and Paul Darby (Savage River Caving Club), Arthur Clarke (STC) and David Wools-Cobb (Northern Caverneers) and, more recently, from the new Karst Index Coordinator, Michael Packer. Due note of these inputs was taken and the proposal was revised where necessary.

In September 2020 the revised proposals were again circulated to Tasmanian caving groups. STC agreed to the proposals as formulated. Further inputs were received from Lyndsey Gray (SRCC), David Butler (NC) and David Wools-Cobb (SRCC, TSLC, NC). This paper sets out the consensus position we believe has been reached and we hope will be accepted as the basis for the formal establishment of background regions in Tasmania from December 2020.

TASMANIAN BACKGROUND REGIONS FOR RECORDING NON-CARBONATE CAVES

There has been a rapid rise in the number of ‘cave areas’ in Tasmania in recent years, mainly to cater for caves outside the ‘traditional’ karst areas (these rose from 2 in 1985 to 51 in 2011 while karst cave areas only increased from 75 to 102 over the same period). In addition, the ‘non-karst’ areas generally contained very few caves – in fact, on average, just three.

To overcome this problem (which will otherwise continue to result in the proliferation of small areas) we can define a limited number of exhaustive background areas, perhaps to be called “Cave Regions” – roughly on the NSW model (Dykes 2011) but simpler – which could provide for the orderly numbering of caves outside the established karst areas.

Earlier GM referred to the Regions as being for ‘non-karst’ caves but, with increasing realisation that many caves in non-carbonate lithologies (particularly sandstones, but even quartzites) may nevertheless be karstic in their speleogenesis, there is a need to be more careful in our use of terms. Perhaps, at least in Tasmania where our major caves are developed in limestone, dolomite and – stretching the application of ‘major’ – magnesite, we can most easily refer to the ‘other’ caves as ‘non-carbonate’.

GM thus attempted to define, purely for the purpose of orderly documentation of cave and related features outside established karst areas, a series of Cave Regions which would jointly cover the whole of Tasmania. Existing (and any new) karst areas will continue to lie within these regions, but are excluded from them. The Map illustrates the location of 11 such regions, based on agglomerations of catchments, and islands, plus Tasman (and Forestier) Peninsula (which is already a non-carbonate area). Bruny and Macquarie islands need to be retained as separate regions.

The regions are unashamedly based on catchments, mainly because they are relatively easy to locate and don’t change much (if we ignore the efforts of the HEC), unlike mapsheets, municipalities, roads, etc. Most non-carbonate caves don’t cross surface divides so this should not be a problem. It is always possible that what we see as a group of non-carbonate caves could be split by one of these drainage divides (which may happen on Mount Wellington). If this proves to be a problem, we can either tweak a boundary to keep all of the ‘group’ together or live with the fact that some of the apparent group are in one region, some in another.

It is understood that only one non-carbonate cave in Tasmania has been physically tagged with an entrance number (Secret or Chauncy Vale Cave at Chauncy Vale (Wylie & Wylie 2003)) so little re-tagging should be required by these proposals. Few of these caves have even been surveyed in recent years so not many map numbers will need to be amended (though perhaps some should be allocated retrospectively). Indeed, numbers for non-karst caves have really only been used on maps and, rarely, in the scant documentation. It is not proposed that non-carbonate caves will necessarily be tagged but they may be if considered necessary or desirable in particular cases.

EFFECTS OF THE CHANGES

Adoption of the ‘Background Regions’ in Tasmania requires the deletion of some existing (‘non-karst’) areas – as shown below. The approx. number of recorded caves in each area is given in brackets. No changes to karst areas are intended.

There was some support for using three-letter codes for the regions to easily distinguish them from the karst areas but unfortunately a number of the two letter codes proposed earlier have been published and included on maps, so it is felt these should be retained.

Bass Strait West - BW - incorporating –

Albatross I. (4), Hunter I. (2), King I. (4).

Bass Strait East - BE - incorporating –

Craggy I. (1), Erith I. (4), Kent Group (4), Prime Seal I. (1). At this time, it is proposed to retain the existing karst areas, Ranga, on Flinders Island (1 or 2 untagged caves) and Cape Barren Island (2 untagged caves).

Tarkine Region - TK - incorporating –

Breakneck Point (2), Cradle Link Road (2), Donaldson Landing (2), Jacobs Boat Harbour (1), Pieman River (2), Rocky Cape (2), Sisters Beach (2).

Central North Region - CN - incorporating –

Devonport (1), Don Heads (3), Goat I. (2), Howth (1), Liffey Falls (1), Preston (1), Stoodley (6), Upper Natone (3), Ferndene (1).

Derwent Region - DT - incorporating –

Blackmans Bay (3), Chauncy Vale (7), Dodges Ferry (1), Hamilton (2), Mt Faulkner (4), Mt Wellington (5), Oatlands (3), Shadow Lake (1), Warrane (2), Wayatinah (1)

Esk-Ringarooma Region - ER - incorporating –

Ross (4), Scottsdale (1), Hillwood (2)

East Coast Region - ET - incorporating –

Mt Amos (2), Okehampton Bay (1)

Gordon-Huon Region - GH - incorporating –

Birchs Inlet (2), Francistown (7), Liberty Pt. (2),
Louisa Bay (2), Mesa-Gleichenia (4), Moonlight Ck.
(2), Mt Arrowsmith (3), Mountain River (1),
Southport (1), South Cape Bay (3), Western Arthurs
(1)

Bruny Island Region - BI - incorporating –

Adventure Bay (4), Variety Bay (3)

Tasman Region - TM - incorporates Tasman Peninsula Area
(TP) (9).

Macquarie Island Region - MQ - incorporates Macquarie
Island Area (MQ) (5).

Within each region, caves will be numbered as they are
reported to the Karst Index Coordinator and numbers may be
allocated retrospectively where caves are adequately
documented.

REFERENCES

DYKES, Peter 2011 *A Karst Atlas of NSW – The documentation system*. ASF: Broadway, NSW.

MIDDLETON, G. 2015, Proposal for establishment of new ('background') regions for the recording of non-karst (and isolated karst) caves in Tasmania. *Speleo Spiel*, 408: 9-13.

WYLIE, John & WYLIE, Glenda 2003 Secret Cave (CV1) (Chauncy Vale Cave), Bagdad, Tasmania. *J. Syd. Speleo. Soc.*, 47(7): 190-194.

[See Map showing proposed "Background Cave Regions" for Tasmania *on the next page*. -Ed]

BACKGROUND REGIONS FOR RECORDING NON-CARBONATE CAVES

TASMANIA
CATCHMENTS MAP

BASS STRAIT
WEST

BASS STRAIT
EAST

CATCHMENTS SHOWN

- 1

Furneaux
- 2

Musselroe - Ansons
- 3

George
- 4

Scamander - Douglas
- 5

Swan - Apsley
- 6

Little Swanport
- 7

Prosser
- 8

Tasman
- 9

Pitt Water - Coal
- 10

Jordan
- 11

Clyde
- 12

Ouse
- 13

Upper Derwent
- 14

Lower Derwent
- 15

Derwent Estuary - Bruny
- 16

Huon
- 17

Port Davey
- 18

Wanderer - Giblin
- 19

Gordon - Franklin
- 20

King - Henty
- 21

Pieman
- 22

Nelson Bay
- 23

Arthur
- 24

Welcome
- 25

King Island
- 26

Montagu
- 27

Duck
- 28

Black - Detention
- 29

Inglis
- 30

Cam
- 31

Emu
- 32

Blythe
- 33

Leven
- 34

Forth - Wilmot
- 35

Mersey
- 36

Rubicon
- 37

Meander
- 38

Great Lake
- 39

Brumbys - Lake
- 40

Macquarie
- 41

South Esk
- 42

North Esk
- 43

Tamar Estuary
- 44

Pipers
- 45

Little Forester
- 46

Great Forester - Brid
- 47

Boobyalla - Tomahawk
- 48

Ringarooma

SCALE

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 km



BACKGROUND REGIONS

- Bass Strait East

BE
- Bass Strait West

BW
- Bruny Island

BI
- Central North

CN
- Derwent

DT
- East Coast

ET
- Esk-Ringarooma

ER
- Gordon-Huon

GH
- Macquarie I.

MQ
- Tarkine

TK
- Tasman

TM

MACQUARIE
ISLAND ↓

New gate on JF-229 Welcome Stranger

January 2021

Gabriel Kinzler (photos supplied David Holley)

As hinted at in previous issues of *Speleo Spiel*, the old Welcome Stranger gate was reworked and put back into place in October 2020.

Here is what David Holley, Ranger at Mt Field and Southwest National Parks, had to say on the matter:

“Trent Prouse - Field Officer (Aboriginal Identified) along with Field Officers Michael Johnson and Matthew Triffitt removed the gate bringing it back to the Mt Field workshop to be reengineered.

The gate had to be flipped around with the lock box now on the outside to allow it to be securely attached.

New Parks and Wildlife branded signage for Welcome Stranger as well as the introduction of a permit system will be introduced in the coming year to bring this cave into line with many of the other cave systems throughout the state.”

-David Holley

Hereinafter are a few pictures provided by Dave.



Trent Prouse - Field Officer ‘extraordinaire’ honing his welding skills fabricating the gate.



Still needed.



Even got a paint job.

Maps

JF-705 Log Fiasco

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

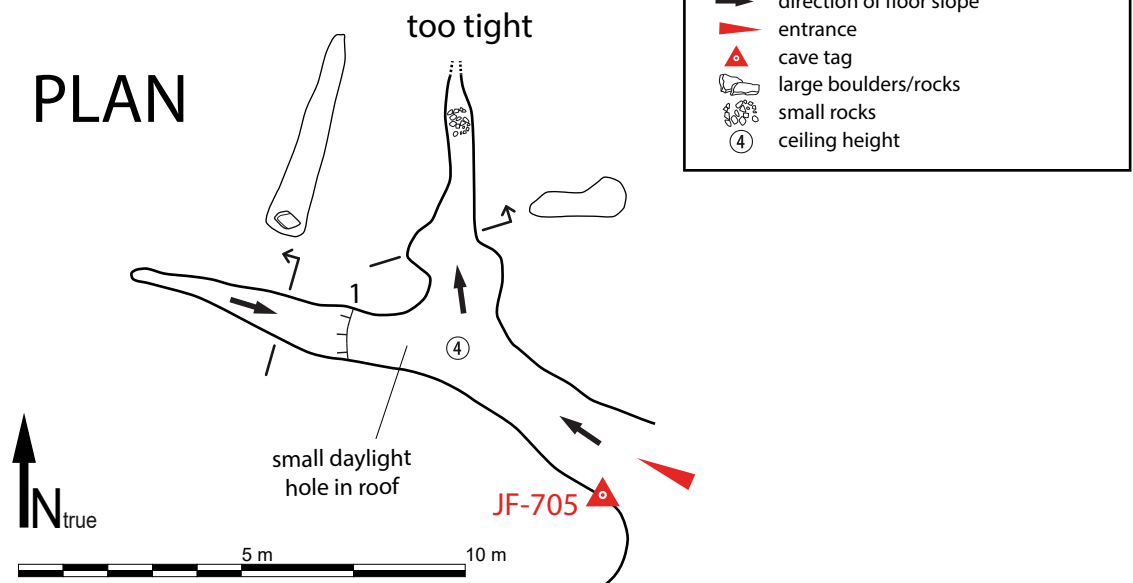
7JF705.STC481

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

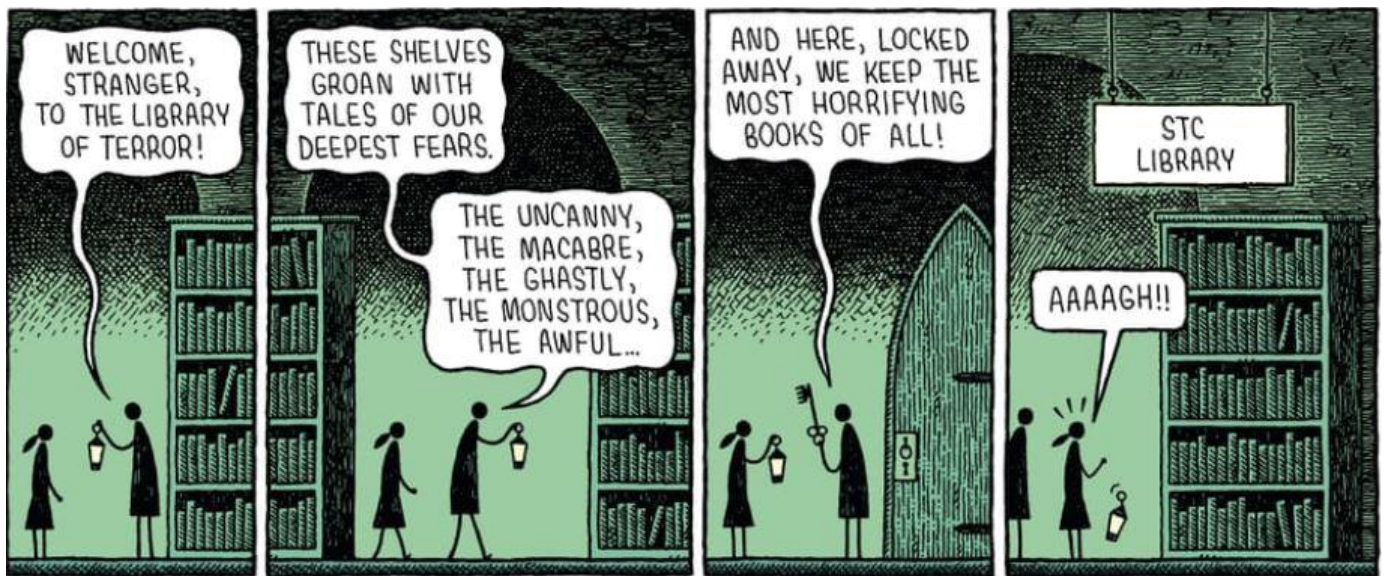
ASF Grade 22

In-cave notes by Gabriel Kinzler (13-01-2021)

Drawn by Gabriel Kinzler (14-01-2021)



Fun and Diversions



Where few fear to tread. Original comic by Tom Gould, adapted by Janine McKinnon.



A submission by Rolan Eberhard: "I thought it was pretty interesting. Taken in Kubla Khan."

The Last Page

